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7 speakers (Theo Mayer, Mike Shuster, Joe Weishaar, Timothy W., Zachary Austin, Leah Tams, Speaker 7)

[0:00:08]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, episode number 120. It's about then, what was happening a hundred 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, learned and taught, but most of all, it's 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're going to explore the April 1919 issue of Popular Science Magazine. We'll hear from Mike Shuster about the reaction to Germany's being dictated the terms of the peace treaty and the reaction against Woodrow Wilson. For a century in the making, Joe Weishaar joins us for an update on the memorial and its recent review by the Commission of Fine Arts. For remembering veterans, we get an update from Dr. Tim Westcott and Zachary Austin about the World War I Valor Medals Review legislation that was recently announced in both the House and the Senate. Then we're going to be joined by Leah Tams, who's going to tell us about animals that served in World War I that we've never talked about before. What could that be? All this week on World War I Centennial News, which is brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, The Starr Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, as well as the good people of Walmart. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. With Mike Shuster doing such an amazing job of giving us the blow by blow story of the Versailles Peace Treaty's negotiations, revelations, and disintegrations, for a hundred years ago, we thought that we would take you out of the headlines dominated by this story and explore the pages of another publication. The April 1919 issue of Popular Science, a whole different insight into the aftermath and effects of World War I. So with that as a set up, let's jump into our centennial time machine and explore some of the stories about innovation and popular technology in April of 1919. Okay, we're back 100 years, and our first stop is at a local magazine stand, where for 20 cents, we pick up the latest issue of Popular Science magazine. It's 135 pages brimming with stories about the latest innovations and tech affecting the national population and life in 1919. We were wondering how much World War I was present in these pages, and what kind of an aftermath effect we could see through this lens? Let's start by describing the cover and its story. It shows an illustration of a deep sea metal helmeted diver, cutting on a piece of sunken ship. The headline reads, Melting Steel Underwater. Now, this points to a story whose headline reads, Lifting Sunken Treasures from the Sea. Ships and cargoes worth billions were sunk by the Germans. Can that treasure be recovered? It's written by Walter Bernard. Here is some of the multi-page, highly illustrated article. According to an official statement issued by the United States Shipping Board, the Allied and neutral nations lost 21,400,000 deadweight tons of shipping during the war, which means that Germany maintained an average destruction of about 445,000 deadweight tons monthly. Most of these ships that were torpedoed undoubtedly lie underwater at both high and low tides. Without the aid of a diver, they would remain there until they literally dissolved, and so divers must be sent down. Exceptional men, amazing men who perform underwater feats of physical endurance and who accomplish tasks of carpentry, fitting, and blacksmithing that seem a little short of miraculous to the untutored layman. Great opening. Let me read you some of the captions on the amazing illustrations. The first is a diagram of an acetylene torch. The caption reads, "This is the oxyacetylene torch, which melts steel underwater, an invention by Brusck and Beyer. A jet of air blows away underwater so that the flames can reach the steel. It also guides and steadies the flame of the torch. In the future, the torch will be used whenever it is possible instead of dynamite." On the next, nearly full page illustration, it shows an underwater wreck with a group of divers fitting it with giant, metallic cylinders. The caption reads, "Floating her with big cans of air, sometimes pontoons. Huge, especially constructed steel cylinder tanks are sunk beside the vessel and fastened into place by divers. The water in the tanks is then pumped out. Such is the buoyancy of the pontoons that the vessel rises." The five page article goes on to show the many methods and ideas for recovering the treasure sunk by the Germans in their unrestricted warfare along the Atlantic shipping. Now, I thought this was interesting. The first 16 pages of the magazine are filled with ads, many of whom are clearly aimed at job training for returning veterans, with headlines like, See How Much Faster a Man Advances After He's Been Trained, from the New York Alexander Hamilton Institute. Or Be A Certified Electrician. I Will Train You At Home from the Chicago Engineering Works. Or Make Bigger Income, Learn Draftsmanship from the Chicago Technical College. Or Come to Detroit and Learn Auto and Tractor Business in the Heart of the Industry. You get the idea. Then on page 17, we get the first feature story. The headline reads, Fighting the U-boat with Paint, How American and English Artists taught sailors to dazzle the U-boat. Article by Waldemar Kaempffert. The article reads, Robin Hood was a camouflageur. Like all huntsmen from time immemorial, he wore green, so that he could blend in color with the foliage of the forest. Naval officers would say, in their technical parlance, that his visibility was low. When the German U-boats began their depredation, it became desperately necessarily to provide some protective coloration for transport, food-ships, and hundreds of vessels that were carrying munitions to Europe. Battleship gray having proved utterly useless, naval officers turned instinctively to artists for advice and assistance. If an artist, with his trained eye, know show to apply color, knows how to trace lines on canvas so that they can become the counterfeit presentment of the thing he sees,

