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10 speakers (Theo Mayer, Katherine Akey, Dr. Lengel, Mike Shuster, Clip voice1, Clip voice 2, Clip voice 1, Barney McCoy, Kenneth Davis, Steven Kelly)

[0:00:09]

**Theo Mayer:** Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 70. It's about World War I then. What was happening a hundred years ago this week and it's about World War I now. News and updates about the centennial and the commemoration. This week Dr. Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, and I sit down for our May 1918 preview roundtable. Mike Schuster from the Great War Project blog with a story of conflict within the allied forces. Author Kenneth C. Davis shares the story of influenza in 1918. Professor Barney McCoy gives us insights into the upcoming documentary Black Jack Pershing: Love and War. Dr. Steve Kelly with the 100 cities, 100 Memorial project from Brownwood, Texas. Katherine Akey with the commemoration of World War I in social media and a whole lot more. On World War I Centennial News, a weekly podcast brought to you by the U.S. 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. Before we get going today, I wanted to tell you about some great new features for the World War I Centennial News Podcast. First of all, you can now listen to the latest episodes of World War I Centennial News on YouTube, if you happen to prefer listening that way. Something I think is really exciting and useful when you go to our podcast website at [ww1cc.org/CN](http://ww1cc.org/CN) (Charlie Nancy). When you click the read more button of the episode, just below the highlights, you will find the full and accurate transcript of the show. But, that's not all it's interactively linked to an audio player. With it, you can scan or search, the text of the transcript. Wherever you double-click in the transcript, the audio will play. Or if you are listening and want to copy and paste a segment of the transcript for your newsletter, your school report or your blog, just pause and scan down the transcript and the section you're listening to is highlighted in blue. This very cool, new interactive transcript technology that's been provided by a great little startup called Jotengine. We have added it to make our podcast even more useful for students, teachers and everyone who wants to share the story of the war that changed the world. Alright now, the first week of every month, we invite you to our preview roundtable where Dr. Ed Lengel, Katherine Akey and I had a talk about the coming month and the key events that happened 100 years ago. The question on the table as we sit down is, what were the big stories and themes in May of 1918. What follows is our conversation. Okay guys so what's the overall dynamic for the month of May 1918?

[0:03:23]

**Katherine Akey:** It's pretty slow in the first half and then the last week it just gets crazy...

[0:03:27]

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah.

[0:03:27]

**Katherine Akey:** ... And it's June and June is crazy.

[0:03:30]

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah. It's just kaboom.

[0:03:33]

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, what do you think the big theme for May is?

[0:03:35]

**Dr. Lengel:** In May 1918, the American forces are preparing for offensive action. We're really entering the war now on a large scale and we're not just defending in the trenches. But, we're actually getting out of the trenches and attacking the Germans. As the Germans begin their own final large-scale offensives towards the spring and into the summer. We're going to be pulled into some of the most important battles not only of World War I but of American history generally.

[0:04:07]

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, that's a pretty powerful statement. Katherine, the Germans go for a new offensive don't they?

[0:04:12]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah, this is their third in a row. The Germans are calling it the Blucher-York Offensive. Now this one is in another totally new part of the line, it's in central France near the Chemin des Dames areas that have seen a lot of fighting. The ideas being they want to sort of hold down the allied forces in central France. And, keep them from

reinforcing the forces that just got attacked in the second offensive which was hitting the ports. I think an important thing to mention about it, is they are hitting central France, they are trying to bog down the allies, and they are actually really successful for the first couple of days. They actually overrun French defenses that are really really run down and inadequate and this is hitting at the very end of May. It starts on the 27th and they make it within about 50 miles of Paris.

**[0:05:08]**

**Theo Mayer:** Ed, what's their strategy at this point?

**[0:05:10]**

**Dr. Lengel:** Well, just to build a little bit on what Katherine was saying first of all. The first day of the German offensive looks like a total disaster for the allies. The French forces rake in multi-stops, their fleeing for the rear. But, as Katherine says they really recouped themselves within a day or two. Over the next several days, the French fight very very hard indeed against the German offensive. However, if you look at American accounts of this period you still have these persistent images of the French troops fleeing, the French troops running away. They really pretty misleading, 'cause the French were fighting hard. The German strategy for this portion of the offensive again was to suck reserves away toward the south, toward the Chemin des Dames, so that the Germans could then resume the offensive in the north at a later date. But, it really doesn't work out that way.

**[0:06:07]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, what the Americans are doing is starting to change a lot too. There are more of them and the posture is being to change isn't it?

**[0:06:14]**

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah, there is a growing perception that we need to launch a set-piece assault on the German lines at some point. Right now, Pershing and members of his staff are working to select that spot. It doesn't need to be a strategically important spot. It doesn't need to even be a tactically important spot. It's just somewhere where they can get some good publicity and show that the Americans are going into the fight. They're going to settle upon the site of Cantigny, which is along the in the south.

**[0:06:48]**

**Theo Mayer:** And the strategy is to get out of the trenches?

**[0:06:50]**

**Dr. Lengel:** The strategy is to get out and sock the Germans in the nose and make them bleed if possible. So that we can get use to a more offensive style of warfare.

**[0:07:00]**

**Theo Mayer:** The German position is starting to fray a bit because they are overextended. There was a report we had last week from Mike that they're starting to worry about re-enforcements from the east because they are being polluted by the Bolsheviks right?

**[0:07:17]**

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah, that's actually really quite ironic in a lot of ways. The Germans are the ones who helped sneak... Was it Lenin?

