**“DEFYING THE NAZIS: THE SHARPS’ WAR” RE-BROADCAST ON PBS, APRIL 13, TIMED TO 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD WAR II VE DAY THIS MAY**

***Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky Documentary Tells Untold Story of American Husband and Wife Who Spent Nearly Two Years on Life-Threatening Missions in Europe to Save Refugees and Dissidents from Nazi Occupation***

March 26, 2025 – **DEFYING THE NAZIS: THE SHARPS’ WAR**, the 2016 documentary directed by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky about a little-known but important mission by an American minister and his wife to rescue refugees and dissidents in Europe before and after the start of World War II, will be re-broadcast on **Sunday, April 13 at 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.** (check local listings), PBS announced today. The film will also stream FVOD on [PBS.org](https://www.pbs.org/) timed to the broadcast for a period of 4 weeks. A trailer for DEFYING THE NAZIS is available [here](https://youtu.be/OQH501USEmU).

The 90-minute film tells the story of Waitstill and Martha Sharp, a Unitarian minister and his wife from Wellesley, Massachusetts, who left their children behind in the care of their parish and boldly committed to multiple life-threatening missions in Europe. Over two dangerous years they helped to save hundreds of imperiled political dissidents and Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi occupation across Europe.

“The story of Waitstill and Martha Sharp is one of the most incredible tales of compassion, sacrifice and heroism that I have ever heard, and I was completely unaware of it until five years ago when Artemis Joukowsky first shared it with me,” said Ken Burns when the film was released in 2016.  “Nearly three years before America as a nation became involved in the Second World War, these two unassuming, so-called ‘ordinary’ Americans gave up everything they knew and loved and risked their lives to become involved in a war 4,000 miles away because they knew there were people in grave danger who needed help.”

Artemis Joukowsky, a film producer and co-founder of No Limits Media, is the grandson of Waitstill and Martha Sharp and had spent decades researching their story before turning it into a feature length documentary with Burns.

“As we are further and further removed from World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust, it becomes even more important to share these stories with young people and the larger public,” said Artemis Joukowsky. “Beyond the cloak-and-dagger suspense of my grandparents’ experience, it is a story of what individual Americans did to help those fleeing terror in Europe.”

In January of 1939, as Americans remained mostly detached from news reports of the growing refugee crisis in the escalating war in Europe, Waitstill received a call from the Rev. Everett Baker, Vice President of the American Unitarian Association, asking if they would travel to Czechoslovakia to help provide relief to people trying to escape Nazi persecution. He invited Waitstill and Martha to take part in “the first intervention against evil by the denomination to be started immediately overseas.”  The mission would involve secretly helping Jews, refugees and dissidents to escape the expanding Nazi threat in Europe. If they were discovered, they would face imprisonment, probable torture and death.  Seventeen other members of the church had declined. With two young children at home, the Sharps accepted. They expected to be gone for several months.

Instead, their mission would last almost two years. During this time, the Sharps would face harrowing encounters with Nazi police, narrowly escape arrest and watch as the Third Reich invaded Eastern Europe. Their marriage would be tested severely and the two children they left behind would be saddened by their parents’ absence. But dozens of Jewish scientists, journalists, doctors, powerful anti-Nazi activists and children would find their way to freedom and start new lives as a result of their efforts.  To recognize their heroic sacrifice, Martha and Waitstill were honored at Yad Vashem in Israel and declared “Righteous Among the Nations.”  Of the thousands so honored, there are only five Americans, including the Sharps.

**DEFYING THE NAZIS** is cinematically told through the letters and journals of the Sharps, with Tom Hanks as the voice of Waitstill and Marina Goldman as the voice of Martha. It features firsthand interviews with the now adult children whom the Sharps saved, as well as leading historians, authors and Holocaust scholars, including William Schulz, Deborah Dwork, Modecai Paldiel, Ghanda DiFiglia and Yehuda Bauer.

Funding for the film was provided by members of [The Better Angels Society](https://www.thebetterangelssociety.org/) including Jan and Rick Cohen and Jonathan and Jeannie Lavine; The Starr Foundation; The Threshold Foundation; and donations from individuals.

**DEFYING THE NAZIS: THE SHARPS' WAR** is a co-production of NO LIMITS MEDIA, Inc., and Florentine Films, in association with WETA Washington, D.C. A film by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky.  Produced by Ken Burns and Matthew Justus, Ken Burns: Executive Producer. Edited by Erik Angra.  Music by Sheldon Mirowitz.  Copyright: Farm Pond Pictures, LLC.

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**ABOUT PBS**

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