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5 speakers (Theo Mayor, Mike Schuster, David Rehbein, Jason Moran, Doug Fisher)

[0:00:07]

Theo Mayor: Welcome to the WW1 Centennial News podcast. It's about then, what was happening a hundred years ago in the aftermath of World War I, and it's about now, how a world transformed by World War I is very present in our lives today, but perhaps equally important. The podcast is about why and how we will never let those events fall back into the mists of obscurity. So, welcome to WW1 Centennial News, episode number 110. This week on the show, we go back 100 years and check in with the peace conference in Paris as Woodrow Wilson lays out the League of Nations. We'll look at Japan's seat at the table and their aspirations. Mike Schuster reports on the assassination attacks in Paris and in Munich and attempts to resolve the Russian civil war. For remembering veterans, Dave Rehbein from the American Legion joins us to talk about how the organization was formed and how they're celebrating their centennial. We're gonna hear about James Reese Europe, the 369th regiment's legendary band leader. From Jason Moran, the Artistic Director for jazz at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. We're going to continue to explore the largely untold story of Fort De Moines with Doug Fisher telling us about the black medical officer training at the camp, and more all this week on WW1 Centennial News, which is brought to you by the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, the Star Foundation, the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, as well as United Technologies. I'm Theo Mayor, the chief technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. The idea of a global intergovernmental organization to maintain world peace predates the U.S. Entry at the World War I. The concept was to prevent wars through collective security and disarmament and settling international disputes through negotiation and arbitration instead of bullets. It's a very new concept at the turn of the century in essentially an imperialistic world. At the peace conference, a commission was appointed to agree on a covenant for this new idea that was being called the League of Nations. U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson campaigned very hard for this as the foundation of world peace and stability and wound up as the chairman of that commission. Well, this is a background. Let's jump into our centennial time machine and go back 100 years this week as Woodrow Wilson presents the World League plan to the conference attendees as reported in the pages of the New York Times. We're back in mid February, 1919. In Paris, the nations have gathered to frame the future of the world. Dateline, February, 15, 1919. Headline, "Wilson Presents World League plan to conference. It provides for arbitration and reduced armaments with "armed force in background only as last resort." And that the conference, the president begins to read the draft of the Constitution of the League of nations. "Mr Chairman, I have the honor and assume it a very great privilege of reporting in the name of the commission constituted by this conference on the formulation of a plan for the League of nations. I am happy to say that it is a unanimous report, a unanimous report from the representatives of 14 nations, the United States, Great Britain and France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Brazil, China, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Serbia. I think it will be serviceable and interesting if I, with your permission, read the document as the only report we have to make." After having read the entire document. President Wilson continues as follows. "It gives me pleasure to add to this formal reading of the results of our labors that the character of the discussion which occurred at the sitting of the commission was not only of the most constructive but of the most encouraging sort. It was obvious throughout our discussion that although there are subjects upon which there were individual differences of judgment, there was practically at no point any serious difference of the opinion or motive as to the objects which we were seeking. Indeed, I think the other members of the commission will agree with me that there was an undertone of high respect and enthusiasm for the things we were trying to do, which was heartening throughout every meeting because we felt that in a way this conference did and trust onto us the expression of one of the highest and most important purposes to see to it that the Concorde of the world and the future with regard to the objects of justice should not be subject to doubt or uncertainty. That the cooperation of the great body of nations should be assured and the maintenance of peace upon terms of honor and of international obligation. There is a very great significance therefore, in the fact that the result was reached unanimously. 14 nations were represented, among them, all of the powers, which for convenience, we have called the great powers, and among the rest a representation of the greatest variety of circumstance and interest. So that I think we are justified in saying that the significance of the results therefore has the deepest of all meanings. The Union of wills and a common purpose. A union of wills which cannot be resisted and which, I dare say, no nation will run the risk of attempting to resist. Now, as to the character of the document. I think you will see at once that it is very simple and then nothing so simple as in the structure which it suggest for a League of Nations, a body of delegates, an executive council and a permanent secretariat. When it came to the question of determining the character of the representation in the body of delegates, we were all aware of a feeling which is current throughout the world. In as much as I am stating it in the presence of the official representatives of the various governments here present, including myself, I may say that there is a universal feeling that the world cannot rest satisfied with merely official guidance. There has reached us through many channels the feeling that if the deliberating body of the League of Nations was merely to be a body of officials representing the various governments, the people of the world would not be sure that some of the mistakes which preoccupied officials had admittedly made