**[0:07:26]**

**Theo Mayer:** Yeah

**[0:07:26]**

**Katherine Akey:** Out of Switzerland and send him back to Russia as a kind of psychological virus to undermine Russia and that worked. I guess what they didn't expect was their troops being exposed to that... They are not inoculated against Bolshevism. So, they are worried bringing them back to the western front. They are worried about that ideology spreading, morale is super, super low and actually, you know, basically, the reason that the German army during this third offensive heads for Paris is because they overrun the French. Ludendorff says, Oh my gosh! This is our chance let's go to Paris. Let's draw the allies into a big battle.

**[0:08:09]**

**Dr. Lengel:** It's also important to point out that the morale of the German troops is really beginning to crumble. I have a wonderful quotation from a German staff officer who watched the final German assaults toward the end of May and he watched after a couple of days. Their determination to fight just dissolving. He says "The horseplay which I saw, much to my surprise, of the men of the division on the march, when they put on straw hats, woman's apparel, etc..

And decorated themselves with flags and ribbons, must be countered with all means possible as through these things discipline is slackened." It really shows they are beginning to fall out of line, get into plundering. That in some ways they are giving up on the cause before these offensives are even over.

[0:08:59]

**Theo Mayer:** Wow! Ed, earlier you mentioned that this third offensive is really setting up the upcoming battle at Château-Thierry. Can you talk a little about that?

[0:09:08]

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah, the German offensive of May 27th as Katherine pointed out is going to lead directly to a number of major battles. Because, it sucks three American divisions, the first, second, and third, into the line along the Marne river. It will lead first of all toward the Battle of Château-Thierry, which the third division will be involved in. Then, the great battle of Belleau Wood, at the very beginning of June. Where the second division with its marine brigade and also its army brigade comes into action.

[0:09:40]

**Katherine Akey:** I have a good figure about the number of Americans we have in France. By, late May, by the time Cantigny offensive happens, that the Americans have planned. Which by the way that lands on May 28th. That is happening at the same time the German offensive is landing. The Americans have planned this attack and they take and hold territory from the Germans. We have about 650,000 Americans soldiers in France at that point. But, that number is going up by 10,000 every day. They're not all in the front lines yet. That continues to be a point of conflict in May for the allied forces. But, they are coming in, in huge numbers. As we said in a previous roundtable, maybe back in April, we're getting to the point in mid-June, not this month, not in May, but, in June where the allied forces will outnumber the Germans on the western front. A familiar name, actually, was involved in holding of Cantigny and that is Theodore Roosevelt Jr. His other brother, Quintin, is still alive and fighting in the air service at the same time.

[0:10:50]

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah and Teddy Jr. Is gonna continue to fight with American forces through into the summer. He'll be wounded as well. One of the most important things about Cantigny is, it's a collaborative, multi-national combined arms action in which French tanks and French engineers will play a role right alongside American infantry. This may, in fact, be the very first battle in American history in which tanks are employed.

[0:11:20]

**Katherine Akey:** And French tanks at that too.

[0:11:22]

**Dr. Lengel:** That's right.

[0:11:23]

**Katherine Akey:** That's cool.

[0:11:23]

**Theo Mayer:** Are they French built Renaults?

[0:11:25]

**Dr. Lengel:** They were not Renaults in this case. They were these bizarre things called Saint Chamonds that were big clunky infantry support tanks.

[0:11:36]

**Theo Mayer:** Interesting. All of this feels like there is some kind of dynamic change in the process. Is that true?

[0:11:43]

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah, I don't think we've reached the primary turning point yet. We're certainly changing direction. The allies are changing direction and beginning to shift over from the defensive to the offensive. Generally, Marshal Ferdinand Fosh is beginning to think in terms of an overall strategy that will be designed to end the war in 1918. With a view toward creating the best possible circumstances for a peace treaty for France as well as Haig's point of view for Great Britain. It's ironic whereas before they were looking towards potentially ending the war in 1919 or 1920. By now, with the American forces in large numbers on the western front, the British and French want to end the war in 1918 before the Americans can really begin to play too major of a role and in some ways dictate a peace.

[0:12:41]

**Theo Mayer:** What I find fascinating is that just four, six weeks ago the attitude was we maybe done for.

**[0:12:49]**

**Dr. Lengel:** Yeah but the German offensives have despite the early panic that they created and then the brief panic again created on May 27th at Chemin des Dames. They have not even come close to realizing any major strategic victories. The allies are a little bit underwhelmed by them. They expected them to push harder and push further than they did. They find their own forces are gathering strength that the Americans are really boosting overall strength on the western front. I think by May they have a sense that the allies are going to win this war.

**[0:13:24]**

**Theo Mayer:** To me that's a major rotation.

**[0:13:27]**

**Dr. Lengel:** It is. Yeah.

**[0:13:29]**

**Theo Mayer:** One of the things that happens this month, happens in the war this guy Eddie Rickenbacker comes online. Any comments on the air war?

**[0:13:36]**

**Katherine Akey:** I know at the beginning of May, the Fokker D. VII comes out. Which is arguably the best fighter plane put out during the war. The Germans have that going for them at the beginning of May. But, they don't really hold the sky in 1918. We've talked about that a little bit. They do have some bombing raids. The first American DH4s come in. We've spoken about that on the podcast before. The American built DH4s, finally get here...

**[0:14:08]**

**Theo Mayer:** The Liberty engines... Yeah.

**[0:14:10]**

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah... So those make their way over. Raoul Lufbery gets killed in May, on the 19th.

**[0:14:17]**

**Theo Mayer:** In fact there's gonna be a commemoration for him coming up that we've talked about on the show as well.

**[0:14:24]**

**Dr. Lengel:** To this point, the only aerial heroes that the United States has are the men of the Lafayette Escadrille who have of course volunteered before we entered the war. There is so much publicity that's given to the Air Aces from Great Britain and France as well as Baron von Richthofen of Germany. There's certainly a sense that we need to compete in the skies as well.

