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7 speakers (Theo Mayer, Dr. Lengel, Mike Schuster, Dr. Zeiger, Dr. Cobbs, Brian McCarthy, Katherine Akey)

[0:00:09]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 62. It's about World War I then, what was happening 100 years ago this week, and it's about World War I now, news and updates about the centennial and the commemoration. Today is March 9th, 2018, and our guests for this week include Dr. Edward Lengel, exploring Alvin York's crisis of conscience as he entered the military. Mike Schuster from the Great War Project blog, with an update on German war activities in May. Dr. Susan Zeiger, telling us about the women workers of the American Expeditionary Forces. Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs, with a story of the Hello Girls. Brian McCarthy, sharing the 100 Cities 100 Memorials project from Worcester, Massachusetts. Katherine Akey, with the World War I commemoration in social media. World War I Centennial News is a weekly podcast brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and the Starr Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission, and your host. Welcome to the show. This week, several stories came up that pointed us to the US Army Signal Corps. They're not just the guys who made the movies and took the pictures. Actually, they have a heritage of being the new tech gurus. Taking initial responsibility for classic ideas, later managed by other organizations, including military intelligence, weather forecasting, and especially aviation. That's because it all started with a visionary guy named Albert James Myer. Myer started as a medical officer in Texas before the Civil War and ended up a brigadier general with the title of First Chief Signal Officer and a legacy as the father of the US Army Signal Corps. Early on, Myer came up with a flag waving scheme to send messages during combat, which the army adopted in 1860, one year before the Civil War started. It's highfalutin' name was aerial telegraphy, but everybody called it wig-wag. During the Civil War, wig-wag was used on the battle field to direct artillery fire. Myer started to experiment with balloons, electric telegraph, and other kinds of new tech. Because he fostered such an innovation culture in the Signal Corps, 10 years later in 1870 when the US Congress decided to mandate a National Weather Service, they tasked Myer and the Signal Corps to create it. Which they did, to great international acclaim. Myer died a decade later in 1880, and his lab/school in Arlington, Virginia was ultimately renamed Fort Myer to honor the father of the US Signal Corps. By the turn of the century, the US Army Signal Corps had taken on a leadership role. Not just with visual signaling, but also with the telegraph, telephone, cable communications, meteorology, combat photography, and had even sprouted an aeronautical and aviation section. Nearly a decade before American forces engaged the enemy in Europe, the Wright Brothers made test flights of the Army's first airplane, built to the Signal Corps' specifications. Tests appropriately performed at Fort Myer. Army aviation stayed with the Signal Corp until May of 1918, when the aviation section of the Signal Corps is transformed by President Wilson's executive order into the Army Air Service, the forerunner of the United States Air Force. Now with that as a setup, let's jump into our centennial time machine, which the Signal Corps did not develop, and roll back 100 years to learn what the US Army Signal Corps was during the war that changed the world. We're back in 1918, and we're going to focus on two key things the Signal Corps does during World War I, communication and documentation. And always with an eye on innovation, because with battles and offenses no longer organized neatly into line of sight groups, innovation is required to communicate and coordinate. The field telephone is one of those basic elements. The challenge of wired electric connections between two telephone devices is that you need the wire, which tends to get blown up, trampled, cut, damaged, and sometimes tapped into by the enemy in the field. Because the telephone in 1918 is a point to point connection, that means that in order to reconnect the field telephone from one place to another, you need to physically re-patch the connection. A function performed by a telephone operator. The Hello Girls who go to France to do that job are sworn into the US Army Signal Corps as soldiers. Yeah, and then at the end of the war, they're just let go and not given honorable discharges, so they don't qualify for veteran benefits. Now, we have a whole section for you with Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs, the author of the book *The Hello Girls*, later in the show. Okay, then there's wireless communication. The Signal Corps teams up with private industry to advance the radio transmission and reception, and create new devices that are smaller, more practical, and more capable. Of course the challenge with radio communications is that everyone can receive it, creating a serious security challenge, and a great intelligence opportunity, both of which the Signal Corps addresses. So when the United States enters the war in early 1917, its own capacity for radio intelligence is significantly underdeveloped. But with the help of their British and French allies and the dedicated work of over 500 men, the Signal Corps' radio section collects huge amounts of radio and other communications traffic to help the American Expeditionary Forces stay one step ahead of their enemy. This area of activity is known as SIGINT, or Signal Intelligence. One battle in which the victory is particularly credited to the work of the radio section is the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in September of 1918, as American operators are able to discover the location of several German command posts and warn the Army of a German counter offensive several hours in advance. But of course, not everything Signal Corps is tech. They also take 600 carrier pigeons to France, including a pigeon named Cher Ami, Dear Friend, who's credited with a stalwart, heroic wounded delivery of a message credited for saving 194 US soldiers for the 77th Infantry Division, the famed Lost Battalion. Then there's the documentation role of the US Army Signal Corps. According to an article by Audrey

