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5 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Shuster, Edward Lengel, Elizabeth Foxwell, Jim Theres)

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Theo Mayer: Welcome to WW1 Centennial News, episode number 113. It's about then, what was happening 100 years ago in the aftermath of World War I. And, it's about now, how World War I is being remembered and commemorated, written about and discussed, but most important, the podcast is about why and how we'll never let those events fall back into the mists of obscurity. So join us as we explore the many facets of World War I, then and now. This week on the show, we explore the headlines of the newspapers 100 years ago and the second week of Mark. Mike Shuster backs up a step and looks at the challenges and status of the Peace Conference and the League of Nation proposal. Dr. Edward Lengel brings up a rather dramatic first-person perspective of the wounded soldiers through the eyes of a woman wounded on a battlefield. For a century in the making, we have part two of Traci Slatton's insightful article on sculptor, Sabin Howard's evolution as an artist through the memorial project. March 13th is K9 Veteran's Day, and we're holding a Facebook poll to crown the 2019 World War I K9 hero, Sergeant Stubby, or Rags the Terrier. For remembering veterans, we speak with Elizabeth Foxwell, on the various roles, including military roles, women played during the war. Jim Ferris, the producer of the Hello Girls documentary joins us for an update on the film and the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Initiative. All this week on WW1 Centennial News, which is brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, the Starr Foundation, the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission, and your host. Welcome to the show. 100 years ago this week, the Allies address the German famine and the US role in that. The US army publishes numbers of war participation. As the humanitarian food crisis is discussed, America's greatest expert on this, Herbert Hoover, shockingly announces his resignation. The Red Scare is in full bloom! Germany gets slapped with a massive reparation bill. And, as the week wraps up, Woodrow Wilson's ships lands back in France. Now, with that as an overview, let's jump into our centennial time machine and go back 100 years, to the second week in March, 1919, and hear how this plays out in the headlines. Dateline. Saturday, March 8th, 1919. Headline: Allies agree Germany must be fed. France wants US to assume burden. Proposal would compel US to supply Germany with \$500 million worth of food. Only securities for pay. And the next day, both food and the men who served in World War I are in the headlines. Dateline. Sunday, March 9, 1919. Headline: New Allied plan to feed Germany. Taking pay in gold and securities. And the story reads: The Supreme War Council reached a decision tonight, whereby the negotiations with Germany over food and ships, which were interrupted at Spa, will immediately resume and at another point, probably in Belgium. The agreement provides a method for insuring delivery of the German merchant ships and furnishing an adequate food supply to Germany until the next harvest. The method of payment, it is understood, will be by credit through neutral countries and by utilizing the foreign currencies held in Germany. When the War Council met, the French still hesitated to permit a diversion of German funds which they held, were part of the reparation. And on the same day, the US army's General March puts out some numbers about the men that fought during the war. Headline: 1,390,000 men of American army fought Germans. General March gives out figures on troops actually in operation. US to keep army up to 500,000 men. Pershing to accept enlistments for regular forces, freeing draft men to come home. And on Monday, more news about food and a shocking announcement. Dateline. Monday, March 10, 1919. Headline: German now assured of food relief, to get 300,000 ton supply a month. Deadlock on food broken. French compromise proposal accepted by the other Allies. And on the same day, in a shocking announcement, at least to me, because just over a week ago, Wilson announced that American would be willing to take on responsibility for a large part of the European food famine if Herbert Hoover were in charge. Headline: Hoover to quit food relief work in Europe in July. Says he and most of his aides must attend to their business. And the story reads that Herbert C. Hoover, the American Food Administrator and lately, appointed Director General of the Inter-Allied Relief Organization is to cease his relief work in the summer, was indicated in a statement issued today by Mr. Hoover concerning the wheat situation. He intimated that a majority of his co-workers would also return to private life. Speaking of various problems connected with the wheat situation, Mr. Hoover said that it would need to be resolved by someone else, "Because neither myself nor most of my men in the Food Administration will be able to continue in the service of the government after next July." You gotta wonder what the backstory is on that one. And on the next day, on Tuesday, the theme is about the Red Scare. Dateline. Tuesday, March 11, 1919. Headline: No quarter given to captured Reds in Berlin uprising. Summary killings begin after Noski learns of atrocities by rebels. Reds execute detectives, put 60 to death and murder other prisoners. Courier is tortured. Women shot in fighting. And even a headline from the US. Headline: Extremists here plan a revolt to seize power. Papers taken in mail and sent to Senate Committee reveal existence of plot. IWW leads propaganda. Anarchists, radical socialists, and socialists uniting for a Bolshevik Republic. And news from Russia. Headline: Russia under Reds a gigantic bedlam. Escaped victims say maniacs stalk raving through the streets of Moscow, fight dogs for carrion, starving crowds devour flesh torn from carcasses of worn out horses. Pretty dramatic. And on the next day, the big news is about the price of the war. Dateline. Wednesday, March 12, 1919. Headline: Bill for reparation is \$35 billion. All matters have been adopted or agreed to by Allies in principal. Reparation bill cut