**[0:14:50]**

**Katherine Akey:** You know if you look at the timeline for May, Rickenbacker and Campbell both become American Aces by the end of May and Raoul Lufbery dies and the Red Baron has died. It kind of almost looks like the big transitioning moment for the characters in the war in the sky.

**[0:15:09]**

**Theo Mayer:** In the U.S. There is some air news as well. We start an air mail postal service.

**[0:15:14]**

**Katherine Akey:** Yes. This is a nerdy passion of mine. I think the establishment of the U.S. Air Mail Service is really really interesting. It gets started May 15th with a line going between New York, Philly, and D.C. It's only running during the day because they have to navigate using landmarks. It takes until the 30s for us to get really well established in nighttime airmail routes. But, over the course of 1918 until 1920 these airmail routes in the U.S. Just spread and spread and spread. It's a big transition for the U.S. And for this one piece of infrastructure.

**[0:15:51]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay, the most fascinating part of the story for me is that in February we told the story on the podcast about how the post service was putting out a call for bids to build these postal planes. Here we are in May, not only did they get the bids out, but, they got the responses back, they got the planes ordered, built, and put into service. America was moving at a pace, I can't even imagine in the context of today. It probably wasn't real smooth either.

**[0:16:19]**

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah, exactly. There built, they're going into service. There is a lot of hiccups at the beginning of this process. Pilots get lost, they fly the wrong direction, they follow the wrong railroad. They are actually using the railroads to navigate a lot of times. They can just latch onto a railroad, fly over it, and get to where they need to go. There is a lot of mail that gets lost. A lot of pilots get killed. It's a little bit of a rocky start. But, it's a start.

[0:16:44]

**Theo Mayer:** Well, then also on the U.S. Side, in mid-May, the congress passes the Sedition Act of 1918, which makes the Espionage Act seem mild and kind. This is pretty harsh. What's it about?

[0:16:58]

**Katherine Akey:** Basically, the biggest point of the Sedition Act was it forbade the use of profane, abusive, undermining, I think they used the word scurrilous language about the government, the flag, the armed forces, anything like that. If you said anything bad about the government, you could be put in jail for five to twenty years.

[0:17:23]

**Theo Mayer:** And, people were.

[0:17:24]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah, people were, exactly.

[0:17:26]

**Theo Mayer:** We will be reporting on that in the coming month because it's pretty craconing.

[0:17:31]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah.

[0:17:32]

**Theo Mayer:** Then, there is a little note of hope for woman's votes. What's that about?

[0:17:37]

**Katherine Akey:** Yeah, the House of Representatives passes an amendment allowing women to vote but the Senate does not pass that particular version of the amendment. So, it's a step forward but it's gonna take awhile still for women to get the right to vote at a federal level.

[0:18:01]

**Theo Mayer:** So, that's an overview of the coming month. But, now let's join Mike Shuster. Former NPR corresponded and curator for the Great War Project blog as he explores another key battle that plays out on the western front. The battle between allied generals and American General John J. Pershing. They don't see eye-to-eye at all. Black Jack Pershing was not going to waver in his belief about how the U.S. Army needs to engage. This sounds like it was more than just a little contentious Mike.

[0:18:32]

**Mike Shuster:** Putting it mildly Theo. A headline reads "The Allies Quarrel: Disagreement over how to use American Forces. Written in France what U.S. Troops in the trenches now. Pershing wants own control. This is special to the Great War Project. As the American presence in France grows, finally, into a significant fighting force, the debate over how the American soldiers should be most effectively deployed generates increasing rancor. The French and British want to throw the Americans into the front lines immediately. They want the Americans to supplement current ongoing fighting operations under the command of the French and British generals. General Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, wants to organize an American army under his command exclusively, planning for the war in 1919. The generals meet in France on May 1st, a century ago. The British and French leaders press the American commander aggressively, reports historian Martin Gilbert, "to bring the existing American troops into the trenches at once. Marshall Foch, the Supreme Allied Commander, "went so far as to say that unless this was done, and American infantrymen and machine-gun units sent forward immediately, all would be lost. General Pershing is unmoved. "I do not suppose that the American army is to be in entirely at the disposal of the French and British commands." He insists: "We must look forward to the time when we have our own army." British Prime Minister David Lloyd George tries to straddle the two sides: "At the present time, however," he declares, "we are engaged in what is perhaps the decisive battle of the war." If we lose this battle, he declares somewhat sarcastically, we'll need the merchant ships to take home what's left of the British and American armies. The threat had no effect on Pershing. In fact, he argues more aggressively, "the time may come," he declares, "when the American army will have to stand the brunt of this war, and it is not wise to fritter away our resources in this manner." That's not a response the French and British respond to well. Marshall Foch replies, "that the war might be over before the American army was ready to enter the battle." Reports historian Gilbert, the British Prime Minister retorts: "Can't you see that the war will be lost

unless we get this support?" Pershing: "Gentlemen, I have thought this program over and will not be coerced." Stalemate on the battlefield, stalemate among the Allies. The mood among the Allied leaders turns even more unpleasant. Just since March 21st a century ago, Lloyd George tells Pershing, British casualties had been 280,000, and the French more than 340,000 men killed or wounded. "If the United States does not come to our aid," he tells Pershing, "then perhaps the enemy's calculations will be correct. If France and Britain should have to yield, their defeat would be honorable, for they would have fought to their last man, while the United States would have to stop without having put into the line more men than little Belgium." Stalemate among the Allies indeed. And that is news from the Great War Project this week a century ago.

