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12 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Shuster, Edward Lengel, Lynn H., Francoise B., Nancy F., Saul Dibb, Jerry Hester, Thomas S., Benny Suggs, Katherine Akey, Speaker 12)

[0:00:09]

**Theo Mayer:** Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 64. 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 23rd, 2018, and our guests for this week include: Mike Shuster, from the great war project blog, giving an overview of the big German spring offensive, Operation Michael. Dr. Edward Lengel, with a story of US combat engineers joining in the fight. Lynn Heidelbaugh introduces the new women's exhibit at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. Dr. Francoise Bonnell discussing the history of women and the US army. Nancy Furstinger, talking about man's best friend in World War I and other critters. Saul Dibb, the director of the new feature film Journey's End, talks about being in the trenches to make the film. Thomas Skolnicki, Ben Suggs, and US World War I Centennial Commissioner Jerry Hester join us to share the story of the 100 cities, 100 memorials project at North Carolina State University. Katherine Akey with the World War I commemoration in social media. A great line up of guests for World War I centennial news, a weekly podcast brought to you by the US World War I centennial commission, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, and the Star Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the chief technologist for the commission, and your host. Welcome to the show. Every week, as we prepare the podcast, we pore through the publications that came out that week 100 years ago, and we look for themes and trends, and what's being talked about. Now this week, we were struck with what wasn't being talked about, especially in government-related media, like the official bulletin, the Government's Daily War Gazette, published for the president by George Creel's committee on public information, or the American Expeditionary Forces weekly stars and stripes newspaper. Now, this is the week on March 21st that the Germans slammed down the hammer with the first phase of their spring offensive. With that as a setup, let's jump into our centennial time machine, and roll back 100 years to the week that launched the definitive six months of do or die in the war that changed the world. It's the third week of March, 1918. To review the situation once again, even before the Brest-Litovsk Treaty earlier this month which successfully wrapped up the war on the eastern front for the Germans, the front collapsing has been freeing up massive resources of men, arms and munitions, which are now being redeployed to the western front. Germany's general, Erich Ludendorff, plans a massive spring offensive designed to separate the British and French armies, and to force a surrender, which the Germans feel pressured to do before the American troops can affect the outcome. The offensive is codenamed Operation Michael, and unbeknownst to the allies is scheduled for March 21st, 1918. Although the allies could have been more prepared, they surely were not surprised. Most historians agree that the only surprise is the specific day and the specific location of the offensive launch. In fact, by mid-February 1918, the build up of men and heavy artillery on the German side has become too large to dismiss any doubt of a coming attack. In a letter from Sir Douglas Haig, commander in chief of the British armies written after the fact, he describes aerial operations revealing expanding ammunition and supply dumps all along the western front, with a clear build up at the Arras sector, leading Haig to believe that this is the most probable place for a German offensive to take place. By some accounts, the actual date of Operation Michael is uncovered by British intelligence a few days before the fact. Unfortunately, defenses are still being prepared on March 21st, and even more unfortunately, General Hague has decided to strengthen his left wing at the expense of his right. His right wing is exactly where the full force of the German hammer lands. According to historian Robert Dowdie, French intelligence also discovers a high probability of a German attack at Arras, but the lack of an overarching structure connecting the two armies hampers collaboration. In the meantime, the US government seems to be focusing its public with misdirection. Dateline, Monday March 18th, 1918. As the offensive encroaches, here's a sampling of headlines in the official bulletin: More than \$12 billion now in war risk insurance. Woman on sub teaches men how to cook underwater. Norway protests to German people over convoy sinking. Bakers must bake victory bread, or close shop after March 20. The next day, the war department briefs the press, causing The New York Times to print an article doubting that the offensive is imminent. Dateline, Tuesday March 19, 1918. A headline in The New York Times reads: Offensive in the west, foes last resort? Washington believes it won't be delivered unless strategy compels it. Massing of more enemy troops is impracticable, and the article reads: Doubt that the German military leaders will launch their offensive in the west, unless compelled by the strategy of the situation to do so is expressed in the weekly statement issued by the war department today, reviewing the military situation of the past week. Meanwhile, the next day, in the official bulletin, we find headlines that include: No icing on this year's hot cross buns for Good Friday. National conference called to discuss plans for Americanization of aliens. Live day-old chicks may be sent by mail on 72-hour journeys, and export of oleomargarine to be licensed to Canada. Still, nothing about the impending offensive. But that's not true for the public press. In contrast to the government media, The New York Times is all over the start of the German spring offensive. Dateline, March 21, 1918. The headline in the The New York Times reads: Concentrated assault made to pinch British out of the front line. Intense struggle ensues. The battle spreads north and south, and still continuing with great fury. Shell storm over lines. Wide area of British front is spread by German missiles. The story reads: The Germans this

