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9 speakers (Theo, Mike, Ed, Monique, Rod, Percy, Michelle, Speaker 8, Katherine)

[0:00:01]

Theo: Just before we begin, we wanna wish the people of the Carolina's our hopes for a speedy recovery as you grapple with the consequences of Florence. Our thoughts and best wishes are with you. Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 89. It's about World War I then, what was happening 100 years ago, and it's about World War I now, news and updates about the centennial and the commemoration. I wanted to remind our listeners that each episode has an interactive transcript on our website that's ideal for teachers and students. Just go to the episode at www1cc.org/cn for Centennial News and click into the episode. Use control or option F, depending on your computer, to search the text in the transcript, then click play to listen to what you find. Or the other way, listen to the episode using the transcript player and what you're hearing will be highlighted. It's totally interactive and a great benefit for education activities like preparing lessons or writing papers because after all, it's more than just a podcast, it's an interactive experience about the war that changed the world. In today's episode, Mike Schuster gives us a high level look at the Battle at Saint Mihiel. Ed Langel digs into the details with some first person accounts and stories. We look at the war in the sky as Saint Mihiel becomes the testing field for the new De Haviland four planes. Then, we explore some of the news and headlines back in the US this week. US World War I Centennial Commissioner Monique Seefried joins us to tell us about the September commemoration events in Europe. Veteran businessman, citizen, historian, and author Nimrod Frazer joins us as we explore his work and the story of the Alabamians in World War I. Michelle Luthin and Percy Rosenbloom III share the 100 Cities/100 Memorials project in Jacksonville, Florida. And The Buzz, with Katherine Akey, where we highlight some of the World War I Centennial posts and stories from social media. World War I Centennial News is brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and the Star Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission and your host. Welcome to the show. This week, 100 years ago, the big focus is on a transformative battle, especially for General John J. Pershing and his newly minted US First Army and the fledgling US Army Air Service, led by a guy named Billy Mitchell. And a new tank corp led by none other than George Patton. The story plays out near a town called Saint Mihiel, where Germany has long held a major salient. Now, in military terms, a salient is a sort of triangular bulge that has been pushed deep into enemy territory. Germany captured the salient in the first three months of the war and has held it since October 1914. With that as a set up, let's jump into our centennial time machine and travel to the mid-days of September 1918. We're gonna open our exploration of the western front and the Battle at Saint Mihiel by turning to Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and the curator for the Great War Project blog.

[0:04:00]

Mike: Thank you, Theo. The headlines read, Huge American Presence on the Attack, German Morale Worse by the Day, A Sense of Looming Defeat, and this is special to the Great War Project. The battle for the Saint Mihiel salient begins in earnest in mid-September a century ago. It is fierce and there is a great American presence in the effort to drive the Germans out of the bulge in their line in northern France. Historian Martin Gilbert reports, when the battle began on September 12th, more than 200000 American troops supported by 48000 French moved forward in pouring rain along the 12 mile front. Then this startling fact, during the advance the American gunners fired 100000 rounds of phosgene gas shells. According to historian Gilbert, 9000 Germans are incapacitated in this gas attack and 50 Germans are killed. Much of this battle takes place in the air. The largest ever number of aircraft were in combat, Gilbert reports, with nearly 1500 aircraft, American, French, Italian, Belgian, Portuguese taking part. They are under American command. The Germans had no way of matching these number or the freshness and zeal of the Americans, many of whom were in action for the first time. Within 48 hours, the Americans had captured 13000 prisoners and 200 guns. The German high command was astounded by the swift, initial American success, but the Americans too had suffered in the battle for the San Mihiel salient. The Americans, reports historian Gilbert, had not won their victory without considerable loss. The American dead from this battle numbers some 4500, but it nevertheless is a considerable strategic achievement, the straightening of the salient, that is the removal of the bulge in the line and the liberation of Saint Mihiel town itself were important achievements. The salient, according to Gilbert, had been in German hands for four years. It had earlier resisted two French attacks. "It is as swift and neat an operation as any in the war," wrote the Manchester Guardian. And perhaps the most heartening of all its features is the proof it gives that the precision, skill, and imagination of American leadership is not inferior to the spirit of their troops. Gary Mead, as well as other historians points out that the Americans caught the Germans in retreat, but that doesn't lessen the significance of the victory at Saint Mihiel. Certainly the Germans were none the better for their retreat. "Fortunate, they may have been", writes Mead, "in capturing the Germans in retreat, but this relatively bloodless victory was a remarkably useful morale boost for the Allies." It was also a serious psychological blow to the Germans, even though they were conducting an orderly retreat. "The ceding of any ground in the coveted territory was a bitter blow," observes Gilbert. "The American soldiers had at last obtained the recognition they deserved." War

historian John Keegan reports an ever-stronger American army was taking an increasingly important part in operations. "Morale on the German side was proving worse by the day. There was a sense of looming defeat among the German army along the front line, certainly caused in part by the sheer number of Americans arriving daily at the front."

