

Intro/welcome - Jindra

[Jonathan Flora]When World War I began in July of 1914, the United States sought to stay neutral. President Woodrow Wilson was a pacifist and Americans had ancestry on both sides of the conflict. The President urged citizens to remain impartial in thought as well as in action. The country was free to trade goods with either camp, but due to the British blockade of Germany and her Central Power partners, nearly all of that commerce was with the Allied Powers led by France, Russia, Italy and Great Britain. On all fronts the war quickly became a stalemate and descended into mechanized slaughter. High explosive artillery, machine guns, poison gas, flamethrowers and the other new weapons of the industrial age made their appearances. Airplanes, barely a decade old, turned from a vehicle of adventure to one of combat. The British Navy ruled the seas with their surface fleet, but the new German U-boats proved to be a frightening adversary that targeted military and ships containing war contraband.

These submarine attacks against our merchantmen, sabotage and spy networks within our borders, and German agents urging Mexico to invade the Southwest in order to preoccupy the American military eventually convinced President Wilson to ask Congress for a Declaration of War against Imperial Germany in a historic address.

[Bill Betten] *Peace of the World Menaced; Neutrality is Not Desirable (LA Times 4/3/1917 Excerpts)*

*In a dispassionate, but unmeasured denunciation of the course of the Imperial German Government ...the President declared that peace was no longer feasible; that armed neutrality had been ineffectual, and was likely to produce what it meant to prevent, and urged the Congress to accept the gauge of battle with all the resources of the nation.*

*The President reached the Capitol about 8:40. He entered amid deafening cheers. Never had he been greeted as he was tonight. The President spoke slowly at first, then faster than usual. His voice was clear and grew louder as he proceeded.*

*"We will not choose the path of submission" drew shouting and handclapping. No attempt was made by Speaker of the House Clark to curb it. Scarcely had the sounds died away when the President declared that a state of war existed and a second demonstration began.*

*Wave after wave of applause met the President's reference to German spies infecting the country and his suggestion of a partnership of democratic nations in the cause of peace.*

*As the President finished every person on the floor and in the galleries arose and shouted. Most of the Senators unfolded flags and waved them vigorously. As he left the Capitol he was cheered enthusiastically and another crowd awaited him at the White House gates.*

[Jonathan Flora]Despite fierce resistance from pacifists in Congress, both houses overwhelmingly voted for the War Resolution. On April 6th, 1917 Wilson signed it. However, the country was completely unprepared for the struggle. While the armies of the European powers numbered into the millions of men, the United States had a small force that even when combined with the National Guard was less than two hundred fifty thousand, with most never seeing combat. The American Air Service had few planes, all obsolete to the ones being turned out by the other warring powers. The US had never developed gas masks or chemical weapons of any kind. Tanks were a new invention spurred on by the war, and once again we were found lacking with no program even in development.

While industry started to be made over to properly get the United States on a war footing, President Wilson and the War Department selected John J. Pershing to lead the American Army in Europe. He quickly boarded a ship and sailed to Britain and France to set up the logistical network and meet his new allies. A small contingent of soldiers soon followed to "show the flag." On the home front it was quickly decided a draft would have to be instituted to raise an army of millions of men. Sensitive to the idea that people did not like being coerced into the military, the idea became to sell it as all men would "volunteer" to register at the draft office, but the government would then select whom they needed. Thus the term "Selective Service" was born. Those who did not register were referred to as "slackers," the origin for the common word of today.

The Americans were given a heroes welcome in France. Shortly after arrival Pershing and his inner circle were invited to the opera by the French government. Pershing's then Chief of Staff, James Harbord, described it to his wife.

[Michael Broderick]*As we entered...every person in the immense audience stood up... [Onstage] A very handsome woman in white with a large American flag, and a pretty French girl in the Tricolor, stood... The American sang "The Star Spangled Banner" and it made tears come to your eyes and little chills run up and down your spine. She had a superb voice, and took the high notes without a miss. She was encored time and time again, and the crowd stood and cheered to the echo. The French girl then sang "La Marseillaise" and did it beautifully. Knowing it, the audience joined in the chorus... The singing and cheering must have taken fifteen minutes, and the crowd stood and eyed the Americans in the box. It was something never to be forgotten. We are all living history. Nothing like it has ever been seen; perhaps it may never occur again. This country is nigh bled white as our enemies put it, and our coming is hailed as the coming of the Lord.*

[Jonathan Flora]On July 4th, Paris threw a Independence Day parade in America's honor. A select group of men from the First Division marched through the streets to a thunderous ovation. Harbord observed.

