

**19-08-12-Episode-135: SPECIAL Focus On: War in The Sky (38m 59s)**

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**10 speakers** (Theo Mayer, Doug Jacobs, Mark Wilkins, Michael O'Neal, Robert Kasprzak, Narrator, Speaker 7, Speaker 8, Crowd, Murphy)

**[0:00:07]**

**Theo Mayer:** Welcome to WW1 Centennial News, the Doughboy podcast, Episode #135. The Doughboy podcast is about what happened 100 years ago during and after the war that changed the world. It's not only about then. It's also about now: how World War I is still present in our daily lives and how it's remembered and discussed, learned and taught. But most important, the podcast is about why and how we'll never let the awareness of World War I fall back into the mists of obscurity. So join us as we explore the many facets of World War I, both then and now. We're introducing another new feature this week. In fact, the whole show is a new feature. We call it, Focus On, where the entire show explores a single subject that we may have been covering over the past several years but pulling together many parts into a cohesive, single subject theme. This is week it's focus on War in the Sky, part one, on WWI Centennial News, the Doughboy podcast, which is sponsored and brought to you by the US World War I Centennial Commission and the Doughboy Foundation, dedicated to remembering those who served in World War I and to building the National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC. I'm Theo Mayer, the chief technologist for the commission and your host. Welcome to the show. World War I was the first time in human history that fixed-wing airplanes were used for warfare. After all, the airplane was not even a teenager when the war broke out in 1914. It was on December 17th, 1903, that Orville and Wilbur Wright pointed their flying contraption into the wind near their camp at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. It was Orville's turn at the controls, and this time it worked. The first flight lasted 12 seconds and covered a total distance of 120 feet or 37 meters. Now putting that into context, that's less than the wingspan of a modern Boeing 747, but by golly, it worked. A short 11 years later, World War I breaks out in Europe. Technology, technology application, and rapid innovation are the hallmarks of aviation in World War I. As the war begins, airplanes are only capable of short flights at speeds of 40 to 60 miles an hour. Their engines are small. They sound like little lawnmowers, and their power is next to nothing. These early planes are notoriously unreliable. They're likely to fall out of the sky even without being shot down. In contrast, by the end of the war, just four and a half years later, there's a fever pitch competition with over a dozen international teams trying to win a huge cash prize for pulling off the first non-stop cross-Atlantic flight. It's a great story and the foundation of a major aspect of life today. In 2018, more than 4.3 billion passengers were carried around the world in airplanes. Now 100 years ago, the whole darn global population was under 2 billion, so over twice as many people were flown by the airlines in 2018 as lived on the planet in 1918. The industry employs over 2.7 million people. And all this got going in World War I. Now, one of the important contributors to my understanding of the great war in the sky is a former top gun pilot who flew fighters in Vietnam, earned the rank of US Air Force Brigadier General and then turned his life's passion into writing about military flight. His name is R.G. Head. R.G. contributed his comprehensive research on the air war in World War I to the centennial effort and curated a nearly day-by-day timeline which is published on the World War I Centennial website at [ww1cc.org/warinthesky](http://ww1cc.org/warinthesky), all one word, all lower case. We have it in the podcast notes. With that as a set up, let's jump into our centennial time machine and go back to World War I and explore the impact and the consequence of the airplane and the war to change the world. It all began with observation balloons, the first of which were used during the French Revolutionary War in the early 1800s, late 1700s period. Now, observation is an incredibly important role for aerial warfare in World War I. I know we tend to think of the iconic fighter planes and dog fighting in the air, but actually one of the main reasons that that was happening was to protect other planes that were flying low and slow, flying observation missions, taking strategically critical reconnaissance photographs. Reconnaissance was the first value proposition for having airplanes in the war and air-to-air combat was initially to protect that idea. But low and slow observation planes weren't the only easy reconnaissance targets in the sky. Observation balloons were used a lot at the fighting front. These now-modern hovering mammoths were used for directing artillery fire which needed spotters and observation well beyond the visual range of the ground-based observers. As much as planes were able to record enemy positions and movements on film, having real-time spotters and observation balloon baskets linked to the ground by telephone was essential. It allowed the artillery to take advantage of increasingly larger guns with much longer ranges. Now, these World War I observation balloons don't quite look like the hot air balloons that easily come to mind. They were often called sausages or saucisson in French. They were big, oblong things with fat inflated fins on the sides to keep them pointing in the right direction. As if being a sitting duck unprotected over battlefield wasn't dangerous enough, those sausages gas bags were filled with super flammable hydrogen making them susceptible to fire set off by hot rounds coming from the ground below. These fat, sitting ducks were also favorite targets for airplanes that attacked from behind the clouds overhead, and these so-called balloon buster planes went after them, flying low with the balloons. While they were doing that, they often got shot down with anti-aircraft guns from below, but not nearly as often as the balloons did. James Allen Higgs, Jr., a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, describes his balloon getting shot down, which happened to him four times during the war, quote, "We were wearing parachute harnesses with a rope attached to the shoot that was stuffed into a bag, hanging on the outside of our baskets. Our weight would pull the shoot out of the bag. They were supposed to open