Amidon, the Signal Corps pays relatively little attention to photography until July 1917, when they're assigned the responsibility for obtaining photographic coverage of America's participation in World War I. That means both moving and still imagery. The purpose is for propaganda, scientific, identification, and military constance purposes. But primarily, it's for the production of a pictorial history of the war. The photographic section of the Signal Corps manages to build up quite a large and efficient organization, beginning with 25 men in August of 1917. The photographic section attached to the AF reaches a strength of 92 officers and 498 men by November 1918. They defined a photographic unit as one motion picture cameraman and one still photographer plus assistants. So, they're capturing stills and motion picture simultaneously at each location. Each division ... Now remember from last week that's a force of around 40,000 American soldiers, gets a photographic unit. They also have units that cover headquarters, sea transport, service and supply, Red Cross and so forth. Between the AEF footage, domestic training documentation, and special projects that include training films for soldiers and pilots, the US Army Signal Corps shoots nearly one million feet of film to document the war that changed the world. This week, 100 years ago, the war in the sky preparations were in full view in The Official Bulletin, the government's daily war gazette, published by George Creel, and as we've told you before, the commission republishes each issue of The Official Bulletin on the centennial of its original publication date. This is a great primary source of information about World War I that you're invited to enjoy at ww1cc.org/bulletin. We selected two articles from this week's issues that illustrate the Signal Corps' role in the war in the sky. The first article is about seeing the foundation of a new US aerospace industry forming. Dateline, March 5, 1918. The article headline reads, "10,000 skilled men needed by the aviation section." The article goes on to read, "The US Army Signal Corps has authorized the call for 10,000 machinists, mechanics, and other skilled workers needed by the aviation section of the Signal Corps. Even though the strength of that service is already 100 times what it was in April of last year, it is now understood that nearly 98 of every 100 men in the service need to be highly skilled. Airplane work has been wholly new and unfamiliar to American mechanics. It's been necessary for both officers and men to learn largely by experience." The article continues with a comment by War Secretary Baker about keeping those planes flying in the field. "A great problem now remaining is to secure the thousands of skilled mechanics, engine men, motor repairmen, wood and metal workers needed to keep the planes always in perfect condition. This great engineering and mechanical force at the airdromes, flying fields, and repair depots, both here, and behind the lines in France is a vital industrial link in the chain of air supremacy." The next day, and article illustrates the foundation of modern cartography, a technology we now enjoy casually and daily with applications like Google Maps. Dateline, March 5, 1918. The article headline reads, "1,000 trained photographers wanted at once for Signal Corps aero plane and ground duty." The article reads, "1,000 men trained in photographic work are needed by the Signal Corps before March 10. These men are to be instructed at the new school for aerial photography just opened at Rochester, New York, preparatory to going overseas. This ground force for American aerial photography requires three types of men. One, laboratory and dark room experts, especially fast news photographers familiar with developing, printing, enlarging, retouching, and finishing pantachromatic photography. Men who can take a plate from the airmen and hand over, 10 minutes later, a finished enlargement to the staff officers. These men will work in motor lorries as close to the front and staff as possible. "Two, men able to keep the whole delicate equipment in good condition, such as cameras and optical constructions, plus repairmen, lens experts, cabinet makers, instrument makers and so forth. Three, men to fit the finished prints into their proper places in the photographic reproduction of the German front, to work out the information disclosed, and to keep the whole map a living, hour to hour story of what the Germans are doing. Many men not physically fit for line service are eligible for this so-called limited military service as defective vision corrected by lenses and other minor physical disabilities are waived. Owing to the shortness of time, it is requested that only men fully qualified apply for this service." That's a great closing line. As this article was published on May 5th, and they want 1,000 men by May 10th. As the Army Signal Corps plays out its role in the war in the sky, 100 years ago this week. For the war on the ground, here's this week's segment of America Emerges, Military Stories from World War I with Dr. Edward Lengel. Ed, this week, your story is about one of the best known soldier heroes of World War I, and his truly profound crisis of conscience in entering his military service. Who was he, and what's his story?