down. First demands of one great power reached the figure of \$200 billion. That's pretty harsh, but maybe the good news is that they went, in today's dollars, from \$6 trillion to \$1 trillion. And the next day, we seesaw back to the Red Scare. Dateline. March 13, 1919. Headline: Berlin Reds make overtures for surrender. "It must be unconditional," Minister Noski tells the [Spartacides]. Loyal troops closing in, Spartacides evacuate Lichtenberg after being caught between two fires. Women carry foe's heads. Reds rob and kill recklessly, and government forced to shoot all prisoners. And back in the States. Headline: Police round up 200 Bolsheviks in east side raid. Bomb squad arrives at 133 15th Street while meeting is in progress, find radical leaflets. "Red Book" discovered at headquarters of Union, entire band detained at criminal court building for examination early this morning. And finally, on Friday, Wilson arrives back in France. Dateline. Friday, March 14, 1919. Headline: President lands, speeds to Paris, reaches Brest in evening. Wilson greeted by huge crowds of soldiers as he goes ashore, takes special train for capitol with Colonel House aboard to tell of Peace Conference, rested by his voyage, the President says. And that's what was happening 100 years ago this week in a world trying to adjust to the aftermath of a global cataclysm that was called World War I. And now we're joined by Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent, and curator for the Great War Project blog. Mike, your post takes us back a few weeks, to before the time Wilson leaves France back to the US, to face his Congress. It reviews the challenges of forming the League of Nations. It really was a gnarly challenge, wasn't it?

[0:10:58]

Mike Shuster: It is. Good word, gnarly. The headline reads: League of Nations takes shape. Wilson, "My work is done," heads for home. "Not so," say the Allies. "What about the Monroe Doctrine?" And this is special to the Great War Project. "By mid-February, a century ago, the first draft of the Peace Treaty is ready, and President Wilson is delighted," so writes historian Margaret MacMillan. The main outlines of the League of Nations are in place. They include a general assembly for all members, a secretariat and an executive council where the big Five would have a bare majority. According to MacMillan, "There would be no League army and no compulsory arbitration or disarmament." On the other hand, all League members pledged themselves to respect one another's independence and territorial boundaries. Because the Great Powers worried that the smaller powers might get together and outvote them, there was also a provision that most League decisions had to be unanimous. As a result, there was fear among the supporters of the League that this would render the League ineffective. "Germany was not allowed to join right away," MacMillan reports. The French were adamant on this, and their Allies were prepared to give way. Indeed, Wilson was all for treating Germany like a convict in need of rehabilitation. The world had a moral right to disarm Germany and to subject her to a generation of thoughtfulness. And so Germany was to be in the curious position of agreeing in the Treaty of Versailles to a club it could not join. "Both the British and the Americans came to think this rather unfair," writes MacMillan. The covenant, she reports, also reflected several other causes dear to internationalists and humanitarians. It contained an undertaking that the League would look into setting up a permanent international court of justice, provisions against arms trafficking, and slavery, and support for the spread of the International Red Cross. It also established the International Labor Organization to work for international standards on working conditions. On February 14th 100 years ago, President Wilson presents the draft of the League covenant to a plenary session of the peace conference. MacMillan reports, "The members of the commission had produced a document, at once practical and inspirational, of which they were all proud." "Many terrible things have come out of this war," Wilson said, "But some very beautiful things have come out of it." That night Wilson leaves Paris for the United States confident that he had accomplished his main purpose in attending the conference. The covenant was not quite finished though. Historian MacMillan reports, "The French still hoped to get in something about military force; the Japanese had warned that they intended to introduce a controversial provision on racial equality. And the mandates over the former German colonies and the Ottoman Empire still had to be awarded." There was also a tricky matter of the Monroe Doctrine underpinning US policy toward the Americas. Would the League have the power, as many of Wilson's conservative opponents feared, to override the doctrine? If so, they would oppose the League, which might well lead to its rejection by Congress. MacMillan reports, "Although Wilson hated to make concessions, especially to men he loathed, he agreed to negotiate a special reservation saying that nothing in the League covenant invalidates the Monroe Doctrine." And that's the news these days, a century ago from the Great War Project.

[0:14:21]

Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster is the curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. This week, regular contributor, historian Dr. Edward Lengel brings us the story of Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, an American who is wounded and finds herself as a critical patient in the company of many wounded soldiers and the war hospitals of France. A warning to our younger and our sensitive listeners, some of this account contains vivid descriptions of suffering.