couldn't he reverse that process and devise some way of blotting out the things that we're looking at? The article goes on with illustrations, one of which is really interesting. It's a man looking through a periscope type device at about a two and a half foot model. The caption reads, Is a new dazzle design effective? The navy camoufleurs found out in the laboratory by testing painted models with a special type of periscope. Now, the article goes on to explain that each individual ship needed its own individual design, and it talks over a few pages of exactly how they did this, both here and in England. The last picture in the article is a bunch of ship models sitting on a table, and the caption reads, literally thousands of low visibility and dazzle designs were experimented with in England and the United States, until at last a few systems were evolved that made it difficult to see the ships at a distance as well as to determine their direction. On page 28, there is a full page article with a half a dozen pictures showing women doing factory jobs. The headline reads, Has She Got Your Job? Some of the captions include, hoisting barrels of oil onto railway wagons has not injured this girl's vanity in the least. Below it, another picture of a woman standing barefoot. Not nearly so vain is this barefoot paddler. With her sleeves and trousers rolled up, she wanders lonely through the long channels of starch in a glucose factory and scoops it up with a wooden paddle. On page 37, there's almost an entire page picture of a battleship under construction. The caption reads, The Maryland is to be our mightiest battleship. She embodies all the lessons taught by the war. Torpedoes were used in the Jutland fight, but what about them? The Maryland has five hulls filled with oil to protect her against them. Heavy, long-range guns won with fight in the North Sea, so the Maryland has a main battery composed of 16 inch guns. Her boilers will be fired by oil and she'll be electrically driven, for oil firing and the electric drive are the latest developments in propelling machinery. It goes on to describe the rest of the ship. Another ship article on page 67 talks about one of the transports that we captured from Germany as she lay at harbor in New York at the beginning of the war. The headline reads, The Largest Anchor on the Largest Ship. The story includes, the Vaterland, rechristened the Leviathan is one of the few large undertakings of Germany that turned out successfully for us. It is so large and moves so swiftly that the Leviathan carried enough American soldiers abroad to finish up the war. This must've been bittersweet news for the Kaiser and his U-boat captains. There are plenty of stories about airplanes as well, including a headline that reads, here is a sign that the time when all of us will fly in airplanes is not far off, and another about being the first to cross the Atlantic nonstop. It reads, who will be the first to fly across? Here is one more candidate for fame and fortune who pins his faith on the sea plane. Those are just a sampling of the articles that you'll find in the pages of Popular Science in April of 1919 about World War I technologies and their affect on post-war life and opportunities. It's a great read, even today, and I didn't mention the four page article about flying to the moon in a rocket ship, yes, in 1919. We put a link to the archive issue in the podcast notes. Over the past weeks, Mike Shuster, former NPR correspondent and curator for The Great War Project blog has been providing us with a series of posts that address the wrapping up and revelation of the Versailles Peace Treaty terms. Let me summarize and set up this week. We've seen Wilson and the American team desperately and frustratingly trying to adhere to Wilson's vision of the 14 points. We've seen that vision essentially and methodically derailed by the Allies with the American team unable to effectively realign things. We've seen Germany unceremoniously call to the table and to be dictated with the terms of the treaty to their shock. So Mike, through your reports, we've seen this building up, but it seems like in the last week of May 1919, the wheels really come off the cart for Wilson.