[0:13:52]

Dr. Lengel: Sometimes the act of one man can change everything, and 100 years ago this month in March of 1918, Alvin York made a decision that changed his life. York was from upcountry Fentress County Tennessee, along the Tennessee/Kentucky border, a very beautiful region, but also, in these times, a very isolated part of the country. The settlers up there were Scotch-Irish folks. They were dirt poor farmers who worked hard and lived tough lives. York had had a tough upbringing. He had experienced the problems of alcoholism, and violence, and a couple of years before the war, he converted to a Bible believing Christian church, and changed his life, but he wanted to follow this new faith as carefully and as truly as he possibly could. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, and Alvin York learned that he had been drafted, it created a crisis of conscience for him, because he couldn't make up his mind whether God would permit him to fight in a war and potentially to kill his fellow man. He sought conscientious objector status, but he was denied. He was assigned in February of 1918 to go as a private to Camp Gordon, Georgia for service with the 82nd All-American Division, which was a draftee division. The name was ironic, because although it was made up of men originally recruited from the southern states, shortly before it went to Europe, and infusion of men from major cities on the east coast of the United States who were, themselves, the immigrants, or

sons of immigrants from places like Russia and Italy and Poland and Germany entered the division, and some of these men were not even naturalized American citizens, so it was a very unusual formation, and York enjoyed getting to know these men. York's officers saw him as the ideal soldier. He was obedient. He understood the military life. He was tough. He was strong, and he was a crack shot who was used to working with a rifle, but he just couldn't make up his mind whether he could agree to go off and fight. If indeed he refused to go off and fight, he might well have been jailed, and his reputation and his future would've been ruined. Alvin York in March of 1918 goes to his officers, a Captain ECB Danforth, and a Major Edward Buxton, to discuss with them this whole question of whether it's right to fight. They were Christians like him, and they read and they discussed the Bible, and finally, his captain, Danforth, asked York, "Are you willing to fight?" York said, "I'll fight if I have to, but I wish you would tell me what this war is about." Danforth explained as best he could, as did Buxton, but it still wasn't quite enough for York. York went back to the barracks in Camp Gordon. He had trouble getting along with some of his fellow soldiers. Even though they were draftees, they felt it was their duty to fight. They were fed up with York for being hesitant about whether he would fight. One of his erstwhile friends, who's a former Irish bartender, even threatened to kill York if he kept talking about not wanting to fight. On March 21st, 1918, which is ironically the same day the Germans launched the first of their major offenses on the western front, Alvin York gets a 10 day leave of absence. He gets this leave so that he can go home to east Tennessee, go up in the mountains, talk with his family, talk with his minister, and pray and try to figure out what he wants to do. We know somewhere up in those mountains, he came to a decision. He later called it a peace which passeth all understanding that he would indeed go to war and fight. This would certainly change his life. It would change the future of the United States military, and it would have a huge impact in a battle in the Argonne Forest in October of 1918, where Alvin York would later perform an act of valor for which he would receive the Medal of Honor.

[0:18:27]

Theo Mayer: Thank you, Ed. Before we close, I have to ask you something that struck me when hearing this account. When Alvin York asked his captain and his battalion commander, "I wish you could tell me what this war is about," I know we don't have a record of what they actually said, but as a historian, how might these military guys have responded? What is the common wisdom and answer to a question like that at the time?

[0:18:50]

Dr. Lengel: Well, one thing we know that would not have worked would be to try to talk with York about unrestricted submarine warfare. That wouldn't have meant anything to them. Although, as you say, we don't quite know what his captain did say, it's pretty certain he would have talked about the importance of democracy and the importance of freedom, and how the United States had entered this war to try to help ensure that democracy would flourish in the world in the future, and that American freedoms would be protected. They also probably would've said that ultimately, you're fighting for your own family, and you're fighting for your own home. To the people of east Tennessee, for whom freedom is really so important, it's wrapped up in their heritage, I think that would've resonated with Alvin York.

[0:19:37]

Theo Mayer: Ed, thank you very much. What are you going to talk about next week?

[0:19:41]

Dr. Lengel: I will be talking about the first American National Guard Division to reach active service on the western front, and that was the 26th Yankee Division that went onto the western front about this time 100 years ago, and they encountered some very bizarre rats that actually proved a help to them on the front lines.

[0:20:07]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Edward Lengel is an American military historian, author, and our segment host for America Emerges, Military Stories from World War I. There are links in the podcast notes to Ed's post and his website as an author. Now, onto the Great War Project with Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project Blog. Mike, your post this week is about the pre-spring offensive actions in Europe. On the front, and reaching all the way back into the allied capitals, it really feels like there's an undercurrent of desperation, and to me, desperation on all sides. Is that the theme here?