[0:14:51]

Edward Lengel: Thousands of American women served on the Western Front in 1918. Some worked for the YMCA or the Salvation Army. Others served as nurses for the U.S. Army or the Red Cross. A few found jobs as mechanics or ambulance drivers. While they experienced the war in a variety of ways, however, very few became, like Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, casualties of war. A native of Brookline, Massachusetts, Sergeant was working as a

correspondent for the New Republic when she visited an abandoned battlefield near Reims with a group of American women writers in October, 1918. A Mademoiselle de Vallette, head of the American section of the French Foreign Office's Press Department, conducted the group along with a French lieutenant. The officer warned the women not to pick up anything, but, eager for souvenirs, they ignored him. Even Vallette picked up a metal object. "Put that on the ground, please," the lieutenant ordered. "I am not sure what it is." But it was too late. The Frenchwoman had picked up a German hand grenade, and it exploded, killing her instantly and blowing off the lieutenant's arm. Sergeant was hurled downhill. When she recovered consciousness, she sat up and found herself severely wounded in the face and legs by flying shrapnel. She would spend the next several months in medical care, surrounded by the wounded soldiers about whom she had come to report. Elizabeth Sergeant awoke in a hospital next to a grievously wounded young French soldier with a gaping wound in his abdomen. "His eyes are caverns," she wrote in her diary, "Deep wells of pain in a face blanched and shrunk to the angles of the bones beneath. They gaze out from under a shock of lank black hair that seems to grow every hour longer; gaze with the persistently hurt, surprised expression of a child who has put his hand in the fire, and finds that fire burns." He kept begging for water. Looking around her, Sergeant saw other soldiers in equally bad condition, or worse. Yet Sergeant could not help, just like everyone else, greedily seeking attention and reassurance from the single overworked American nurse, a Miss Bullard. Of course, Sergeant, as a woman, a reporter, and an American at that, soon received some special attention. Representatives of the French government came to visit her, and Sergeant could not help but notice how they breezily ignored their wounded countrymen in order to sympathize with her on her injury. At night, though, the officials were gone and she was just another one of the wounded, feeling as they felt. "I become an impotent, aching creature," she wrote. "Full of unpleasant holes, lost in a corner of devastated France infinitely remote from everyone I care for." Sergeant's wounds became infected, and doctors worried that she might lose her leg or even her life. She was transferred to the American Hospital in Paris. That's where she met the Armistice on November 11. When it was announced, every soldier who could move on foot or crutches went out into the city to celebrate, each in his own way. Sergeant and the more severely wounded soldiers stayed behind in the hospital, straining for sounds of celebration they couldn't hear. For them, an elderly French housekeeper joked darkly, "The war wasn't over." That night she, like the soldiers around her, dreamed of the war. Over the following weeks, a steady stream of visitors dropped by to update Sergeant on world affairs or on how friends were doing. For her, though, the world had become circumscribed, measured by injections or the turning of a mattress. For those outside, some of the accumulated thoughts and feelings of the past years could dissipate a little in the open air. In the hospital, though, the war remained very close, reminders brought by each agonizing throb of an infected wound. Not until the end of November did Sergeant's leg recover sufficiently that the doctors were able to reassure her that it would not have to be amputated. A week later she got to spend a little time out of bed. On Christmas Day, she and the wounded doughboys in her ward celebrated with a small party, courtesy of their American nurses. Months of recovery and rehabilitation would follow, though, before and after she boarded a ship for home in May, 1919. "Deliver me," she concluded at the time, "From pity for other people or myself! The men who were killed do not want our pity or need it. They gave their lives so eagerly and freely, the first of them, so awarely and impersonally, the last of them, that we are unworthy of them if we offer it. And surely the survivors are not to be pitied, but envied for their chance to put a great experience to lifelong use. The way we measure warriors and war-workers in the future, I'm sure, is by their ability to get away from the war, to make it merely the foundation of a new existence." But the years would tell that getting away from the war was easier said than done.

[0:19:59]

Theo Mayer: Dr. Edward Lengel's blog is called A Storyteller Hiking Through History, and it's filled with first-person accounts that provide nuanced insights into the era. We have links to Ed's post and his author's website 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 is about now, and how World War I is being remembered and commemorated, written about and discussed, taught and learned. Here is where we continue to spotlight the surprisingly numerous and significant remembrances and commemoration activities surrounding World War I and World War I themes. For our regular feature, a century in the making, last week we brought you part one of writer Traci L. Slatton's article titled Digital Technology and the Sculptor's Art. You see, Traci is not only an accomplished international author of historical, paranormal, and romantic novels, but she's also married to Sabin Howard, the sculptor for the national World War I memorial in Washington, D.C. Traci's insightful article is about Sabin's own journey and transformation, as a result of working on this project, and she's graciously agreed to allow us to share the article with you. Here's part two. The memorial sculpture is a poignant story that works on multiple levels. It shows the personal, the allegorical, and the mythological experience of the Great War and its cost. Traci's own contribution to this worthy endeavor, and one that Sabin often acknowledges publicly, was to draw Sabin's attention to the resonance of this piece with Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. And one of the results is that the piece is called A Soldier's Journey. After finalizing the design, there ensued a multitude of Washington, D.C. Commissions approval meetings. For an artist, a torturous process to which only Dante could do justice. It could even be described as an inhumanly labyrinthian process in order to gather all the necessary approvals from all the various civic bodies with a stake in a national memorial in our nation's capitol. One World War I Centennial Commissioner lecturing at the Army Navy Club referred plaintively to the cycles of death. Now, Traci notes her admiration for their persistence, which is, in its own right, heroic. And finally, the design was approved. A 56.5 foot long bronze wall, covered by the relief. Moving further into the process,