[0:07:20]

Theo: Mike Schuster is the curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. Continuing the story of the Battle of Saint Mihiel, we're joined by Dr. Edward Langel. The name of the podcast segment is "America Emerges: Military Stories from World War I". And it couldn't be more appropriately titled as Ed provides a series of details and accounts from these dynamic days 100 years ago this week.

[0:07:48]

Ed: General John J. Pershing had finally achieved his dream. In August 1918, after months of dispersing his troops of the American Expeditionary Forces to fight under French and British command, he received permission to form the first US Army. For the first time, an American army would occupy its own section of the front and fight under Pershing's direct command. This army launched its first major action 100 years ago, on September ninth, 1918, the Battle of Saint Mihiel. German forces had occupied the Saint Mihiel salient, so named after the village situated at its tip, since 1914. It was located in eastern France, southeast of the legendary fortress of Verdun. For years, Allied leaders pondered plans to reduce the salient, but not until the late summer of 1918 did the project seem feasible, thanks to heavy German battlefield losses and the arrival of American troops and strength. Pershing's plans were for a concentric attack against the salient by three American corps and one French corp. He also dictated the use of combined arms, including not just thousands of French and American crude artillery pieces, but tanks and planes as well. For the first time, Colonel George Patton would have the opportunity to lead American, but French-built tanks into action, while Colonel William "Billy" Mitchell coordinated the employment of some 1500 American, French, and British aircraft en masse. The major part of the fighting, though, would have to be carried out by the foot soldiers. Marine private John E. Ausland, 55th company, witnessed the bombardment that began in the early morning of September 12th, perfectly timed with a massive thunderstorm, and he remembered this: "Along with artillery fire, gas shells, rockets of different colors, star shells exploding way up in the air. Shouting by men in the trenches behind us, wire cutters ahead of us in no man's land, cutting the tangled mass of wire. What a night. At dawn, whistles blew all along the line and the Marines slithered out of their muddy trenches to slog toward the German lines, with French tanks trying to keep pace alongside." Corporal Horatio Rogers, serving with the 26th division's field artillery, described the scene that the advancing Americans found along the German front lines. "Everywhere were elaborate trench systems, concrete pill boxes, barbed wire entanglements and luxurious dugouts. The place abounded in sign boards, carefully printed in German letters. The destruction of our bombardment had been terrific. In fact, we had churned things up so badly that it was interfering with our own progress. There were great craters in the road being filled by our engineers with dead horses, rocks, broken wagons, and everything that came to hand." The Germans who had been preparing plans of their own for abandoning the salient were caught completely by surprise by the well-coordinated American attack. The front collapsed quickly, and although the Germans offered temporary resistance at certain points, the next few days went surprisingly easily for the Yanks. There were even some comic scenes. Lieutenant Maury Maverick of the first division's 28th regiment, was riding through a forest at sundown on September 12th, trying to find a detour for some of its wagons stuck on the road, when he stumbled on a group of 26 German soldiers. "I was scared to death," Maverick remembered, "and nearly fell off my horse. My knees banged up against the horse. I think even the horse was scared. I expected to be shot full of holes, but the Germans threw down their arms, put up their hands and begged in the worst English I ever heard in Europe to save their lives." A 26th division patrol encountered a group of 200 Germans. "I guess they were more surprised than we were," remembered one American private, "because they all reached for the stars at once. We discovered that our capture included a German band, and we soon encouraged them to play the Star Spangled Banner and they did a pretty good job." The doughboys quickly showed themselves the most avid souvenir hunters in all of Europe. Corporal Amos Wilder of the 26th division captured a German gunner and divested him of his more interesting possessions. "I buckled his belt around me," he recalled, "which contained his revolver and dagger with citation cord attached, and determined to bring them back to the states with me as souvenirs. Along with my own belt full of ammunition, I was pretty well weighted down and my hip bones were sore, but still I carried them. Had I known that two weeks later, two of my company were going to steal these souvenirs and sell them, I would not have carried them." By September 16th, the US First Army had captured the entire Saint Mihiel salient, suffering about 7000 casualties, claiming to have captured 16000 German soldiers and over 400 artillery pieces. It was a clear cut victory, and vastly increased confidence within the AEF, but maybe Pershing and his officers became too confident. The Meuse-Argonne offensive lay just ahead.