afternoon launched a heavy attack against the British lines over a wide front in and near the sector. The assault bears all of the earmarks of being the beginning of the enemy's much heralded grand offensive. The attack was preceded by a heavy bombardment from guns of all calibers, and the duel between opposing heavy artillery has been rocking the countryside for hours. Meanwhile, another headline reads: Washington still doubtful on drive. American officers wait for full scope of German move to develop. However, the next day, on March 22nd, a reporter named Philip Gibbs files a cable report for the The New York Times that is, in retrospect, the most accurate description of this dynamic moment. Dateline, March 22nd, 1918. The headline of the The New York Times reads: Germans' vast superiority and guns is backed by 50 division of men. One cannon for every 12 yards of front. One British division fought six near San Quentin. The story reads: The enemy flung the full weight of his great army against the British yesterday. Nearly 40 divisions are identified, and it is certain that as many as 50 must be engaged. In proportion of men, the British are much outnumbered. Therefore, their obstinacy and the resistance of the troops is to be admired. Nine German divisions were hurled against three British at one part of the line, and eight against two at another. All the storm troops, including the guards, were in brand-new uniforms. They advance in dense masses, and never falter until shattered by machine gun fire. As far as I can find, the enemy introduced no new frightfulness. No tanks, no special invented gases, but instead, relied on the power of his artillery, and the weight of his infantry assault. The supporting waves advance over the bodies of the dead and wounded. The German commanders are ruthless in the sacrifice of life, in the hope of overwhelming the defenses by sheer weight of numbers. That's how the media ran this week, 100 years ago, when the German spring offensive launches in the war that changed the world. We put the links to our research in the podcast notes for you to explore. That brings us to the great war project with Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent, and curator for the great war project blog. Mike, we've been looking at this moment through the lens of the press reports. Meanwhile, your post this week offers a great sort of a congealing overview of the first days of the spring offensive. What's your headline, Mike?

[0:10:35]

**Mike Shuster:** Well, Theo, the headline reads: Last chance for both sides as Germany attacks Germans in stronger position, allies in terrible shape. The Kaiser declares victory. This is special to the great war project. In the early morning of March 21st a century ago, the Germans launched the offensive that is intended to bring victory to their forces on the western front. The goals according to his story in Martin Gilbert are first to drive the British army from the Somme in northern France, and at the same time, drive the French forces from the River Aisne. Both areas were fought over to a stalemate earlier in the war. Now, the omens for Germany were good, writes Gilbert. Russia was out of the war, their pre-war nightmare of a conflict on two fronts was over. The German railway hitherto tied to the eastern front now is moving men and guns rapidly westward. The initial German thrust surprises them. They figure the first action would come much further south. It didn't. They were wrong, and their manpower is weak in the face of the German onslaught. After three and a half years of fighting, observed Gilbert, that manpower shortage was still a factor in the British army's ability to make war. In this offensive a century ago, more than 6000 heavy German guns unleashed their fury, augmented by another 3000 mortars. Reports Gilbert, gas shells were employed to weaken the ability of the British artillery to counter the German barrage. The Germans drop as many as two million gas shells on the British lines. British aircraft are also vastly outnumbered. Then the first wave of German infantry attacks. Reports historian Gilbert, Winston Churchill is visiting one of the frontline headquarters when the assault begins. He is only just able to escape the initial artillery barrage before the Germans advance four and a half miles, and take 21,000 British prisoners. Two days later, the Germans bombard Paris using three long distance artillery guns, especially manufactured for just such an operation. Gilbert writes, using just 20 shells, the Germans forced the British to retreat to the Somme. The German Kaiser declares the battle won, the English utterly defeated. The allies had every course to be alarmed by the speed and scale of the German advance, and as for the vast army of Americans expected to turn the tide, they are still not ready to enter the battle lines. Prime Minister David Lloyd George telegraphs the British ambassador in Washington telling him to explain to President Woodrow Wilson the situation is undoubtedly critical, and if America delays now, she may be too late. Wilson receives the British ambassador immediately, and tells him he will do his damndest. Day one of the German spring offensive had undoubtedly been a German victory, observes war historian John Keegan, although the total of German dead, more than 10,000, exceeded that of the British, as did the number of wounded, nearly 29,000 Germans against 10,000 British. Concludes historian Gary Meade, the allies should have been better prepared for this offensive than they were. After all, they had good intelligence as to what the Germans were planning. It is the German's greatest gamble of the war. Effectively, they throw everything into the battle, believing this too is their last chance for victory before the Americans arrive. That's the news from the great war project this week a century ago.

[0:14:03]

**Theo Mayer:** Mike Shuster, from the great war project blog. Now for this week's segment of America Emerges, military stories from World War I with Dr. Edward Lengel. Ed, your story this week is about a third division regiment of engineers. Now when I read it, it really struck me as a great example of what the Americans were bringing to the bone-tired desperate and war-weary allies. It was more than bodies and equipment. It was also a really special almost naive but very recognizable spirit, so what is the story?

[0:14:41]