Washington's Commission on Fine Arts, known as the CFA, asked to see how the bronze relief panel would seat into the stone base. It's a good question, leaving to the creation of another maquette. Sabin also had to contend with time pressures for the actual final relief. A 38-figure bronze relief is a life's work. Now, it could, realistically, take 20 years to complete to the artistic standards required to do justice to a national memorial; to fully honor the sacrifices and service of our nation's soldiers, over 116,000 of whom died during World War I. But 20 years to sculpt this memorial simply isn't available. It's unrealistic in today's fast-paced world. In fact, some would like to compress the sculpting and fabrication of the process into a two year time span, which is also unrealistic. There's no short-cutting the process of casting a 56.5 foot long, 10 foot high bronze wall. So, Sabin faced a sharp-toothed challenge: How to accelerate the creation of a bronze sculpture without losing its artistic merit or the integrity of the bronze medium. Sabin and Traci spent months in 2018 researching foundries. Now, this research is undertaken with the bedrock of Sabin's 30 plus years of working with various foundries. Sabin's well aware of the intricacies of bronze-pouring! But the size and complexity of the bronze relief pose multiple problems in all phases of fabrication: Building the armature, sculpting, molding, casting, integrating internal support structures, finishing, patinating the piece, transporting it to Pershing Park, and, finally, setting it in its place. Any one of these steps could go awry, spelling catastrophe for the project. After visiting multiple of the best foundries, a foundry called Pangolin Editions emerged as the clear choice. Located in Stroud, UK, a lively industrial area in the Cotswolds, Pangolin Editions offers an expansive, highly organized, factory-like approach to bronze casting from the beginning to the end of the process. Pouring molten metal can be tricky, dangerous, and time-consuming. It requires numerous steps. AT Pangolin, approximately 200 highly skilled workers work in teams to accomplish the various steps involved. It's all carefully thought out and meticulously performed at Pangolin. Sabin and Traci met with manager and co-owner Steve Maule. Editor's note: Steve Maule was on the podcast a couple of weeks ago on episode number 111. His courtesy and kindness were a great pleasure, but what convinced them was his fluency with the unique problems faced by elite sculptors on large projects. Maule understood all too keenly the pressure to accomplish an important public sculpture on deadline and on budget while respecting the artist's vision. Maule introduced them to Steve Russell, an independent photographer who works closely enough with Pangolin that he purchased his own studio space on-site. Soft-spoken, Russell is a gifted artist in his own right. His show Mountains of the Moon at the Royal Geographic Society in London is garnering accolades. This exhibit shows the breathtaking Rwenzori mountains of East Africa. Russell also has ideas for innovation. He listened carefully to Sabin's plan to scan models posing in World War I uniforms, and thus create a digital blueprint for 3D printing a small maquette. Editor's note: This is a process that Sabin had become familiar with when working with the famed WETA Workshop in New Zealand, the creative technology power horse for many special effects features films for directors like Peter Jackson and James Cameron. Russell suggested an approach involving enhanced photogrammetry. The augmented images would provide a superabundance of digital 3D information which could be manipulated via Zbrush, a digital sculpting app, and then rendered into three dimensions via a milling process. The photogrammetry could reduce the time needed to make the small maquette, and it could even be used later on for the actual relief. The digital information could be rendered into soft foam and then covered with clay, providing Sabin with a super accurate armature on which to sculpt. Potentially, it could save years of work. Sabin was struck by the photogrammetry process. This new technology could assist him in completing the memorial with relative speed. Yet, it deprived him of what had always been an integral part of his sculpting process: Using his own hands to put up the steel armatures, cover them with foam, and layer on the clay base coat. He used that time to design and redesign a piece in his head; to take apart the figure, move the parts around, and then put 'em back together and to understand the hierarchy of the parts within the whole. He used that process to get to know his subject with extreme clarity so he could produce his unique vision of the human figure. Rungwe Kingdon, one of the owners of Pangolin Editions, is a tall man with an imposing beard, a passion for art, and a brilliance in articulating the philosophy of art. He discussed the new process, saying, "Change is one constant in life, and the challenge is to see it as adventure of life. What art does is elevate us, or plunge us into thought to see the world anew. For the artist, the trick is to remain curious and to engage when exploring the new technology." Sabin mused, "Oh, you can choose not to use the new technology, but then you risk becoming archaic and irrelevant." Traci saw her courageous husband was game to try the photogrammetry, though he felt a pang, acknowledging the sacrifice of his hard-won traditional technique. Sabin brought a team of eager young actors to Stroud for the photogrammetry. Evelyn, Paul, Zach, and Mark love the project. They've been photographed for it in Sabin's studio. They were happy to travel for the Memorial. They stayed out late at the pubs at night, toasting the locals with hearty Stroud ale. Still, they showed up early and focused, every morning for work. And work them, Sabin did. Sabin is an exacting task-master. He knows what makes good art, and he doesn't tolerate any slacking off. Never raising his voice, he directs his models with quiet, stern authority. Now, Traci knows this firsthand from posing for Sabin on other projects, and also because he pressed her into service as a nurse in dress uniform in the final triumphal procession. Moreover, Steve Russell's elaborate photogrammetry rig gave Sabin a whole new set of reasons to push his models for their ultimate poses. From the moment he laid eyes on the rig, Sabin was inspired. Russell's rig was custom designed for the World War I Memorial project. It consists of 156 cameras linked together in a spacious arc. They synchronize shots to within milliseconds. Some of the cameras are Hasselblads that bring superb quality to their piece of the puzzle. The rig allows Russell to capture realtime expressions and movement in high definition. This photographic information eventually produces fully-formed, lushly-textured 3D models. For sculpting the World War I Memorial, it's a remarkable time saving tool. For sculpting any work of art, for actualizing any sculptor's vision, it's an unprecedented detail-capturing, time-saving