[0:20:47]

Mike Schuster: I think it is, Theo. The headline reads, "Germany now dominates on western front. German air attacks increasingly deadly. For allies, it's victory or collapse." This is special to the Great War Project. This week, a century ago, the Germans let loose with one of their most effective air attacks of the war. Historian Martin Gilbert writes, "In the first week of March 1918, Germany and Austria launched four bombing runs. Austrian aircraft bombed Venice, Padua, and two other Italian towns, but they'd lose a third of their planes. Three days later, German giant bombers attacked London," Gilbert reports. "A single bomb killed 12 people in a residential neighborhood. 400 homes are damaged. Then, German planes dropped more than 90 bombs on Paris," writes Gilbert. "Without panic, but with much fear, 200,000 Parisians left the capital by rail for the countryside. Three days later, a German airship drops its

bombs on the Italian naval base and steel plant at Naples. German forces occupy Odessa and Ukraine. During these days, everyone is waiting anxiously for offensives on both sides. "On March 9th, the Germans begin with a series of bombardments in the preliminary phase of what was to be their largest and most essential gamble of the war, a massive offensive against the British and French forces on the western front. Hitherto the main military initiatives on the western front," observed Gilbert, "had been taken by the allied powers. On the sum, , each of these offensives had broken themselves against superior German fortifications and defense lines. Now, it was the Germans trying to break through the line of the trenches," Gilbert writes. "They had one overriding concern, that their victory should be secured before the mass of Americans reached the war zone. The German preliminary bombardment of March 9th starts with a gas attack, half a million mustard gas and phosgene shells were fired, 1,000 tons of gas in all." Reports historian Gilbert, "The use of gas on the battle fronts led to many individual cases of panic, fear, malingering, and desertion. In the German Army, this led to the establishment of a rule in operation throughout the German medical services from the end of 1917 that alleged cases of gas poisoning and malingerers who show no definite symptoms are retained for 24 to 48 hours for observation in medication inspection rooms, with a view to returning them to their units, if possible. They were not to be admitted to local field hospitals or gas clearing stations," Gilbert reports. "Then, the British counter. They unleash a preemptive strike, firing off 85 tons of phosgene gas, killing some 250 Germans. Finally, on March 21st, the Germans launched their great offensive. 40 German divisions were not transferred from the eastern to the western front," writes historian Norman Stone. "This gave Germany superiority at least until the Americans arrive." Observes historian Gilbert, "Were it to succeed, Germany could win the war in the west on the battlefield." Writes Stone, "The war economic position of Germany was now such that her alternatives were outright victory, or outright collapse. This moment, the allies morale was lower than at any other point in the war." That's the news this week from the Great War Project.

[0:24:14]

Theo Mayer: Mike Schuster from the Great War Project Blog. We love that you listen to us, but if you'd like to watch some videos about World War I, go see our friends at the Great War Channel on YouTube. This week's new videos include, Ludendorff's Window of Opportunity, and from Caporetto to Cambrai, a Summary, and finally, Lenin & Trotsky, Their Rise to Power. To see these videos, search for The Great War on YouTube, or follow the link in the podcast notes. Okay. It's time to fast forward back to the present with World War I Centennial News Now. This is the part of the podcast where we explore what's happening now, to commemorate the centennial of the war that changed the world. This week, in Remembering Veterans, and for Women's History Month, we're continuing our focus on women in World War I. We're joined by Dr. Susan Zeiger, an author and member of the commission's historical advisory board. She's also the program director at Primary Source, a nonprofit advancing global and cultural learning in schools. She's a professor emeritus of history at Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts, and the author of *In Uncle Sam's Service, Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Forces, 1917 to 1919*. Welcome, Dr. Zeiger.

[0:25:53]

Dr. Zeiger: Thank you, Theo. I'm so glad to be here. It's really an honor to be on the show. I've been enjoying the podcasts.

[0:25:59]

Theo Mayer: Thank you. Okay, Dr. Zeiger, this phenomenon that you describe in your book, thousands of women taking on responsibilities usually reserved for men, seems pretty groundbreaking in all sorts of ways. What motivated thousands of American women to volunteer for overseas service during World War I?

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Dr. Zeiger: Well, about 16,000 US women served overseas in official roles with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. Many women were truly eager to serve, and specifically to serve overseas where they felt the real war was going on, was happening, and so patriotic service, patriotism was a major factor. They wanted to contribute their skills and their knowledge and their work experience to an allied victory. They wanted to prove themselves, and they wanted to test themselves in this national crisis, but it was also an adventure for women in many ways, an opportunity I think many of them saw it for personal freedom, and mobility for working women who filled up the ranks of this group, and women professionals who came from small towns and from small and big cities all across the country. They saw it as a chance to break free of some of the gender restrictions that still definitely governed women's lives. There was the ... I call it a two sided pull, the desire to serve the nation, and also for themselves, too, to have this opportunity and this experience. I would note, too, that these are some of the same working women who were marching for full citizenship for women in the same period, part of that same community. The connection to suffrage should be noted as well.

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Theo Mayer: I was going to mention, this was in the middle of the suffrage movement, so what kind of resistance did these women encounter, both at home on the job, and as they went off to work?