when we dropped 300 feet. Now, it takes nearly five seconds to fall 300 feet from a standing start, and that's an awful long time to wonder whether you're going to live or you're going to die. The parachutes opened with a considerable jolt, but that was a really pleasant feeling," unquote. Higgs and his fellows got rewarded for jumping out of burning, falling balloons. Each time they were shot down, they got 48 hours of leave in Paris to settle their nerves and get ready to go up again. Balloons were an essential part of the aerial repertoire in World War I, and it's easy to understand why the guys in them were called balloonatics. Now, you can hear a longer segment on balloonatic James Allen Higgs, Jr. That we were recorded for the War in the Sky segment of Episode 30 in July of 2017. Of course, we have that link for you in the podcast notes. For our next segment, I'd like to introduce you to Erwin Bleckley. He's one of the aerial heroes of the Lost Battalion saga, a name that's not that well known in aviation history. To tell us the story of Erwin, we're joined by Lieutenant Colonel Doug Jacobs, US Army (Retired). Doug is the former command historian and curator for the Kansas National Guard Museum. He's also an Erwin Bleckley biographer who spent years researching this man and his story. Here is a conversation I had with Doug in September of 2018 during Episode #91. Doug, welcome to the show.

**[0:08:42]**

**Doug Jacobs:** Thank you, Theo. I appreciate being here and an opportunity to talk about a subject that is very dear to my heart and I feel a lot of passion for, and that is the story of Erwin Bleckley.

**[0:08:54]**

**Theo Mayer:** Who is Erwin Bleckley?

**[0:08:56]**

**Doug Jacobs:** Well, Erwin Bleckley has a unique story in that he was a man that enlisted in the Kansas National Guard from Wichita, Kansas. He was the second man to join the first field artillery battery that was just formed in Wichita. He received a commission, and 30 days after, that unit was mobilized to go to war. It was made part of the 130th Field Artillery regiment which is part of the 35th Division. It's a National Guard unit made up of members of the Missouri National Guard and the Kansas National Guard. I know about Erwin because I've spent about 25 years of my life studying him. During World War I, he is one of four Air Service members that received the Medal of Honor. He went to war. He learned his job as a forward observer. When they got to France, they'd asked all the forward observers to consider being forward observers in airplanes. The airplane was used for the first time as a combat platform during World War I, and so it was a lot about learning as you go. Now, you have to remember that the Air Service was the forerunner of the Army Air Corps, and in 1947, that became the Air Force, so I guess the lineage goes back through the Air Force to this young man that was in the Kansas National Guard as a field artillery. It's a unique story in that respect. I really can't tell the story of Erwin without talking about the pilot of the airplane that he was in, and that was Lieutenant Harold Goettler. Harold Goettler was an aviator from Chicago, Illinois. They were assigned to the 50th Aero Squadron, and their job was to support the 77th Division in the Meuse-Argonne. The 77th Division had the unit that became known as the Lost Battalion. The Lost Battalion really wasn't lost. They were pretty much where they were supposed to be. But on the morning on the 5th of October, the commander of the 77th Division had asked the 50th Aero Squadron to see what they could do about contacting them, try to resupply them, and see if they could find out what the commander needed as far as support. When they got to the coordinates that they were given, they could not find the guy. What they found was a bunch of enemy soldiers firing back at them. Important to note that it was actually a team effort by the 50th Aero Squad to save the Lost Battalion. They all worked together, the maintenance people, the supply group. Bleckley had suggested that they might use a process of elimination to locate where the unit actually was at by drawing fire from the enemy. So they would fly down the ravine real low, and if the men on the ground shot at them, they would mark that map. Basically using themselves as bait to locate where they were being shot at from the Germans in order to find the spot where they weren't being shot at by the Americans. The 50th Aero Squadron did 13 sorties to that area, dropping supplies. It was the following day on the 6th of October that a flight crew by the name of Anderson and Rogers flying the number 16 airplane actually were able to report the location where they were at. A lot of planes got riddled with bullets. As a matter of fact, two planes before Harold and Erwin's plane, did not make it back that day. Erwin's plane was the last one, and they did not make it back because they had crashed in the process. He gave his life in order to save these guys on the ground. Now we have to remember, this is the first time in the Army Air Service that they ever attempted to drop supplies to combat units on the ground, and they did not know exactly how to do it. There's been a lot of arguments about whether or not they were successful in saving the Lost Battalion, whether or not they were successful in getting the packages on the ground. In fact, the package they did drop, the ones that landed on the ground, did get into the soldiers' hands. They just happened to be the wrong soldiers. They did locate the unit. They were saved the next day. But the most important thing that the aircraft crews did flying over was to give the guys on the ground hope that somebody was looking for them. It's because of that they were able to hold out just long enough for the units to come in and rescue the Lost Battalion.