[Michael Broderick]*How the thousands did cheer to the echo as the head of the column passed under the arch and out into the outer court. They marched on to the tomb of Lafayette at Picpus Cemetery, perhaps three miles away, and every step brought an ovation. Girls, women, men crowded into the street...flowers were showered on them from every side; and the roar of applause rose and never died away. As far as the eye could reach the mass of French people stretched.*

[Jonathan Flora] Back in the States - the Federal Government took control of many industries from shipping to train service to try and make buildup more efficient. The shipyards of California went into high gear as many additional vessels were needed to add to the fleet sending troops and supplies to Europe. Propaganda campaigns like posters and four minute men speakers drove support for Liberty Loans and other attempts to assist the war effort. Hollywood stars and other celebrities urged people to give, prefiguring the film industry's support of the Second World War.

Regulars, National Guard, and the first draftees were training in newly built camps all throughout the country. These American soldiers were nicknamed Doughboys. Then as now the reason for this is surrounded with theories, but no one is sure why the name stuck. In the 91st Division, two regiments of Californian "doughboys" reported to duty at Camp Lewis in Washington. The Fortieth Division mostly made up of Californians also trained at Camp Kearney in San Diego, including the 160th Regiment, which came to be known as Los Angeles' Own and were based out of the old Armory in Exposition Park.

[George Cantero] *"The first day at camp I was afraid I was going to die. My next two weeks my sole fear was that I wasn't going to die. And after that I knew I would never die because I had become so hard that nothing could kill me." ---- Unknown*

[Ken Campbell]*"There was nothing but drill every day and most of the nights." Private Ruben Nelson*

[Buddy Watson]*"Nights were bitterly cold, but the sun would be scorching hot during the day. You would come back from a day on the drill field or from a 10-mile hike, perspiring profusely, and then almost freezing to death at night." Private William F. Clarke*

[Jonathan Flora]On arrival in Europe the 40th Division would be broken up as a replacement Division and its members served throughout the AEF. Meanwhile, General Pershing was busy organizing the behind the lines network for the trickle of Americans that were making the voyage across the Atlantic. He knew it would eventually turn into a flood and wanted it to be ready to accommodate the millions of men who would arrive.

Things were not going well for the Allies. Russia had successive Revolutions with the Communist Vladimir Lenin coming to power, making a separate peace with Germany, and a civil war ensuing. He also called for a world wide revolution to overthrow capitalistic governments that he blamed for the war. France who had tried a massive offensive in the Spring of 1917 had been turned back with hundreds of thousands of casualties. The

soldiers then refused to attack any longer, demanding the war be run in a more intelligent fashion. Only the Germans not being aware of these mutinies saved France from defeat. Italy was nearly overrun by the Austrians. British and French reinforcements barely prevented her collapse. Great Britain was suffering heavily from the German submarine menace, at times only weeks from being out of food. In the Baltic states Germany's ally Bulgaria pinned down an amalgamated army of various allied powers. Only in the Middle East was the Allied cause doing well as the British made progress in Arabia against the Ottoman Turks.

The British sought to put the Germans in occupied Belgium on the defense with a huge attack. What became known as the Battle of Passchendaele resulted in one of the mostly ghastly clashes of the war. Soon after it began, rains saturated the area and mobility become nearly nonexistent in the thick mud. Wounded literally were swallowed up by the earth and drowned in the sludge. The battle slogged on for over three months and half a million were killed, wounded, or missing on both sides. An account of a typical day follows.