might not be repeated. It was impossible to conceive a method or an assembly so large and various as to be really representative of the great body of the people of the world. Because as I roughly reckon it, represent as we sit around this table more than 1200 million people. You cannot have a representative assembly of 1200 million people, but if you leave it to each government to have, if it pleases one, two or three representatives, though only with a single vote, we thought that this was a proper and very prudent concession to the practically universal opinion of plain men everywhere that they wanted the door left open to a variety of representation. Instead of being confined to a single official body with which they could or might not find themselves in sympathy. And you will notice that this body has unlimited rights of discussion. I mean, of discussion of anything that falls within the field of international relations, and that it is especially agreed that war or international misunderstandings or anything that may lead to friction of trouble is everybody's business because it may affect the peace of the world. In order to safeguard the popular power so far as we could have this representative body, it is provided, you will notice, that when a subject is submitted, it is not to arbitration, but to discussion by the executive council. It can, upon the initiative of either of the parties of the dispute, be drawn out to the executive council into the larger form of the general body of delegates because through this instrument we are depending primarily and chiefly upon one great force and this is the moral force of the public opinion of the world. This involves the pleasing and clarifying and compelling influence of publicity so that intrigue can no longer have their coverts, so that designs that are sinister can, at anytime, be drawn into the open so that those things that are destroyed by the light may be promptly destroyed by the overwhelming light of the universal expression of the condemnation of the world. Armed forces in the background in this program, but it is in the background, and if the moral force of the world will not suffice, the physical force of the world shall, but that is the last resort because this is intended as a constitution of peace, not a league of war. The simplicity of the documents seems to me to be one of its chief virtues because, speaking for myself, I was unable to see the variety of circumstances with which this league would have to deal. I was unable therefore to plan all the machinery that might be necessary to meet the differing and unexpected contingencies. Therefore, I should save this document that it is not a straight jacket, but it is a vehicle of life. A living thing is born and we must see to it what clothes we put on it. It is not a vehicle of power, but a vehicle in which power may be varied at the discretion of those who exercise it and in accordance with the changing circumstances of time. And yet, while it is elastic, while it is general in its terms, it is definite in the one thing that we were called upon to make definite. It is a definite guarantee of peace. It is a definite guarantee by word against aggression. It has a definite guarantee against the things which have just come near to bringing the whole structure of civilization into ruin. We recognize, in the most solemn manner, that the helpless and undeveloped people of the world being in that condition put an obligation upon us to look after their interests, primarily before we use them for our interests, and that in all cases of this sort hereafter, it shall be the duty of the League to see that the nations who are assigned as to the tutors and advisors and directors of these people shall look to their interests and their development before they look to the interests and desires of the amendatory nation itself. There is no greater advanced than this gentleman. So, I think I can say of this document that it is, at one and the same time, a practical document and a human document. There is a pulse of sympathy in it. There is a compulsion of conscience throughout it. It is practical and yet, it is intended to purify, to rectify, to elevate. And I want to say that so far as my observation instructs me, this is in one sense a belated document. I believe that the conscience of the world has long been prepared to express itself in some such way. I think it is an occasion therefore for the most profound satisfaction that this humane decision should have been reached in a matter for which the world has long been waiting, and until a very recent period, thought that it was still too early to hope. Many terrible things have come out of this war gentlemen, but some very beautiful things have come out of it as well. Wrong has been defeated and the rest of the world has been more conscious than it ever has before of the majority of right. People that were suspicious of one another, can now live as friends and comrades in a single family and desire to do so. The miasma, of distrust of intrigue is cleared away. Men are looking eye to eye and saying we are brothers and have a common purpose. We did not realize it before, but now, we do realize it and this is our covenant of friendship. Woodrow Wilson." in our segment looking at the peace conference that we call a seat at the table this week, Japan. Japan supports the allies from the very first days of the war in 1914, years before America enters the fray. Sweeping through Asia, the Japanese prevent an extra World War I front opening in the Asia Pacific region. According to historian, Dr. Frederick Dickinson, who joined us last August for episode number 84 had Japan sided with Germany and Prussia defending our Pacific coast might well have kept America out of Europe and changed the very course of history, but they sided with the allies. Japan, to the surprise of the Europeans, had a very competent and effective navy, which plays an important role as a convoy escort, keeping the [inaudible] threat at bay in the Mediterranean for both shipping and troop movements. All this earns Japan a seat at the table at Versailles. So, on the 13th of February, 1919, the Japanese delegation in Paris proposes a racial equality clause to be included in the covenant of the League of Nations. It reads the equality of nations being a basic principle of the League of nations. The high contracting parties agreed to a cord as soon as possible to all alien nationals of state, members of the League, equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction either in law, or in fact, on account of their race or nationality. Well, it may sound simple, but it carries with it complications for many other nations, including the United States. The statute would require the allowance of more immigration from Asia. In America, this is a nonstarter for the senators of the western states who are crucial votes that Wilson needs to ratify the treaty of Versailles in the U.S Congress. Now, this is a pretty racist world in 1919. There are many colonial interests around the world that depend on keeping local nonwhite population suppressed. And so, the notion of racial equality is a shocking challenge. For