**[0:21:38]**

**Theo Mayer:** Thank you, Mike. Mike Shuster from The Great War Project blog. The link to Mike Shuster's Great War Project blog and the post are in the podcast notes. It is a changing of the guard, for the War in the sky over Europe 100 years ago this April and May. In April 1918, Germany's Manfred von Richthofen falls, and in May America's Raoul Lufbery. One of the new names that rises among these ashes is that of a Columbus, Ohio native. Every bit as much of a flamboyant character as the early fliers. Before joining the service, he was a famed race car driver who set a land speed record at Daytona of 134 miles per hour. A tough guy, technically too old to be accepted into flight school, and a guy who claimed he was afraid of heights. His name was Eddie Rickenbacker. Born the oldest son of 5 siblings in 1890, young Eddie had to step up to become the major family breadwinner, quitting school at only 12 years old, when his father died in a construction accident. A tough beginning for what would turn out to be quite a guy! Having developed a passion for the new technology of the internal combustion engine. By 16, he had landed a job with a race car driver named Lee Frayer, who liked the scrawny, scrappy kid, and let him ride in major races as his mechanic. By 1912, the young 22-year-old was driving his own races and winning! And crashing! And surviving! When war broke out in 1917, Rickenbacker volunteered. But at 27 years old, he was already too old to get accepted to flight school. Something the speed demon really wanted to do! Because he had a reputation as a race car driver, he was enlisted as a sergeant and sailed to Europe as a driver. There is a lot of lore that he drove John J. Pershing, but generally, that's disputed. However, he did get an assignment to drive Billy Mitchell's flashy twin-six-cylinder Packard and talked himself into flight school through the boss. His World War I flying exploits are legendary and the kid from Ohio came home a national hero. But, that was just the beginning of a colorful life for a scrappy and scrawny kid, turned Ace of Aces, airline president; famed raft survivor of a plane ditching in the Pacific during World War II; potential presidential candidate, who lived large and in full living color; and finally died in 1973, at the age 83, having launched his career as a World War I fighter pilot in the war in sky 100 years ago this week. For videos about World War I, 100 years ago and from a more European perspective, check out our friends at the Great War Channel on Youtube. New episodes include The First Tank-on-Tank Battle in History and Tank Crew Training with more German Tank Prototypes. Plus, the Finnish Jägers in World War I. See their videos by searching for the Great War on Youtube or by following the link in the podcast notes. Alright, it's time to fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. This part of the podcast isn't about the past, it focuses on the now and how we are commemorating the centennial of World War I. This week in Commission News, we heard with great distress that the lovely Oak sapling from Belleau Wood, that had been planted by Presidents Macron and Trump on the White House lawn last week, had mysteriously gone missing. One day it was there and the next it just wasn't! Much to our relief, the mystery was resolved quickly. It turns out that the tree, which has made its journey from Europe with Macron had to be put into temporary quarantine. A typical procedure for living agricultural goods imported from overseas. It'll be put back to its original spot as soon as it gets out of detention! We put a link to the story in the podcast notes! We have a spotlight on the media for you. The spotlight is on U.S. General of the Armies, the American Expeditionary Forces commander, General John J. Pershing.

**[0:26:09]**

**Clip voice 1:** John J. Pershing commanded American troops against a veteran German army. His nickname was Black Jack. A six star general who was the highest ranking active duty officer in American history. Black Jack Pershing was the personification of America at war.

**[0:26:27]**

**Clip voice 2:** John J. Pershing for all of his flaws and problems as a true American son of a bitch.

**[0:26:34]**

**Clip voice 1:** Buried beneath Pershing's iron shell were the wounds of a tragedy so deep, Black Jack could never speak of it.

**[0:26:41]**

**Theo Mayer:** That clip is from a new documentary, "Black Jack Pershing: Love and War". Today, we are joined by the film's producer, Barney McCoy, professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Barney, Welcome!

**[0:26:55]**

**Barney McCoy:** Hello Theo and hey thanks for letting me join the podcast.

**[0:26:58]**

**Theo Mayer:** Happy to have you here. Barney, I understand you are film looks not just at Pershing the general but also Pershing the man who is also a guy suffered and endure a lot of personal tragedy and heartbreak in his life. Can you give us an overview of the story of the film?

**[0:27:13]**

**Barney McCoy:** Absolutely! You know World War I when we talk about this all the time it's so profoundly shaped this country. But, it's still the war Americans know the least about. I guess you could say the same thing about John Pershing. What I am trying to do with my documentary is introduce Americans to Pershing through the voices of historians and Pershing family members and even Pershing himself. Through his private letters and diaries. What we are trying to do here is describe Pershing and Americans extraordinary sacrifices and I guess you could say accomplishments, that helped to turn the tide of World War I in favor of the allies and forcing an end to the war. But, also revealing the tremendous tragedy that Pershing suffers. That began in 1915, less than two years before America gets involved with World War I. His wife Frankie and the couple's three young daughters were killed in a fire at the commandant's residence in San Francisco. Pershing's young son, Warren, was the only survivor of that fire. At the time Pershing was thousands of miles away, commanding U.S. Troops who were patrolling the Texas/Mexican border because there were reports that Mexican revolutionary general, Pancho Villa and his men, were going to make cross the border raids. So, Pershing finds out this news thousands of miles away from San Francisco and his family. He was just so devastated by that loss that he would never talk publicly about that tragedy for the rest of his life. It was a loss that would continue to haunt him too when he commanded two million U.S. Troops who were fighting in Europe in World War I. This is a documentary, "Black Jack Pershing: Love and War", that kind of gives us that personal view of Pershing and kind of re-frames a critical role that he played as commander of the expeditionary forces in World War I.