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Dr. Zeiger: To answer your question, I just need to go back for a moment to look at the government side of the equation, because we didn't speak about that yet. The majority of national leaders just basically thought women belonged at home. Defending the nation was men's work, and women's work was to keep the home fires burning. Of course, the British had already very successfully enlisted women in female military corps, and that option was considered in the United States too, but Secretary of War, Newton Baker, had something like an 'over my dead body' sort of response to that question. I found a War Department memo that I love, that weighed in on this question when a bill came up in the house, and it said, "It would be unwise, highly undesirable, and exceedingly ill advised to enlist women." I thought that triple negative was an interesting construction. There was a lot of opposition to women's service. It was captured and preserved in newspaper articles, cartoons and sermons from church pulpits. The worry that enlisting women would emasculate men and heard with that, the idea that war would masculinize women, so there was lots of nervous humor about women wearing pants in the family, and that being inappropriate, and you see also that kind of discomfort and resistance among soldiers too. In the Stars and Stripes, there are some funny, but very sexist cartoons about bossy, castrating nurses, and completely fabricated war front rumors that women workers were getting pregnant and being sent home, and there was no evidence at all that that was the case. That resistance took those forms. It also took the form of workplace hostility and tension. There were many instances of insubordination where men orderlies in hospitals would refuse to take orders from a nurse, and there were examples of sexual harassment as well that are worth noting. All of that, I was able to document in my book, but I still think we need to take a balanced view of this too. There was also a lot of patriotic pride in what women were doing, positive articles about their work, and grudging respect, gratitude for the women who saved lives in the hospitals and gratitude for the canteen workers, so over time, men and women did figure out how to work together in these extreme and unusual circumstances. World War I, I would say, was very much an experiment, or a first draft, so to speak. All the problems came up during the war, but none of them were resolved. There really wasn't much political will to do better than that. Women still had no political voice nationally. This was before women had full citizenship and the vote, so really, in many ways, a lot of these problems all got shelved for World War II, and so it was undefinitive in that sense, but it was a stepping stone. It was a first recognition, a first step, and a recognition that the nation, going forward, would indeed be dependent on women, and women workers. We needed women. We needed clerical workers. We needed nurses. We needed telephone operators. Those were feminized professions and occupations. It wasn't possible to conduct war without their assistance. For the women who served, on the other hand, it was a very profound and lasting experience that had lots of different ramifications, but I would just, I think, summarize by saying it marked a powerful moment of transition into a new kind of citizenship, and a new basis of citizenship for women as soldiers, and as service women.

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Theo Mayer: Well, Dr. Zeiger, thank you for joining us today.

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Dr. Zeiger: You're welcome. It was a pleasure.

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Theo Mayer: Dr. Susan Zeiger is a member of the commission's historical advisory board, the program director at Primary Source, professor emeritus of history at Regis College, and author. Learn more about her and her work by following the link in the podcast notes. Staying with our theme, this week for our Spotlight in the Media, we're joined by Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs, whose book, *The Hello Girls, America's First Women Soldiers* is the basis for the documentary, *The Hello Girls*, which just had a really successful world premiere in Washington, D.C at the Women's Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. Dr. Cobbs is also the Melbern Glasscock Chair at Texas A&M University, as well as a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. Welcome, Dr. Cobbs.

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Dr. Cobbs: Thank you. Great to be with you.

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Theo Mayer: Dr. Cobbs, I heard great things about the showing in D.C last week, including the attendance by two granddaughters of *The Hello Girls*. Were you there?

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Dr. Cobbs: I was. It was actually really thrilling and touching.

[0:32:57]

Theo Mayer: Tell us a little bit about the premiere.

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Dr. Cobbs: This was a film that a fellow at the VA, a documentary filmmaker, decided to make after reading my book, and it's just one of those things that kept spiraling on and on, so I had gotten in touch with one of the granddaughters of the woman who led the first contingent of women soldiers to France in 1918, and they actually went before most of the doughboys, because they worked the telephones, and you have to have logistical folks on the ground, even before you have the actual fighters. It was just fabulous. We had three women come who were the granddaughters, and one, I'd never gotten in touch with, and she was the best friend of Grace Banker, who was the person who won the Distinguished Service Medal for leading that contingent, and so these two modern women are meeting together, and it turned out that these women were so close, that one was the matron of honor at the wedding of the other, once they were back in the states. Then, the families had altogether lost touch.

[0:33:57]

Theo Mayer: We mentioned the Hello Girls at the top of the show in our segment on the US Army Signal Corps. Who were the Hello Girls? What kind of women were they?