**Edward Lengel:** Well, the German offensive, as Mike showed very well, was a smashing success for Germany in the first few days. It tore open the British lines in northern France, and among the many units and individuals that it caught up was a few companies of American engineers. They were members of the sixth engineer regiment, which was part of the third infantry division. There were two companies, B and D, and a headquarters company that were at work along the Somme river building bridges. They were certainly eager to get as close to the front as they could be, but they didn't expect to be thrown into combat, which is what happened. Shortly after March 21st, they hear the guns firing in the distance, and they get the first reports of the German assault. Then a short time later, they see aircraft fighting overhead. Most frighteningly, they witness crowds of French refugees streaming away from the front. It's really a heart-rending sight. Their hearts go out to them, but they know that they're going to be next in line, because the orders come up from British headquarters that they need every single man at the front. A fleet of trucks arrives at the engineer's camps, and the British give the engineers a chicken dinner, and then they give them rifles and machine guns and ammunition, and tell them that they're on the way to the front to try to help and stem the German tide. As the trucks drive off toward the front, the engineers are excited, actually, even though they're not prepared for combat, and they're singing all the way to the front, the song *Where Do We Go From Here, Boys?* They end up in woods near Peron. German infantry come in contact with the American engineers on March 27th and 28th. They have no reserves behind them. The only troops nearby actually are a group of Canadian railway workers who have also been thrown into the front to try to stem the tide. On March 29th, on Good Friday, German artillery spots the American trenches. Now fortunately, these engineers know how to dig trenches very well, and they hunker down in the trenches. The German bombardment begins, but unfortunately the German shells catch an American field kitchen right behind the lines, and kill several Americans. On Saturday, March 30th, the Germans attack in force. The engineers are firing with their rifles and their Lewis Light machine guns from their trenches. They beat back multiple attacks. I found a wonderful first-hand account of an officer who was wandering the lines behind the engineers just about this time, and he finds an engineer with bandoliers of ammunition carrying rifles on his way back to the front. He's a big hulky guy from Kentucky, and the officer asks him, "Are you heading back to the front?" The man says, "Well, my daddy is Deputy Sheriff at Catlettsburg, Kentucky, and if he ever thought a boy of his backed away from a German, he'd take me out and shoot me himself." They had that kind of spirit. They end up beating off the German attacks, and the next day is March 31st, is Easter Sunday, is sunny and quiet. The British begin an artillery bombardment the following day on April 1st, and the German tide, at that point, at least, is broken. For the six engineers, it's at the cost of 28 men killed and 54 wounded, but they brought a special determination to the front. It's actually a very uplifting moment for the Americans.

[0:18:29]

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, what are you gonna be telling us about next week?

[0:18:31]

**Edward Lengel:** Well, the draftees played a major role in American success on the western front, and I will be talking about the departure of the first two national army divisions made up of draftees right around this time, the end of March, beginning of April. The 77th and the 82nd, the metropolitan and the all-American divisions leave the United States ready to go and enter into combat, which they would do very shortly.

[0:18:58]

**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 I recommend that you take a look at it. The pictures Ed included are really memorable. If you'd like to see videos about World War I, we suggest our friends at the great war channel on YouTube. This week's new episodes include allied unified command on the horizon, and King George the fifth in World War I, and inside the German A7V World War I tank. See their videos by searching for the great war on YouTube, or by following the link in the podcast notes. Okay, it's time to fast-forward into the present with World War I centennial news now. Well this part of the podcast isn't about the past. It's about the now. There's a lot going on to commemorate the centennial of the war that changed the world. This week, for remembering veterans and for Women's History month, we're highlighting a special exhibit. In her words, women's duty and service in World War I, which is on view at the Smithsonian's national postal museum. We're joined by Lynn Heidelbaugh, the curator for the exhibit. Lynn nice to have you back on the podcast.

[0:20:29]

**Lynn H.:** Glad to be joining you today.

[0:20:31]

**Theo Mayer:** Lynn, with families being separated, with more and more men sent to training camps and abroad, is there an estimation of how much mail was being sent during World War I?

[0:20:40]

**Lynn H.:** The post office department took a lot of statistics in the first 12 months of the war. The post office department every year issued an annual report which ran from June to July, so it gives us a good idea of what was going on in just those first 12 months between June of 1917, to July of 1918, where about a million men were being sent to the western front. So we can trace what kind of mail followed them there, and what they were sending back. The post office department reports that there were about 15 million letters that were being sent back from the western front, and about 35 million letters that were being sent from the US to those troops who were overseas. That's not including the parcels and other kinds of mail like hometown newspapers that were going over to the troops that were serving at the front.

**[0:21:37]**

**Theo Mayer:** That's pretty impressive.

**[0:21:38]**

**Lynn H.:** Pretty impressive, yeah, but there was a lot of mail that was being moved around the US to get to the people in training camps as well. The post office department had to set up 123 postal branches at the various training camps, and those could serve populations of 30-50,000 people. They were averaging about 100,000 letters per day coming into those camps. That's about two pieces of mail per person per day.

**[0:22:09]**

**Theo Mayer:** An ongoing subject on the show is the new roles and jobs that women were taking during the war. Did the postal service see women joining its ranks?

**[0:22:17]**

**Lynn H.:** Yes, they did. They experimented with women working as letter carriers, particularly in the larger cities. The first two were in Washington, DC, in 1917, and they started off as temporary substitute carriers. After about two weeks, they moved them to what they call indoor jobs, and in order to prepare for the Christmas rush in December of 1917, they experimented in a couple more cities, particularly Chicago, New York and St. Louis.

**[0:22:51]**

**Theo Mayer:** I heard a bunch of stories about women becoming the postmaster in small-town USA as well.

**[0:22:56]**

**Lynn H.:** That's true, yes. Small-town USA had women serving as postmasters, as well as rural free delivery carriers. Often, there seems to be a tendency where those jobs were almost kind of defacto handed off to a family member sometimes, partly to employ a woman who needed some of that income, but yes, definitely, they were filling those jobs with women as well in rural America.

**[0:23:22]**

**Theo Mayer:** Lynn, let's talk a little bit about the exhibit. What inspired it, and how does it differ from the World War I letters exhibit, My Fellow Soldiers?