Japanese delicate, Nobuaki Makino, he sees that the race has fought side by side, including Japan. And so now, "It is time to act on a common bond of sympathy and gratitude." This causes a lot of hemming and hawing at the conference, with Japan a proud and very confident nation pushing the point. Finally, Japan forces a vote on the measure in April of 1919. The result, a majority approve the measure. Not to, would have been a huge hypocrisy. However, Wilson states that due to the great opposition to the measure, as chairman of the session, he cannot allow it to be implemented and the issue dies. The clause is also tied to a clause guaranteeing religious freedom, which also fails. So, it's with a great deal of irony that this war to end all wars, this war to make the world safe for democracy, for Wilson's 14 points, defining a new world order for this League of Nations, defining a new way for the world to transact with each other based on mutual guarantees of rights, all of this can't quite accept the idea that all men and women were created equal regardless of race, religion, color, or creed, at least not yet. In the war that changed the world in so many other ways a hundred years ago this week. Next, we're joined by Mike Schuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War project blog. Mike, they're not shooting in the trenches of Europe, but the sniping and the turmoil in Paris is anything but peaceful, and in fact, actual shooting takes place as assassination attempts and assassinations happen in both Paris and Germany. It certainly isn't a very peaceful peace conference, is it Mike?

[0:19:10]

Mike Schuster: That's right, Theo, far from it. The headline reads, "An assassin's bullet fells Clemenceau. Attacks in Paris and Munich. Wilson returning home, briefly and attempt to solve the Russian civil war. And this is special to the great war project. President Woodrow Wilson returns briefly to the United States on February 23rd a century ago. He's leaving France with Europe in turmoil. While he is at sea, an anarchist shoots and severely wounds the French Prime Minister, George Clemenceau. The would be assassin declares himself ready to kill any man who would start another war. Shortly after that, a right wing gunman shoots and kills a German socialist leader in Munich sparking more armed attacks. Before he leaves France, Wilson is deep into a number of issues plaguing the peace conference. He presents the completed covenant for a League of Nations to the Plenary Council of the Peace Conference and asks the delegates to adopt it as an integral part of the forthcoming treaty." "He saw himself leading the entire world to a new spiritual level," historian, Thomas Fleming writes, "a global incarnation of American idealism." "But he was a very tired man." Fleming reports. "His words did not come close to matching his vision, nor did the text of the League, which had not a single soaring phrase. He calls the League, not a straight check it, but a vehicle of life. He describes it as the birth of a single human family." "We are all brothers and have a common human purpose." He says. And Wilson points to the mandate system as a crucial element for peoples the war has let loose from domination by the imperial political system, which had led to the disastrous war in the first place. Before he returns to the U.S., he steps into another controversy plaguing the peace conference, the problem of Russia. In late January, Wilson invites the Bolsheviks and their white Russian enemies to approach each other through the mechanism of the peace conference. The goal is to try to bring their civil war to an end. The author writes, historian, Fleming makes front page headlines in the United States, but not in Paris, where Lennon refuses to take part. "Recognize the revolution," declares one headline in The Washington Post. The paper reports that General Pershing who had commanded the American expeditionary forces in the war would represent the United States if such a meeting were to take place. "As usual," writes Fleming, "the newspapers got only half the story." The idea originated with the British leader, David Lloyd George, who's conservative parliamentary supporters were having nightmares about the Bolsheviks taking over Russia. Wilson volunteered to issue a statement that would they hoped, perhaps lay the groundwork for an agreement that would divide Russia into white and red spheres. Observed Fleming, the Russian revolution stirred strong emotions in Wilson's soul. His statement called for a ceasefire, a general election and some adequate arrangement for the repayment of Russia's large debts to France and England. Wilson was ignoring the vicious names the Bolsheviks had called him. "He was playing one of his favorite games," writes Fleming. Defender of the poor, against the forces of privilege. He was hoping the Bolsheviks would join the Americans in this noble crusade and align themselves with him at the peace conference. Fleming writes, "It was a hope that only proved the president's ignorance of the Bolshevik mind." That's the news on these days a century ago from the Great War project.