[Danielle Baker] *The French and British Consolidate Their Gains (LA Times August 2nd 1917)*

*A torrential rainfall and the resultant turning of the battlefield into a quagmire almost halted for awhile, the great Allied offensive in Flanders. For the most part the day was spent by the British and French troops in consolidating in Tuesday's spectacular drive.*

*Generally speaking, the situation was unchanged along the British front. Several German counterattacks were repulsed during the night and movement has rendered most difficult in the rain. The German artillery today actively shelled the trenches which were wrested from them yesterday. In No Man's land, the British guns continued to pour a steady stream of shrapnel and high explosives into the position which the enemy had retired. The air squadrons on both sides were rendered helpless by the storm to assist.*

[Jonathan Flora]The US Navy reinforced the British fleet with the use of protection convoys and the submarine threat largely subsided. In late 1917, the first American units entered the line to get their practical know-how. Trench raids and artillery skirmishes soon became common place as the troops gained experience in a "quiet" sector. However, most Americans were still back in the USA training.

Meanwhile, women were not only helping on the home front, anticipating the Rosie the Riveter of the following generation, but they were getting involved in the military. Women joined the Navy and Marines in clerical and office jobs with perhaps the first Californian being Bernice Duncan Smith of Los Angeles. General Pershing asked for women volunteers to run the telephone network that was being built for his army command and supply depots. Thousands of women bilingual in French and English, volunteered with with 223 serving overseas. Of that number, nearly 40 called California home, the most of any state. These women were affectionately nicknamed "Hello Girls" and by the height of the fighting in 1918, they would connect over 150 thousand calls a day.

[Donna Colloway] *The Seattle and California girls are much softer than the others when it comes to discipline and are not used to obeying unquestioningly but they have fine material in them."* Adele Hoppock

[Jennifer Campbell] *You feel like you are a real part of the Army knowing that Pershing can't talk to Colonel House or Lloyd George unless you make the connection. ---- Louise Barbour*

[Jennifer Crandall] *Every order for an infantry advance, a barrage preparatory to the taking of a new objective, and in fact, for every troop movement, came over the 'fighting lines' as we called them --- Berthe Hunt*

[Jonathan Flora]While Asians, Native Americans, Hispanics and other races served among whites - African Americans were segregated into their own units with Caucasian officers. The vast majority served in the Services of Supply, the extensive logistical arm of the American Expeditionary Forces. The SOS, which by war's end would have over six hundred thousand troops, had a monumental challenge of creating and maintaining a line of supply over three thousand miles of ocean and then across hundreds of miles of France. About a third of the SOS was made up of African Americans.

However, two combat divisions of African Americans, the 92nd and 93rd, were formed for duty at the front. The Allies were constantly pleading for troops and so Pershing offered the four infantry regiments of the 93rd Division to both the British and French. France accepted them and under their command the soldiers of those regiments

would become among the most highly awarded of all American units with two members eventually receiving the Medal of Honor and every member of the 369th infantry receiving the Croix de Guerre. The 92nd stayed under American command and saw action in the Meuse-Argonne campaign.

[Jeff Daly]*"I heard the boom of several of our light artillery guns, and like a thousand pheasants, several shells came whizzing over our heads and burst about 40 yards in front of me. ... All up and down the front they were pouring—all calibers—and were sweeping the enemy's trench."* First Lieutenant James Reese Europe

[Al Naipo] *I am in the southern part of France...quartered in one of the best hotels in the town. There are about one hundred officers at the hotel and I the only colored one so you know I am lonesome. I was as hungry as a dog the first night that I was here but walking in the dining room seeing about one hundred white officers and no colored officers I lost my appetite - but it came back by morning and has stayed with since. I am treated fine by all the officers but most of them say I am a damn fool for wanting to get back to the front. -----* First Lieutenant James W. Alston

[Jonathan Flora]Germany decided to roll the dice and try to win before the United States flexed its power. Despite being in the war for nearly a year only a handful of American Divisions had made it overseas, but all were aware that the USA had nearly unlimited resources to draw from. Germany attacked in the Spring of 1918 with a hammer blow on the British nearly knocking them back to the sea. Then the Germans shattered the French lines and drew close to Paris. In the crisis, Pershing decided he had to throw in his men before he felt they were ready. As he told French Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch:

[Jack Kennedy] *"I have come to tell you that the American people would consider it a great honor for our troops to be engaged in the present battle. I ask you for this in their name and my own.*

*At this moment there are no other questions but of fighting. Infantry, artillery, aviation, all that we have is yours; use them as you wish. More will come, in numbers equal to the requirements."* General John J. Pershing

[Jonathan Flora]Despite compromising, Pershing insisted American troops fight together and not be amalgamated into British or French regiments. Shortly thereafter the American First Division made their initial attack at the Battle of Cantigny. Victory there was a boost of morale to the tired Allies. Americans were finally starting to show on the field in force.

