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10 speakers (Theo Mayer, RG Head, Richard Rubin, Jonathan B., Mike schuster, Ann Taylor, Ruth Edmondson, Jeff Jakeman, Susan Werbe, Catherine Achey)

[0:00:06]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War 1 Centennial news. It's about World War 1 news a 100 years ago this week and it's about World War 1 news now. News and updates about the centennial and the commemoration. Today is August 16 2017 and we have a big lineup today with six guests joining us. You're going to hear from RG head, former air force, general fighter pilot, author and historian, the storyteller and the historian Richard Rubin and Jonathan Bratten. Mike Schuster from the Great War Project blog and Taylor and Ruth Edmondson Johnson from the 100 cities 100 memorials project in Jackson, California. Jeff Jakeman, professor emeritus from Auburn University and Susan Werbe, independent scholar and artist. World War 1 Centennial news is brought to you by the US World War 1 centennial commission and the Pritzker Military Museum and library. I'm Theo Mayer, the chief technologist for the commission and your host. The following section comes from the headlines and the pages of the official bulletin, the government's Daily War Gazette, published by George Creel President Wilson's propaganda chief. We're republishing the daily issues on the centennial anniversary of their original publish dates. At ww1cc.org/bulletin. So for those of you who'd like to follow the events of a 100 years ago in the words and headlines of the Times as presented by the US government, we offer a unique and powerful way to follow the war, that changed the world. We have the link in the podcast notes. So let's jump into our way back machine and take a look at one of the themes that pervaded the official bulletin a 100 years ago. This week it's the week of August 12th, 1917 starting on the Monday of this week, the official bulletin launches a new series of articles, 30 lessons issued by the war department over five weeks written for the benefit of men selected for service. The lessons are informal in tone and designed to define the image and more importantly, the self image of the American soldier, its philosophy, attitude, behavior, morality, personal hygiene, and more. It's a manifesto for what it means to be an American soldier. Listen to a few random excerpts taken from the first six lessons published this week From lesson one, your post of honor, "other things being equal, an army made up of self reliance thinking men has a great advantage over a merely machine like army and is especially true in this present day warfare". "The American soldier fights fairly and treats even the enemy with as much humanity as his own conduct will permit. As for slaughtering and enslaving the civilian population of captured territories attacking prisoners or assaulting women, American soldiers would as little commit such crimes in times of war. As in times of peace". "America has fought always and everywhere, and defensive principles and rights, never merely for territory and power". From lesson two making good as a soldier "loyalty, obedience, and physical fitness are the three basic qualities essential to the making of a real soldier" From lesson three soldierly qualities, "intelligence, cleanliness, cheerfulness, confidence, Spirit, tenacity, strength, and self-reliance are the qualities of an American soldier". Lesson four getting ready for camp, "don't take a last fling. It may land you in the hospital and at best it will probably bring you to camp in an unfit condition to take up your duties". From lesson five first day at camp "as the men in the national army which must be ready in record breaking time. Your training will be more strenuous than that of soldiers in peace. You will find that there is plenty of hard work ahead of you. The average energetic young American will be glad of it" Lesson six cleanliness in camp. "The good soldier is almost fussy in the care of his person, his clothing, his bedding, and his other belongings. Personal cleanliness includes using only your own linen, toilet articles, cup and mess kit" and so go the first six of 31 page lessons defining what it means to be an American soldier for tens of thousands of young men, many of whom have never been away from home. One of our listeners who joined us during the live recording of this episode commented that these lessons were not only new for the recent draftees but new for the army at large. Bill Benton from California mentioned that until now the US military consisted of professional career soldiers whose reputation was considered, shall we say, a bit rough. And so this rebranding of what it means to be an American soldier is a seed change and the world view and self image of our military. And another key example of the war that changed the world. To learn how you can join the live recording of the podcast, go to one ww1cc.org/cn that's Charlie, Nancy, all lower case. Moving to our war in the sky segment. We're joined today by our RG head retired Air Force brigadier general fighter pilot, military historian and author. RG offers us a retrospective of the past six months in the great war in the sky and a preview of what's going to happen over the coming months. Welcome RG.

[0:06:26]

RG Head: Good morning.

[0:06:27]

Theo Mayer: RG. A lot has happened over the past months in the skies over Europe. How would you characterize it in overview?