[0:12:53]

Theo: Dr. Langel is an American military historian and our segment host for "America Emerges: Military Stories from World War I". We put a link in the podcast notes to Ed's post at his author's website. The Saint Mihiel offensive marks a key moment for the war in the sky as well. It's the greatest air battle of World War I. Some 1476 Allied airplanes

participate. Having been calculated to offer a three to one advantage over the Germans, this massive air force is prepared in great secrecy. As of this week in 1918, this is the largest assembly of aviation assets the world has ever seen. It combines operation of air powers from the US, France, Italy, Great Britain and Portugal. For the most part, these Allied air sets are under a single command, the First US Army Air Service. This largest air operation in history is entrusted to an obscure American colonel, William "Billy" Mitchell, a future superstar recognized for his vision of air power, but who at this point has really very limited combat experience, especially in comparison to his Allied counterparts. It is a war in the sky endeavor that will be studied for generations as a planning and execution model. And it's also the inaugural battle for a new plane. A number of US Army Air Service pilots are flying the new British De Havilland four, sporting the American-made Liberty motor. From the headlines of the New York Times, "Dateline, September 17, 1918. Headline: De Havilland fours meet battle test, show superior speed to German pursuit planes in Saint Mihiel fighting." A part of the story reads, "Airplanes driven by American-made Liberty motor played an important role in our reduction of the Saint Mihiel salient. Where the Liberty motor achieved the biggest success was in the development of speed against the German pursuit planes as this one instance illustrates, quote, 'Three of our De Havilland fours at an altitude of 6000 meters spy two German Fokkers. The Fokkers fled with the De Havilland machines after them. The American machines had better speed than the Germans and drew down on them. The Germans dove, our machines got one and the other escaped. This was the first battle performance of the American machines equipped with the Liberty motor and our air officers are enthusiastic over the results.'" Meanwhile, back home, on the front page headlines of the official bulletin, the US government's daily War Gazette, the offensive at Saint Mihiel is recognized as a watershed moment for America in her prosecution of World War I. "Dateline, September 16, 1918. Headline: President thanks the army and France for victory and King George cables President Wilson his congratulations." And the story reads: "The White House, Washington DC, September 14, 1918. To General John J. Pershing American Expeditionary Forces France, please accept my warmest congratulations on the brilliant achievement of the Americans under your command. The boys have done what we expected of them and have done it in a way we most admire. We are deeply proud of them and their chief. Please convey to all concerned my grateful and affectionate thanks. President Woodrow Wilson." In the same issue, "King George cables President Wilson his congratulations. The cable to President Wilson reads: To the President of the United States of America, on behalf of the British empire I heartily congratulate you on the brilliant achievement of the American and Allied troops under the leadership of General Pershing in the Saint Mihiel salient. The far reaching results secured by the successful operations which have marked the active intervention of the American army on a great scale under its own administration are the happiest augury for the complete and, I hope, not far distant future of the Allied cause. King George V." Meanwhile, as the Germans retreat from the Saint Mihiel salient, the ongoing defeats of the Austro-Hungarian forces further to the south has prompted the imperial government of Austria-Hungary to reach out to President Wilson via the Swedish government, proposing a peace conference. America's reply comes on September 17th on the front page headlines of the official bulletin. "Dateline, September 17, 1918. Headline: US declines Austria's proposal for an unofficial peace conference." And the story reads: "The Secretary of State, New York's Robert Lansing issues the following statement: I'm authorized by the President of the United States that the following will be the reply of this government to the Austro-Hungarian note proposing an unofficial conference of belligerence. The government of the United States feels that there is only one reply which can be made to the suggestion of the imperial Austro-Hungarian government. We have repeatedly and with entire candor stated the terms upon which the United States would consider peace. We will entertain no proposal for a conference upon the matter concerning upon which the government has made its position and purpose so plain." And with that, dear listeners, we're gonna leave 1918 and this dynamic, important, and in some ways exhilarating week in American history, but one that foreshadows some great challenges to come in the weeks ahead for the war that changed the world. We've jumped back into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. This part of the podcast focuses on now and how the centennial and the upcoming centennial of the armistice are being commemorated. This week in commission news, this weekend commission team members are headed over to New York where dozens of history experts, authors, and re-enactors bring World War I to Governor's Island National Monument this Saturday and Sunday, September 15th and 16th. It's free to the public and there'll be on hand demonstrations, displays, real artifacts, book talks, and activities for all ages as the living history group sets up their third annual Camp Doughboy World War I History Weekend. Head on over there, it's a blast. Other members of the US World War I Centennial Commission are heading over to France to help support the commemoration activities at Saint Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne. Starting Wednesday, September 19th check the commission's website at ww1cc.org/international to follow the events on one of our social aggregator pages where you can follow and even contribute to the page using the hashtag [wwi100](https://twitter.com/wwi100). That's [wwi100](https://twitter.com/wwi100). This'll send your post to our moderator dashboard and we'll add the most interesting posts to the page like we did this past August at ww1cc.org/amiens. That's A-M-I-E-N-S, amiens, all lower case. Or follow the links in the podcast notes. Bells of Peace, the national bell-tolling to commemorate the centennial of the armistice is really taking off. We now have state proclamations completed or in progress from Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Virginia, Hawaii, Nebraska, North Dakota and Rhode Island. If your state wasn't on that list, we need your help. Please contact your state governor's office and let them know about the Bells of Peace initiative. Use the menu contact option on our website at ww1cc.org/bells and let us know who in your state government office we should contact. Our goal is a proclamation by every state in the nation, and you can help. The Bells of Peace Smartphone app for participating and tolling, even if you don't have a bell, is now in beta