The Germans were less than 50 miles from Paris and the question was whether the French would fight on if their capital was captured. Floods of refugees were on the road, as the 2nd Division, made up of army and marines, was sent to root out a enemy contingent at Belleau Wood. A French officer, Jean de Pierrefeu wrote:

[Fernando Rivero]*Swarms of Americans began to appear on the roads. They passed in interminable columns...The spectacle of this magnificent youth from overseas, these beardless children of twenty, radiating strength and health, produced a great effect. They contrasted strikingly with our regiments in their faded uniforms wasted by so many years of war, whose members thin and their sunken eyes shining with a dull fire were no more than bundles of nerves held together by a will to heroism and sacrifice. We all had the impression that we were about to see a wonderful operation of transfusion of blood. Life arrived in floods to reanimate the mangled body of a France bled white by the innumerable wounds of four years. No one said anything about these soldiers not being trained, about their having only courage. When one looked at this event in the broadest sense, one perceived the presence of gushing, untiring force that would overcome everything because of its strength.*

[Jonathan Flora]A battered French officer told the marching Americans to fall back to which "Retreat, Hell! We just got here" was the immortal reply of Capt. Lloyd W. Williams. The battle that followed became legendary to the Marine Corps.

[George Cantero]*As soon as we came out of this first band of woods in my platoon there were only six people that got across the first 75 yards. All the rest were killed, wounded, or pinned down. - Sergeant Merwin Silverthorn*

[Ken Campbell]*How those shells did maim and kill our good boys. It was worse than hell --- Private Onnie J. Cords*

[Buddy Watson]*The woods was a trackless jungle and there was Germans in trees, behind woodpiles, in ravines, hid in piles of stone. We had to advance tree to tree, looking all around to see where those shots were coming from. It was like playing Hide & Seek, only if you lost you were out for keeps. --- Corporal Joseph E. Rendinell*

[Jonathan Flora]After three weeks of savage fighting and the sections of the forest trading hands back and forth multiple times, the Second Division beat back the Germans. The understated communique said simply "Woods now U.S. Marine Corps entirely." The Marines lost more men at Belleau Wood than they had in their entire history previous to that point.

Less than a month later, the war's great pivot would occur during the Second Battle of the Marne. Germany threw everything they had to cut through the defenses at the Marne River and take Paris. In the initial stages they had success, but the American Third Division held their ground at the river's edge causing the attack to grind to a halt elsewhere. Then the great counter offensive began, spearheaded by Americans and Germany was pushed back from many of their Spring advances.

[George Cantero] *Men, caught off balance were hurled to the earth, which shook against the guns. ---Corporal Elton Mackin*

[Ken Campbell]*It is impossible to express the exhilaration experienced it seeing an attacking body of troops five times your superior in number stop in advance under your fire, waver, run for shelters, then the whole bunch disintegrate." ---Captain Jesse Woolridge*

[Buddy Watson]*America became the deciding factor in the war -- German Quartermaster General Erich Ludendorff*

[Jonathan Flora]The Allies continued to push back on the Western front. The British scored a major victory at Amiens, the "Black Day of the German Army." Germany attempted to fall behind their key defensive lines to wait till the winter and the end of the major combat season so they could regroup. Elsewhere the Central Powers were also retreating in all theaters from Italy to the Middle East. Suddenly the war that seemed like could go on forever potentially appeared to headed towards a rapid conclusion. Up until this time American Divisions had been scattered around the front line pitching in wherever they were needed most. Pershing was finally able to convince his allies to let them be concentrated in a single United States Army. American troops were landing at the rate of ten thousand a day and soon there would be over two million in Europe - completely tilting the balance of manpower. Pershing sent his troops into battle at Saint-Mihiel, routing a retreating German force. It was tremendous justification for American dreams of a unified command. In addition to the debut of the First American Army overseas, it also was the highest concentration of aviators in history to that point as 1500 allied airplanes flew sorties.