[0:06:33]

RG Head: The big changes occurred in the air forces of both sides in 1917 is characterized by great growth in the number of squadrons in the French, British and German air forces. The numbers of aircraft increase from their initial quieter battles. In 1916, fighter wings were formed putting several squadrons together. As many as four, the biggest battle was called bloody April. And to give an example of the size, the British lost 245 aircraft in April alone to the German 66. [inaudible] got 20 victories all by himself. Boelcke's effect was really felt in 1917 six weeks after Boelcke was killed in the mid air collision, the emperor named the Squadron Boelcke. And so just a two became just Boelcke and [inaudible] instead of being given command of that squadron was transferred on January 11th to command the 11th Jeff's staff. And the whole German air service took such a morale from Boelcke's performance that they really dominated the first half of 1917 until the British were able to introduce, better airplanes. And the British in 1917 introduced a rigorous pilot training system that rectified many of their faults earlier in the war. But the three aircraft that were introduced in 1917 on the allied side where the British camel, the British SE5 and the French spad seven and 13, and these aircraft made a big difference in the quality of the allied air forces. Of course, the biggest event worldwide was the April six US declaration of war. And by this time the US finally began to put more money and resources into training air forces. In 1914, the US had only 11 aircraft. Air Service requested a million dollars appropriation that was reduced to 300,000 by the secretary of war. And the Congress reduced it to 250,000. 1915, we had one squadron of aircraft with 77 officers and still only 300,000 appropriated. By 1916, we'd doubled to two squadrons, still with only 65 officers, but the budget zoomed up to \$13 million. And in 1918 at the conclusion of the war, we will have 45 squadrons with almost a thousand pilots and huge resources.

[0:09:50]

Theo Mayer: So RG, we've reported a lot about the US and allied belief that overwhelming US air power could be the linchpin in hastening the end of this terrible war. How did that play out over the coming months?

[0:10:03]

RG Head: That was one of the great disappointments of all of the allies, including the United States. It turned out that by the end of 1918 after 18 months of being at war, the US did not field a single aircraft made in the United States for the air campaign. We did produce nearly 20,000 liberty engines and the growth from zero to production rate to produce 20,000 is one of the American miracles. And the liberty was used in many, many aircraft and especially between the wars World War 1 and 2. So the US flew primarily French aircraft and some British aircraft, but its own production did not get into the war on the side of aircraft itself.

[0:11:04]

Theo Mayer: So you're saying that the strategy didn't work out because we couldn't pull off the manufacturing, is that right?

[0:11:11]

RG Head: We couldn't put the manufacturing together and we couldn't ship them overseas fast enough. The US timeline for moving from peace time production to military production when there were no specifications, we had to build a whole system of research and development, production tests, evaluation and deployment and 18 months was just not enough time to do that.

[0:11:36]

Theo Mayer: So just before we wrap up, I want to talk a bit about your book on Oswald Boelcke, a little bit about him and I understand it's coming out in German. How'd that happen?

[0:11:46]

RG Head: The Boelcke book is selling very well. In fact, we only have 300 copies left. They're still available. It's in translation to German at this point. Many chapters are in first, second and third draft and that should be out in the fall and we hope to make that available to readers worldwide.

[0:12:07]

Theo Mayer: Thank you RG.

[0:12:08]

RG Head: Thanks for the opportunity to speak to your listeners.

[0:12:11]

Theo Mayer: That was RG Head, retired Air Force, Brigadier General fighter pilot, military historian and author. His latest book is a biography of Oswald Boelcke, often referred to as the father of combat aviation, RG Head. Also the curator of a comprehensive nearly day to day war in the sky timeline on the commission's website, we have links to the book, the timeline and RG Facebook page in the podcast notes. From the war in the sky to the war on the water.

We're joined by the storyteller and the Historian Richard Rubin and Jonathan Bratten. Today they're going to explore the naval reserve act, which created an unprecedented window of opportunity for women to enlist in the military.

[0:12:56]

Richard Rubin: Greetings. This is Richard Rubin Storyteller, the author of the last of the Doughboys and back over there.

[0:13:02]

Jonathan B.: And this is Jonathan Breton historian.