[0:13:02]

Mike Shuster: Yeah, they sure do, Theo. So the headline reads, This is Not Peace. Liberals in America flee Wilson, shocked by the treaty. Can Germany survive? And this is special to the Great War Project. The Germans rush a copy of the translated treaty to Berlin, according to historian Thomas Fleming's account that these days, a century ago. Overnight, he reports Wilson went from the most admired to the most hated man in Germany. In their rage and despair, the Germans printed several thousand copies of the treaty and distributed them all over Berlin. The President of German, Friedrich Ebert, says, "It is a monstrous document." The head of the German defense machine roars that it was time to tell America to go to hell. The German Chancellor called Wilson a hypocrite and said the treaty was the vilest crime in history. A crowd gathers at the American embassy and chants, "Where is Wilson's peace? Where are the 14 points?" The German Chancellor orders his delegates in Versailles to inform the Allies that the treaty is unbearable and unfulfillable. A copy of the treaty quickly reaches American shores, where it immediately sparks sharp discussion in American newspapers. Liberals in America do not welcome its terms. They are already distressed by the treaty's handling of the League of Nations with its implicit support for the British empire in perpetuity. They are appalled when they see the League linked to the punitive treaty. "They too," Fleming writes, "Lost all confidence in Wilson." One newspaper editor writes that the League's tilt to the conservative side of things was bad enough, but now it was tied to a piece of intrigue, selfish aggression, and naked imperialism. One editor describes the peace conference as the madness at Versailles and dismisses Wilson whom he and his colleagues had supported. On May 24, The Nation magazine publishes a special edition titled, This Is Not Peace. It is a document that states baldly Wilson's supporters had made a terrible mistake backing Wilson and his war. The magazine called the treaty an inhuman monster. Americans would be fools to support a treaty that could not last. The writer sees only one solution, an American withdrawal from the whole, sordid mess. The famous columnist, Walter Lippmann, who had supported Wilson's war for the past two years put it this way. "The League of Nations is fundamentally diseased," and he begins denouncing it everywhere, even going so far as to say it was all Wilson's fault. Much of the mainstream media is hardly more understanding and a mocking tone in the Cleveland Press for one taunts, "It's a hard bid, Tiny,

but who made it?" The New York Times editorializes, it is a terrible punishment the German people and their mad rulers have brought upon themselves. Can Germany live under these circumstances? All the world can see that they are terribly severe, but the world knows too that they are just. The reaction is much harsher among the allies. In Britain, editors gloat that the treaty would leave Germany an unrecognizable ghost of the empire, bloated as it was with criminal annexations, arrogant with wealth, and crazed with the consciousness of unparalleled military power. That's some of the news from the Great War Project these days a century ago.

[0:16:24]

Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster 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 World War I Centennial News now. During this part of the podcast, we explore how World War I is being remembered and commemorated, written about and discussed, taught and learned today. Here is where we spotlight the surprisingly numerous and significant remembrances, honorings and commemoration activities surrounding World War I and World War I themes. For a century in the making, on April 18, 2019, it was a big week for a national World War I memorial in Washington, DC. The memorial team's development of the project was once again going before the very important Commission of Fine Arts, Washington's CFA, for a review of design updates and developments. This is all part of the rigorous process for creating a memorial in the nation's capital. Everybody on the team was very excited about the refinements and the detailed developments that they were bringing forth, but they were also collectively nervous. This is crunch time. To tell us what happened and how it went is the man whose vision and design for the overall memorial was selected in an international design competition that kicked all this off. Joe Weishaar, the lead designer for the national World War I memorial in Washington, DC. Joe, welcome back to the show.

[0:18:08]

Joe Weishaar: Thanks for having me, Theo.

[0:18:09]

Theo Mayer: Well, Joe, you've been on the podcast before several times, but our audience just keeps growing and growing, so for our new listeners, how old were you when you entered the design competition and what happened?

[0:18:21]

Joe Weishaar: I was 25 at the time. I'm 29 now, and coming up very close on four years in June, so I'm sure looking forward to that anniversary. By then, we'll be really close to being done with the design, actually.

[0:18:35]

Theo Mayer: How many people are on the whole team, if you were to add up everybody who's sort of working on the designs and the details and the lighting and the construction development, all that stuff. About how big of a team do you think that is?

[0:18:46]

Joe Weishaar: Adding in everybody, we're about 15-20.

[0:18:49]

Theo Mayer: Well, I would venture to guess that you probably had a, no idea of what you were getting yourself into, and that in the last four years you've probably grown and experienced a couple of decades.

[0:19:01]

Joe Weishaar: I had no idea what I was getting into, and yes, absolutely. The experience has been eye opening [inaudible] but also wonderful at the same time.

[0:19:10]

Theo Mayer: I've been watching it from afar and it's a remarkable experience. Well, let's talk about the April 18 event. What was the team's mission for the CFA presentation, and what were you bringing to them?