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Theo Mayor: Mike Schuster is the curator for the Great War project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. All right, let's fast forward into the present with WW1 Centennial News now. As our regular listeners know, this part of the podcast focuses on the present. It explores the ongoing world war one documentation, commemoration, education and exploration. Here is where we tried to show you how the echos of the war that change the world are still very present in our everyday lives. In Paris, 100 years ago this week, on February 15th, during the peace conference, Teddy Roosevelt Jr., and a few others, got together and opened a discussion that would eventually lead to the formation of the American Legion. With us, to tell us the story of its creation is American Legion past commander and the chairman of the American Legion hundredth anniversary committee, David Rehbein. Welcome to the show, sir.

[0:23:53]

David Rehbein: I'm very glad to be here, sir. Thank you.

[0:23:55]

Theo Mayor: David, it's appropriate to wish the entire American legion a happy centennial birthday. What's the official date?

[0:24:02]

David Rehbein: The official dates are March 15 through 17, that was the date that they met, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. And his group met in the Paris caucus. But the actual formation of the American Legion, we have to go back to about 1914 because Theodore Roosevelt junior and a group of his friends felt that it was inevitable that we would be drawn into World War I, and that we were not prepared. So in Plattsburgh, New York, they set up a military training camp, and over the next couple of years, trained several thousand interested Americans that agreed that we would be drawn into that war. So, formation goes back to Plattsburgh, but once those folks all wound up in the military in Paris after the war, Theodore Roosevelt Jr. Was able to get in contact with quite a number of them and draw them to Paris for an initial formation meeting. That's the Paris caucus in March of 1919.

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Theo Mayor: In its formative years, how did the American Legion evolve and how did it grow?

[0:25:08]

David Rehbein: From that Paris meeting, there was a second meeting set up in Saint Louis in May, and then after that Saint Louis meeting then individual local post began to form. Over the next nine months, several thousand American Legion post formed across the country as word of this organization's spread through the veterans as they came home. Here in Iowa alone, nearly 350 posts were formed just in those first few months.

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Theo Mayor: Who were the people forming them?

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David Rehbein: The people forming those posts were World War I veterans that had come home to their local communities. The word was spreading through the military, through the National Guard that there's American Legion organization was forming and that the leadership, the military leadership felt this was a good thing for American veterans to become involved in.

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Theo Mayor: So, in its early in formative years, how was the mission describe? What did people think they were doing when they were forming posts?

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David Rehbein: Initially, it was formed to provide help and support for the wounded comrades that were coming home because there was no government structure to provide that kind of support. And all of those veterans coming home knew that they were going to be coming home to families of comrades that weren't coming home, that there were going to be spouses and children that needed their help as they went on into the future. So, it was really to support the veterans of World War I, but it widened from there within the first few years. Then national security became a big issue, from the lack of military training prior to World War I and in community service where the posts would fulfill needs in their community. And there's many, many, many stories there of what posts did in their local communities to help make their communities better.

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Theo Mayor: Now, you're the chairman of the hundredth anniversary committee. What are some of the plans for the centennial?