[0:13:06]

Richard Rubin: The Naval Reserve Act of 1916 was very long and very dense and explored in minute detail, all of the requirements for service in the United States Navy or naval reserve with one very big exception. Nowhere in there did it say that you had to be male in order to serve in the navy. And so when in early 1917 someone pointed this out to secretary of the navy, Josephus Daniels Daniels, to his great credit, let it stand. And that's how it came to be that in the course of the first World War, some 11,000 women enlisted in the United States Navy, they were all given the rank Yeoman parentheses, F for female, though they were popularly known as Yeomanetts. Kind of an unfortunate name. Sounds like something you'd buy at the movie theater concession stand. But this was a very big deal at the time. Women had never before served in uniform with rank in any branch of the American armed forces. Jonathan is looking dubious, but I'm going to just push right on through that and tell you that before the war ended, some 11,000 women had enlisted in the navy as Yeomanetts. And though only five, that is the number five, not 5,000. Only five of them went overseas during the war. They were all discharged afterward with their rank. And many of them were among the founders of American Legion posts, the very first American legion posts in the country. So this was quite an advancement for women. And I just want to say that of all the people to be a civil rights pioneer, Josephus Daniels, not what you would expect. He was a newspaper publisher from I believe North Carolina who had been an early supporter of Wilson's during his 1912 presidential run and had gotten that appointment as payback, Daniels let that gender desegregation stand, but still insistent on very rigid segregation along racial lines in the United States Navy to the point where as I write in the last of the Doughboys, sea men who were suspected of being at least partially African American, were assigned jobs below decks where they would never come into contact with sea men of European ancestry. And so not exactly a progressive and yet responsible for one of the most progressive acts of the early 20th century, I would say.

[0:15:54]

Jonathan B.: And because, the Marine Corps, even though it likes to pretend that it doesn't fall into the navy, but because of that, it did and still does fall under the branch of the Navy, the Marine Corps of all branches also allowed women to serve in uniform. Now we're only talking a couple 100. They were all serving in similar capacities.

[0:16:18]

Richard Rubin: So clerical capacity.

[0:16:19]

Jonathan B.: Correct. And they served down in Washington, DC at the naval yard.

[0:16:25]

Richard Rubin: What were they called? Do they do they have a nickname?

[0:16:29]

Jonathan B.: They, I believe, fell under the same umbrella as Yeomanettes because they served as Yeoman also F, in the navy.

[0:16:39]

Richard Rubin: This is news being broken by the way. Right here on S and h, storyteller and historian.

[0:16:45]

Jonathan B.: Lest I betray my own branch, the army did finally in 1906, begin allowing women into the army nurse corps, even though that women had been serving as nurses for the army since the time of the civil war, usually falling under some other different type of organization. But it wasn't until after the Spanish American war that women were finally allowed to serve in the army nurse corps.

[0:17:12]

Richard Rubin: They were not assigned rank. Is that correct?

[0:17:15]

Jonathan B.: That I'm not sure of.

[0:17:17]

Richard Rubin: It's my understanding that Yeomanette's were the first military personnel who were assigned official rank and were issued official uniforms of that branch of service. And you know, it wasn't all sunshine and rainbows and Unicorn for them either. As soon as the war ended, all 11,000 Yeomanetts were discharged whether they wanted out or not. And they were not given honorable discharges. They were just discharged.

[0:17:47]

Jonathan B.: Like general discharge.

[0:17:48]

Richard Rubin: And they were not given, I believe pensions due their rank and they had to agitate for those. And it took them decades to get them retroactively. And so as is so often the case, this was a matter of two steps forward, one step back. But there was no going back those two steps. And in the Second World War, I don't believe there would have been wax or waves without the service of those 11,000 Yeomanetts in the first world war. Would you disagree, Jonathan?

[0:18:21]

Jonathan B.: No, I think that they were in every true sense of the word, they were trailblazers making an absolutely profound impact just by the act of wearing a uniform of the US armed forces and walking down the street.

[0:18:39]

Theo Mayer: Thank you gentlemen. That was the storyteller, Richard Rubin and the Historian Jonathan Bratten, the storyteller and the historian is now a full hour long monthly podcast. Look for it on iTunes and Libsyn or follow the link in the podcast notes. Next, we're joined by Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and curator of the Great War project blog. When thinking about World War 1, people often focus on the western front of France and Belgium, but this world war was truly global. Today, Mike's post is an update on the Middle East where the Turks find themselves in a difficult situation. Welcome Mike.