testing. I got the beta on my phone this week and it's pretty cool. I can tell you that right now, looking down at it, it's 56 days, 23 hours, and 17 minutes until 11 AM on 11/11 in my time zone. That's when my phone will start tolling the bells if I have the app open. I can also flip through the bell selections and pick a sound. This is coming from my rather old iPhone. Here's the cathedral bell. And, the church bell. Or, let's see, there's an honor bell and a bunch of others, including a ship's bell. The webpage is up now. It's where you can learn more and pre-order the free app. That way we'll send you the installation links as soon as it hits the app stores at the end of the month. Go to ww1cc.org/app, all lower case. The World War I Armistice Film Festival ordering went live last week. Thank you for the wonderful groups that are signing up. Some participants came up with some interesting approaches that had never occurred to us. For example, a festival host in Rhode Island is gonna move the festival to a different town in his area each of the four days to get the festival into several communities. Another host in Pennsylvania cut a deal with the local theater and they're doing it as a fundraiser for the National World War I Memorial in Washington DC. And one more film festival story, in Honolulu, Hawaii, the State Centennial Committee is the host and they're pairing the film festival with their 100 Cities/100 Memorials re-dedication. It's an all weekend event with lots of activities interspersed with our World War I movies being shown to the public night time and day time on a big, 12 foot by six foot LED screen that they're setting up for the long Veteran's Day weekend. If you wanna host a World War I Armistice Film Festival, it's easy. Learn more at ww1cc.org/film. If all of this sounds interesting to you and you wanna get involved with a bell tolling, holding an armistice event, getting the bells app, holding a film festival or attending something in Washington DC and all those URLs we're giving you sound confusing, just remember this: ww1cc.org. That's the letters W-W- the number one and the letters C-C-.org. Then click on the contact button in the menu and send us a note. We'll take care of you. As we mentioned earlier, part of our team is heading to France to participate in the commemoration events over there and leading those efforts is US World War I Centennial Commissioner Dr. Monique Seefried, who's joining us this week for our international report. Bonjour Monique.

[0:24:50]

Monique: Thank you so much for this introduction.

[0:24:53]

Theo: So, you're back in France now this week to represent the commission at more events. What's the lineup?

[0:24:59]

Monique: It's going to be a series of wonderful commemoration. This weekend we are first having a celebration in the town of Fismes, which is where the 28th division from Pennsylvania distinguished itself and where a bridge was built after World War I to honor the soldiers from Pennsylvania and now the city of Fismes 100 years later, has had a wonderful sculptor erect very modern memorial to commemorate this centennial. The next day I will be in Vauxaillon where there is a all weekend commemoration about the soldiers of all colors fight for peace and we will have the 370th regiment from Illinois with schools from Chicago and they will participate in concert and various events. Then, the following weekend will be the commemoration of the Battle of Saint Mihiel with a parade from the city of Thiaucourt to the cemetery and the next day the commemoration of the Battle of Meuse-Argonne. For 24 hours, the names of the soldiers will be read one after the next and after the ceremony that starts at four PM on Sunday, then candles will be placed on the graves and the reading of the name will continue through the night.

[0:26:43]

Theo: Well, I understand that it's going to be a sea of candles, that it's quite touching.

[0:26:48]

Monique: Yes, absolutely. And that morning in fact, we will be visiting the incredible trail that has been set up by the French National Office of Forestry to commemorate the Americans.

[0:27:04]

Theo: Well that's exactly what I was gonna ask you about. Tell us about that please.

[0:27:08]

Monique: This is one of the most moving project I have been privileged to be engaged with. It was conceived by a French gentleman who has been working for nearly 40 years for the French National Office of Forestry. His name is Daniel Georges, he's a forest ranger, a forest warden whose duty was to care and supervise the national forests in the Argonne, a region divided since the French Revolution between the departments of [inaudible] and the Meuse. They had requested our endorsement for a project which they had started that planted 1700 trees to represent a code of arm of the first division. Douglas firs and sequoias for the field of the code of arm and red oaks in the shape of the big red one to commemorate 1700 soldiers of the first division what died in those woods in October 1918. The project at the time was only focused on the first division, but the French National Office of Forestry's ONF had also planned an orientation table overlooking the battlefields which saw the combat of the first division as well as two tourist

information panels, a historical one about the first division and a botanical one to highlight the [inaudible] plants which arrived as a result of the war, brought to the region by the foreign armies that passed through.

[0:28:46]

Theo: Very interesting. It's a new way of thinking of invasive plants.