[0:19:20]

Joe Weishaar: Sure, so this meeting in particular, we were bringing back to them two really critical pieces of the design, the overall sort of lighting strategy and detailing for the park memorial, and a little bit trickier issue, which was establishing sort of the final dimension of the sculpture. We brought both of those elements to them before, but this time with the sculpture, we were in a little bit of a conundrum. We had gotten a previously approved size and scale, both the bronze element and the future height, but this time when Sabin went back through and sculpted the [inaudible], the proportions changed ever so slightly in his refinement. I think the change was about 1.7%, was oddly small, but it made a big difference when you're talking about a sculpture that's 58 feet long. So what we previously brought to them was a sculpture that was 56 and a half feet long. It had six foot, six inch on average figures. In

Sabin's resculpting, we could either bring them and have approved a six foot six figure, but the sculpture would need to become 58 and a half feet long instead of 56 and a half. Or we could keep the length the same and the figures would have to get smaller. They would have to go down to about six foot two. So the design team in the World War I commission, we've been very concerned since the beginning. You don't want to make figures that are too small. We want them to be slightly a larger than life size, otherwise they just start to look diminutive. So it was our goal that we would get the larger figures approved and get sort of that additional length, because getting that approved really is the go ahead for Sabin to start sculpting until it was really a big meeting for him and we're just thrilled with the outcome, but that approved that decision.

[0:21:16]

Theo Mayer: So they approved it being the longer length which allowed you to go larger than life so that the impact was more powerful. Is that what happened?

[0:21:24]

Joe Weishaar: Exactly, and you have to remember that these figures, even though they're larger than life, they're not huge. So it's a weird piece of sculpture that I don't think any of us had really considered before. I mean, Sabin knows it, but bringing everybody else along and trying to convince them that when you move the sculptures outdoors, they just start to look smaller and smaller. We didn't want to lose that impact.

[0:21:49]

Theo Mayer: Well, and you don't want it to be ordinary.

[0:21:51]

Joe Weishaar: Exactly.

[0:21:52]

Theo Mayer: You brought a whole bunch of other design details for the park to the commission, including the lighting. Tell us about that.

[0:21:59]

Joe Weishaar: Yeah, so the lighting is really a tricky thing to convey in a meeting, and it's sort of unfortunate that there aren't great tools out in the world to describe light, unless you actually get to bring them to the meeting and turn them on and sort of shine them around the room, which you can't really do when you have theoretical design. So we did as many different studies as we possibly could and took as many pictures of the park at night with existing light. We had a new, rendered fly through of the final memorial, of the design with all of the lighting in place. Then we showed a series of we call sort of heat maps that are really planned diagrams for the park that show the light source and how the light source spreads throughout, just to try to get people understanding of what it's going to be like. But it is a very difficult thing to explain.

[0:22:51]

Theo Mayer: Well now you made a movie, right? And I heard that when you rolled the video of the nighttime look for the memorial audience, there was a gasp in the room.

[0:23:00]

Joe Weishaar: Yeah, it was probably the thing that helped us the most, just because people understand the drawings, but not necessarily the impact that what we're proposing and what our lighting designers are showing them actually works. So having that video really captured everybody's attention and sort of imagination. I'm pretty convinced. I think it was [inaudible] design team is that this is going to be a memorial to go see at night. The design of the lighting is just flawless, and it'll really be spectacular.

[0:23:31]

Theo Mayer: As this design is evolving, Joe, and as it's coming together and you guys are really down to details and simulating details, is it kind of taking on a life of its own for you?

[0:23:42]

Joe Weishaar: It is. In a lot of ways, it's so much more than I thought it was going to be at the start of this. I've been through the design process before, and I know that when you get close to the end, it seems like every detail now that we draw has to have five others and more conversations, but that part makes it even more exciting and more fun to be a part of.

[0:24:04]

Theo Mayer: Well, you guys get to live in the memorial every day. Joe, just really quickly in closing, the team's getting really close to completed final approvals on everything. How does that play out?

[0:24:14]

Joe Weishaar: It's interesting. So we're probably about two meetings away from the end at this point, so we've got another meeting to discuss the park signage, text selections, really nit picky details about fonts and things like that. Then we'll have one more probably in June in which we just go back through the last three years of meetings and pick up any last loose ends that were hanging out there. Then hopefully by that point, we'll have final approval on the design and we'll plan for [inaudible].