**[0:23:29]**

**Lynn H.:** This exhibition focuses on four women. We tell their stories through their letters and their objects. We have two women who were in the army nurse corp, one woman who was a Yeoman (F) and one woman who actually served with the YMCA in some of the canteens in Paris and Verdun in France. We opened the In Her Words exhibition in February, and it's a partnership with the women in military service for America memorial foundation. All the material is from that collection. The curators at the women's memorial and myself wanted to look at letters in a very different way in this exhibition than our My Fellow Soldiers exhibit that I had opened a year ago previous. These really kind of look at a biography, in a way. We're using the individual's letters to gain a better understanding of women's experiences during the war. We go much more in depth about the person, and some of her material, including uniforms and medals, diaries. We wanted to give people a sense of who these women were, why they were joining the military or some of the civilian service organizations, what was their motivation, and what was it like to serve in the different branches? What was it like to serve stateside versus overseas? This exhibition gave us an opportunity to go in more detail than our ongoing exhibition, My Fellow Soldiers.

**[0:25:08]**

**Theo Mayer:** Lynn, thank you so much for bringing this to us.

**[0:25:10]**

**Lynn H.:** Excellent. Well, I'm happy to share it with you, and really pleased that my organization partnered with women in military service for America. I think we've put together great stories of these very unique experiences during the war.

[0:25:23]

**Theo Mayer:** Lynn Heidelbaugh is a curator at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum. Learn more about their World War I exhibits by following the links in the podcast notes. Now, sticking with museums, and continuing our focus on women's history month, we're joined by Dr. Françoise Bonnell, the director of the US Army Women's Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia. She's an author and a recognized authority in women's military history. Dr. Bonnell, welcome to the podcast.

[0:25:53]

**Françoise B.:** Thank you, it's great to be here.

[0:25:55]

**Theo Mayer:** I'd like to start by asking you about the US Army Women's Museum. Can you give us a quick overview?

[0:26:00]

**Françoise B.:** Sure. Actually, we're the only museum of our type dedicated to telling the story of the contributions of women to the army. The army is the only branch of our armed forces that has a museum such as ours. Primary job and mission as it is today is to train soldiers, and to inform the public about the roles of those contributions of women. We opened our doors, and inherited a huge mission, which is telling those stories, those contributions from 1775 to present.

[0:26:28]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, okay. 1775, that's pre-United States. What was the role of women in our colonial 1775 army?

[0:26:37]

**Françoise B.:** Well, a very important role. Remember, when our army was founded, its focus was very much on providing soldiers and ammunition and equipment to fight during the American Revolution. Many of the logistical functions that later will be adopted by the logistical branches of the army fall upon women. Many women, who we've come to know them today as camp followers, coming from the entire social strata of our American colonial society, it fell upon them to cook and to clean, and to provide water, sometimes to forage, and to do those things that were need for the soldiers, especially during the encampment, that also helped bring a little normalcy and humanity to those encampments as well.

[0:27:23]

**Theo Mayer:** Okay, onto World War I. Dr. Bonnell, how did women affect the army in World War I, and how did their service affect womanhood?

[0:27:32]

**Françoise B.:** We found that the service of women in the military, and in the army in particular, was very much intertwined with American society, and so it's important to look at what women in American society were doing. In fact, on the eve of World War I, most of the areas in which women worked was either in the agricultural or service sectors. That's gonna begin to expand just as the war started. Sometimes, the changing role of women is also based on the needs of not only the army but the nation as well. As you can imagine, with millions of men going off to work and being mobilized and being sent overseas, women would move into the factories just as we know very much is the same with World War II, and then also were called upon for their specific skills, and what they were able to do in support of the American expeditionary forces. A little bit interesting, it's actually the navy and the Marine Corps who were the first to enlist women. American expeditionary force commander, General Pershing, understood that there was a very important aspect of ensuring that his troops were able to maintain a high level of morale and welfare, so there's several civilian organizations such as the American Red Cross. There's over 2000 American women who served there. They actually also trained the nurses for the Army Nurse Corps, because of course that had been founded only a decade and a half before. They provided support to wounded soldiers, provided basic supplies and necessities as well. Then additionally, there's thousands of women who served with the Young Men's Christians Association, and the Young Women's Christian Association, so the YMCA and the YWCA. In fact, the women in the Y, they worked in canteens, both overseas as well as here in the United States. They provided hot food, things such as pies, sandwiches, hot chocolate, anything that could be done in order to make the doughboys more comfortable. In fact, we found out recently that one of the canteen bakers, she baked 316 pies in a single day.

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**Theo Mayer:** Is there a continuing legacy of World War I for women in the army today?

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**Francoise B.:** Yes. In fact, the legacy of the service of women during World War I is profound. They've left an indelible mark on our army as well as our military as well as our nation. In one aspect, prior to the war, President Woodrow Wilson was not a huge supporter of the right for women to vote, except after World War I, in the year or two ensuing, his attitude began to change. In fact, he said, "We have made partners of the women in the war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering, sacrifice and toil, and not to the partnership of privilege and rights? As far as the military and the army in particular, what became known as the injustices of the fact that these women were contracted, and they had not been given those benefits that their male counterparts had enjoyed, a congresswoman by the name of Edith Nourse Rogers from Massachusetts, with the rumbling of World War II on the horizons almost 20 years later, vowed that if women were ever to serve again, they would do so with the same rights and privileges of men. It was really her leadership with the support of the chief of staff of the army, General George C. Marshall, that resulted in the creation of the women's Army Corps in World War II. Once those women were put into the women's Army Corps and given the same rights as their male counterparts, it's that legacy of which women today serving the military really stand on, because that is the formalization of that relationship.