[0:34:05]

Dr. Cobbs: The Hello Girls were women who were recruited to be telephone operators. In World War I, the technology was such that every command to fire or cease fire, to advance, to retreat, to get out of the way of friendly fire, was all delivered by telephone from Army headquarters right behind the firing line, into, literally, the trenches. But, every single call had to be connected, and it was connected by a woman. The Hello Girls connected 26 million calls, including most of the operational calls for World War I.

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Theo Mayer: Dr. Cobbs, these women signed up as soldiers, and were actually literally inducted into the US Army Signal Corps, but they got gyped out of the veteran benefits. What's that story?

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Dr. Cobbs: Yeah, totally crazy. Here, the Navy and Marines recruited officially, inducted 11,000 women to serve at home in safe occupations here at home. The Army recruited 223, took them across the ocean, where they could've been sunk at any moment by a submarine, put many of them in harm's way, or at least a number of them, they were literally in France and always being bombarded. They were working right behind the firing lines at the Battle of Meuse-Argonne and Saint-Mihiel. The Army brings these 223 women home and says, "Who are you?" They basically told the women, "No, you weren't actually soldiers. You took oaths. You were subject to court martial. You were put in military review parades by the US Army. Pershing personally inspected you, and you were told, 'You're in the Army now.'" Then, they got home and they were told, "Oh, actually, you know what? You were civilians. You don't get anything. You don't even get a flag on your coffin." Two of the women died in France.

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Theo Mayer: That got resolved eventually, didn't it?

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Dr. Cobbs: Well, they fought it. Most of them were good soldiers. They buttoned up and said, "Yes, sir," but there was a handful of women who just couldn't take it lying down, and partly because they'd seen women disabled in the service, and some of them got tuberculosis in France, and had permanent disabilities, and this killed them that they couldn't get their victory medals or hospitalization for their fellow soldiers. They fought it for 60 years, and they wrote Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eisenhower and Truman and Richard Nixon and all the way up through Jimmy Carter. Eventually, they did manage to convince US Congress in 1977 to recognize their service in World War I. This, by the way, this happened because there was a bill at the time up to acknowledge the women of World War II, the WASPs, the Women's Air Service Pilots who had flown many missions for the United States and were similarly disrespected at the end of the war. So, after 60 years, literally, 60 years to the day, the woman who led that fight, she gave a speech at the Army fort in Seattle where they were recognizing her at age 91, and giving her her discharge papers at age 91. She said, "I'm so glad to get my victory medal, not only for serving in France, but for fighting the US Army for 60 years."

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Theo Mayer: That's pretty good. Now, did the Hello Girls continue to be telephone operators when they got back to the home workforce?

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Dr. Cobbs: Some of them did, but you have to understand, part of the reason why they were recruited was because the Army had nobody, really, who could parlez vous. When you're connecting phone calls and doing simultaneous translations between French officers and American officers, they needed women who had also the skill of absolutely fluent, crackerjack French. Some of the women hadn't been telephone operators ahead of time, and when they came

back, they stepped out of it. Some of them got married. Many did. Some of them went back to other jobs, and some of them, yes, did stay on as telephone operators.

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Theo Mayer: I didn't know that they were doing translation at the same time.

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Dr. Cobbs: Yeah, and in fact, by the way, 7,600 women applied for the first 100 positions. Half of the men in World War I volunteered, and all of the women did. These particular women were winnowed down to this tiny number, because they had extremely rigorous language examinations to make sure that the women could understand, repeat, translate, connect calls instantly, and so they were doing this all the time. They were mostly speaking English, but yes, they were doing simultaneous translations, as well.

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Theo Mayer: Dr. Cobbs, we've included a link to your book in the podcast notes, but where can people see the documentary?

[0:38:19]

Dr. Cobbs: That's a good question. The filmmaker, Jim There's, he's right now putting it in festivals, so it has not got a broadcast date at this point, but I do suggest people look it up. The Hello Girls, the documentary, because it's fabulous. Oh, my gosh. I have to tell you this really exciting thing that happened. One of the granddaughters was so thrilled by the book that she started doing some research on her own, and she found, in the National Archives, footage, and she sent me an email, and she said, "Look at this link. Go to seven minutes and 10 seconds. I think it's my grandma," whom she'd never met, who died, won the Distinguished Service Medal and died before her granddaughter was born. Of course, I've been pouring over photographs of these women now for two years, and I go to the link, and I go, "Oh, my gosh. Of course it's Grace. There she is." We now have, in this documentary, some footage of General Pershing inspecting these women troops lined up, as with all men, in these giant yard parade ground at Charmont, France, which is where the US Army headquarters was, and they're all there together. It's a bit like the film Hidden Figures, where these women were never hidden, they just weren't seen.

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Theo Mayer: What's the most important thing we should remember about the story of these women?