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David Rehbein: Some of the things we have going on right now, I just returned from Philadelphia a few days ago. We have a commemorative coin coming out of the U.S. Mint that we had the first strike ceremony. There will be a set of three coins or there will be individual coins that will be available for purchase through the Mint beginning March 14th. There'll be a \$5 gold piece, a silver dollar and a 50 cent piece. We've also put together an exhibit on the GI Bill, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 because. Because that's really a product of the American Legion. We have a museum quality exhibit that's traveling the country. It began in the World War II museum in New Orleans and will be opening in a few days in Douglas, Georgia, the hometown of John Gibson, the representative that was the deciding vote on that piece of legislation. And then, we also have on our website a place where the local posts can publicize some of their history, where they can look back at their past, at their legacy and talk about some of the

projects that they would have accomplished to help their local communities because we're really a community based organization. We're not a Washington D.C. Based organization.

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Theo Mayor: David, I want to ask, what would you say are three things that people should know and remember about the American Legion and your mission?

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David Rehbein: First, they need to know that the American Legion is completely nonpartisan. We never endorse a political candidate. We never endorse someone for office. We strictly involve ourselves with policy issues and so that's all of the positions we take will be on policy because of that nonpartisan requirement. We are a very much community based organization. As you travel, you have to hunt to find a local community that there is not an American Legion post and that American Legion post will be doing things like veterans funerals. They will be leading the parade on the 4th of July. They will be posting colors at the local high school football games. And so, we're very much a community based organization and we're very much an organization that is focused on the future. Right now, we have the generation coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan. Our organization is working very hard to stay connected with those veterans and do everything we can to assist with the problems that are coming home with them. The same as the World War One veterans assisted with the support needed by the World War II generation when they came home.

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Theo Mayor: As the show and as the commission, we want to wish a happy birthday to your really wonderful organization and every member in it. Congratulations on 100 years of amazing service.

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David Rehbein: We appreciate your thoughts. We appreciate your good wishes and we very much appreciate the opportunity to be part of this podcast.

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Theo Mayor: David Rehbein is American Legion past national commander and the chairman of the American Legion Hundredth Anniversary Committee. We have links for you in the podcast notes. In a bonus segment of remembering veterans, we're going to focus on the African American 369th regiment and their regimental band led by Jazz Legend, James Reese Europe. A little background. They started as the New York National Guards 15th Infantry Regiment, and they were renamed the U.S. army 369th infantry regimen. Actually, they had plenty of nicknames. The Harlem ratters, for one, with the regimental patch featuring a rattlesnake. The French dubbed them the men of bronze, and the Germans called them the Hellfighters. Today, they're best known as the Harlem Hellfighters, honored and respected as a distinguished fighting force that spent 191 days on the line longer than any other unit and never giving up a foot of territory to the enemy. But they're distinguished for another reason as well. Their regimental band led by a man named James Reese Europe, and credited for bringing jazz to France. To tell us more is Jason Moran, the Artistic Director for jazz at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Pianist, composer, educator, and curator, Rolling Stone Magazine called him one of the most provocative thinkers and current jazz. He spoke about James Reese Europe during the commission's arms to centennial when we held a special concert with the 369th experience. A tribute recreation of the Harlem Hellfighters regimental band.

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Jason Moran: The music of James Reese Europe, a lauded hero, masterful conductor and supreme composer. A man who, not only wrote for the world, but then wrote for a military band and enlivened the world with this syncopation that he created. There's something about the way his music sounds. When I listened to it today, there's something about the feel that he sets up 100 years ago that sets the course of what jazz will become. He is one of our firmest roots in what the tradition of freedom of improvisation has suggested for the rest of the world. James Reese Europe wrote songs, not only for the military band, but he wrote songs for a hundred musicians to play at Carnegie Hall. He wrote songs for dancers. He wrote songs to invigorate African Americans to understand their cultural worth and to develop a union based around their music and their musicianship. He was a real instigator. He's a real activist. He's a real powerful musician who then also wanting to share his music by virtue of going to the war. When James Reese Europe's music met France for the first time, people were sure that he had trick instruments, were sure that the band members were not playing instruments that they were accustomed to, because the music was so fresh. And so, using such a nuanced new technique that it seemed like it was a mirage. He then taught people how to play the music. There's something also I would want to talk about, which is in relationship to syncopation and what syncopation means. We hear this term, syncopation, and we think, "Okay. Well, what is it? So, here, there's always a beat in music, there's always a downbeat, and the syncopation is the anticipation of the downbeat. So, it's always looking ahead and looking toward. There's something so metaphorically beautiful about a composer, a hundred years ago, an African-American, not so long away from the mass patient proclamation, who