**[0:13:32]**

**Theo Mayer:** Doug, you're bringing a really interesting and somewhat unknown story to us. Thank you so very much.

[0:13:37]

**Doug Jacobs:** All right, thank you.

[0:13:39]

**Theo Mayer:** Erwin Bleckley biographer, Lieutenant Colonel Doug Jacobs, US Army (Retired) is the former command historian and curator of the Kansas City National Guard Museum. An arms race in the sky was inevitable as each side tried to improve the capability, reliability, and the lethality of planes. Believe it or not, the first gunfire in the air involved pilots just pulling out their service revolvers and popping off at each other. Aiming the plane and shooting where the plane was aimed was a big deal. The first attempts to mount a machine gun on a plane ended with the heavy nose prototype crashing on its first experimental flight. As we said, those early planes were not very powerful flyers. Beyond that, mounting a machine gun to shoot forward without shooting off your own propeller was a really big challenge. They tried a lot of ideas. Some guns were mounted very high on top of the wings. Some planes carried a second man, a machine gunner who whipped around his weapon on a swinging tripod. There were pusher planes with props behind the wings allowing the pilot to aim the plane forward and shoot without hitting the blades of the propeller. But pusher planes were slow and less maneuverable. Enter Dutch aircraft designer, Anthony Fokker, who came up with the ultimate answer. Unfortunately, he did it for the Germans. His mechanism, referred to as an interrupter gear, connected the firing of the machine gun with a turning of the propeller allowing the bullets to pass through the brief gap between the blades as they spun. Now in spite of the tests on both the ground and in the air proving that his design worked, German generals remained skeptical. They demanded that Fokker prove his idea by going out on a mission and shooting down an enemy by himself. That's pretty harsh in my book. Fokker saluted and did as he was told. Pretty soon a French plane came into his sights, but that poor Fokker found himself unable to pull the trigger. He was an engineer not a warrior. Fokker returned to the flying field and told the generals he couldn't do it. Someone else was going to have to test the plane. And so it was that the German pilot who would become Germany's first ace and who would be known as the father of air-to-air combat, Lieutenant Oswald Boelcke was the first pilot to successfully use the interrupter gear to shoot down another airplane on August 1st, 1915. With that innovation, the German planes would continue to dominate the skies, a phenomenon known as the Fokker scourge until mid-1916. The interrupter gear, a technological marvel that brought air combat into the future. Now we've put links in the podcast notes for you, and R.G. Head's book about Boelcke, more information about interrupter gears, and a very cool YouTube video from the Slow Mo Guys that shows you an interrupter gear operating in really, really slow motion. Check it out. All sciences advanced in the war that changed the world. This includes the relatively new medical sciences of psychology and psychiatry. Our balloonatic, James Higgs, may have enjoyed his 48 hours in Paris after being shot down, but 48 hours of oo-la-la isn't going to fix the stress of being in combat. Shell shock is a term that was first heard in World War I and was often treated as cowardice or even treason. It was really the equivalent of what we recognize today as post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD. We normally think of shell shock as an infliction for those affected by horrendous barrages of artillery fire and machine guns on the battlefields and in the trenches. It turns out that pilots apparently suffered greatly from PTSD. Here is Mark Wilkins, historian, writer, museum professional, and lecturer. Welcome to the podcast, Mark.

[0:17:37]

**Mark Wilkins:** Thank you. Glad to be here.

[0:17:39]

**Theo Mayer:** Mark, to start with how did you get the trove of letters you used for your research?

[0:17:44]

**Mark Wilkins:** Well, research as you know, is a treasure hunt. It's intuitive, and sometimes information is found in the most unlikely places. That being said, there's some recent books that have collections of pilots' letters. University and national archives are another great source as are aviation museums or war museums like the Imperial War Museum in London. Local historical societies, sometimes relatives of the pilots, also online newspaper and periodical archives are another fabulous source for information.

[0:18:11]

**Theo Mayer:** Mark, about how many letters do you think you went through to start to do your research?

[0:18:17]

**Mark Wilkins:** Too many to count. Many, many, many, many, many letters, yes.

[0:18:22]

**Theo Mayer:** In World War I, malady was equated with physical issues, but your article deals with the psychological stresses of the pilot's experience. Last year we were telling stories about soldiers being executed for shell shock on charges of cowardice. How did that play out for the pilots?