[0:39:34]

Dr. Cobbs: Some people will say, "Gosh. It took them 60 years to get recognition. How terrible." And, it was, but what happened is that their work helped women get the vote, because women were soldiers before they were voters in America. When they became soldiers, and when they served in World War I, that helped to pass the bill in congress that men had to pass to give women the vote. Then, it took another 60 years, but they caught the second wave of the women's movement. In fact, the woman who led the campaign to recognize the Hello Girls, she said, "People will ask me, why? Here I am in my 80s and 90s still fighting this battle, and why do I do it?" She says, "I do it because I love my country, and I want my country to be worth loving."

[0:40:14]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs is the Melbern Glasscock chair at Texas A&M University, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, and an acclaimed author. You can learn more about her and her book, "The Hello Girls, America's First Women Soldiers" by following the link in the podcast notes. Moving on to our 100 Cities, 100 Memorials segment, about the \$200,000 matching grant challenge to rescue and focus on our local World War I memorials. This week, we're profiling the Memorial Grove at Green Hills Park in Worcester, Massachusetts. With us to tell us about this ambitious restoration is Brian McCarthy, President of the Green Hill Park Coalition. Brian, thank you for joining us on the podcast.

[0:41:01]

Brian McCarthy: Thank you for having me, Theo.

[0:41:03]

Theo Mayer: Brian, the memorial in Worcester was originally put in in 1928 by Post 5 of the American Legion. What did they do, and what's the history of the memorial?

[0:41:13]

Brian McCarthy: The American Legion Post 5, now defunct, put in 353 trees, maple trees on a 30 foot grid to resemble a military cemetery, and they built a ceremonial area with seating and bronze plaques, and the most

important part, I thought, was that they put bronze plaques on each one of the trees commemorating each citizen of Worcester who died in the war.

[0:41:42]

Theo Mayer: Brian, your Green Hills Park Coalition took this on, and it's not a little spruce up. No tree pun intended on that, but a really ambitious, multi hundred thousand dollar memorial park renovation. How did it come about?

[0:41:56]

Brian McCarthy: Well, interestingly enough, I was walking in the park following an extremely heavy snow storm, and the whiteness of the ground outlined the eight acre spot of Memorial Grove, and it showed me how neglected it has been over the last couple decades. We decided to take it on as a restoration project. We originally wanted to restore it to exactly what it was in 1928, but it seemed to take on a life of its own as we went, and it grew and grew and grew.

[0:42:29]

Theo Mayer: When was that, Brian?

[0:42:30]

Brian McCarthy: 2015 is the date that we started working on this, and we approached the city to get their permission, because it is in a city park, so we had to attend numerous board and commission meetings, and present our plans, and we went to one of the local colleges and got their architectural engineering program on board with us, and they designed an entirely new Memorial Grove that is like you say.

[0:43:00]

Theo Mayer: I got to tell you, Brian, when I saw your design study and your planning documents, I was really impressed. The thinking is just beautiful, and it's practical. What's the status of the project now?

[0:43:11]

Brian McCarthy: The status is that it's going out to bid a week from yesterday, it's going out to bid. Bids should be open two weeks after that, and we expect construction to start in the spring with a completion deadline for Armistice Day in November.

[0:43:29]

Theo Mayer: Can you describe it a little bit for us, because I've seen the visuals, but it really is a striking approach.

[0:43:35]

Brian McCarthy: Well, it's an eight acre site with the 350 maple trees, of which 140 or so had died over the years. We've replaced most of those so far. We cut out four acres of brush that had overgrown the area. We have 455 steel posts, 20 feet line that are forming the core of the area in the shape of a hand, so if you look at these steel posts from the sky, it looks like two hands clasping each other, and we will have engraved name plaques for each one of the soldiers and civilians ... We have two civilians that gave their lives to the war as well, so, we will have engraved name plaques for each one of them on each of these steel posts, 20 feet in the air, and about the only thing original will be a stone wall that was still there, and the bronze plaque that was originally made in 1928.

[0:44:35]

Theo Mayer: Well, it's a beautiful project, and it's really something that is honoring what happened 100 years ago. Your project has deservedly been designated as a World War I Centennial Memorial. How can people help?

[0:44:48]

Brian McCarthy: Well, we have a GoFundMe site, which has, to this date, not been very successful in raising money. We've been much more successful getting grants from local organizations and getting the help of environmental organizations in the area.

[0:45:02]

Theo Mayer: You're getting the city involved as well, aren't you?

[0:45:04]

Brian McCarthy: Oh, the city is extremely involved. The city is our number one ally. Without the city, we wouldn't be able to put this kind of money down and get this finished up, and I'm really pleased with everything the city has done. Just couldn't be happier.