**[0:28:55]**

**Theo Mayer:** Now, you made this documentary by incorporating hundreds of U.S. Army Signal Corps photographs and films from the National Archives. What was the research process like?

**[0:29:05]**

**Barney McCoy:** This is probably the most deeply researched documentary I've ever produced. We took multiple trips, thousands of hours spent examining and digitizing personal papers, and amazing photographs and films from the National Archives and the Library of Congress. We visited the Jesuit Archives in St. Louis where we found love letters. Then, the Pershing family materials in New York City and here in Nebraska in the state historical archives and so forth.

**[0:29:32]**

**Theo Mayer:** Did you come across anything particularly surprising as you were poking around in the archives?

**[0:29:36]**

**Barney McCoy:** Archival discoveries, that's a good question. I was just stunned by all the destruction and the devastation. So many cities and village in France, Belgium, and Italy that just were reduced to rubble. They think about, here we have more than a million U.S. Troops fighting Germany in the pivotal 47 day battle of the Meuse-Argonne in the fall of 1918. When that battle began the rugged Meuse forest was just beautiful. Filled with pines and hardwood trees, some of them standing 70 feet tall or more. Then, when the fighting ended in November of 1918 all that you could see, all that remained of that Meuse forest, was splintered tree trunks. Just baron, muddy, shell holed barb wire landscape stretch as far as the eye could see. That to me was just shocking.

**[0:30:28]**

**Theo Mayer:** How did you get involved in the film? How did that happen?

**[0:30:31]**

**Barney McCoy:** Serendipity. I got a phone call here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from a former member of our University reserve officers training core. ROTC as it's called today. Back in the 1890's Pershing had commanded the cadet program here. He was a first lieutenant at the time. The person who called me he said, this Pershing guy, I think his life story could make an interesting documentary. So, that is kind of where I began that whole process of trying to found out if there were enough materials on him. Thanks in large part to the National Archives and the Library of Congress, the answer as I found was, yes, we could do this documentary. Thus began that long five-year road to produce "Black Jack Pershing: Love and War".

**[0:31:15]**

**Theo Mayer:** A very important question for your Barney. When and where can I see the film?

**[0:31:20]**

**Barney McCoy:** We are traveling across the country this year Theo, holding private screenings for "Black Jack Pershing: Love and War" at film festivals and other venues. In fact, including right there the National Archives. May 24th you can go online and see our screening schedule and you can also find out how to schedule a screening in your own hometown by visiting our website. That's [www.JJPershing.com](http://www.JJPershing.com) and we also expect to make the documentary available for Video on Demand release later on this year on Amazon Prime.

**[0:31:49]**

**Theo Mayer:** Barney, thank you for coming on and telling us the story.

**[0:31:52]**

**Barney McCoy:** Thank you very much Theo. I'm exciting to share this story with America and I appreciate having this opportunity to talk about it.

**[0:31:59]**

**Theo Mayer:** Barney McCoy is a professor of journalism at University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the producer of "Black Jack Pershing: Love and War". We've included links to the film's trailer, website, and upcoming screenings in the podcast notes! This week For Remembering Veterans, we're turning our attention away from the battlefield and looking at a phenomenon that took more lives than the bullets or shells. With us to explore the story of the Flu pandemic 100 years ago, is Kenneth C. Davis, bestselling author of the I Don't Know Much About book series. In fact, during our editorial meeting, when we were discussing the interview our intern, John enthused that these books were on his shelf as he was growing up. Well, Kenneth's new book is coming out on May 15th and it is called, "More Deadly Than War: The Hidden Story of the Spanish Flu and the First World War". A fascinating subject by a wonderful author. Kenneth, Welcome to the podcast.

**[0:32:57]**

**Kenneth Davis:** It is a great pleasure to be with you. Thanks so much for having me.

**[0:33:01]**

**Theo Mayer:** Ken, Let's start with the name of this flu pandemic. Patient zero wasn't from Spain were they?

**[0:33:07]**

**Kenneth Davis:** No, the Spanish Flu was not Spanish. The Spanish Flu as it was known mostly in England and America. The truth is that we really don't know even to this date where it originated. Of course, it has other names in different parts of the world. Everyone seems to want to blame someone else for it. The Russians called it the German Pest, blacks in South Africa called it the White Disease, whites called it the Black Disease. It is an interesting phenomenon. But, the Spanish flu came from the idea that Spain was a neutral nation during the war. Its newspapers were not censored unlike those like most of the allies, which didn't want to report bad news. Like, flu pandemics. When the Spanish press reported that the King of Spain and many other Spanish people were down with the flu the name was attached just about 100 years ago. It happened in May of 1918. By that time, American soldiers who were certainly carrying the virus were landing in France in large numbers. They most certainly were responsible for the widespread nature of the flu coming 100 years ago.

**[0:34:22]**

**Theo Mayer:** So, how big and bad was it? I mean I have heard varying numbers. But, whatever they were I've heard is staggering in scale.

**[0:34:29]**

**Kenneth Davis:** They are staggering numbers. Right now the estimates are up to about 100 million people dead worldwide. That includes 18.5 to 20 million in India alone. That's an extraordinary number by itself but it was also 5% of the world population at the time. In the United States, the numbers are now as high in terms of estimates as 675,000 Americans dying. The population of the United States was about a third of what it is today. To try and project those numbers out would be staggering. It was completely related to the war in so many ways. The flu spread rapidly in the army camps, the camp convents as they were called. Where young men were preparing to go to the trenches of Europe.

