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Performance In Everyday Life Class, Professor Audrey Colby, 2006

Documentary and Storytelling-Grandfather Fought In The War and This Film Doesn't Talk About It

For two years now I have been trying to make a documentary about my grandmother. Maria Popa is 85 years old and lives in Cretesti, Romania.

In my research I have stumbled upon different types of information, most of which are related to the history of my family. Maria has confessed to me not to be in love with my grandfather, but to have still married him, due to his and her parents' determination. She was not forced into marriage, nothing like that, but she was convinced to marry. She had been in love with someone else, a man who gambled and drank.

Ilie and Maria married in October 1940 and Ilie left for the Army a few weeks later.

According to Maria, he was in Russia, fighting for the Germans from 1940 till 1944. My father was born in May 1944, which I think makes her memory a bit flawed.

Last winter I started writing grandmother's biography. It is a compilation of dates and events taken from a Romanian history book, which I found in a travel store on Michigan Avenue in the city of Chicago, and a compilation of dates and events, which Maria told me about, in April 2005, in Cretesti.

Through this biography I became more and more interested in the war that Ilie had participated in.

I met Ilie and I used to see him every two weeks before he died in 1999. The right side of his body was paralyzed and had been like that since I was four years old. He didn't speak much.

Maria said that Ilie had reached Stalingrad in his journey to Russia and when he came back he had lice and a beard. My mom said she didn't think he had gone so far.

In October of 2006, while looking for masking tape at CVS I found some green and beige toy soldiers in different fighting positions, and, as I couldn't resist, I took them to my studio.

I put them on a piece of wood I had lying around and thought of them as being "The Battle of Stalingrad".

In the meantime I got this book called "Stalingrad" from a friend and I also managed to get a 2003 documentary called "Stalingrad".

I watched "Stalingrad" by the German filmmaker Dr. Guido Knapp and was surprised to find that there was no mention of any other nationalities that fought alongside the Germans in the Russian Campaign.

The book "Stalingrad", on the other hand, does justice to the around 500 000 men who were Romanian, Hungarian and Italian and includes them in the story. Unfortunately it is pretty compact and not easy at all to read, so I had to borrow another book, called "The Battle of Stalingrad".

This book reads like a novel and I've read a big chunk of it, but there is no mention of my grandfather in it. I also used other sources in my research, such as the Internet and both the Internet and the books have the same maps.

You can see the Romanian, Hungarian and Italian armies advancing through Russia.

All these sources are recent and I am sure they all had reasonable archive documents available to research, so I started to wonder about these writers' and filmmakers' choices when writing about the event which had a major influence on the outcome of World War II.

What is their purpose and how do they justify their omissions?

I have written a story about my grandfather and I would like you to listen to it and enjoy :

Grandfather

Grandfather fought in the war. He was a green soldier.

The red soldiers protected their city from my grandfather, so he had to fight hard to defeat them. He was 24 years old when he started the war and 69 when he was defeated.

There is a very furry animal that walks alongside troupes when they go to war. It is called the JAMAL. It follows them at a 250 feet distance and is able to smell their courage. If they feel fear he comes closer at a distance of 200 feet. If they are hungry he approaches at 150 feet. If they have no desire to fight, he attacks the last soldier in line and leaves.

Crossing the Volga must have been beautiful. It was fall and the sun was shining.

The green soldiers spoke four languages. They felt like brothers and talked about their lovers. They burned the land they encountered and killed some of the locals.

Grandfather felt the Jamal approaching but didn't pay attention to it. His brother Matthew was devoured by the animal in front of him, but all grandfather could do was be silent.

They continued their offensive and reached the city. Its inhabitants fought with all they had, starved and ate each other.

The crystals are made of never ending permutations. They fall from the sky and when they reach the ground they join the crystal army. The crystal army killed the four languages army fast.

German troupes, protected by Italian, Hungarian and Romanian troupes were defeated by the extreme Russian winter in 1943, while attempting to defeat the Soviet city of Stalingrad.

While a film about Stalingrad was playing on the screen I was reading this story,
competeing with the film's sound.

Chicago, 2006