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**Theo Mayer:** Okay, finally, does the museum have any World War I centennial commemorative plans?

[0:31:05]

**Francoise B.:** Yes. I think that women have served valiantly, quietly, not as whatsoever their own benefit, but really for the support and the benefit of the nation, and so this particular centennial has given us at the museum an opportunity to highlight that aspect of it in terms of those contributions, but also not forgetting that other equally important contributions throughout our history over the last 200-plus years.

[0:31:32]

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Francoise Bonnell is the director of the US Army Women's Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia. Learn more about the museum and the legacy of women's service in the army by visiting the links in the podcast notes. Now, men served in World War I, and as we've been exploring this month, women served in World War I, but in addition to people, over 16 million animals were mobilized by the war effort. We've covered some of these stories in the past. Horses, mules, pigeons, the lion cubs, Whisky and Soda, the elephants from the Berlin Zoo, and last week, the trench rats at the Chemin-des-Dames. Today, we're joined by Nancy Furstinger, an animal author, who's book, Paws of Courage, highlights the tales of our heroic canines. Welcome, Nancy.

[0:32:23]

**Nancy F.:** Thank you for having me.

[0:32:25]

**Theo Mayer:** Nancy, to start, can you give us an overview of the various dog roles played in the US armed forces?

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**Nancy F.:** Certainly. Military dogs played a vital part in World War I, and they acted as scouts, sentries, messengers, and even mascots to lift spirits. They also cleared the trenches of rats. As an interesting aside, the American soldiers fashioned homemade gas masks for their dogs, the mustard gas really took a toll on dogs as well as the soldiers. One old prototype that I discovered in my research was a jumble of leather straps, a headpiece with goggles, and six layers of cheesecloth. We've certainly come a long ways from that homemade prototype. I also wanted to mention that the American pit bull terrier was America's military mascot during World War I. This breed starred on posters used to sell war bonds, and recruit for the US military, which I thought was really interesting.

[0:33:38]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, everybody's talking about Sergeant Stubby, and of course next week, he premieres as the star of his own animated feature film. What other famous wartime pooches are there in World War I?

[0:33:49]

**Nancy F.:** I can't wait to see this upcoming film. In my research, I came across a dog, his name was Rags, and he was a Cairn Terrier mix, like Toto in the Wizard of Oz, who was found by an American soldier named James Donovan during an air raid in Paris. Dogs have a phenomenal sense of hearing, so his ears could hear the buzz of incoming shells before the soldiers did. Just like Sergeant Stubby, he would alert the soldiers prior to the shells exploding, so he did a wonderful service there. He also became a career dog who crawled under barbed wire to deliver messages for radio operators over dangerous battlefields, despite being injured. He served in three major World War I campaigns, and saved many lives. Rags made rank of lieutenant colonel, and when he died, Rags was buried with military honors. Then in the military mascots section of the book, I have a picture that cracks me up every time I see it, of Sergeant Major Jigs, who was an English bulldog, and he became the first mascot of the Marine Corps. His recruiting picture during World War I featured Sergeant Major Jigs equipped with a helmet, and displaying his

enormous underbite, which is pretty characteristic of the breed. In October of 1922, the Marine Corps enlisted Jigs, and he symbolized the fighting spirit, despite massive amounts of slobbering and snoring.

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**Theo Mayer:** Well, and I think one or more drill instructors were also very much like him. Well, your book covers dogs in service, and as we covered in the opening, there were a lot of different animals that served in World War I. From your research, what strikes you as one of the most unusual animals in how they were used in the war?

[0:35:54]

**Nancy F.:** Well, we also had a Murphy the donkey. When a stretcher bearer for the Australian Army Medical Corps found a donkey, he trained Murphy the animal to become an ambulance. Murphy was awarded a purple cross for carrying wounded soldiers down rocky gulleys into field hospitals during World War I. When given the command backward, Murphy reversed direction and returned to the front. He sounded really amazing. There was also, of course, Lizzie the Indian elephant. When the British army sent more than a million horses and mules to the World War I front to pull artillery, civilians wondered who would haul the scrap metal off to the steel makers for the war effort, so they enlisted Lizzie, who they leased from a traveling circus. Lizzie had a custom-made pair of leather boots, and a harness to tackle the task that was usually performed by three horses. Last but not least, a very surprising species, brave champions on the battlefield, were European glow worms with wine-colored lights that glow in the darkness. Glow worms served as nature's night lights during World War I. British soldiers would collect jar fulls of the female insects, because the males don't glow, and use them to brighten dark trenches so they could study battle maps, write messages, and importantly, read letters from home.

[0:37:33]

**Theo Mayer:** Now Nancy, that's something I did not know before. That's great.

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**Nancy F.:** Pretty amazing.

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**Theo Mayer:** Well, thank you for coming by, and giving us so much insight on our animal friends, and how they helped

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**Nancy F.:** Thank you for having me.