**[0:35:20]**

**Theo Mayer:** One question Ken. Why was it so especially deadly?

**[0:35:25]**

**Kenneth Davis:** What was unusual about this flu was that it was killing young people. Young men in particular in the training camps so rapidly and so violently. It is this idea that their immune systems were so powerful and attacked this mutant virus so powerfully that was the reason the level of mortality was so high. There are reports that sound like Apocalypse now. One doctor in New York City reported in fact that there were thousands of people coming in, they were spitting blood and they were blue as huckleberries. It's an astonishing image to think about. This was the most deadly pandemic in modern history and probably the most deadly pandemic after the Black Death of the Middle Ages. It struck with such suddenness. That's what made it so extraordinary. Because of the war, it went around the world so quickly. It certainly may have had an impact on the outcome of the conflict to some degree. There's a discussion for instance that the German offensive in the spring and early summer of 1918 was halted because half of a million German soldiers were sick with the flu. Certainly, affected the morale of the German people. They were already under extreme distress because of the economic quarantine and they were half a million people sick in Germany with the flu.

**[0:36:49]**

**Theo Mayer:** Interesting. When I was speaking with Katherine during our editorial meeting, one of the things she had wondered was there was so much progress with medicine at the time and other areas, how did medicine react to this in particular. Or, didn't they?

**[0:37:04]**

**Kenneth Davis:** They were certainly trying. They were doing everything possible. They knew that more soldiers die from disease and related problems than actual battlefield wounds. But, they didn't really have the medical wherewithal at that point. A virus was still unknown and really unseen. The word virus existed, people knew what flu was and what the symptoms were but they didn't know it was caused by a virus. Virus' had never been seen because they are much smaller than bacteria, which had been seen. There was very little medically in the terms of what was in the doctor's kit at the time to deal with flu. Even today, there is no cure for the common cold, there certainly wasn't back then. All they had was aspirin. When the flu hit in America because we were in the midst of the war a lot of people were convinced that it was German plan. A German plot somehow. That U-boats had poisoned the water or that German spies were putting germs in the movie theaters. There was even the suggestion that aspirin was tainted because Bayer was a German company.

**[0:38:14]**

**Theo Mayer:** As a closing question, do you think that this deadly global event still echos around today?

**[0:38:20]**

**Kenneth Davis:** Oh! Absolutely! That is one of the reasons I wrote this book. I was just talking about the fear and the propaganda that drove some of the reactions to the Spanish flu 100 years ago. I think that we can see some of those things today. When we dismiss science for instance or we dismiss what is sound medical advice. Woodrow Wilson and General Pershing certainly dismissed sound medical advice. They were told to quarantine some of the camps. They did not. That probably helped spread this very very violent and lethal disease.

**[0:38:56]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, Ken, thank you so much for coming in and speaking with us today, really fascinating subject.

**[0:39:01]**

**Kenneth Davis:** Thank you.

**[0:39:03]**

**Theo Mayer:** Kenneth C. Davis is the bestselling author of the Don't Know Much About Books series. Don't miss his upcoming, "More Deadly Than War: The Hidden History of the Spanish Flu and the First World War" which will be available from your favorite bookseller, May 15. We have put links to his work and upcoming events in the podcast notes. For World War I, War Tech, we are going to tell you the amazing and tragic story of a World War I era technologist, the German chemist Fritz Haber. Fritz Haber is one of the most underappreciated actors of World War I whose discovery spanned from the life-giving to the life taking. He was celebrated with a Nobel Prize for developing chemical fertilizers and equally vilified for another invention, chlorine gas. Tragically, one of his most vocal critics was his wife, Clara, who was not only an ardent pacifist but an accomplished chemist herself. The invention of what is known as the Haber Process was the result of wartime necessities. Even before World War I, German military strategists recognized the potential of a total British blockade on their country, which would do tremendous damage to their ability to import the materials required to manufacture weapons. One particularly vulnerable commodity were the nitrates imported from South America, used in the development of ammonia in explosives. Haber discovered a new method of creating ammonia by combining nitrogen and hydrogen gases. Since ammonia is also used as a fertilizer, the Haber Process allowed for the mass production of agricultural fertilizers, transforming agriculture worldwide. Much of the reason of why the world is able to support a population of more than seven billion is the use

of these fertilizers, which all have their roots in the Haber Process. And for his method of creating artificial ammonia, Haber was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry 100 years ago in 1918. But, as we said, another of Haber's invention would come to overshadow this incredible discovery. When World War I finally broke out in 1914, the quick victory expected by many military generals soon became a slow, bloody struggle to shift the front lines only a few miles either way. The German High Command quickly realized they wanted a new, fearsome weapon to break the stalemate. It was the strongly patriotic Haber who came up with the solution. By combining the ammonia that he extracted from the air with chlorine, he could produce a gas that would asphyxiate all who encountered it. Haber was on hand personally when his chlorine gas was first released by the German military at the Second Battle of Ypres. Over 5,000 men, not recognizing this new weapon's true danger, were quickly overcome, and they were found by their fellow soldiers with their faces turned black, shirts torn open in a desperate search for air. Germany's use of poison gas at Ypres would set a precedent for an unprecedented tactic, one that would scar many men for a lifetime after the war ended. People around the world were horrified by Haber's new, deadly invention, but among the most repelled was Haber's own wife, Clara. At a party celebrating his promotion to Captain as a result of his work in poison gas nine days after the test at Ypres, Clara directly confronted her husband, calling him morally bankrupt and his efforts monstrous. Haber ignored her. Later that night, no longer able to stand her marriage, Clara shot herself in the garden with her husband's pistol. Haber left the next day to supervise another gas attack on the western front, leaving his young son to grieve alone. After the war ended in Germany's defeat, the brokenhearted Haber would try to single handedly pay back the burdensome war reparations by inventing a new process to distill dissolved gold floating in the ocean, an ultimately unsuccessful endeavor. There is a final, tragic and ironic twist on Haber's legacy. During World War II, when the Nazi regime was looking for ways to best murder their many classes of undesirables, they came upon one of Haber's products, a pesticide called Zyklon. The Nazi authorities used this chemical to gas millions of innocent victims in the Holocaust, including the Jewish German Haber's own friends and family. Fritz Haber, a brilliant man whose fertilizer invention have fed billions, whose weaponized inventions killed millions, whose wife shot herself in protest and whose family and friends were finally gassed in concentration camps with his own invention. An epic, tragic and another amazing story of the war that changed the world and this weeks World War I, War Tech. We have links for you in the podcast notes. This week for our 100 Cities, 100 Memorials segment, the \$200,000 matching grant challenge to rescue and focus on our local World War I memorials. We are updating one of the very first projects that we profiled on the podcast. Joining us again for an update on the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials project from Brownwood, Texas is Dr. Steven Kelly. The immediate past president of the Central Texas Veterans Memorial. Steven, welcome back to the show.