tool. As Kingdon pointed out, "What photography did for painting, photogrammetry can do for sculpture." Standing in the rig as the nurse, Traci listened closely to Sabin's instructions. "When I attained the desired pose, I strained to hold my arms aloft and to freeze in position. A Hasselblad not connected to the rig would take an initial image. That Hasselblad sent the shot to a computer so Sabin could peruse the image on-screen, and if he liked it, he'd call, 'Shoot it!'" Russell or his assistant Ashley would jog over to deploy the rig, and the lights would flash while the cameras all whirred. This process repeated three times in quick succession. Traci noted, "It was strange to think that an image of my body in the round was being compiled, complete with the crinkles of the skirt behind my thigh and the strain of the fabric against the back of my neck." The models worked diligently as Sabin posed them again and again, until his critical eye was satisfied. Each of the scenes in *A Soldier's Journey* was shot several times to provide maximum coverage. After five days of shooting, the imagery was handed over to Pangolin's crackerjack digital team: Joe, Andy, and Angelo. They had some sausage-making to do in order to clean up the data into a usable format. No, that took a few weeks. When that was done, Sabin and Traci returned to Stroud to begin the process of working with the data in Zbrush. So far, the process' only tangible product is a test maquette, a powder print at 27.5 feet long. This test maquette gave Sabin an opportunity to do preliminary work on joining of the base with the sculpture. It's a far cry from the presentation maquette that will go to the CFA at the next meeting. It's also a just faint harbinger of what's to come: The crucial foam armature for Sabin to sculpt into the actual Memorial. But the small powder print whet Sabin's appetite for more. He spent a day raptly working on the little test maquette. Then, trudging back to their hotel room, he regaled Traci with the possibilities. He saw a myriad diverse sculpture projects of the human form, and the human body in unfettered motion, that were newly possible! They could be brought to fruition with hitherto unimaginable speed. He had lost one cherished technique, but he'd gained a tool that could free his creativity in a way that he'd never envisioned. As Kingdon noted, art elevates us. It plunges us into thought to see the world anew. It also influences us subliminally, shaping our perception of our lives and the universe. Sometimes the very process of making art can do that, too, when an artist can heed, and even embrace, a disruption that becomes a catalyst. And that was part two of Traci Slatton's *Digital Technology and the Sculptor's Art: Innovation and Imagination*. We want to thank Traci for allowing us to share this fascinating insight into her husband Sabin Howard's journey as an artist. We put a set of links in the podcast notes to her website as well as a really wonderful website that she's curating for Sabin, himself. This week, for remembering veterans, we have a couple of treats for you, starting with a subject of adoration for a lot of people: Dogs. On March 13th, we celebrate National K9 Veterans day. Yep, the military pup has his own day of remembrance. During World War I, we didn't have an official K-9 Corp. That didn't happen until March 13th, 1942. But dogs in the trenches were very much a part of World War I. They were very popular as ratters, helping to manage that pesky rodent scourge. And two of man's best friends became quite famous in the US Army. They helped set the stage for the K-9 Corps. They're none other than Sargent Stubby, a proclaimed American hero, and the perhaps lesser known, but incredibly cute Rags the Terrier, from the first infantry division. Though some claim that dogs like Rags and Stubby were mere military mascots, stories abound about their exploits, heroism and service, saving lives by warning of incoming gas attacks, and even capturing enemy spies in the trenches. Nevermind that they also lifted the spirits of the doughboys with their unbridled and irrepressible joy that were simply a part of being a dog. We put some links in the podcast notes about both Stubby and Rags, and for our 2019 commemoration of K9 Veterans Day, we're gonna challenge you with a Facebook poll. You get to vote for one or the other as our 2019 World War I K9 hero. Will it be Rags, or will it be Stubby? It's up to you. The poll will be on our Facebook page at WW1 Centennial on March 13th. And then, we're going to announce the winner next week. Now, I personally have a favorite, but I really can't say. Gruff! Our second remembering veterans story is a bit more serious and definitely more poignant. Let me set it up this way: World War I did not merely engaged armies. It engaged nations and their populations in an unprecedented scale and scope. And although statistically, the gender of the armies was predominantly male, the gender of the world was, and is pretty much 50/50. And so, this cataclysmic event in world history was also a pivot for the 20th century perception and the role of womanhood. As the armies absorbed and ever larger percentage of the adult male population, the other half began to take on new roles and new responsibilities. With us today, is Elizabeth Foxwell, a journalist and author focusing on the stories and neglected accounts of and by women who served in various roles in the war. She's the editor of a collection of first-person accounts by US women in the war called *In Their Own Words: American Women in World War I*. Elizabeth, welcome to the podcast.