[0:37:47]

**Theo Mayer:** Nancy Furstinger is the author of over 100 books, many about her life's passion, animals. Learn more about Nancy and her writing, and the service of animals, by following the links in the podcast notes. Last week, in spotlight on the media, we introduced you to a World War I feature film that premiered over the weekend in both New York and Los Angeles. Journey's End is a powerful film about a group of British soldiers that rotated into the frontline trenches just about exactly 100 years ago this week. I had a chance to catch up with the film's director, Saul Dibb, in a call to London. Here's how it went. Saul, Journey's End is a really intimate film about a really intimate subject. It's about men, mortality and fear. Can you give us a quick overview of the story?

[0:38:36]

**Saul Dibb:** Well, you know, you've given it a very good introduction there. It's essentially about a regiment of soldiers, so around 120 men, who are going back to a frontline in the knowledge that there is gonna be an enormous attack coming, and they're very likely to be there when it comes. It's about how they wait as the days go by, and the minutes tick by, and how each of them deals with their fear, like you say. At the center of it is Stanhope, who's a very seasoned captain, even though he's only in his early 20s, who's changed irrevocably in the three years that he's been at the front. Then into his dugout steps a young man of 19, who hero worships him when he was at school, and this has tracked him down. In the middle of all the pressure that they're under anyway, suddenly there's a young man who remembers him as he was, and thing kind of puts a massive added amount of tension and pressure onto Stanhope's shoulders.

[0:39:40]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, quite literally from a historical standpoint, this is taking place during the spring offensive right in that same timeframe isn't it?

[0:39:46]

**Saul Dibb:** It is, yeah. The big thing that's hanging over all of it is that just before then, the Americans had joined the war, but weren't able to mobilize their troops until a year later. So from what I understand of it, and obviously your

listeners may know much, much more about it, but the Germans felt that this was the last big push before reinforcements arrived, and so they plant an enormous barrage of bombs and mustard gas and all of this stuff that was all gonna come on March the 21st. The British were aware of it, and so the word went out in the kind of euphemistic phrase at the time, was to lightly defend these trenches. They thought, "Well, what we're gonna do is sacrifice this line, this part of the line, and the men that go with it." The regiment is a microcosm of all the regiments that were there during the spring offensive, and the spring offensive is a microcosm of the war itself. I think you're absolutely right, each part stands for a part that's much bigger than itself, but they all say the same thing.

**[0:40:49]**

**Theo Mayer:** Journey's End was originally a stage play, and in fact a really good stage play, with a story that plays out largely in the confines of a trench system. How did that affect your approach?

**[0:41:00]**

**Saul Dibb:** I got the script after Simon Reid had worked on the adaptation, so I had not read the play or seen the play before then. Then I made a conscious decision never to do that. I thought it's not gonna be helpful to me as a filmmaker to be thinking about how it was staged as a play. What we had, which is really brilliant and incredibly helpful, was Sheriff had gone on after writing the play to novelize it, so we had a novel. He had naturally opened it out. I guess that was the starting point, really, to think, well actually we don't need to be limited by the limitations of the play. What's that given us is a brilliant set up or brilliant set of characters, a brilliant tension, and all the inter-dynamics. But visually, we have more freedom.

**[0:41:47]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, not only the script, but the art direction, and cinematography and the performances are just all amazing. As a director, what was your biggest challenge in bringing it all together?

**[0:41:57]**

**Saul Dibb:** Well, I think there were two challenges, or two main goals, I suppose. I think one was to try and make a virtue of what might have been perceived as a weakness, which is the fact that it's all in one location, to use this one location, and to try and make it as tense and cinematic as possible. It's really just about performance. This is all about getting to know, and really deeply care about a group of people as they wait for their, and potential, impending death. The film needed really, really, really brilliant, nuanced, convincing performances, and it lives or dies, in a sense, on the strength of those performances. Very luckily for us, we had this brilliant group of actors who were able to give that.

**[0:42:47]**

**Theo Mayer:** Saul, you've made several period films, and authenticity starts to become a real key element. How'd you go about getting it right for this one?

**[0:42:55]**

**Saul Dibb:** Yeah. I mean, authenticity is the key for me, starting point, really. Before I made feature films, I made documentaries. If you make documentaries, you're just very aware of smelling a rat in a lot of films, and I think it's true for lots of films. Just, most of the time, I feel like I'm watching a film, and I just don't buy it. The ones that I watch where I feel like they really, really, really meticulously created it, and it feels true to that world, are the ones that work for me.

**[0:43:25]**

**Theo Mayer:** Do you put lice on your actors?

**[0:43:27]**

**Saul Dibb:** No, but we did make them act in freezing cold temperatures, in real trenches with real mud. Their feet were frozen. Their boots were covered in mud. It was a deeply, deeply uncomfortable experience, making the film, and everyone relished it, because they felt, well, we're only experiencing a fraction of the hell that those people experienced when they went through it for real. Yeah, and we did have real rats in there, real cold, real mud. It was real trenches. It was just really important that everything about it felt authentic, because I think it helps the actors give better performances too.

**[0:44:03]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well it looks like a brilliant film. Thank you for joining us today, and giving us an insight into it.

**[0:44:08]**

**Saul Dibb:** Thank you, it was a pleasure.

**[0:44:10]**

**Theo Mayer:** Saul Dibb is the director of the feature film Journey's End. Now in limited release in US theaters across the country. We put links in the podcast notes for both the trailer and the theater show listing. If you are interested in what this first week of spring was like for the Tommys in the trenches in 1918, this is a really fine film that will take you there. Moving onto 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 bell tower project at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina. With us to tell us about the project are Thomas Skolnicki, a veteran, and the landscape architect for the university, retired US rear admiral Benny Suggs, the director of the North Carolina State Alumni Association, and US Air Force veteran, World War I Centennial Commissioner, Jerry Hester. All three men are alumni of the school. Welcome, gentlemen.