**[0:44:45]**

**Steven Kelly:** Thank you very much it's great to be here and thank you for inviting us.

**[0:44:49]**

**Theo Mayer:** So Steve, the last time we spoke about your project, it was just a candidate. But, since then, it's been designated as an official World War I Centennial Memorial. Congratulations.

**[0:44:58]**

**Steven Kelly:** Thank you very much.

**[0:44:59]**

**Theo Mayer:** For your project you moved a World War I memorial from behind a bush at an old, closed high school to a new memorial site at your local American Legion post 196. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

**[0:45:12]**

**Steven Kelly:** Yes, the memorial was placed in 1919 at the old high school. The high school closed in 1961. It had been behind the bush and the World War I memorial became weathered, forgotten, illegible. We started building a new memorial, the Central Texas Veteran's Memorial, to honor the 259 Brown County residents who died from World War I forward. The first thing we did was move the memorial to a position of honor. The second thing we did was found the 39 Brown County veterans who died in World War I and put a granite tablet there with their names on it. The third thing we did, was took the illegible words from the old 1919 memorial and put those on a bronze plaque so everybody could read it. That's just one sentence and it goes like this "To those men from Brown County who rendered valance service in the world war. Who feared not, who believe in the sacred principals upon which this republic is founded. Who preferred death to slavery. Who signified a willingness to give their lives and to perpetuate democracy. This monument is reverently dedicated". The next thing we did was got a bronze plaque explaining our local sacrifices in World War I. It tells about the memorial. It tells about the 39 veterans from Brown County who died. It tells about Isham Smith whose a namesake of American Legion Post 196. He served with the first infantry division and I believe he was at the Battle of Cantigny on May 28th. But, did not die until June 14, 1918. The fifth thing that we did was got a bronze plaque which was a synopsis of World War I, the history and all casualties both for the allies and for the central powers.

[0:47:18]

**Theo Mayer:** That plague is an educational timeline isn't it?

[0:47:22]

**Steven Kelly:** Oh yes! Yes, yes. We have 12 granite tablets and now 14 bronze plaques that lineate a synopsis and causalities of all of the wars from World War I forward. We can use this to show future generations and teach future generations of the shared sacrifice that made our country great. Share the history with the grade school, high school and our local college.

[0:47:51]

**Theo Mayer:** Steve, what stage is the whole project at, at this point? I know you guys been working really hard at it. But, where is it at now?

[0:47:57]

**Steven Kelly:** We have decided that we're going to keep working. Since we last spoke, we've added a lot of bronze plaques; we have a new Korean War jeep; we just received a Vietnam War era UH1 Huey helicopter which we're renovating for display; we have a Congressional Medal of Honor area; one of our local citizens who was born here in 1878 received the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Philippine insurrection and fought in World War I as a major and we have a replica of his grave stone along with a synopsis of the Congressional Medal of Honor and his history. Also, we honor George Matthew Shelton who is the second Texan to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. In World War II we had a local man who received three Navy crosses and died in a submarine. He also has a Navy ship named after him, USS John Anderson Moore. We are continuing to work as we will continue to work. The work is never done.

[0:49:02]

**Theo Mayer:** Sounds like a pretty large space you are working in. How big is it?

[0:49:06]

**Steven Kelly:** It is fairly big. We have a one half mile walking trail around the memorial. It covers probably ten acres.

[0:49:16]

**Theo Mayer:** Wow! That's gonna be quite a resource for your community. That sounds great.

[0:49:20]

**Steven Kelly:** We hope it will be. We hope to share the history and sacrifices with everyone.

[0:49:27]

**Theo Mayer:** Thank you for coming on and giving us an update on your project from Brown County, Texas.

[0:49:32]

**Steven Kelly:** Thank you very much and we are very honored to be an official World War I Centennial Memorial.

[0:49:38]