[0:24:49]

Theo Mayer: There's a couple of other regulatory agencies that also have a sign off, but they've been pretty much going along with what the CFA is doing, haven't they?

[0:24:57]

Joe Weishaar: They have been. When the CFA makes the determination, they're in the room. We've already met with their staff members, so we know it's sort of a go ahead.

[0:25:05]

Theo Mayer: Well, Joe, thank you. It's always great to get caught up on this, and appreciate you coming in.

[0:25:11]

Joe Weishaar: Oh, my pleasure. Any time.

[0:25:12]

Theo Mayer: Joe Weishaar, the lead designer for the national World War I Memorial in Washington DC. Coming up in a week or two, we're going to bring on the lead fundraiser for the project to tell us about how the most crucial part of the project is coming along. Go to ww1cc.org/memorial, all lower case, to see the new fly through video, including how the memorial's going to look at night. It's really awesome. And of course, the link is in the podcast notes. For remembering veterans the same week, it was also big news for the Valor Medals Review Taskforce. To tell us about that are two gentlemen who have been on the show before, Dr. Timothy Westcott, Park University Associate Professor for History and Director of the George S. Robb Centre for the study of the great war and Zachary Austin, the Adjunct Director for the Commissions Valor Medal Review Task Force. Gentlemen, welcome back to the podcast.

[0:26:13]

Timothy W.: Thanks, Theo.

[0:26:14]

Zachary Austin: Hi, Theo. Thanks for having us back on the show.

[0:26:17]

Theo Mayer: So Zack, let me start with you. What happened? What was the legislation and who introduced it?

[0:26:22]

Zachary Austin: Well, to put it really succinctly, we have liftoff. We saw a group of bipartisan senators and representatives introduce what they're calling the World War I Valor Medals Review Act. The bill numbers are Senate 1218 and House Resolution 2249. Essentially, we've seen coalitions, folks both inside and outside the congressional armed services committees release bills that are going to bring our project to life. In terms of who introduced it, in the Senate, the lead author was Senator Chris Van Hollen from Maryland, who introduced on behalf of himself, and Mr. Roy Blunt from Missouri. There are three more co-sponsors on that bill. All three are from the Senate Armed Services Committee. Those are Senators Tim Scott from South Carolina, Tammy Duckworth from Illinois, and Richard Blumenthal from Connecticut. I should also add that Senators Van Hollen and Blunt are both on the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is the organization responsible for appropriating the money that would go towards funding our national defense. In the House for House resolution 2249, the lead author was Representative French Hill from Arkansas. He was joined on the bill by Representatives Emanuel Cleaver from Missouri, Chrissy Houlahan from Pennsylvania, and Sam Graves from Missouri as well. Both Representatives Houlahan and Graves are on the Armed Services Committee.

[0:27:55]

Theo Mayer: Zack, I just want to interrupt and point out something that showed up in social media really strong. This is really on both sides or bipartisan groups, and there's a great deal of very positive reaction about the bipartisan nature of the legislation.

[0:28:09]

Zachary Austin: Yeah, absolutely. That's one of the things that we're very excited about. We've seen this emerge with some of the previous reviews that have happened in congress, but we are ecstatic, really, that there's recognition across the aisle that this is something that has to be done to ensure that every American whose actions warranted a Medal of Honor receives one, regardless of their race, their creed, or their religion.

[0:28:35]

Theo Mayer: Zack, can you give us a quick overview of what the bills actually encompass?

[0:28:38]

Zachary Austin: First is they waive some statutory and legal limits on awarding the Medal of Honor in advance of the study being completed. After a certain amount of time has passed, there's a moratorium on further awards that takes an act of congress to remove. This bill does that. The second thing it does is authorize the secretaries of each military department to begin a systematic review of Asian American, African American, Hispanic American, Jewish American, and Native American veterans from the first World War who may have been overlooked for the Medal of Honor in spite of deserving service. As part of that, our task force has been asked to serve as a consulting partner for the Department of Defense to assist them with some of the early and non-controversial parts of the research. Those also happen to be the most expensive parts of the research, and we're very excited that through that collaboration, we think this is the first survey of its kind that has been completed for any war in American history that can be accomplished at zero expense to the American taxpayer.

