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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO press kit available at www.wliw.org/pressroom

TWO MEN, TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND MILES, ONE MISSION

*New Documentary Follows Two Friends from Queens, New York As They
Re-trace Marco Polo's Complete Journey*

October 24, 2008 – Many people have big dreams, but only a few bold adventurers *live* them. Denis Belliveau and Francis O'Donnell took a wild idea – retrace Marco Polo's entire 25,000-mile, land-and-sea route from Venice to China and back – and spent two incredible years of their lives making their dream a reality.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO, premiering on public television beginning November 2008 (check local listings), chronicles the journey of two ordinary guys – Belliveau, at the time a wedding photographer, and O'Donnell, an artist and former Marine – as they set out to follow Polo's historic route. Equal parts travelogue, adventure story, history trek and buddy movie, the 90-minute film weaves footage from the duo's often perilous voyage with Marco Polo's descriptions and experiences. Richly enhanced with Belliveau's award-winning photographs, the program details their highs and lows as they retrace Polo's path, trying to see what he saw and feel what he must have felt.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO captures the pair as they survive a deadly firefight and befriend a warlord in Afghanistan, cross the forbidding Taklamakan Desert in a Silk Road camel caravan, endure continuous interrogations from authorities, and live among cultures ranging from the expert horsemen of Mongolia to the tattooed tribes of Indonesia.

"We made a pact," says O'Donnell, "that, under any conditions, no matter what, we were only coming back to the United States two ways – either dead or successful."

In the spirit of history's great adventurers, the two make their way across the world's largest land mass and back, securing – or, when necessary, forging – visas, surviving extreme temperatures, and talking their way out of jams brought on by Tajik soldiers, Chinese security officers, and an assortment of other bureaucrats, border guards and armed warriors.

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“We made it the 13th century in our heads,” said Belliveau. “What was this like for Marco? How would it have been for him? We were going to try to make this whole journey like we were living in Marco Polo’s world.” Without the assistance of air travel, they made their way on foot, horseback, camelback, in jeeps, trucks, boats and trains.

But as fascinating as the world looked through Marco Polo’s eyes, is the world and the people Belliveau and O’Donnell saw through their own. “Travel is the enemy of bigotry,” says O’Donnell. “There’s a lot more good people on the planet than bad...Get out there, meet [people], they’re good,” adds Belliveau.

Visit www.wliw.org/marcopolo, scheduled to launch Thursday, November 13, 2008, for more information.

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO is produced by Return to Venice LLC and WLIW21 in association with WNET.ORG. Executive Producers: Tom Casciato, Josh Nathan and Stephen Segaller; Producer: Emir Lewis; Writer: Tom Casciato; Senior Producer: Eva Anisko. For Return to Venice LLC: Producer/Directors: Denis Belliveau and Francis O’Donnell; Executive Producer: Lisa Taylor. The program is presented nationally by WLIW21 and distributed nationally by American Public Television.

Funding for ***IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARCO POLO*** is provided by The Starr Foundation and the Center for Cultural Interchange.

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About WNET.ORG

New York public media company WNET.ORG is a pioneering provider of television and web content. The parent of Thirteen, WLIW21 and Creative News Group, WNET.ORG brings such acclaimed broadcast series and websites as [Worldfocus](#), [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [Charlie Rose](#), [Wide Angle](#), [Secrets of the Dead](#), [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly](#), [Visions](#), [Consuelo Mack WealthTrack](#), [Wild Chronicles](#), [Miffy and Friends](#), and [Cyberchase](#) to national and international audiences. Through its wide range of channels and platforms, WNET.ORG serves the entire New York City metro area with unique local productions, broadcasts and innovative educational and cultural projects. In all that it does, WNET.ORG pursues a single, overarching goal – to create media experiences of lasting significance for New York, America and the world. For more information, visit www.wnet.org.

About American Public Television

With more than 10,000 hours of programming in its library, American Public Television (APT) has been a prime source of programming for the nation’s public television stations for 47 years, distributing more than 300 new program titles per year. In 2006, APT launched Create – the TV channel featuring the best of public television’s lifestyle programming. Known for its leadership in identifying innovative, worthwhile and viewer-friendly programming, APT has established a tradition of providing public television stations with program choices that strengthen and customize their schedules, such as such as *Rick Steves’ Europe*, *Worldfocus*, *Globe Trekker*, *Simply Ming*, *Sara’s Weeknight Meals*, *America’s Test Kitchen From Cook’s Illustrated*, *Doc Martin*, *Broadway: The Golden Age*, *Lidia’s Family Table*, *Rosemary and Thyme*, *P. Allen Smith’s Garden Home*, *The Big Comfy Couch*, *Celine Dion: A New Day*, *Queen Rock Montreal*, *Monarchy With David Starkey*, *Spain...on the road Again*, and other prominent documentaries, dramatic series, how-to programs, children’s series and classic movies. For more information about APT’s programs and services, visit APTonline.org.