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Steven Kelly is the immediate past president of the Central Texas Veterans Memorial in Brownwood, Texas. Learn more about the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials Program by following the links in the podcast notes or by going to [www.1CC.org/100memorials](http://www.1CC.org/100memorials) Welcome to our weekly feature, Speaking World War 1. Where we explore the words and phrases that are rooted in the war. Let's start by thinking, obsessive compulsive consumption. I heard a great analysis of our modern media times recently. It talked about the fact that in our new age, we no longer get stop cues for media consumption. You don't read the newspaper, you take in an endless stream of news feeds and tweets. You don't watch T.V., you find yourself awake on the couch at 3:00 am with just two episodes left to finish the fourth season of The Office, and you're not alone! Without stop cues the analysis went on, we are media binging all the time. And, that brings us to our Speaking World War I word for this week, binge. And, who would you have thought that that phrase made its way to the 21st century by way of the trenches. Binge was originally a Northern English term meaning to over-indulge. The word first appeared in printed form in 1854, with a clearly alcohol-related connotation. And, a connotation that may have carried forward for many of our listener to their college years with binge drinking. The term remained regional to Northern England until World War 1, when it spread through the English speaking forces and became standardized in the English lexicon. It also started being used to describe the obsessive compulsive, consumption of food. Which, led to the description of an eating disorder called binge and purge. So, now its meaning has expanded to any number of new categories: food, drink, media, entertainment, and well, many others. Binge: obsessive, compulsive, consumption, and this week's words for Speaking World War I. We have links for you in the podcast notes. For Articles and posts, here are some of the highlights from our weekly Dispatch newsletter which you can subscribe to at [www.ww1cc.org/subscribe](http://www.ww1cc.org/subscribe) all lowercase or through the podcast

notes. Headline: Two World War I nurses led the way for women in today's Wisconsin National Guard. Read the story of two women serving as Army nurses in World War I. Pioneering the opportunity for women to serve in every duty position in the Wisconsin National Guard. Headline: NARA is getting World War I Army Division records online, with citizen help. The National Archives Records Administration also known as NARA. Is getting citizen archivists to help make these records more accessible. If you'd like to help NARA transcribe these historic handwritten records, you can. There's a link in the podcast notes for you to get started. Headline: The studio that brought you Wallace and Grommit is creating an emotional World War I game. Read more about the new video game 11-11: Memories Retold, a narrative adventure about two World War I soldiers who meet under the most unlikely of circumstances. Headline: Doughboy MIA for week of April 30th. Read about Private Charles H. Holland, a native of Mississippi and member of the 2nd Division, 9th Infantry, Company L. Charles was wounded in action during the battle of Soissons. He was carried off to a field hospital and never seen nor heard of again. Finally, our selection from our World War I official online centennial merchandise store. This week, with Memorial Day coming up, it's your last chance to order our small, 8" X 12" World War I Centennial flags for Memorial Day. This is the year to display the memorial ground flags honoring your local fallen Doughboys! You'll be doing double honors, because a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the item goes to building America's National World War I Memorial at Pershing Park, in Washington DC. And, those are some of the headlines this week from the Dispatch Newsletter. Subscribe or read the newsletter online by following the links in the podcast notes. And that brings us to the buzz, the centennial of World War I this week in social media with Katherine Akey. Katherine, what are this week's picks?

**[0:54:23]**

**Katherine Akey:** Hey Theo! This week we shared a video on Facebook from one of the Commission's Commemorative partners, the French Centenaire. It shows the project undertaken by two Frenchmen to restore an American Doughboy's Harley-Davidson. Which they are now bringing to, and driving across America. The motorbike would have been used to carry messages behind the lines, and less than a thousand are thought to have made it to today. Watch the video and read an article about the project at the link in the podcast notes. We've also included a link to their Facebook page so you can follow their journey as they ride the bike across the U.S.. Also, on Facebook this week, we shared a photograph of a humble receipt from the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum. This week 100 years ago, the future president was a captain in the army, commanding a battery of field artillery on the western front. And, his birthday was coming up. So, his loving wife Bess ordered him a fruit cake, having it shipped to his 129th field artillery in France. The receipt shows her purchase from the Jones Store Company in Kansas City, Missouri. Likely a fruit cake would survive the journey and we hope he enjoyed it on his birthday on May 8th, 1918. And if you're wondering, it cost a whopping total of \$1.40, equivalent to about \$25 now, to both buy and send the birthday treat. See the receipt yourself at the link in the notes. Finally, this week, I wanted to point you towards a very thoughtful opinion piece from the Military Times website. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, a subject that has been deeply important to the success and wellbeing of our armed service members all throughout history. The article is entitled "A century after shell shock, struggle to address post-combat trauma continues". It opens up questions about our understanding of PTSD, and our relatively recent acceptance of trauma as a significant and common affliction. Read more about how World War I changed our understanding and treatment of PTSD at the link in the podcast notes. Don't worry we'll have guests on later this month to continue to address the topic. That's it for this week in the Buzz.

**[0:56:31]**

**Theo Mayer:** And, that wraps up the first week of May for 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; Kenneth C. Davis, author and historian; Barney McCoy, professor of journalism of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Dr. Steven Kelly with the 100 Cities, 100 Memorial project from Brownwood, Texas; Katherine Akey, World War I photography specialist and the line producer for the podcast. Many thanks to Mac Nelsen our sound editor as well as John Morreale our intern and Eric Marr for their great research assistance. And I am Theo Mayer - your host. The US World War One 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 are bringing the lessons of the 100 years ago into today's classrooms. We are helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country and of course we are 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 Starr Foundation for their support. The podcast can be found on our website at [ww1cc.org/cn](http://ww1cc.org/cn), now with our new interactive transcript feature for students, teachers and sharing. Or search for WW1 Centennial News on iTunes, Google Play, TuneIn, Podbean, Stitcher, Radio on Demand, Spotify or using your smart speaker, just say "Play WW1 Centennial News Podcast", and now also available on Youtube at WW1 Centennial. Our Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc and we are on Facebook @ww1centennial. Thank you for joining us. And don't forget to share the stories you are hearing here today about the war that changed the world! Talk about bingeing, I just got a note from a listener who decided to listen to all of 1917 from our World War I Centennial News podcast. Eating a pizza with every episode, washed down with a six pack. That sounds awful and I'm just kidding! So long!

[0:59:19]