[0:19:21]

Mike schuster: Thanks Theo. Here's our headline crisis for the Turks in the Middle East. As Middle East fronts multiply, Germans want control, British and Turks attack on Palestine. This is special to the great war project now for an update on the war in the Middle East where by this time a century ago, war had spread to two fronts and is threatening to spread even further as the Ottoman tert forces occupying much of the Arab world are facing collapse. As of August, 1917 rights historian Eugene Rogan General Edmund Allenby, commander of British forces in the Middle East was securely in command of a two front campaign to defeat the Ottomans in Syria and Palestine. He turned his attention toward the Palestine front and prepared his army for a third attempt at Gaza. Two earlier attempts to seize Gaza from the Ottoman Turks had not been entirely successful. The British are also hailing the seizure of Aqaba a port to the Red Sea. This took place just a month earlier, a century ago. It has shocked the Ottomans and they are fearful. The Arab and British victory may spread quickly to other parts of the Arabian peninsula. Earlier reports. Rogan, the Ottoman Minister of war and for Pasha convened his army commanders in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo. They come from far and wide from Mesopotamia. Now Iraq from Gullapalli in western Turkey, from the Turkish front in the Caucasus and from Syria convening such an unusual gathering of Turkish commanders is not an everyday affair. Observes Rogan. The turkers supreme commander proposes a bold new initiative. It involves the Germans. He proposes to seize Baghdad from the British who had conquered that city earlier in 1917. The German general Erich Von Falkenhayn would be in command. Falkenhayn had failed to seize Baghdad from the French the previous year, but had led a Victorious offensive in Romania. According to Rogan, the Germans commit \$5 million in gold, an enormous sum at the time to prevent Ottoman failure in the Middle East. Ottoman commanders do not welcome [inaudible] proposal. In fact, according to Rogan, the Ottoman commanders were stunned by the plan, offensive operations to recover Baghdad seemed foolhardy when the empire was threatened by attack. On so many other crucial fronts and they were appalled by the prospect of coming under German command. Relations between Germans and Turks had grown strained during the course of the war. Soldiers diaries captured the resentment among officers and the ranks of like what they saw as German arrogance. One soldier warned that Turkey was becoming a German colony and his proposal is to dispatch officers from Germany who had no knowledge of the Ottoman Empire or Turkish culture, but the Ottoman Minister of Auras not to be deterred in the summer of 1917 he assembles a force that he intends to use against the British, but where the British are putting together a force of their own that provides the perfect challenge for the combined Turkish and German troops that appears the British are assembling an army to seize Palestine. And that's our story for this week. A 100 years ago in the Great War project.

[0:22:31]

Theo Mayer: Thank you Mike. That was Mike Schuster from the Great War Project blog. For videos about World War 1. Our friends at the Great War channel on youtube have been producing great videos about the Great War since 2014. This week's new episodes include despair everywhere. The Great War. Week 159. Another episode war weariness, the Great War summary, part 10 and a hardware piece. Italian pistols of World War 1. Follow the link in the podcast notes or search for the Great War on YouTube and now we're going to move forward in time to the present. Welcome to World War 1 centennial news. Now, this part of the show is not about history, but about the centennial of the war that changed the world and how it's being commemorated today we're going to start with activities and events selected from the US National World War 1. Centennial Events Register at ww1cc.org/events where we're and recording World War 1 commemoration events from around the country. Our pick of the week is from the Smithsonian Museum of American history in Washington DC. The exhibit is called uniformed women in World War 1 and explores the active and sometimes overlooked role played by women throughout the war. Their roles were seminal both as a part of the preparedness effort before 1917 as well as uniform members of military and civilian organizations. Even if you can't make it to Washington DC, the Smithsonian offers a wonderfully detailed website featuring American women, their service and their uniforms. Take a virtual visit with the link in the podcast notes, so if you're involved with any World War 1 centennial events, you're invited to submit them to the National World War Centennial Events Register. This not only promotes them to the World War 1 Community of interest, but it also puts them into the permanent national US archival record of the centennial. Go to ww1cc.org/events. Click on the big red button and fill out the form. In our education segment. We wanted to let you know that the latest issue of the education newsletter is out, understanding the great war issue eight is all about propaganda with lesson plans, source materials, links to youtube videos and other resources. All designed to let educators create memorable learning experiences for their students. Follow the link in the podcast notes to the newsletter archive or to register to receive the publication In our newest feature speaking World War 1 where we explore today's words and phrases that were rooted in World War 1 this week. Selected word is thingamajig. Can you spell it? T-H-I- N-G thing U-A-M-Y ma.J-I-G. Jig. Thingamajig. I like that word. Although it appears to have existed prior to the war. It became cemented in common use. During the conflict, soldiers were often confronted with many new objects and parts and things, and so the word thingamajig became a quick, easy way for soldiers to refer to those new bits and pieces around them. Other words for that thing, I can't really recall what it's called. Includes the Canadian favorite. Who's your Macu? Read all about the many ways the soldiers referred to the things that they couldn't quite remember the names of by following the link in the podcast notes. Every week we're profiling one of the many amazing projects submitted to our \$200,000 matching grant giveaway to rescue ailing World War 1 memorials. The program's called a 100 cities a 100 memorials. Last week we profiled the veterans of World War 1 of the USA monument in Phoenix, Arizona. This week we're heading to Jackson, California to profile the Albert Harry Bode grave site project to tell us about it. We're joined by Ann Taylor, regent of the Sierra Amador chapter of the NSDAR the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Ruth Edmondson, Johnson honorary region and national lineage research chair, southwest. Anne and Ruth, welcome.