[0:29:40]

Theo Mayer: We ran a Facebook post about this as the legislation came out that had a rather stunning or phenomenal result, but it got almost 14,000 reactions. One in every ten people who saw the post responded to it with a like or a click or a share, and it was shared thousands of times, and there were about 350 comments that tells me that there's a huge interest of community out there about what's happening here. I wanted to highlight a comment I saw just this morning as we head to Dr. Westcott. The comment came from a gentleman named John McConnell. It was, quote, "While giving their families medals is nice, the best way to honor them is to learn about what they did, so hopefully the stories associated with how they earned them will get a few more people to pay attention to the cost that all military members paid during the great war. Leading that to you, Dr. Westcott and your research, are you going to be publishing these profiles on these cases?"

[0:30:39]

Timothy W.: Yes, we are planning on publishing them in two formats. One is more immediate, and one would be more long term, more toward the end of the project, which currently we're estimating to be five to seven years. As we complete individual service member records, we will be posting those narratives, as I call them, or stories on our website at gsr.park.edu, so individuals can read the life and the times of these individuals. I think Mr. McConnell has the perfect point. Sometimes I believe we can get bogged down a little bit in the details. The team here has to do that naturally in order to complete the template for the Medal of Honor submission for review, but we've made a very concerted effort that as we do that type of detail, we're also getting the details of those individuals as human beings. If we can get before the war, great. During the war's even better, and then after the war, we want to also tell that story even though in that sense, it may not be connected to the valor itself, but it's talk about the life afterwards, because some of the things we have been finding. When these gentlemen came home, in some cases, life was pretty hard, and we want to make sure that we tell the full life narrative of this individual. At the end of the project it is the intent of the university to look at gentlemen, the service members that we actually move up to the Department of Defense, if that's a dozen, two dozen or how many from the approximately 150 that we think we will review. We're going to look at it in a similar vein as Pershing did with his 100. We want to do sort of supplement to that with 24, the 36, and I've already reached out to the local university press here in the Midwest that sort of wants to help us do those stories in a publication.

[0:32:52]

Theo Mayer: They really are stories of service, and that encompasses all of that. Zack, you mentioned that because of what Park University's doing and the task force that the weight and the cost of that initial research is not being borne by the congress. Has that not happened before in terms of Valor of Medal reviews?

[0:33:09]

Zachary Austin: Yeah, that's never been done before, Theo. So the first review that was commissioned in this series was specifically for African Americans in World War II in the army, and the army employed a similar approach to what we're doing now. There was a university task force that was assembled do to a lot of the research before turning over the process to make final decisions to the Department of Defense. The difference is the army paid for that service, and since that time, that's kind of been the norm. The individual services within the armed forces have been footing

the bill for these studies whenever they've been authorized for World War II or later conflicts. We through the World War I Valor of Medals Review Act, have partnered with congress to return to that original model that was employed for African Americans in World War II with important exception that we're volunteering our services rather than asking for a contract to pay for that.

[0:34:03]

Theo Mayer: Well, I think that's really amazing, actually. So what happens next with the legislation?

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Zachary Austin: Because the legislation has been referred to the armed services committees, I would anticipate that it is going to be included in what's called the National Defense Authorization Act for this upcoming fiscal year. That's the policy bill that collates all the different issues, touching on the Department of Defense. So that is one of the bills that passes every year with wide bipartisan support because of where this has ended up in Congress and the bipartisan support it's enjoyed, we're anticipating this legislation's going to be included in that measure.

[0:34:44]

Theo Mayer: Well, gentlemen, your second program, the Congressional Gold Medal for the Hello Girls, how has that legislation going and how can our listeners help move it along?

[0:34:52]

Zachary Austin: Really, the most important thing that is going to make or break the Hello Girls bill is the involvement of folks like you who are listening. Get involved with the story. Do some research on the unit, and who represents you today and shoot them a quick email or give them a call. I think you might be surprised at the kind of impact it could have.

[0:35:11]

Theo Mayer: Well, I think that all I want to say is thank you to the congressional teams that are helping us to remember the great sacrifice and service of our World War I veterans and what they gave for us, and also the task force for shepherding this along. Thank you gentlemen.

[0:35:24]

Zachary Austin: Thank you, Theo, for having us on the show, and again, a hearty thanks to all the members of the United States Congress who have chosen to take this upon themselves.

[0:35:33]

Timothy W.: Thank you, Theo, and I would echo Zach's compliments to all of our congressional support.

