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## UW-Platteville professor uses knowledge of history to create high-stakes thriller

JEANNE KOLKER For the State Journal 10 hrs ago



Submitted photo

For his first mystery novel, historian David Krugler chose to immerse readers in the Soviet spy game as World War II draws to a close.

In “The Dead Don’t Bleed,” Krugler, a professor of history at UW-Platteville, uses his wealth of historical knowledge to craft a high-stakes thriller set in 1945 starring a young naval officer investigating a murder in Washington, D.C., and perhaps protecting the free world from nuclear destruction.

Krugler, 47, will promote his book at Mystery to Me on June 29.

**Q: You’ve written a few books before “The Dead Don’t Bleed,” all nonfiction. What drove you to write a mystery?**

**A:** I’m a big fan of fiction, a voracious reader of the genre. I always wanted to try my hand at it. In my research and teaching, I uncovered a lot of promising material. The espionage that took place during World War II, in which spies for the Soviet Union passed on secrets of the atomic bomb project, seemed like really fertile material to build a story on.

**Q: Was there one creative spark that led to your main characters?**

**A:** There are a lot of writers who spend a lot of time sketching out characters before they begin writing. Unfortunately I’m not one of those writers. I had some general ideas about my narrator and protagonist, Lt. Ellis Voight, so I sketched them out and thought about the main points of the story, but I found that I needed to set the place and create the problem before I could have a vivid sense of what people should populate this time and place.

I started with the city and the time period. As a historian that’s what I’m most comfortable with. I knew Washington historically pretty well, so I started there. And then I turned to the mechanics of espionage. Once I felt comfortable converting my historical background into a fictional one, then I was able to work on the characters.

**Q: It was called “deeply researched” in Publishers Weekly. What sort of research did you do?**



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**A:** I did a lot of research on what life was like in Washington, D.C. It was a city bursting at the seams because mobilization for the war required so many clerks and typists and stenographers on top of all the military personnel. I looked into boarding house situations, what people did in these jobs, what sort of social activities they had. Washington was working around the clock, but people still had time to have fun. Where did they go? I had to find out what nightclubs were around, where young people hung out, since a lot of the characters are young and in the prime of their lives.

**Q: Did your previous historical books inform your fiction?**

**A:** The material that proved most helpful was collected for my book “This is Only a Test: How Washington D.C. Prepared for Nuclear War” (2006). I had a lot of primary sources, a lot of historical documents left over from that book, and I mined it to get all of these details of time and place and to build atmosphere.

**Q: Do you have a favorite historical figure?**

**A:** From World War II, there’s just so many. I guess I find the Army Chief of Staff George Marshall pretty interesting. He was so important to the war effort.

**Q: What do you hope people learn from “The Dead Don’t Bleed”?**

**A:** I hope the plot, the problem of the espionage carries them along. I also hope that they come away from the book feeling like they've been transported to this really fascinating, once-in-a-lifetime time and place, Washington D.C. at the very end of World War II, just before the Germans surrendered. I just found it really fascinating to think about what it must have been like to live there in your early 20s, working a government job or in the military, contributing to the war effort in the national capital.

**Q: Will it be required reading for your classes?**

**A:** No, I won't require it for any classes. But I'll happily sign copies for students who buy the book.

If you go

**What:** David Krugler discusses "The Dead Don't Bleed" (Pegasus Books, \$25.95) with journalist Doug Moe.

**When:** 7 p.m. Wednesday

**Where:** Mystery to Me, 1863 Monroe St.

**More:** [www.mysterytomebooks.com](http://www.mysterytomebooks.com); [www.davidkrugler.com](http://www.davidkrugler.com)

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