[0:27:12]

Ann Taylor: Thank you.

[0:27:14]

Ruth Edmondson: Thank you. It's going to be here.

[0:27:14]

Theo Mayer: You know what I love about the 100 cities 100 memorial's initiative is the range of project that's drawn. Last week, Neil Urban was with us and he works for the state of Arizona. Today you're here from Jackson, California, a beautiful little hamlet located between Yosemite and Sacramento and there's only 3,500 people in the town. Now I've read your grant application and you have a great story. Why don't you share it with us?

[0:27:40]

Ann Taylor: I'm sure will be glad to. First, I just would say that we, every November our chapter goes out and flags all of the veterans that we can find in our local Jackson Pioneer Cemetery. And one thing at the far end, there's an old grave that has sunken down. It's got broken wooden boards over it. It has a diseased tree and written every year I whispered to Albert Bode, I say, I'm so sorry about your grave but we honor you and we're so proud of your service. And then we saw that there was a special event coming where we might be able to get some additional funding to help restore the grave starting to work on this project, working on putting together a proposal for the grave. We realized that we have other World War 1 veterans in there. So while we are making a big deal of restoring Albert's grave, we've also discovered that we have in our 900 some graveyard. We already have found 51 World War 1 veterans. We have 12 other possibles that we're working. Ruth you want to talk a little bit about that?

[0:28:50]

Ruth Edmondson: Sure. We're looking for the family, the descendants of Albert Harry Bode because we would like to have them attend the ceremony when we consecrate his grave again and we looked through and we found a lot of

information online about that recently found a picture of himself with his wife and it's a lovely picture. And his grave is, if you want to have a look yourself, it's on find a grave. A picture of the stone. It's the standard military issue that we found him in many different areas. We have his wedding certificates. And we have found him in the 1940, the 1930, 1920, 1910 and-

[0:29:35]

Ann Taylor: Ruth has gone back to the Revolution.

[0:29:39]

Ruth Edmondson: We challenge revolutionaries patrons for him. Mr. Campbell, Christopher Campbell from Pennsylvania, born in New Jersey.

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Ann Taylor: So Harry is a descendant of a revolutionary war veteran as well. And so we are looking forward to including the local groups. We have a lot of associations in the area and highly patriotic county here in Amador and Calaveras counties. We're looking forward to the conversations that we're going to be having as we locate the families of these 51 plus World War 1 veterans. We're looking forward to the conversations with the various organizations that will be meeting with to a search support for holding centennial commemoration celebration after we stored grave site. And we are hoping to have additional money to make a marker with the names of all on World War 1 veterans. So it's a big deal. The Centennial Organization has really inspired our chapter. We're thrilled to be part of it.

[0:30:45]

Theo Mayer: Well, you know, that was one of the core objectives when we created the program to act as a catalyst for communities to rediscover their heritage. And it sounds like the project's doing exactly that in Jackson, California.

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Ann Taylor: We're excited about it.

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Theo Mayer: Thank you both.