[0:45:20]

Theo Mayer: You said that you're trying to get the rededication timed in in time for the Armistice?

[0:45:25]

Brian McCarthy: That's correct.

[0:45:26]

Theo Mayer: Well, anything else you want to tell us about the project?

[0:45:28]

Brian McCarthy: Oh, just that it's been three years in the making, and one thing that we really wanted to do with this project is make it a destination as opposed to just a forgotten grove in the city, a grove that, frankly, I think I was the only one that knew what its origin was, and what it was all about. When I went to the city boards and commissions, they had not a clue what Memorial Grove was all about. We really want to make it a destination and start honoring these people who gave their lives 100 years ago.

[0:45:56]

Theo Mayer: Thank you for your great work, sir.

[0:45:59]

Brian McCarthy: You're welcome. Thank you.

[0:46:00]

Theo Mayer: Brian McCarthy is the president of the Green Hill Park Coalition. Their GoFundMe site and more information about the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials Program are both available through the links in the podcast notes. Now, for our feature, Speaking World War I, where we explore the words and phrases that are rooted in the war. The American armed forces ballooned in size during 1917 and 1918. Putting men in uniform was not just a conceptual statement, but a literal one. Underwear, socks, shoes, belts and uniforms for millions were needed now. This week, 100 years ago, on March 6th in the pages of The Official Bulletin, and apparently after some accusations of problems, the government seeks to reassure the country that the Army uniforms are made with absolutely the best materials, and that they did not overuse "shoddy", our Speaking World War I word for this week. Shoddy may have originally derived from a mining term, shoad, meaning scraps. The article goes on to define what the government means by shoddy. This indicates to us that it was not a term commonly used in 1918, but it is today. Shoddy is simply reworked wool remnants and clippings, worked into the fiber of virgin wool. Like stretching ground sirloin with a little bit of bread crumbs. The use of shoddy, or reworked wool, was urged by the government's wool experts as helpful and a partial solution to the huge wool shortage, but it had to be added sparingly. Shoddy was also used in military uniforms during the Civil War, but apparently, overused. There are stories of soldiers' clothes falling to pieces after just a few days of wear, or even in heavy rains, giving the uniforms a really bad reputation, and redefining the word shoddy, not as wool clippings, but as a description of something poorly made. Luckily, the shoddy laden wool in World War I was not as shoddy as the shoddy uniforms of the Civil War. They did hold up in the rain and the mud of the trenches. No shame in that shoddy, our word this week for Speaking World War I. Learn more at the link in the podcast notes. That brings us to The Buzz. The centennial of World War I this week, and social media with Katherine Akey. Catherine, what did you pick this week?

[0:48:24]

Katherine Akey: This week, we share an article on Facebook from Longmont, Colorado, where a local man named Paul Hanson discovered a long forgotten World War I era diary. The diary belonged to his father, who left it, along with a few other mementos of his service in the war in his Army issued foot locker, left to collect dust in the family barn. Hanson inherited the box from his father, opening it, and rediscovering the life his father had lived as a soldier in the war. In it, he found his father's diary, as well as his victory medal, and love letters between his father and his girlfriend, who died from influenza before he returned home from the battle. Hanson has taken all of these items, and the very detailed diary, and brought them into a book called Soldier of the Great War, My Father's Diary. The story of this man and this very personal discovery of his father's service, it's a reminder that though the war is 100 years past, so many stories of the war are yet to be discovered and told. You can read more about the incredible history pieced together by this veteran's son by visiting the link in the podcast notes. That's it this week for The Buzz.

[0:49:29]

Theo Mayer: Thank you everyone for listening to this week's episode of World War I Centennial News. We also want to thank our guests. Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author. Mike Schuster, curator for the Great War Project Blog. Dr. Susan Zeiger, member of the commission's historical advisory board, author, and program director at Primary Source. Dr. Elizabeth Cobb, historian and author. Brian McCarthy from the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials Project in Worcester, Massachusetts. Katherine Akey, the commission's social media director, and the line producer from the podcast. Thank you, also, to Eric, as well as our intern, John for their great research assistance. I'm Theo Mayer, your host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate,

and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago into today's classrooms. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes around the country, and of course, we're building America's National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as the Starr Foundation for their support. The podcast can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn, on iTunes, Google Play, TuneIn, Podbean, and now on Stitcher Radio on demand, as well as other places you get your podcasts, even on your Smart Speaker. Just say, "Play WW1 Centennial News Podcast." Our Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc, and we're on Facebook at WW1Centennial. Thank you for joining us, and don't forget to share the stories that you're hearing here today about the war that changed the world. (singing) Hello Girls. Could one of y'all please connect me with Field Marshall , ? Why, thank you, ma'am. So, long.

[0:52:14]