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Elizabeth Foxwell: Thank you, Theo. It's very nice to be here.

[0:38:29]

Theo Mayer: So Elizabeth, before we start talking about the women of World War I, how did you get interested in the subject?

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Elizabeth Foxwell: Well, Theo, it's a very simple answer. It was Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth*, which was published in 1933 and has never been out of print. Brittain was a British nurse in World War I, and the book, to me, was just so incredibly wrenching, where the number of people she lost, and her experiences. So I actually wrote my

Master's thesis at Georgetown on her World War II experiences. She was an ardent pacifist as a result of her World War I experiences, and it made me start looking for equivalent US accounts. And yet, there isn't a sort of book on the same footing as Testament of Youth, in the United States, I think. And so that made me set out on the hunt for first-person accounts by US women.

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Theo Mayer: Now, you immersed yourself in first-person accounts of these women. Is there a common theme that motivated 'em to change their lives at this point in time?

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Elizabeth Foxwell: I think there are a few. One, they certainly wanted to serve their country like any other citizen of the United States, but they also wanted to prove themselves. As you know, the suffrage movement was gaining momentum, as we head toward the 19th Amendment passing. And they wanted to prove that they were equal citizens of this country and deserved the vote. So I think that there was a large contingent that felt, "If I serve in a war role, I will have proved myself as a citizen of this country." And certainly, many of the women who were in war roles were involved in the suffrage movement.

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Theo Mayer: Now, what kind of roles did these women take up?

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Elizabeth Foxwell: They were pretty varied. I think there is an incorrect perception out there that if you're a US woman and you served in World War I, that equals nurse. Not necessarily. They had very varied roles. There were motor drivers. There were several motor units. One of the Red Cross that was approximately 12,000 members, and that was primarily women, and they were especially invaluable and lauded for their role in the flu epidemic. There is one account that I came across where the writer was talking about sleeping next to her vehicle, 'cause they were working 'round the clock. And I also wanna point out what was called the only colored women's motor corps in the world, and that was of the Hayward Unit of the National League for Women's Service. And that was a black club in New York that sought to serve the needs of black servicemen, and that included entertainment. That included a place for them to stay. And they also visited hospitalized African American service members and took them on outings. And they also were lauded for their role in the flu epidemic.

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Theo Mayer: Now, this is a really important question, because this came up in another interview, even last week. Then the war ends, what happened to these women?

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Elizabeth Foxwell: It varies. A lot of times, there were occasions where it was sort of, "sayonara, we no longer need you." I have run across a couple accounts of suicide. Two women were Yeoman (F)s, which was the navy. The accounts I've read sort of indicate that there were some mental health problems with these two particular cases, but I have also run across issues of discrimination, such as Marjorie Hulsizer Copher, who was a decorated dietician in the war, and she's from Flemington, New Jersey. She was forced to resign her dietician's job when she got married. And some of the data indicates that some of the women who served were in quite a serious situation. In 1923, the American Legion noted that one fifth of the 30,000 women who served in the navy had applied for government relief, and it was thought that that number actually should be much higher. The Overseas Women's Service League also pointed out, around that time, that they new of 1,000 of their members who were veterans and who were disabled. We start to see, around this period, some coverage about concern of the health needs of female veterans.

[0:43:04]

Theo Mayer: I wanna get back to a comment that you made, because it came up in an interview last week, talking about the suffrage roles in the UK, and that it was, in fact, a law in the United Kingdom that if you got married, you could no longer work. There was no parallel to that in the US, but it sounds like you had a story case where that was actually what happened.