Keeping the men occupied in the theater of war and morale high was something the US government took very seriously. Drives to collect books to send overseas lasted throughout The YMCA and YWCA both provided activities like dances and concerts so the men would have entertaining things to do while out of the front line. The Salvation Army provided fresh donuts and coffee to the troops going off to battle. However, one woman more than any other dedicated herself to the mental health of our troops overseas. Elsie Janis was a musical theater star who had recently made it in the brand new Hollywood film industry. Janis would spend six months in Europe putting on improvised shows within earshot of the German guns in which she danced, sang popular tunes, told jokes, and did impersonations. She performed up to nine shows a day and was lovingly called the Sweetheart of the AEF. She pioneered the kind of shows that would be performed by Bob Hope and the USO decades later. Unlike Hope, her valuable service is forgotten now and is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale California with little fanfare. That and her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame are her only visible legacies today. Sarah Lonsert will now perform a popular song from the era that Elsie Janis may very well have sung for the troops.

((( If He Can Fight Like He Can Love )))

[Jonathan Flora]As previously mentioned, the US Navy helped the British bottle up the German presence at sea. However, the U-boats were still deadly. The Coast Guard, which was placed under the Navy for the duration of the war, suffered what is still to this day the largest loss of life in their history when the USS Tampa was torpedoed with all hands lost.

Back in the United States, President Wilson had begun to articulate his plan for the impending peace. Many felt he did this to counteract the Communist vision for the future being espoused by Vladimir Lenin. Wilson called his proposal the Fourteen Points and he believed if followed would make prospective wars all but impossible. The Fourteenth Point, the most important in his mind, was a covenant for a League of Nations that would resolve international disputes before they could descend into armed conflict. Press around the world largely hailed Wilson's vision, though in the post war peace conference Georges Clémenceau, the Prime Minister of France, was reported to have said "Mr. Wilson bores me with his Fourteen Points; why, God Almighty has only Ten!"

After the Battle of Saint-Mihiel the Americans attacked in the Meuse-Argonne sector. This was part of the final push by the allies to drive Germans out of France and Belgium. Much of the Western Front was one continuous battlefield as the hope was to grind down the German resources to resist. The area between the Meuse River and Argonne Forest was incredibly difficult for advance with it being unnaturally suited for defense. The clash turned into a punishing 47 day grind on the ground and air.

[George Cantero] *This is simply a living death. Hell can hold no terrors for me after this. We are not men anymore, just savage beasts. ----- Private Edward Davies*

[Ken Campbell] *When the machine gun started shooting at us, it made a glaring red light and the star shells the Germans shot in the air made a lot of light. I dropped to the ground and made my self as flat as I could. I didn't dare to move, not even a muscle. I waited until the star shell went out. I crawled back to the road and found a big shell hole on it. So I stayed there all by myself...The machine gun was about fifty steps away from me. I am not ashamed to say that I prayed fast." ----- Sergeant Andrew Kachik*

[Buddy Watson] *"From that point on, we began to realize what artillery really meant." -----Major Charles DuPuy*

[Jeff Daly] *Saw at least two hundred bodies....the smell of dead is terrible in the woods. ----- Private Charles Minder*

[Al Naipo] *We wasn't nowhere...but slugging through a black dream with no end ----- Dispatch Runner James Cain*

[Jonathan Flora]One of the most famous episodes in the Meuse-Argonne was the fate of the so called "Lost Battalion." A composite group of several companies of the 77th Division numbering around 600 men, including many Californians. They advanced beyond their support, were surrounded and cut off for nearly a week. The unit held out, refusing to surrender, until finally rescued. Only 194 members were able to walk out on their own, the rest being either too injured to do so, killed, captured, or missing. Among the survivors, just twenty percent were deemed fit for further combat. Captain Nelson M. Holderman from Santa Ana California received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the week. Seven other Californians would also receive the Medal of Honor during the war, two of those being from Los Angeles. Americans also took to the air, flying in Belgium, France, and Italy. America's top ace was Eddie Rickenbacker – a legendary figure from the 94th Aero Squadron. A restaurant named after that famous unit is located in Van Nuys California.

