**WWI Author Receives International Praise**  
Alumnus Sheds Light on Little-Known WWI Humanitarian Effort  
by Kristin Kemp

One of the 20th century’s greatest humanitarian efforts has been understated or even omitted from most American history books about World War I. Alumnus Jeffrey Miller (BA ’75, history) is changing that.

Miller’s latest book of nonfiction, *Behind the Lines*, describes the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB), which fed more than 9 million people every day during WWI (1914-1918). CRB delegates supervised the program while behind German lines in Belgium and Northern France. Miller’s grandfather was a CRB delegate and his Belgian grandmother helped in the food relief while also working in the underground against the Germans.

“Learning of my grandparents’ experiences when I was a teenager, and then receiving their diaries, journals, letters and photos after they died, led me to research the CRB, Belgium and WWI,” said Miller, who has been an award-winning journalist and author ever since he began reporting for DU’s student newspaper, *The Clarion*.

In recognition of his work to share this important piece of Belgian history with American readers, the Belgian Embassy invited Miller to present at the 2014 Washington, D.C. memorial that honored the 100th anniversary of the CRB’s founding.

Miller devoted nearly two years to full-time research before writing the 482-page book in a marathon five-and-a-half month period, from January to June 2014. *Behind the Lines: WWI’s Little-Known Story of German Occupation, Belgian Resistance, and the Band of Yanks who Helped Save Millions from Starvation* was self-published remarkably fast in October 2014 with support from a book team that included a history professor consultant, cover designer, interior book designer, copy editor, proof reader and professional indexer.

“It was an effort that I’m still surprised I was able to do! Because of the efforts of my book team working on rolling deadlines, I had a high-quality printed book by October 2014—a feat that most traditional book publishers would not be able to recreate,” said Miller, who founded his own publishing company, JBM Publishing. He pushed for a 2014 publication date because he wanted the book to be out during the 100th year anniversary of the start of WWI and the CRB.

It was well received. Kirkus Reviews included the book as one of its Best Books of 2014, remarking that it is: “an excellent history that should catapult Miller to the top tier of popular historians.” As an American expert on the CRB, Miller has been featured as one of four historians to speak at a symposium at Iowa’s Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, which aired on American History TV. Last fall, he was one of five featured speakers at the inaugural Rocky Mountain Literary Festival.
Prior to focusing on Belgian history, Miller devoted the majority of his career to travel communication. He was the editor-in-chief for five inflight magazines and wrote his first book, *Stapleton International Airport*, in 1983 (Pruett Publishing, Boulder), which is one of the first history books about a major U.S. airport.

Self-publishing can be difficult, but Miller’s success with his latest book is less surprising. After college, Miller enrolled in DU’s Publishing Institute, a summer intensive program that teaches aspiring writers and editors about the publishing industry. Plus, during college he had already begun writing journalistically as an undergraduate reporter for *The Clarion* at DU.

“I was incredibly lucky in my freshman year to have as my assigned advisor the chairman of the history department, Professor Breck. The professors in the history department reinforced my love of the subject and taught me the basics of good historical research. And my creative writing and journalism professors exposed me to the excitement of reporting,” he said.

Miller, originally from New Jersey, never left Denver after moving here for college. He returns to campus regularly to guest lecture in history classes, most recently to describe the CRB in WW1 courses.

“The students were enthusiastic, engaged and asked highly intelligent questions. I was impressed with their observations and opinions, which reflects well not only on them, but also on their teacher,” he said of Carol Helstosky, associate professor of history.

Similar to some out-of-state students today – in 2016 more than two-thirds of undergraduate students are from out-of-state –, Miller was drawn to DU because of its proximity to the mountains.

“The duo Simon & Garfunkel told me in one of their songs to go look for America, so in the summer of 1970 I left New Jersey and spent three months hitchhiking around the country. I saw the mountains and I knew this was where I wanted to live the rest of my life,” said Miller. “DU ended up being perfect for me, most importantly because it's where I met DU classmate Susan Burdick who has been my wife for 32 years."