[0:31:01]

Ann Taylor: You are so welcome. And we applaud the work that you're doing. We're looking forward to the Friday show.

[0:31:08]

Theo Mayer: That was Anne Taylor and Ruth Edmondson Johnson from the Sierra Amador chapter of the NSDAR telling us about Albert Bode's military plaque and headstone restoration in Jackson, California. We're going to continue to profile the submitting teams in their projects on the show over the coming months. Learn more about the 100 cities 100 memorial's program@wwwcc.org/100memorials or follow the link in the podcast notes. Welcome to our segment on updates from the states starting with some exciting news from our friends in the Aloha state. Hawaii's Governor David Ige has signed a letter pledging the state support to Hawaii's World War 1 centennial task force. This is a great group of people that have been working diligently over the past several years to present and expose Hawaii's role in the war that changed the world. Visit their website at wwwcc.org/Hawaii all lower case or follow the link in the podcast notes to read the story about this good news. Next from the heart of Dixie, the state of Alabama. We're going to be joined by Jeff Jakeman, professor of History Emeritus at Auburn University to talk about a unique World War 1 aviator, who was also quite an accomplished architect and artist Penrose Vast Stout. Welcome Jeff.

[0:32:35]

Jeff Jakeman: Hello Theo. It's good to be with you.

[0:32:37]

Theo Mayer: Jeff, what can you tell us about Penrose?

[0:32:41]

Jeff Jakeman: Well, Penrose Vast Stout where he was born in Montgomery in 1887. He was in the first class of architecture students at Auburn University, graduated in 1909. And by 1917 he was a practicing architect in Bronxville New York, a suburb of New York City, even before the United States declared war. He was attempting to join the air service and he eventually was selected despite his advanced age. He was 30 years old when he applied, trained for almost a year. And by the end of August, 1918 found himself as a member of the 27th aero squadron. That's one of four squadrons that made up the well known first pursuit group that included the likes of a Frank Luke and Eddie

Rickenbacker, both the recipients of the medal of honor. His combat service didn't last that long. By the end of September, he had been shot down and survived the attack and was in convalescent hospital when the armistice was declared in November. He was unlike many of his comrades. As I mentioned, he was quite advanced in age by the time he was in combat, he was 31 years old, substantially older than most other pilots. Whose average age was about 20. He was a southerner who had migrated to the north for economic opportunity and he left the well-established career to volunteer for the air service and most important, he was a talented artist who documented his service with letters and drawings. His drawings, appear embedded in the text of his letters. And he also compiled a fairly large sketch book documenting his service, his training, French countryside. It's quite an impressive piece of art. And the family, a year or two ago, donated all of his papers to the Alabama Department of Archives and history where they're available online as part of the archives digital history collection.

[0:34:51]

Theo Mayer: So Jeff, could you tell us about Van Stout's exhibit at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts?

[0:34:57]

Jeff Jakeman: Yes, absolutely. This was a collaborative effort between the Department of Archives and history and the Montgomery Museum of fine arts. The exhibit opened several weeks ago and will be running through September 10th. For those of you that are close enough to get to Montgomery, it's a wonderful introduction to Stout's career as a combat aviator and his artwork documenting the time he served as a pilot. Two images. If I can speak about two of them that are, I think they're all wonderful but two struck me. One, he was a squatter inmate of the famous ace, the balloon buster, Frank Luke. Several of his letters contain descriptions of Luke and missions. He flew with Luke and there is a two portraits of Luke. One is embedded in the text of the letter, a very small little sketch and then a large or more detailed sketch of Frank Luke. The second image that strikes me as is perhaps the most important sketch in the collection is a sketch of an aerial view of the opening artillery barrage before the onset of them use are gone offensive. Many airman who flew in that offensive have provided verbal descriptions of that horrific scene. But I don't know of any other, visual depiction other than a Stout's depiction.

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Theo Mayer: Jeff, thank you so much for joining us.