**[0:45:14]**

**Jerry Hester:** Glad to be with you.

**[0:45:15]**

**Thomas S.:** Thanks for having us.

**[0:45:16]**

**Theo Mayer:** Let me start with a courtesy. Commissioner Hester, we've not had the pleasure of your presence on the podcast before. I just want to welcome you to the show.

**[0:45:24]**

**Jerry Hester:** Well, it's my pleasure. I've been following it many, many times, and I also want to say hello to my friend, Ed Lengel. Ed was one of the first persons that I ever contacted when we were looking in The Meuse-Argonne region back in the 70th anniversary of World War I.

**[0:45:41]**

**Edward Lengel:** Glad to be here.

**[0:45:43]**

**Theo Mayer:** That's right, you're live. Terrific. Okay, so my first question's gonna go to you, Tom. The North Carolina State University bell tower is a really, it's an unusual building with an interesting history. It started out as a low 16-foot World War I memorial, a cornerstone monument known as the shrine room, but like a tree, it started to grow for decades, up to 115 feet tall. Can you tell us the story?

**[0:46:10]**

**Thomas S.:** Sure. I'd be glad to. The memorial bell tower, as you said, is at 115 feet tall, is I think easily our most prominent landmark on campus. It's located along our historic campus edge, and in 2007, it was designated as one of nine hallowed places on our campus. Those are places that are irreplaceable buildings or landscapes that have accrued a special meaning over time, and to multiple generations of NC State members of our community. The university was founded in 1887, and from its inception, it's had military training drills and classes as part of its curriculum, so there's always been a strong connection to the military since the founding of the university. As the US entered the war, nearly 100 students immediately withdrew from the college to enlist in the military. As the war came to an end, , I remember the class of 1907 and other alumni formed the Memorial Tower Committee, and the committee struggled with debt during the decades preceding the tower's completion, largely as a result of the great depression. The project fell deeply into debt, and the committee was threatened with legal action until the outstanding balance was paid. Due to these financial constraints, the memorial had a couple of starts and stops, as you mentioned. It took time to complete it. In fact, it was begun in 1921, and was not officially dedicated until 1949, 20 years after the construction began.

**[0:47:43]**

**Theo Mayer:** Commissioner Hester, you're an alumni of the university, and did you encourage them to participate in the 100 cities, 100 memorials project, or did you learn about their participation afterwards?

**[0:47:53]**

**Jerry Hester:** Oh. When we were starting this project, my first thoughts were to my university, and I remember as a student, working around the tower but never going in it. When this came up, I said, "My goodness, we got a, a great memorial here." Therefore, I went to Admiral Suggs, who's head alumni, and we began to talk about the importance of this, and part of the commemoration's centennial activity is education and honor. We knew that we had to educate the students there to its significance as well as honor them. I had to make sure that my own university had recognized what was on the campus, and I think we've been successful at that. I go back to my early English classes at the university, English 101, when we studied poetry, and World War I poet, Alan Seeger's poem, I Have a

Rendezvous With Death. An excerpt from this poem is appropriate. I have a rendezvous with death, at some disputed barricade, when spring comes back with rustling shade, and apple blossoms fill the air, I have a rendezvous with death. It's appropriate in the spring of this year, and May 1st, that we'd remember those young men whose lives were cut short. That was my motivation when I began to get involved with my university on this.

**[0:49:24]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, that's a great lead-in directly to Benny. Benny, this is our first spring of 2018 episode, and appropriately for your restoration project, you're adding poppy beds to the tower, and then you're gonna have a commemoration. Can you tell us about that?

**[0:49:42]**

**Benny Suggs:** Absolutely. Thanks a bunch for having me aboard today. Mr. Hester did approach me a while back, and since I am an alum, and a 30-year naval aviator veteran, I jumped at the privilege of helping out with this very special event coming up on May 1st, it's a Tuesday, at 3:00 in the afternoon. As Tom said, this is the most prominent gateway here to NC State. The alumni memorial bell tower is on our official seal. It's also on our class ring, one that I'm wearing right now. It's an extremely important landmark here at NC State. We have a lot of passion for what it represents, and it's rare that a student that leaves NC State would have an opportunity to go inside the shrine room, and see there's names inscribed in the marble as Tom described. The students and alumni who served so well with great honor, and unfortunately perished, and also appreciate all those folks who served then and subsequently with great distinction. But we decided to do the event either late April or early May, and so we've got with our horticulture department. We actually have over a thousand poppies growing now in our greenhouses at NC State, and they'll be transplanted over to the alumni memorial bell tower. We're gonna have a special event beginning at 3:00 in between the sound of the bell tower, marking 3:00, and sounding 3:30. We're expecting a big turnout. It's gonna be a great event, and I think it's something that is very appropriate as we recognize those students alumni who served so well with so much honor in World War I. Again, Mr. Hester approached us to begin the planning, and we look at this as a real privilege and a special honor to help showcase the significance of the bell tower, and NC State alumni's service to its country.