was now, and his compatriots around him creating music that uses syncopation to look ahead towards a brighter future. These are the things that they wanted to prove when the Harlem Hellfighters signed up to go to war. They wanted to prove this. And the music is one of the great sounds we have to document what it felt like to look ahead towards a future that they were not sure was really gonna be given to him, his people. So when people heard the music in France, they lost their minds, in a good way. They lost their minds and they wanted to hear it again. And one concert led to another concert and it led to another concert and it led to another concert. And music like that, I mean, I'm sure you can think about your favorite bands that you've heard, favorite songs you've heard. When it hits your body hits real and you can't get it out of your mind. So, I'll think back to those people who sat in the audience at the Champs-Élysées theater and heard James Reese Europe's band walk on stage. And these musicians had already also been to Carnegie Hall, so they know what a great stage looks like, and once they hit that audience with that sound, it left people feeling, even during a time of war, feeling like they could move forward. They also brought this music to hospitals to help the soldiers feel better, to kind of heal themselves through the sound, as the sound as itself. And so, musicians like this, they're heroes, they are brave, they're thoughtful, they have empathy, they share, they're generous and they inspire. We give it up for James Reese Europe for dedicating his life to this music that has helped inform everything that we do today.

[0:35:58]

Theo Mayor: Welcome to our segment called the historians corner. Last week we introduced you to Fort De Moines in Iowa, a training camp for black military officers. As we were joined by guest, Hal Chase. The Facebook posts we published on the story, got nearly 5,000 reactions, dozens of comments, and was shared over 500 times. Clearly, there's an interest in the story, but there's even more to the story of Fort De Moines. It was also a training camp for African American medical officers. And with us today to talk about that aspect of the camp is Doug Fisher. Doug has a colorful career including working in the foreign service, computing, banking. Doug has devoted almost 20 years to the study of the first World War. In 2016, he coauthored a book very descriptively titled, "African American Doctors of World War I: The Lives of 104 Volunteers." Doug, welcome to the podcast.

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Doug Fisher: Thanks very much, Theo.

[0:37:01]

Theo Mayor: Doug, I understand your grandfather served in world war one is that what got you interested in exploring the story?

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Doug Fisher: Absolutely. He and I were very close and I was an only son in the line of the family and he'd been an immigrant from England, so he served in the navy and the army and the air corps in three different wars. So, I had a close relationship with him and I was very interested in his history.

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Theo Mayor: Let's talk about your book for a moment. Tell us about the African American doctors who joined, what units did they support and how that happened?

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Doug Fisher: Well, the doctors were put into regiments and were part of the 92nd and the 93rd divisions. The 92nd division was a full division of 27,000 men and the 93rd division was a provisional division. It was made up of regiments that were turned over to the French to command. So, the 93rd division had eight of the doctors that we were talking about assigned to it balanced were with the 92nd division.

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Theo Mayor: Did I remember seeing in your bio that your grandfather served in the 92nd?

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Doug Fisher: Yes, he did. He commanded a 500 man unit. It was called the motor supply train. One of the doctors that we wrote about served with him and that's what peaked the whole interest in this project.

[0:38:11]

Theo Mayor: Interesting. So, in the segregated army of World War I, before these volunteers, what was the plan for caring for the troops?

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Doug Fisher: They anticipated providing white doctors because white doctors were all that were really recognized, and then the efforts of the black community to both get line officer's, which they did and then the medical officers to treat their soldiers were things that came forward later.

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Theo Mayor: Tell us about how Fort De Moines played a role in the story.