[0:35:38]

Theo Mayer: That was Dr. Timothy Westcott, Park University Associate Professor of History and Director of the George S. Robb Center for the study of the great war, the lead research partner on the task force, and Zack Austin, the Adjunct Director for the Commissions Valor Medal Review Task Force. We have links for you in the podcast notes for the House bill press release and the Senate bill press release. As our regular listeners know, we've talked before about our four legged friends serving in World War I. In fact, we have a wonderful and comprehensive section on our website curated by Brooke USA about horses and mules in World War I. You can find it at ww1cc.org/horses. Of course, Sergeants Stubby and Rags are legendary, and Sergeant Stubby was recognized with his own animated feature film, Sergeant Stubby, an American hero. Cher Ami, the messenger pigeon of the last battalion saga has been a favorite, and we've featured a couple of segments on how pigeons have been revered and reviled through history. What about legless and wingless friends who served in World War I? What am I talking about? Is it snakes? Nope, it's not snakes. Here to tell you about a very unexpected friend from the animal kingdom who served in World War I is Leah Tams, Program Associate of the University of Mary Washington in Virginia. She's working on a number of programs, including an initiative to develop multi-campus team talk distance learning liberal arts seminars. Before that, she was a James Lollar Hagan intern at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, where she did some interesting study about animals in World War I. Leah, welcome to the podcast.

[0:37:22]

Leah Tams: Hi, Theo. Thanks for having me.

[0:37:24]

Theo Mayer: Leah, you're at the University of Mary Washington. What do you do there?

[0:37:28]

Leah Tams: I am the program associate for a grant funded project called COPLACDigital. COPLAC is the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, and so that speaks to sort of the multi-campus team taught project that you mentioned before. So essentially, I have helped train a small group of faculty from different public liberal arts colleges across North America, and we taught them some digital history tools and methodologies and then helped them develop courses together and then offer those courses to students at all of these different public liberal arts institutions.

[0:38:03]

Theo Mayer: When you were an intern at the National Museum of American History, you had a chance to do some research on World War I. How'd you wind up focusing on animals?

[0:38:12]

Leah Tams: Well, it was purely by accident, because I was actually there to research the different roles that American women played in World War I, but as I was looking through the Smithsonian's collections and identifying objects that we could use in the online exhibit I created, I kept coming across a lot of objects and archival materials that featured animals very prominently. I myself am an animal lover, so of course I wanted to do a small side project about animals in World War I.

[0:38:44]

Theo Mayer: Okay, Leah. In the set up, I mentioned a surprising legless, wingless animal that served in World War I. What is it and how did they serve?

[0:38:54]

Leah Tams: So it's not snakes. It's actually slugs, which I was very surprised when I found out. So the slugs that served in World War I were Leopard Slugs, also known as great gray slugs. Essentially, they served as mustard gas detectors for American soldiers in the trenches. There was a curator by the name of Paul Bartsch at the Smithsonian's US National Museum, which is now the National Museum of Natural History. He kind of discovered this purely by accident. He had some of these slugs at his home one day, and they escaped from the enclosure that they were supposed to be in and got into his furnace room. When he discovered the slugs in his furnace room, they were acting very distressed. Specifically, they were doing some very odd movements with their tentacles to show their distress. He kind of thought, oh, okay. That's interesting, and then didn't think about it for a few years until the United States entered World War I in 1917. He thought, oh, this could actually be pretty useful. So he went back and did some quick experiments to see if the slugs were as sensitive to mustard gas as they were to the fumes in his furnace room. He discovered that they were extremely sensitive, much more so than humans, and possibly even more sensitive than other animals used for gas detection like dogs. So he let the US army know, and then the slugs were sent off to the trenches, and they helped the soldiers by observing the slugs and seeing if they made these very characteristic distressed movements with their tentacles could alert the soldiers that they needed to put their gas masks on before they were exposed to harmful levels of gas.

[0:40:40]

Theo Mayer: This is a story I literally had never heard before. Gastropod gas detectors. It's got kind of a ring to it. When you did your research, what other things surprised you?