[0:43:25]

Elizabeth Foxwell: You do learn about some of these cases. It occurred with teachers, that if you got married, you lost your job. Ruth Bryan Owen is an especially acute case, and extremely prominent. She was the daughter of Presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. She married a British man, and you automatically lost your US citizenship when that happened. You had no choice. It was on the books like that. And she served in the Egypt Palestine campaign of the Brits. She was a nurse, and she also set up troop entertainment, and she decided, after her husband died and she came back to this country, that she wanted to run for Congress. And so she had to apply to get her citizenship reinstated. And it took a bit of time, and she was successful. She ran for Congress, she won.

And then her opponent filed a lawsuit saying that the election was invalid because she was not a citizen. And that got overturned, but she became our first US female ambassador.

[0:44:32]

Theo Mayer: Well, Elizabeth, thank you for joining us today. The stories, the accounts, and the impact of this moment in time really is profound. So thank you for telling the story.

[0:44:43]

Elizabeth Foxwell: Thank you so much for having me.

[0:44:45]

Theo Mayer: Elizabeth Foxwell has focused on the stories and neglected accounts about and by women who served in various roles in World War I. She's the editor of a collection of first-person accounts by US women in the war called *In Their Own Words: American Women in World War I*. We have links for you in the podcast notes to her writing and the Amazon link for her book. And for our spotlight on the media segment, the Hello Girls has really become one of the great themes of interest for the WW1 Centennial. In 2017, author and historian Dr. Elizabeth Cobbs wrote a book about how, in 1918, the US Army Signal Corps sent 223 to France. They were masters of the latest technology, the telephone switchboards. General John J. Pershing, Commander of the American expeditionary force, demanded female wire experts when he discovered that the inexperienced doughboys were unable to keep him connected with the troops under fire. And he was pretty clear that without communications, for even an hour, they would lose the fight. The Hello Girls story spawned the book. There's a stage play that was produced in New York. There was an initiative in the US Congress to honor these women with their own Congressional Gold Medal. And as powerful as anything, there was a documentary film that tells about these women and their struggle not only during the war, but for decades after, as they fought for recognition and their veteran's benefits. Jim Ferris is the Executive Producer and Director of that documentary, and he's been on the podcast before. Jim is joining us again today. Jim, welcome back.

[0:46:29]

Jim Theres: Yes, hi. It's great to be back. Thank you.

[0:46:31]

Theo Mayer: So Jim, what did we miss in the setup that the listener should know about these remarkable women and their struggle?

[0:46:38]

Jim Theres: Six groups went overseas. A seventh group was waiting on the docks to go overseas when the armistice hit, but the initial groups were relayed that they needed French and English speakers. All the women had signed on for the duration of the war. And then the follow on contingency of women who were put overseas, that wasn't necessarily requirement, because we now needed trainers. It started out English and French speaking women, and then grew 'em into [inaudible] work with the switchboard, so they could train the troops.

[0:47:08]

Theo Mayer: So Jim, we have a key anniversary for the Hello Girls, 101 years ago. What is it?

[0:47:13]

Jim Theres: Yes, March 6th, the first contingent of women. 33 women sailed overseas. And very interesting comment, Grace Banker, who was the leader of that expedition of those women, she made a comment in her diary. She said, basically, "I'm in charge of 33 women. One is 19, and the other is quite old, I think. She's 35."

[0:47:34]

Theo Mayer: And where did they take off from?

[0:47:36]

Jim Theres: New York. And they dodged some German submarines and landed first in England, and then over to France. By the end of March, early April, the groups went to [inaudible], and they ended up in Paris. And then from there, they scattered all over, kinda like a spiderweb of communications. There were groups in Paris. There were groups in [inaudible]. There were groups north, but they were all very close within our [inaudible] range, and certainly airplane bombing range of the war.

[0:48:05]

Theo Mayer: I have a question. After the armistice, when did these women get to ship home?

[0:48:10]

Jim Theres: So it was interesting, one of the earlier historians, he talked about the Paris Peace Conference. Some of the women were sent there. Some of the women went to Cologne for the occupation of Germany. That's where Grace Banker went, and that's where she received a Distinguished Service medal. And there a few other spots throughout France, but they were there throughout the Peace Conference, and then they gradually started coming home. The last of the women came home in January of 1920.

[0:48:34]

Theo Mayer: Wow. I did not know that. So Jim, your documentary's become a favorite in the documentary film festival circuit. And you've had showings for Congress. Tell us about some of the successes and the awards and special showings.

[0:48:47]

Jim Theres: Yeah. When you make it, you try to be humble, but it's always nice to be recognized. You know? We've been to about 30 film festivals. So getting selected is kinda the first hurdle. Three of them were Academy Award qualifying festivals, which is kinda neat. You get a real high-level vis, there. And then we were nominated for six awards, variant awards about the documentary, and won four of those awards: For best documentary, people's choice, and all that. So it's variant through the [inaudible] crowd. I played to as many as 400, and as few as 50, but people always come out, 'cause they're very interested in these women.

[0:49:25]

Theo Mayer: So, Jim, tell us about some of the special showings, 'cause I mentioned the one for Congress, but you've had some really great showings that are in government and other specialty places.