[0:28:50]

Monique: Absolutely. You had also German plants and you can see them all now growing together. It's quite an amazing endeavor. So while the geography of the forest itself has barely changed since 1918, these plants are unexpected and moving witness to the globalization of the Great War. In a preserved environment, the landscapes bear the well-preserved traces of the fortification and the fighting, trenches, ditches, shelters, bunkers, surviving trees. So ONF undertook an Heritage Preservation Program to preserve these highly symbolic and historic places where the 35th, the first and the 42nd division fought to ensure the memorization and look to the future. ONF was able to do so thanks to the support of local and national French public entities as well as private donation and also through the generosity of the McCormack Foundation, the Society of the First Division, and the 16th Infantry Association as well as thanks to the General Douglas McArthur Foundation and the Rainbow Division Veteran Foundation.

[0:30:10]

Theo: Great information. Monique, thank you for coming in.

[0:30:13]

Monique: You are very welcome. It was a pleasure and thank you for all you are doing to commemorate and to remember.

[0:30:21]

Theo: US World War I Centennial Commissioner, Monique Seefried. For our spotlight on the media, Commissioner Seefried introduced us to a very interesting friend of hers, Nimrod Frazer, who I think, after speaking with him, mostly thinks of himself as a proud veteran from Alabama. Rod served in Korea, is a Harvard Business School graduate, a member of the Alabama Business Hall of Fame. He became a citizen historian and started writing books to include the best war story I know, "On the Point in the Argonne" and "Send in the Alabamians". Rod, welcome to the program.

[0:31:00]

Rod: Hello. I'm delighted to be with you folks.

[0:31:02]

Theo: You have just a remarkable career starting as a veteran and so forth. What moved from you from business to becoming an author?

[0:31:09]

Rod: Well, I knew about the Rainbow Division and the Argonne Forest probably before I could read. My father was a Purple Heart veteran of the Alabama regiment in the Rainbow and so I was raised with great respect for those events, but it was only about 10 years ago that I paused from my business career to commence the research that helped me to write two books, one about the Alabama regiment called "Send in the Alabamians" and the other one about the Argonne. The 35th and the first and the 42nd divisions were all significant players because they were the point divisions, exhausted mentally and physically after fantastic performance. They were replaced by the Rainbow and that was the piece of it that I was raised knowing something about and I spent a couple more years working just on those three point divisions in the Argonne. So I've known about these great units all my life, but the further down the trail you get, the less the soldier knows about what's going on, so my old man was not able to tell me with great authority what he was participating in, so that's why I wrote those books.

[0:32:25]

Theo: You also endowed some memorials and they're very unusual. I mean, the statue is almost iconic. Can you tell us a bit about that?

[0:32:33]

Rod: Through the good offices of Dr. Seefried, I learned where my father was wounded and so I visited the battlefield and saw a piece of ground there about three and a half acres that could be bought and that was irresistible to me. And I bought it, it was a great piece of Alabama history, a great piece of Rainbow Division history. And then after I owned it, I didn't know what to do with it and I found Jim Butler who's a wonderful sculptor in England, commissioned him to do a piece of art that was incredible. We call it the Rainbow Soldier. And we erected that in 2011 there on the

battlefield in France. I gave it all to the nearby village of Fere-en-Tardenois, which has been a wonderful caretaker for it and then the Rainbow Division named it its memorial, and so it's been a central point of Rainbow Division history and we are so proud of that in Alabama. We sent 3677 of these country boys to France and better than 600 were killed in action and I got into it and realized that I was on something far, far bigger than I was.

[0:33:48]

Theo: Rod, let me ask you something. When you decided to write the book, either book really, what is the single thing that you remember most that you learned in the process of pulling all of this together?

[0:34:00]

Rod: Well I realized that a lot of these old veteran's stories that I told needed a lot of backup and things that are told around the campfire and around the barracks, not necessarily a good basis for a scholarly book. It was the great discovery, I got in there with these people, particularly going to Fort Benning and viewing these records of these first division guys who had fought so heroically and so well. Then you get acquainted, become very enamored of some of these people and not all of them are heroes. A lot of the soldiering is not heroic and a lot of the work that you research is very tragic. I had gone into the army in 1950 when the Korean War cranked up. I got a quick commission at OCS, so I was in three operations in Korea and I'm very proud of that service and I think that my personal combat experience helped me very much, so I had a very good grasp of what combat was like and that is basically the lens through which I wrote my two books. I always had in mind what it meant to the guy who was doing the fighting, and that was one of the great takeaways that I had from doing the research.

[0:35:21]

Theo: Well, in closing the segment, I wanna let our audience know that the memorial statue that Rod commissioned is really stunning and pretty much unlike any other World War I monument out there. And because the podcast has a Twitter channel at TheWW1Podcast, that's at T-H-E-W-W- the number one podcast, we're gonna put some of those images up during the week for you to see what we've been talking about. And Rod, I wanna congratulate you as a man who's found a way to bring his passion and his dedication forward in a way that's gonna last a really long time. Congratulations and thank you.