**[0:51:40]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well gentlemen, I have a real quick question for each of you. You can kind of give us a yes, no, on it, and the question is, just in closing, when you were at school, did you know there was a World War I memorial? Jerry, start with you.

**[0:51:56]**

**Jerry Hester:** We didn't know either. We just thought it was a bell tower.

**[0:51:59]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay, Benny?

**[0:52:03]**

**Benny Suggs:** Yes, I knew it was a World War I memorial.

**[0:52:06]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay, and Tom, how about yourself?

**[0:52:10]**

**Thomas S.:** I don't think I knew it was a World War I memorial when I was a student, but coming back here to work on staff, I definitely learned it 10 years ago when I started here.

**[0:52:20]**

**Theo Mayer:** So three to one, that's about normal. Thank you, gentlemen, very much for joining us.

**[0:52:27]**

**Jerry Hester:** We hope out of this event, the students will begin to recognize what they have on their campus. The students today are numbering above 30,000. Back when we were students, we were about 5000.

**[0:52:39]**

**Thomas S.:** Yeah, I agree, and I think that this event and this display of poppies, and our ability to replicate it in the future is gonna be a big part of telling that story.

**[0:52:51]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, happy spring to all of you.

[0:52:53]

**Jerry Hester:** Thank you.

[0:52:55]

**Theo Mayer:** Thank you, gentlemen. Thomas Skolnicki is the university landscape architect at North Carolina State University. Benny Suggs, the director of North Carolina State's Alumni Association, and Jerry Hester is a World War I Centennial Commissioner. Learn more about the 100 cities, 100 memorials program at the link in the podcast notes, or by going to [ww1cc.org/100memorials](http://ww1cc.org/100memorials). That brings us to the buzz, the centennial of World War I this week in social media, with Katherine Akey. Katherine, what did you pick this week?

[0:53:30]

**Katherine Akey:** Hi, Theo. We celebrated St. Patrick's Day this past weekend, and in honor of that, I wanted to share two quick articles about the Irish and Irish-Americans of World War I that we shared on Facebook this past week. The first comes from NPR, and tells the story of a torpedoed Irish ship, and the cargo aboard that saved its sailor's lives. The ship was making its way across the Irish Sea, a favorite hunting ground for German U-boats, when it was struck by a torpedo and split in two. As the ship began to sink, sucking the sailors down into the water with it, the cargo floated up to the surface, barrels and barrels of the iconic Irish stout, Guinness. Holding onto the Guinness, the sailors drifted in the sea, and were rescued a few hours later. You can read the full story at the link in the podcast notes. To wrap up St. Patrick's Day, head to the Saratogian News, where they recently published an article about the experience of an Irish-American regiment, a part of the 42nd Rainbow Division, during the St. Patrick's Day of 1918. They celebrated the holiday just after having experienced some heavy losses at the hand of the Germans and their artillery. Read about their valiant efforts under intense German fire, and their celebration of the holiday at the link in the podcast notes. Finally, for this week you can head over to Mental Floss to take a World War I-era literacy test. With a rapidly growing armed forces drawn from all corners of the country and all segments of the population, officials and army leaders saw indications of life in the early 20th century. Nutrition and literacy in this cross-section of America were not at the levels they had expected. Though reading and writing were not necessarily the most important requirements for trench warfare, and indeed several combatants including Russia, Italy and Turkey had shockingly low rates of literacy in their ranks, the US became increasingly concerned with whether or not its soldiers were literate as the war picked up pace. Thousands of American soldiers couldn't read printed directions on basic military tasks, posing a potentially dangerous problem for the fledgling force. The army didn't implement its first major literacy program until the 1940s, but it did use a battery of yes or no questions to test literacy as new recruits came in during World War I. Some of the questions are quite simple, like, "Is coal white?" But they escalate in complexity to ones like, "Are members of the family usually regarded as guests?" And, "Are loquacious and voluble opposite in meaning?" You can take the test yourself, and read more about the pitfalls of this first literacy battery by visiting the link in the podcast notes. That's it this week in the buzz.

[0:56:05]

**Theo Mayer:** That's also it for this week's episode of World War I centennial news. Thank you for listening. We also want to thank our guests, Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author, Mike Shuster, curator for the great war project blog, Lynn Heidelbaugh, curator at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Dr. Francoise Bonnell, director of the US Army Women's Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia, Nancy Furstinger, animal lover and author about animals, Saul Dibb, director of the feature film, Journey's End, Thomas Skolnicki, Benny Suggs, and World War I Centennial Commissioner, Jerry Hester, for the 100 cities, 100 memorials project at North Carolina State University, Katherine Akey, the commission social media director, and the line producer for the show. A shoutout to Eric Marr, as well as our intern, John Morelis, for their great research assistance, and 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, including this podcast. 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 across the country, and of course we're building America's national World War I memorial in Washington, DC. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and library, as well as the Star Foundation for their support. The podcast can be found on our website at [ww1cc.org/cn](http://ww1cc.org/cn). On iTunes, Google Play, TuneIn, Podbean, Stitcher Radio on-demand, or using your smart speaker, just say, "Play WW1 centennial news podcast." We're excited to announce that as of this week, you can listen to us on Spotify. Search WWI centennial news. Our Twitter and Instagram handles are both @WW1CC, and we're on Facebook at WW1 Centennial. 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.

[0:58:53]

**Speaker 12:** (singing)

[0:58:53]

**Theo Mayer:** So long.  
**[0:58:56]**