[0:49:35]

Jim Theres: Right. So we screened the film at the National World War I Museum in Kansas City to a wonderful crowd, the Truman Library, near there. I think Independence is where that is. And the Womens' Memorial was the world premiere, March 3rd of 2018. The National Archives, we screened it there. And one that I was particularly interested in was George Washington's estate down at Mount Vernon. And when we go to those venues, the people that organize them always get huge, huge crowds.

[0:50:05]

Theo Mayer: We have Elizabeth Cobb coming back on the show in a few weeks. She just penned an article that came out this week in the Washington Post, and there's some others coming up. What do you think about all the buzz? I mean, it's really sort of taking off again, and some more.

[0:50:18]

Jim Theres: Yes. Senators Jon Tester and Marsha Blackburn, they have submitted legislation for the women to receive a Congressional Gold Medal. Of course, that's all gonna be posthumously. The last ones died in the mid 1980s. But certainly, a great recognition for the women kinda solidifies that they were indeed part of the army, and contributed significantly. By the time they were done, they had connected over 26 million calls. These weren't always just General to General. They were part of the battle rhythm, and they would help the forward observers call in the artillery, so they were very much part of the war.

[0:50:55]

Theo Mayer: Where can people see the film?

[0:50:57]

Jim Theres: So very soon, I'm gonna put it online for viewing. We're still goin' through kinda at the tail end of the festival cycle. The film wasn't complete by March of 2018, and I had entered some women's film festivals, and none of 'em selected us. But this year, with the film complete, about five or six have selected us now, which is great. Because this is really an important audience. And it's still kinda going, so I'm gonna hold off a little bit, and probably at the summer, we're going to put it online available.

[0:51:26]

Theo Mayer: I've spoken with a number of people who've seen it. And people's reaction to the film is always, at the very least, powerful. It really affects people, and the women's audience really feels empowered by it, I think. Do you have that experience?

[0:51:40]

Jim Theres: Yes. So had a Q&A whenever I have the ability to attend, which is more often than not. The Q&A is always very robust. I remember the National Archives had to flick the lights on and off, because they were like, "Look, you gotta get outta here, now." Q&As go a solid 20 to 30 minutes, and we leaves questions on the table, and then

people come up to me afterward, and continue to talk. One gentleman, just last Saturday, it was Sedona, Arizona, came up to me after, and we got to talkin'. He was a former veteran, and he just said to me, "You know, I don't know what it is about this film, but it just really struck me." And he had tears in his eyes. So that's the kind of emotion that the film drives in the audience.

[0:52:21]

Theo Mayer: Well, as a documentary filmmaker, it's partly about great storytelling, but knowing and picking a great story is probably equal, if not more important. What's next for you?

[0:52:31]

Jim Theres: Yeah, so I'm kinda staying with this theme. I showed the film, the Hello Girls, somewhere in town, here. And someone came up to me and said, "Have you ever heard of the 6888th?" I said, "No, I have not." This is a World War II story. The 6888th was the only all-black female Battalion, led by a black female, Charity Adams. And their mission was very simple, very short: To clear the backlog of mail. And in six months, they cleared over 17 million pieces of mail that were sitting in huge warehouses. Really, an amazing feat.

[0:53:04]

Theo Mayer: Oh, that's great. Well, Jim, thanks for coming by. It's always enlightened to speak with you.

[0:53:08]

Jim Theres: Oh yeah, my pleasure. And I really lit up when I got the email, said, Of course I'll be there.

[0:53:13]

Theo Mayer: Well, thank you, Jim.

[0:53:15]

Jim Theres: Thank you.

[0:53:16]

Theo Mayer: Jim Ferris is the Executive Producer and Director of the documentary the Hello Girls. And hot off the presses, just this week, Jim received a special recognition award at the Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame induction ceremony, for spotlighting America's first women soldiers. Learn more about the Hello Girls and the film by following the link in the podcast notes. And that wraps up episode number 113 of the award winning WW1 Centennial News podcast. Thank you for listening. We wanna thank our great guests, crew, and supports, including Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog; Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author; Traci Slatton, for allowing us to serialize her article: Digital Technology and the Sculptor's Art: Innovation and Imagination; Elizabeth Foxwell, a journalist and author about women and World War I; Jim Ferris, director and Executive Producer of the Hello Girls documentary film. Thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crow our interview editing team. Cats Lazlow, the line producer for the show. J.L Misho and Dave Kramer for research and script support. And I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I, including through this podcast. 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 in 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 and Library; as well as our other sponsors: The Starr Foundation, The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation, and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at ww1cc.org/CN. You'll find WW1 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 Commission Twitter and Instagram are both @WW1CC, and we're on Facebook at WW1Centennial. Thank you for joining us, and don't forget: Keep the story alive for America by helping us build the memorial. Just text the letters WWI or WW1 to the phone number 91-999. (singing) Well, thank you for listening. So long!

[0:56:51]