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Jeff Jakeman: Oh, it's been a pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

[0:36:36]

Theo Mayer: That was professor Jeff Jakeman telling us about aviator architect artists and alumni of Auburn University Penrose Vast Stout and the exhibit sketching. This guy's Penrose Vast Stout, which runs through September 10th at Montgomery's Museum of fine arts. You can learn more by following the link in the podcast notes. It's time for our articles and posts segments with new posts from the website at ww1cc.org in the news section, you'll find an article that parallels current events with news from 99 years ago and the subject is eclipses. In 1918 newspapers across America tucked in among the reports about US regimens fighting overseas and war bond propaganda were reports about a total eclipse casting the moon's shadow over the country. Just as in 2017, in 1918 the path of the eclipse started south of Japan when across the Pacific Ocean and then across the United States. And just as in 2017 Americans were avidly interested in the amazing cosmic phenomena. Read more about it by visiting ww1cc.org/news or following the link in the podcast notes. For our spotlight on the media section. We're being joined by Susan Werbe, an independent scholar, an artist with a focus on the social and cultural history of World War 1. She's the creator and executive producer of the Great War theater project. Messengers of a bitter truth recently performed in Boston, New York and Letchworth in the United Kingdom. Susan wrote about this project in a recent article in our write blog and she's here with us today to tell us more about it and about another project she's been working on. Welcome Susan.

[0:38:31]

Susan Werbe: Thank you, Theo. It's a pleasure to be here.

[0:38:34]

Theo Mayer: Susan, could you give our listeners an idea of what your theater project messengers of a bitter truth is all about?

[0:38:40]

Susan Werbe: Absolutely. The Great War Theater project was a multimedia theater piece that involved spoken word, commissioned contemporary music and a video and the video comprised archival film footage paintings from World War 1 that were produced on the battlefield and on the home front and contemporary footage that we also filmed at that time. It was a 25 minute piece and it was originally envisioned as a companion piece for high school students

who were studying World War 1 certainly in the United States and we were very fortunate as it turned out to be able to perform it in Letchworth Garden City in the United Kingdom as well with and for high school students. It started with my own interest in the writings of the first world war. Paul's Hustle in his seminal work, the great war in modern memory called World War 1, the most literary of all wars. And when I read that book back in the 1970s I was so struck with that and so struck with the voices in the case of Fussell's book, the men's voices, the young men's voices, whether it was poetry, whether it was diaries, journals, letters, all of which came out of very personal experiences and really gave the reader the opportunity to connect with these men and what they had experienced in this cataclysmic event. And so as I continued to read and I continued to research my interest grew and grew, and by a chance remark by the head of the dance department at the Boston Arts Academy who said, Oh, I'm so interested in the first world war. I'd love to choreograph a piece about it. And that started me off. And I did research both in the United Kingdom and here in the US I looked at primary source material, secondary source material. And one extraordinary experience was an experience I had at the bird collection of English and American literature at the New York Public Library on 42nd street in Manhattan. And I sat there in 2012 holding a letter that Isaac Rosenberg British war poet who was killed in the first world war, a letter that he had written to Edward Marsh, the private secretary of Winston Churchill. And I was holding this letter that was almost 100 years old. And it was written when Isaac Rosenberg was in the trenches, and it was such a powerful experience for me to read about what this young man in his mid twenties was going through. So to be able to bring that experience again, back to young people who were studying the war, who were studying the, the Mehta, if you will, and the battles and the number of people involved, the horrific number of people killed. But to bring it down to an individual experience seemed to me to create a theater piece that would deepen and enrich the academic experiences that high school students were having was a real opportunity to look at this history through the lens of art. So it's theater, it's media, it's music, it's movement. And that was combined in this 25 minute piece.

[0:42:32]

Theo Mayer: Now, Susan, your newest project isn't theater. It's a music project called letters that you will not get. What inspired this one?

[0:42:40]

Susan Werbe: Again, I did so much research connected to the theater project and it was really important to me to have both men and women's voices represented and men and women's experiences represented in the theater piece. And I discovered that over the past several decades, there's been a wealth of material that has come to the fore again of women's poetry, women's paintings, women's writing letters, journals, diaries, and I wanted to think about how to have women have their own voice. And I will say, much as I admired Paul Fussell's work, he made it very clear in his work that he thought it was a man's story for men to tell. And I would argue that it's a human story for human beings to tell. I had the opportunity to put together with a theater director in New York, a Libretto of women's writings all from the first world war. Again, poetry, diaries, letters, journals, and again as in the theater project from both sides of the conflict. So we have German women, we have American women, French women, British women.

[0:44:03]

Theo Mayer: So I know you haven't recorded the music for, four letters you will not get at this time, but you do have the Libretto. Can you give us a sample?