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Doug Fisher: There had never been a camp before for training these black doctors and so it was the first time this ever happened. In fact, I think it was the only time that it ever happened exclusively like this, and 118 doctors were brought together there. 104 of whom completed the training and there were a dozen dentists that were also brought there. They all completed the training and they all then went to serve with the 92nd, the 93rd troops. Actually, I think a handful of them, for various reasons, didn't leave the states. They served in the United States and one I think I actually had to leave the service because of a medical issue of his own, but I believe the number is 89 of them actually served in combat in France.

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Theo Mayor: So, we actually have a program trying to reexamine medals of honor and valor medals for African-American and other ethnic groups in World War I that might've been overlooked. Do you know of any other doctors who were awarded military honors by the military and should they have been?

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Doug Fisher: Yes. A number of them were. Ones that served with the French were awarded Crotty [Gares], and actually, one of the doctors who served with the French was also awarded a distinguished service cross posthumously. He was killed in combat in the front lines caring for troops. His name was Dr. Urbane Bass from Fredericksburg, Virginia. And the story is that an artillery shell came in while he was treating the wounded there and cut off his legs. And he was trying to tell the corpsman what to do to keep him from bleeding out, but he bled out and died there on the battlefield. So, he was awarded a DSC posthumously. And there was another doctor. Dr. T.E. Jones, who was quite a guy. He served with the 368 and the moves are gone and he was awarded a distinguished service cross and he survived the war and went on to head Howard University Medical school, Freedman's Hospital in Washington D.C. He was quite a distinguished man as well.

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Theo Mayor: Speaking of the folks coming home, I know that we can't generalize and all that, but how did these doctors readjust when they came home? What were their lives like?

[0:40:46]

Doug Fisher: Well, it was, as you can imagine, it was quite varied. But one thing that was characteristic of them is that most of them lived lives of service to their communities and some to the nation for many years, well into the 1950s and 1960s. Of course, some died fairly soon after they came home. Some died of battle related injuries such as the gas that was prevalent on the battlefields during World War One. Even Dr. Lewis T. Wright, who became chairman of the NAACP and died in 1952 suffered for years with the effects of gassing.

[0:41:22]

Theo Mayor: Now, I asked the same question of Hal Chase last week about the officers trained at Fort De Moines, what are the two most important things our listeners should remember about this story?

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Doug Fisher: The first is that there were a lot of African American doctors, not a tremendous number, but there were over 1,000 African American doctors at that time in our history in the early 1900s, which is a surprise to many people. And to learn that there were 104 who served in combat in World War I on behalf of their nation is also generally a great surprise and it's rather shocking to many. The fact that one died in combat is a surprise to most people. They really were the forerunners of a lot of the civil rights movements that we've lived through, of course, in the '60s and '70s and so on. I think the interesting thing about these guys is that they fought at a time when it was really a Jim Crow world and their efforts were not appreciated by many people who were white at the time. Nevertheless, their contributions extended into World War II. One of the doctors even served on active duty in World War II, ran a hospital in Arizona and the efforts that they made in between wars, a number of them served actively in reserve units. Of course, they were segregated black units for the most part, but they served their nation throughout their lifetimes and continued to do so when the Jim Crow world had divided us so completely.

