

Adam Presswood was a frequent guest in the stands at Busch Stadium II as a child, during the heyday of St. Louis Cardinals stars such as Ozzie Smith and Willie McGee, and he's continued making occasional visits to the team's new home since it opened in 2006.

But until last summer, Presswood hadn't set foot on the field or other parts of the stadium not usually open to fans. That changed in June when he was hired as the supervisor of stadium tours and museum operations.

"They took me out to see the field that first day, and I realized where I was," Presswood says. "There is a feeling of, 'Oh my gosh. Look at what I'm looking at.' I don't think anybody's completely immune to that."

Presswood, who earned a master's degree in history with a concentration in museums, heritage and public history from the University of Missouri–St. Louis in 2020, now tries to help others share in similar experiences.

From his office under the stands behind home plate, he helps oversee a team of tour guides who bring in visitors from throughout the Midwest – and often far beyond – to get a different view of the stadium. Guests gain more insight into the organization and its history than they can pick up from watching a game in the stands or on television. Typical tours take visitors inside the radio booth and onto the warning track and offer lessons in Cardinals lore.

In his role, Presswood also helps coordinate artifact spotlights each weekend, working with the archivist at the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum to bring out and show visitors a piece of memorabilia that doesn't usually see the light of day.

Presswood wasn't sure what kind of position he might wind up in when he first made the decision to pursue a master's degree after returning to college in his 30s to earn a bachelor's in history at Washington University in St. Louis. But his passion for history centered on topics such as the Holocaust, World War I and World War II.

Perhaps the biggest lesson faculty members such as Lara Kelland and Andrew Hurley imparted on Presswood while a graduate student at UMSL was to be adaptable – particularly as museums across the country were shuttering their doors amid the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, only months before his graduation.

"Between the emergence of the pandemic and my graduation, the entire discussion changed, and it was all about making us as willingly and capably versatile as we can be," he says. "To figure out how many hats we could possibly wear to stay in this profession."

He's taken that to heart as he's found multiple avenues to share his knowledge, working as an adjunct faculty member teaching history courses on the Holocaust and other topics at Maryville University and recording and organizing oral histories at Soldiers Memorial Military Museum.

No matter the subject, Presswood's work has focused on helping people experience parts of history and culture.

"You can't be a good public historian," Presswood says, "if you're not trying constantly to figure out ways – new and different all the time – to make the public feel connected to what you do." ■



ADAM PRESSWOOD

helps fans connect with
the St. Louis Cardinals
from a new perspective

By Steve Walentik