[0:35:57]

Rod: Thank you.

[0:35:58]

Theo: Veteran, businessman, citizen historian and author, Rod Frazer. Learn more about his projects, books, and adventures by visiting the links in the podcast notes. Moving on to our 100 Cities/100 Memorials segment about the 200000 dollar matching grant challenge to rescue and focus on our local World War I memorials. This week we're headed to Jacksonville, Florida and the restoration project at Memorial Park. Here to tell us about the project are Michelle Luthin, Vice President at large on the board of directors for the Memorial Park Association and Percy Rosenbloom III, President of the Memorial Park Association. Michelle, Percy, welcome to the podcast.

[0:36:41]

Percy: Thank you, we're glad to be here.

[0:36:42]

Michelle: Thank you for having us.

[0:36:44]

Theo: So, Memorial Park in Jacksonville is an absolutely beautiful community place, starting with your incredibly fountain and distinctive sculpture. Can one of you describe it for us?

[0:36:55]

Percy: It's a sculpture that was designed by Charles Adrian Pillars. The whole concept behind the park initially hatched literally the day after armistice was signed by the rotary club of Jacksonville, which at the time was the first and only rotary club in Florida. And what they decided to do was to create a memorial for all the Floridians who fought and died in World War I. So they did that and with the help of another community patron, Nina Cummer, her home is now an art museum there, they worked together and did two things that were really memorable and historic. They contracted with the Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm, they were basically the founders of landscape architecture in the US, as well as Charles Adrian Pillar, who at the time was a very noted sculptor. And the sculpture in the park is known as Spiritualized Life. It sits in a fountain, rising out of the fountain as a globe and the globe is basically surrounded by swirling bodies that represent the chaos of war and people torn up in that chaos. Mounted on the top of it is a winged [inaudible] figure that holds up an olive branch and it symbolizes the spirit of victory over the chaos and turmoil of war. It's fronted by a six-acre park that the Olmsted Brothers designed, but the backdrop is the

beautiful St. John's river. Riverside Avenue is one of the major avenues leading into downtown Jacksonville and as you drive by it, it's just spectacular every time you see it.

[0:38:31]

Theo: It really is spectacular. I've only seen it in images, not in person, but you all produced a wonderful documentary about the history of the park. So, let's listen to some of the clips and get the history story.

[0:38:42]

Michelle: We had 1220 Floridans that died in World War I and the rotary club of Jacksonville felt it was critical enough for those people to be honored with this memorial.

[0:38:56]

Percy: The site of Memorial Park today was around 1890s known as the Robinson property and the city purchased it for 125000 dollars in 1919.

[0:39:09]

Speaker 8: Well there wasn't that much natural beauty. There was six acres and it was just a big old sand field when they got started.

[0:39:15]

Percy: And by the time it was inaugurated in 1924, it was one of the most beautiful outdoor gardens in the south.

[0:39:22]

Michelle: And Nina Cummer, of course, was involved in promoting the beauty of our community and she had a great friendship with the Olmsted firm.

[0:39:31]

Percy: It was the famous landscape architecture firm that the father, Frederick Law Olmsted, who was considered the father of American landscape architecture.

[0:39:40]

Michelle: And the subject of the statue came up to be commissioned by the citizens committee, the rotary committee. I really believe it was Nina Cummer who connected Pillars to the committee.

[0:39:53]

Percy: Pillars sculpture sketch was so breathtaking that the committee immediately agreed to let him proceed.

[0:40:02]

Michelle: What must the commitment of the public to this park, and not just the commitment, but the enthusiasm that on Christmas Day, the hundreds and hundreds if not thousands of people who left their homes and celebrated that grand statue life's unveiling. That was in 1924.

[0:40:25]

Percy: Two little girls pulled back the curtain, revealing this nude man standing on a ball and there was a gasp from the crowd and then there was roaring applause because it was so beautiful.

[0:40:37]

Theo: Percy, you have an ongoing multi-phase renovation and restoration for Memorial Park and then you participated in 100 Cities/100 Memorials Program for a piece of that. What's the plan?

[0:40:49]

Percy: Well the plan actually was hatched about six or seven years ago, Michelle, I think. It's the master plan that was initially started by the noted historical landscape architect David Saks in Atlanta. You gotta keep in mind, this park was initially unveiled to the public in 1924, so as you can imagine, over that period of time needs attention from time to time. The reason that the Memorial Park Association is in existence is because the city of Jacksonville has one of the largest park systems in the nation. We have over 400 parks. So, the Memorial Park Association was formed in 1986 to form a public/private partnership with the city of Jacksonville to really take this iconic premier historic park and re-claim it for the community of Jacksonville. One of the things that they've done was to say let's get this thing back in order the way that Nina Cummer and the Olmsted brothers intended it to be. And so that's been in progress for a while now, but one of the things that the World War I 100 Cities Program has helped with is the sculpture itself because it is right there on the river and we've had a number of hurricanes, most recently Hurricane Irma. Your generous contribution has helped us to bring in the McKay Lodge Art Conservation Laboratory out of

Oberlin, Ohio. They're expert in the field of restoration of these types of sculptures. It's absolutely stunning what they've done. It looks brand new.