[0:44:09]

Susan Werbe: Absolutely. I would be delighted to. One thing I would like to read, two very short excerpts and what they do for me is really illustrate two very different responses to losing a son in the first world war. The first is lady Violet Sesal who was a British aristocrat who's only child. George went missing in the first two months of the war. And this is an excerpt from a book that her quotes contained in. Violet passed on news from George. He said that up to date, it had all been the most glorious fun. And then the next excerpt is from [inaudible] Covitz, the visual artists, the German visual artist. "Where are my children now? What is left to their mother? One boy to the right, one boy to the left, my right son and my left son, as they called themselves where are my children now, one dead and one's so far away". What's so interesting to me, the juxtaposition of these two women, that Violet Sesal lost her only child in this war and she memorialized him by giving to his high school a rifle range and [inaudible] Covitz memorialized her son and the trauma and loss of war by creating antiwar art for the rest of her life. She was a sculptor. She did woodcuts. She did lithographs works, which are extraordinarily powerful. So that's just a taste of two aspects of the Libretto.

[0:46:00]

Theo Mayer: Thank you so much, Susan.

[0:46:01]

Susan Werbe: Theo. It's my pleasure. Thank you for having me.

[0:46:04]

Theo Mayer: That was Susan Werbe, an independent scholar and creative artist with a focus on the social and cultural history of World War 1. Learn more about Susan's work and research by following the links in the podcast notes. And that brings us to the buzz, the centennial of World War 1 this week, and social media with Catherine Achey. Catherine, what do you have for us this week?

[0:46:27]

Catherine Achey: Hi Theo. Today I wanted to highlight a great new initiative from the US citizenship and immigration service that we shared on Facebook. This past week. They're commemorating the World War 1 centennial with new webpages highlighting the history of Immigration and naturalization and their impact on the US during the war, America entered the war during a swell of immigration between 1901 and 1920 some 14.5 million immigrants arrived on our shores. As with every wave of immigration, some Americans welcomed the new immigrants and some called for increased restrictions. Foreign born soldiers composed over 18% of the US army during World War 1. Almost one in five draftees was born overseas in response to calls for immigration restriction and to flaring ethnic and cultural tensions. Many recent immigrants volunteered to serve to demonstrate their patriotism for their new country. Several units became renowned for their many immigrant members. The 77th infantry division which was nicknamed the melting pot division was one unit famed for its diversity. They're shoulder patch bears. To this day, the Statue of Liberty and gold on a field of blue. Read more about the service of immigrants and foreign born Americans in World War 1 and the role of the US CIS during the conflict by following the links in the podcast notes. That's it this week from the buzz.

[0:47:49]

Theo Mayer: Thank you Catherine and that's also it for a World War 1 centennial news for this week. In closing, we want to thank our guests, RG Head, author and historian giving us a retrospective on the war in the sky, the storyteller and the historian Richard Ruben and Jonathan Bratten talking to us about the Naval Reserve Act. Mike Schuster from the Great War project blog highlighting the situation in the Middle East 100 years ago. Ann Taylor and Ruth Edmondson Johnson from the 100 cities 100 memorial's project in Jackson, California. Jeff Jakeman, professor Emeritus from Auburn University talking to us about aviator architect and artist Penrose Vest Stout, Susan Werbe, independent scholar and artist telling us about her projects, highlighting the voice of the people, both men and women during the war. Catherine Achey, the commission's social media director, and also the line producer for the show. And I'm Theo Mayer, your host, the U S World War 1 centennial commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate and educate about World War 1. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War 1 World War 1 centennial news is a part of that. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago into today's classrooms, we're helping to restore world war 1 memorials in communities of all sizes across the country. And of course, we're building America's National World War 1 memorial in Washington DC. If you like the work that we're doing, please support it with a tax deductible donation at ww1cc.org/donate all lower case. Or if you're on a smartphone, text the word ww1 to 41444. That's the letters ww and the number one text it to 41444 you can donate any amount and of course any amount is appreciated. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker military museum and library for their support. The podcast can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn on iTunes and Google play at ww1 centennial News, our Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ ww1cc and we're on Facebook at ww1 centennial, thanks for joining us. And don't forget to share the stories that you're hearing here with someone about the war, the change the world. Hey, Halsy could you pass me that thingamajig. Thanks.

[0:51:27]