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Theo Mayor: Doug Fisher, coauthor of African American doctors of World War I. Now, before we close this, we also want to thank Larry Mark Watt, from the Iowa and Minnesota World War I Centennial Committees for putting us onto the story and in touch with Hal Chase and Doug Fisher. We have links for you in the podcast notes. Welcome to our segment called Speaking World War I, where we explore words and phrases that are rooted in the war, with many still used commonly today. This week's word is, or rather acronym is GI. GI, as universally understood, they stand for the American soldiers. It's so ingrained in our culture that toy companies and Hollywood have used it to make millions. I mean, who hasn't heard of GI Joe? Now, the term is normally associated with World War II, but like so many things that has its roots in World War I. When soldiers began to adopt it as a nickname, GI doesn't actually stand for American. It's an acronym derived for the term government issue, GI. Now, according to our speaking World War I Bible, the slang of the American Expeditionary Force GI, was originally used as shorthand for galvanized iron. Things made from GI, galvanized iron were used throughout the military. A manifest might read six buckets GI. Gradually, since the government did in fact issue such items, the term began to mean anything issued by the government i.e., GI, government issue. And soon enough, it began to the soldiers themselves. A World War I named Irving Herman, years after the war, wrote, "Now, one of the first words we learned in training camp was GI. On the one hand, there were the rookies like us. On the other, there were the professional soldiers who'd been in for 5, 10, 20 years. And these were GI men. But then, when we got to France, you couldn't tell the old timers from the draftees, so everybody was a GI guy." From galvanized iron buckets and cans to a nickname uniting all of those who fought and served on the same side, GI, and this week's word for speaking World War I. If you want to know more, we put links for you on the podcast notes. In articles and posts where we highlight the stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, the dispatch. Headline, "NCPCC approves preliminary plans for National World War One memorial in D.C." At its February 7th, 2019 meeting the National Capitol Planning Commission, the NCPCC, one of the entities that needs to approve what's built in the nation's capital approved the preliminary site development plans for the National World War I memorial submitted by the National Park Service in collaboration with the World War I centennial commission. Headline, "New exhibitions seeks to connect world war one staggering losses to modern medicine." Drawing from the Ebling Library for Health Services, vast collection of health service materials, including early 20th century nursing journals and medical books as well as the University of Wisconsin's archives, a new exhibition seeks to tell the story of World War I, its impact on modern medicine and the forgotten people who fought in it. It's called, staggering losses. World War I and the influenza pandemic of 1918. It officially opened on Thursday, February 7th and runs through May. Headline, "The fictions of World War I, seven novels inspired by the Great War. Author, Reese Boden describes seven of her favorite novels set in the Great War. In the article she says about World War I, "I have written novel set in the Second World War, but the reason centennial of World War I made me aware of the horrors of that great conflict. Such a senseless war directed by generals used to cavalry charges who sent men over the top to face tanks, grenades, and mustard gas. More men were killed in World War I than in any other war." Headline, article by Brennan Gauthier, the men and women captured in my portrait collection have unique stories that are all but lost to history. We recently came across Brennan Gauthier, who has a remarkable example of bringing his interests into a unique format. For his regular job, Brennan is a senior archaeologist for the state of Vermont Transportation Department. Privately, he writes and manages portrait of war.com. A blog site that examines World War I photography. Brennan looks at the style, the milieu, the context of the pictures, but then he takes things a step further. Brennan does deep-dive looks into the subjects, their uniforms, their decorations, and their units. Headline, from the WWrite blog, "A new look at Anne Frank, her father and World War I through literature and history. This week in the WWrite blog, new York Times bestselling writer of "City of women," David Gillham discusses his newly released book "Annelies" a novel that imagines a scenario in which Ann Frank survives the Holocaust. The Nazi officer, a veteran of World War I who arrested the Frank family, decides to be nice to them because he discovers that Otto Frank and his father also served in World War One. Links to the full length articles for these stories and more are available through our weekly dispatch newsletter. It's a short and sweet guide to World War One News and information and it's free. Subscribe at ww1cc.org/subscribe or follow the link in the podcast notes. And that wraps up episode number 110 of the award-winning WWI Centennial News podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests screw and supporters, including Mike Schuster from the Great War Project blog. Jason Moran, Artistic Director for Jazz at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Author, Doug Fisher, telling us about the black medical officer training at Fort De Moines, and Dave Rehbein from the American legion. Thanks to Mack Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing team. Kats Lazlo, the line producer for the show. JL Mischow and Dave Cramer for research and writing support. And I'm Theo mayor, your producer and host. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate, and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators, their classrooms, and the public. We're helping to restore World War I memorials and communities of all sizes across the country. And of course, we're building America's National World War I memorial in Washington D.C. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, as well as our other sponsors, the Star Foundation, the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, and United Technologies. The podcast, and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/cn, for Centennial News. You'll find WWW1 Centennial News in all the places you get your podcasts and even using your smart speaker by saying play WWW1 Centennial News podcast. And as of now, you can even ask Siri. The podcast Twitter handle is @thewww1podcast. The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @www1cc. And we're on Facebook at

WW1 Centennial, thank you for joining us. And don't forget, keep the story alive for America by helping to build the memorial. Just text the letters, WWI or WW to the phone number 91-999. Thank you for listening, so long.
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