[0:42:22]

Michelle: Yeah, brand new. The park was also added to the National Register of Historic Places in October of last year.

[0:42:32]

Theo: So Michelle, now that the park's designated as one of the 100 World War I Centennial memorials, do you have any special plans for the centennial for the armistice?

[0:42:40]

Michelle: Yes, we do. We have a lot of events coming up. We're starting our speaker series this weekend, September 15th, which we're really excited to hold in the park every Saturday leading up to Veteran's Day. The speakers will speak at 10 AM and then on actual Veteran's Day we're going to have a bagpipe, part of the National Piping: Sleep in Peace, Now the Battle is Over program. At sunrise, bagpipes will play. We're also going to ring bells at 11 AM as will be done at multiple locations in the country. And then at five PM we're having the Jacksonville Symphony youth orchestra play. In addition, we're gonna have a flyover by the Warbirds, a bunch of retired navy and air force pilots who will be doing that for us as well. So we have a lot of great things planned and they're all taking place in the park.

[0:43:32]

Theo: Fantastic. Well, you know, this is an audio program, but we do have a Twitter feed, so we're gonna post some of the images of your amazing Memorial Park at TheWW1Podcast, that's at T-H-E-W-W- the number one podcast on Twitter. I encourage our listeners to take a look. It's really quite wonderful. And thank you both, the Memorial Park Association and the whole city of Jacksonville for the great commemorative focus on World War I.

[0:43:59]

Percy: Thank you.

[0:44:00]

Michelle: Thank you.

[0:44:01]

Theo: Michelle Luthin and Percy Rosenbloom are from the Memorial Park Association in Jacksonville, Florida. Learn more about the 100 Cities/100 Memorials program by following the links in the podcast notes. This week for World War I War-tech, as anyone who's listened to our show or otherwise studied the Great War knows, World War I represents a transition from traditional to modern warfare. As the saying goes, they rode into World War I on horses and they rode out on tanks. That's a pretty good lead-in to our subject today. At the beginning of the war, in 1914, European generals expected that elite cavalry units with spearhead offensives with grand charges as they'd done for centuries. Meanwhile, the internal combustion engine tank wasn't even a prototype yet. Traditionalists like Britain's Lord Kitchner dismissed the tank as a "pretty, mechanical toy". When World War I started, the Allies and the Germans both attacked each other with cavalry units and failed miserably. In a single minor early war engagement with the Belgians, the German army lost nearly 850 horses. The mighty horse and rider, a power weapon since even before the days of knights in armor, and that had propelled several empires over the course of history, proved seriously inadequate against modern firepower. So horses were relegated to transportation duties, still fulfilling a vital but less glamorous role. At the end of that first year, in 1914, the war moved into its stalemate phase with neither side capable of really breaking through. The great dynamic offensive tactic of previous wars, the cavalry charge was suicidal against an entrenched enemy. Infantry wave preceded by bombardments became the offensive choice, but that meant huge casualties from every territorial gain. Something was needed that could endure the machine gun fire and the barbed wire. In 1915, the British decided to revisit the idea of an armored, machine gun-wielding vehicle that they dubbed "The Landship". Britain debuted the first combat tanks during the Battle of the Somme in September of 1916. Now, these first models proved to be notoriously unreliable, often breaking down and becoming stuck in the trenches and besides, the crews were forced to breathe choking fumes. They hadn't figured that out yet. Nevertheless, the tank displayed enough potential on that day that the British and also the French continued to develop and build more of them. The tank cemented its place as a vital weapon of modern war on November 20, 1917 at the Battle of Cambrai. 453 British tanks surged over the German lines, capturing thousands of probably very stunned prisoners. The Germans were able to recover and mostly reverse the breakthrough because the British failed to follow up the tank assaults with adequate infantry support. Remember, tank tactics hadn't been figured out yet and the generals were still learning how to effectively coordinate tanks and infantry movements. Moving forward to 100 years ago this week, in September of 1918, the war entered a decisive phase. The American assault on the Saint Mihiel salient included 144 American-manned tanks led by a young colonel named George Patton. According to a