[0:40:52]

Leah Tams: Honestly, what surprised me the most was just the sheer number of animals that served in World War I, because now we're brought up, we're living in the age of technology where animals don't really have the same place in war that they did back in World War I. Definitely what stuck out the most to me were these odd animals that served, like slugs, or oftentimes there were mascots for different regiments. The mascots could be very interesting. There was one unit called the Lafayette Escadrille which were basically American volunteers who went over to France. Their mascots were actually lion cubs, so I thought seeing all the different mascots, some were bears, some were foxes that were actually with the regiments were pretty cool too.

[0:41:37]

Theo Mayer: We featured a story where the Aussies brought kangaroos to the Middle East, so they had these roos, those mascots.

[0:41:45]

Leah Tams: Very fitting.

[0:41:47]

Theo Mayer: Thank you for joining us, Leah. Leah Tams is a program associate at the University of Mary Washington. We have additional links for you in the podcast notes about animals in World War I. This week in articles and posts where we highlight some of the selected stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, The Dispatch. Our first

story, hero in World War I and baseball to receive overdue waters from PA hometown. If Spottswood Poles had been born a century later, he would've been a superstar. Instead, most people in his hometown of Winchester, Pennsylvania have no idea who he was and what he did. But that's about to change. Poles, an African American who became a hero on the ball fields and the battlefields alike will be recognized by city officials and the local baseball team this summer with a historical marker and the naming of a road for him. Poles was a decorated hero in the army's 369th infantry regiment during World War I, the legendary Harlem Hellfighters, and many argue that the black Ty Cobb should be in the national baseball hall of fame. Another baseball story. Major league baseball adds poppy with lest we forget to Memorial Day game uniforms. Major league baseball is adding a poppy to its Memorial Day uniforms, a symbol that has been used since World War I to honor those who died in the war with the phrase, lest we forget. These will appear on team regular uniforms. The caps will feature a special stars and stripes Memorial Day patch. On Memorial Day, the individual teams will present on the field tributes featuring their own local military heroes. A third baseball story. Virginia war memorial event celebrates baseball in Virginia. Baseball was an important part of the lives of soldiers involved in World War I. When millions of US troops deployed to Europe, they brought with them the love for the game and promptly addressed the absence of the diamonds. They made hundreds of fields. "The French would stand around and wonder, what the heck are those crazy guys doing?" Said Al Barnes, author of Play Ball!: Doughboy and Baseball in the Great War. By the war's end, there were more than 4,000 teams made of military personnel, including major leaguers, minor leaguers, and negro league players, all competing in Europe, according to Barnes. Our last story, World War I veterans struggle after army service led to Shazam! The Warner Brothers' superhero film Shazam!, currently playing around the nation, is based on a character with an army veteran's little known struggle a century ago to adjust to life after the war. The world's mightiest mortal was introduced by Fawcett Publications as Captain Marvel, the alter ego of a kid reporter, Billy Batson. But before the fictional captain, there was Captain Billy, a real life, former World War I soldier and newspaper reporter whose humor magazine for World War I veterans shocked the 1920s America and launched a publishing empire spanning magazines, comics, and paperbacks. The Weekly Dispatch newsletter, a series of short paragraphs that act as an easy guide to great World War I news and information. Like the podcast, it's from then and now. You can subscribe to this wonderful, free, weekly guide at ww1cc.org/subscribe, or follow our link in the podcast notes to the Dispatch newsletter and its links. That wraps up episode number 120 of the award winning World War I Centennial News Podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, crew, and supporters including Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog, Joe Weishaar, the lead designer for the National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC. Dr. Timothy Westcott and Zachary Austin, from the World War I Valor Medal Review Task Force. Leah Tams, historian, educator, and writer. Thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing teams. Kats Laslow, the line producer for the show. Dave Kramer and JL [Michaux] 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 this podcast. We're bringing the lessons of a hundred 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 DC. Coming up in May, we're going to take our World War I and memorial message on the road to Fleet Week in New York. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library as well as our other sponsors, the STARR Foundation, the General Motors Foundation, and the good people of Walmart. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found at our website at ww1cc.org/cn. You'll find World War I centennial news in all the places you get your podcasts, and even using your smart speaker by saying, "Play WW1 Centennial News Podcast." The podcast Twitter handle is @vww1podcast. The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc, 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 WW1 to the phone number 91999 and please give a small donation.

[0:48:15]

Speaker 7: I'm forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air. They fly so high, nearly reach the sky, then like my dreams, they fade and die. I'm forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air.

[0:48:42]

Theo Mayer: Thank you for listening. So long.

[0:48:53]