Despite trying to keep Americans under his central command, General Pershing did loan out some troops to his allies. Divisions fought under British, Belgian, French, and one regiment was sent as a public relations gesture to the Italians. The 91st was one such division. After participating in the early days of the Meuse-Argonne, it was sent to Belgium where it helped liberate several towns near the end of the war. Elsewhere Germany's allies were crumbling as Bulgaria, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria-Hungary asked for terms throughout the fall.

The main thrust of Americans and of Californians was in the Meuse-Argonne sector. In all over 1.2 million Americans participated in the battle with over 26 thousand giving their lives - it is the largest & deadliest in American history. Pressure all up and down the Western Front from the allies made Germany come to the peace table. On November 11th at 11 AM an armistice went into effect and combat ceased.

[George Cantero]As noon approached, we became conscious of an unusual quietness all around us. Firing of all kinds had almost entirely ceased. The Germans were not firing even a machine gun, though our artillery continued to send over a shell now and then. The Germans occupied the crest of the ridge along the river, and if they had had sufficient numbers, could easily have cleaned us up. After eleven o'clock, all firing ceased entirely, not a sound any where. Soon everyone was talking about it. No word had reached us yet. ---Private Clarence Richmond

[Ken Campbell]At the front our days and nights were filled with the sounds and smells of bombardment, Never were we free of it. On November 11 at at 11:00AM those sounds and vibrations suddenly stopped. The quietness that followed was awesome; you could feel it -- almost smell and taste it.--- Private Frank Groves

[Buddy Watson]"I don't think [peace] has quite sopped into our heads. What tells me more than anything that it is coming to me is a sinking feeling not unlike the hopelessness dawning of the responsibility tied to a college diploma. It's all over. What now?" ----Airman Joseph Eastman

[Jeff Daly]It was so unreal, that it disturbed you emotionally. Some of the hardest officers wept. It was so unusual that you would walk around without being shot at. ---- First Lt. Clair Groover

[Al Naipo]It was over. Thank God, it was over." Sergeant Chester E. Baker

[Jonathan Flora]Californians served all over the AEF in every job imaginable. From mechanics to veterinarians, to ambulance drivers, to artillery spotters from balloons, and everything in between. A small contingent of American troops, many from the Golden State, were sent to Russia to guard Allied supplies and watch a rail line as their Civil War descended into slaughter. Those troops stationed in Russia would be among the last to return to the United States. However, for everyone else, combat was over on Armistice Day. Though many would still succumb in the Great Spanish Flu Pandemic which had begun in the early fall.

The following day, a century ago from this very day, General Pershing sent this telegram out to be read to all Americans under his command.

[Jack Kennedy]The enemy has capitulated. It is fitting that I address myself in thanks directly to the officers and soldiers of the American Expeditionary Forces who by their heroic efforts have made possible this glorious result. Our armies, hurriedly raised and hastily trained, met a veteran enemy, and by courage, discipline and skill always defeated him. Without complaint you have endured incessant toil, privation and danger. You have seen many of your comrades make the supreme sacrifice that freedom may live. I thank you for the patience and courage with which you have endured. I congratulate you upon the splendid fruits of victory which your heroism and the blood of our gallant dead are now presenting to our nation. Your deeds will live forever on the most glorious pages of America's history."--- General John J Pershing

[Jonathan Flora]The First World War war changed the nation in more ways than can be counted. Mobilization spurred greater development in industry and a great number of people moved to the cities. For the first time in US history more people would live in urban centers than of rural areas. The country, long isolationist, now was looked to as a world power. The Nineteenth Amendment granting the right to vote to all women was passed shortly after the war largely based on their service at home and abroad. Because of all of the loans that were provided by the US government to the Allies, the US became a creditor nation instead of a debtor.

Over four and a half million Americans entered military service during the war. Of that number over one hundred and sixteen thousand would die as a result. Our state paid a high price with more than 3400 giving their lives, of that nearly 450 being from LA. In the County of Los Angeles over thirty memorials were dedicated to the war, including this very building that we sit in today. Sadly the USA's sacrifice has forgotten in the century since. It is our hope, that our program will have illuminated this blind spot in our history and honored the generation that gave so much.

[Me]Conclusion...Wreath by Mayor's Military and eterans Affairs Director Larry Vasquez...Thanks Yous