battle analysis by a US Army captain named George Giese, quote, "A hallmark of the battle was Colonel George Patton's employment of unsupported tank platoons in a cavalry-styled attack outside the small town of Jonville. Reacting quickly to an evolving situation, Patton unleashed five tanks on a German infantry battalion heavily armed with machine guns. Despite their number, Patton's tanks overwhelmed the Germans, pushing them six miles back and capturing some of their equipment." Now, this episode really illustrated how the tank resurrected mobile warfare, defeating the very weapons, the machine guns and light artillery, that neutralized the cavalry and made war this bloody stalemate. The last cavalry charge of the war occurred in March of 1918, led by Brigadier General Jack Seely of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. It was a desperate attempt to halt the German offensive at a strategic point near the French town of Moreuil. Although the Canadians did accomplish this goal, the cavalry was simply mowed down as they charged the German lines. In the words of one first-hand account, "In a few minutes, one could only see a few riderless horses still heading towards our gun lines. The greatest part of the riders lay dead or wounded on the ground. A few lucky ones were able to escape this fate through quick retreat. They rode into World War I on horses and they rode out in tanks." This weeks World War I War Tech. Learn more by following the links in the podcast notes. In articles and posts where we highlight the stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, The Dispatch. "Headline: World War I commemorative garden dedication at General John J. Pershing's boyhood home. General John J. Pershing's boyhood home state historic site will hold a ceremony to formally dedicate its new World War I commemorative garden on Saturday, September 15th at the historic site in Laclede, Missouri. The garden incorporates soil collected from the eight World War I American cemeteries. The public is invited." "Headline: Train and Traction project brings World War I era restoration train cars to towns in France. Trains and Tractions, a remarkable World War I restoration project in France, restored original American army World War I era boxcars for eventual display and exhibit. Their original project of one boxcar grew to an incredible restoration of five as well as a flatcar. In all, there were 37800 train cars that Americans brought over to France during the war." "Headline: Quilt raises money for World War I vets in United States during and after the war. Quilt historian Sue Reich has collected World War I era quilts from all over the country and has written a book about them. Commissioner John Monahan met Sue at the American Legion 100th Convention in Minneapolis and toured her exhibit of the quilts that she's collected." Finally, from our official World War I Centennial merchandise shop, our featured item this week is our World War I collectible stamp and frame. The striking new World War I commemorative stamp by the US Postal Service is offered in a beautiful frame along with a replica victory lapel pin, [inaudible] commission card, and a certificate of authenticity. And as an aside, I went to my local post office in Ventura, California this week to buy some of the commemorative stamps. The postal clerk told me that he was sorry, apparently they sold out almost immediately. Well, that's good news and bad news for me. So, if you want some and your local post office is out, his recommendation was that I order them online. Luckily, I've put a link for that on our website at ww1cc.org/collectibles, all lowercase. Links to our merchandise shop and all the articles we've highlighted here are available in our weekly dispatch newsletter. Subscribe at ww1cc.org/subscribe. You can also send us a link request at our podcast Twitter account at [TheWW1Podcast](https://twitter.com/TheWW1Podcast) or follow the links in the podcast notes. And that brings us to The Buzz. The centennial of World War I this week and social media with Katherine Akey. Katherine, what are the posts this week?

[0:52:23]

Katherine: There's a really interesting commemoration coming up this weekend, September 14th to 16th in the [inaudible] region of France. An unprecedented tribute will be paid to the 370th African American regiment who participated in the liberation of the [inaudible] region, especially during violent fights for [inaudible] and [inaudible] where for the first time, a regiment of black Americans was given an entire front line sector, this month, September 1918. President Macron will be in attendance as well as a high school orchestra from Chicago where the 370th regiment is from. You can read more about the ceremonies and even download a complete program at the link in the podcast notes. Last for the week, we shared an article on Facebook about an interesting project to visualize the losses of World War I on Canadian cities. The interactive maps show the homes of the Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg war dead of the first and second world wars. Little red dots spread across the cities. It's an impactful, heartbreaking way to visualize the enormous sacrifice made by thousands of households all across Canada and there are links for you in the podcast notes to go and explore for yourself. That's it this week for The Buzz.

[0:53:40]

Theo: And that wraps up episode number 89 of World War I Centennial News. Thank you for listening. We also wanna thank our guests, Mike Schuster, Curator for the Great War Project blog, Ed Langel, military historian and author, Commissioner Monique Seefried, author Nimrod Frazer, Michelle Luthin and Percy Rosenbloom from the Memorial Park Association in Jacksonville, Florida, Katherine Akey, World War I photography specialist and line producer for the podcast. Many thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crow, our intrepid sound editing team and to [inaudible], our researcher. And I'm producer and host, Theo Mayer. 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 or awareness about World War I, including the podcast. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators and their classrooms. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across our country, and of course we're building America's national World War I memorial in Washington DC. We wanna thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library as well as the

Star Foundation. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I Centennial News in all the places you get your podcasts and even using your Smart Speaker by saying 'Play WW1 Centennial News Podcast'. The podcast Twitter handle is @TheWW1Podcast. The commissions Twitter and Instagram handles are both @WW1CC and we're on Facebook at WW1Centennial. Thank you for joining us and don't forget to share the stories that you're hearing here today about the war that changed the world.

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