**[0:18:38]**

**Mark Wilkins:** Well, the field of aviation psychology, so-called, evolved symbiotically with the war. Psychiatrists were initially split about the causation of shell shock, for example. Some thought it was a purely physical phenomenon. Whereas others thought it was psychological. This began a debate that actually didn't conclude until around, I think, 1922. The military finally opted for the latter definition that it was psychological because this allowed them to either be returned to the trenches or the cockpit. This was important because with the epic casualty tolls mounting, they really needed every man. I'm not aware of any pilot being shot for cowardice. Although when cowardice was observed, the offending pilot was severely reprimanded or transferred. You have to remember they're trying to build these guys up as basically rock stars. The trench warfare was not going well, and these guys that flew these one-on-one jousting in the skies, I mean this was something that gave the men in the trenches hope, so they didn't want their image tarnished. Many internalized the struggle. In the British squadrons, it was understood that you kept a sunny disposition in front of the men, but you could privately go to pieces.

**[0:19:39]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, the stress on these aces actually makes a lot of sense. If you were an ace, you flew a lot, and the mortality rate of your buddies is off the chart. You don't have like you do in a trench, you've got the courage of the guy to your left and the guy to your right to bolster you. But this is kind of a white knuckle, cold sweat daily solo experience, so it sounds like traumatic stress is inevitable. How common was it?

**[0:20:02]**

**Mark Wilkins:** Among those who talked it, you have to remember that many didn't, it was very common. Elliott White Springs, who was an American who flew for the RFC, the Royal Flying Corps, in the 85th and 148th Squadron, basically said, "It's only a question of time until we all get it. I'm all shot to pieces. My nerves are all gone, and I can't stop. Few men live to know what real fear is. It's something that grows on you day by day that eats into your constitution that undermines your sanity." Let me give you another example. Squadron leader Cecil Lewis wrote, "I realize not then but later while pilots cracked up, why they lost their nerve and had to go home. Nobody could stand the strain indefinitely. Ultimately it reduced you to a dithering state near to imbecility. They send you home to rest. They put it in the background of your mind, but it was not like a bodily fatigue from which you could recover. It was sort of a damage to the essential tissue of your being, and never, once you have been through it, could you be quite the same again."

**[0:20:52]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, so Mark, after immersing yourself in all of this, can you give us one example of what your biggest takeaway is from this?

**[0:21:00]**

**Mark Wilkins:** Well, it's a complex notion. It was a bittersweet experience to find easy explanation or quantification. From Arthur Gould Lee, Lee after the war reflecting, he goes back to the Western Front. He's standing by the corner of a chateau and he says, "In the sunshine by the waving grain with everything now at peace I remembered them and was filled with a heavy sense of loneliness. I knew that although I had not been killed, something in me had. Something had gone out of me and was buried and would always be buried in 100 cemeteries in France and in England along with the companions of my youth who had died that our country might live."

**[0:21:36]**

**Theo Mayer:** We just had a great question come in from our live audience. Frank [Crohn] wants to know did Richthofen, Germany's Red Baron, appear to suffer from PTSD?

**[0:21:46]**

**Mark Wilkins:** Yes, he did. He was a fearless pilot, but he was wounded in the head. He suffered a head wound, and after that he changed. He became a little more cautious, a little bit more protective of his pilots. He basically realized that mortality was something that could happen to him. The problem is we can only deduce what happened based on the letters that many of these guys wrote. Red Baron, even though he wrote an autobiography, he doesn't really talk about much of that stuff. His mother basically is the one who commented on his condition and his temperament had changed after he was wounded.

**[0:22:17]**

**Theo Mayer:** Last December, we had filmmaker Darroch Greer on the show about his upcoming film about the Lafayette Escadrille and doing a documentary. You're involved in that project, aren't you?

**[0:22:26]**

**Mark Wilkins:** That's right. I'm the producer of aerial effects and a historical consultant for the film. Basically as a producer for aerial effects, I line up venues for shoot so that the aircraft I mentioned, we did one at the Golden Age Air Museum filming replica Nieuport 17s and a German two-seater and simulated controls and dog fight segments. In addition, I've built a few large-scale actually radio-controlled models. These will stand in for what we can't do with full-scale aircraft. As a historical consultant for the film, I'm helping out with historical big-picture aspects. Really the trick with this is to locate it within the greater framework of the war so the viewer not only sees this particular story in great detail but is also able to see where it fits within the big picture, the major battles and political trends of the war.

[0:23:07]

**Theo Mayer:** Thank you for coming on the show and giving us the story and the article.

[0:23:11]

**Mark Wilkins:** Well, thank you for having me.

[0:23:12]

**Theo Mayer:** Mark Wilkins, historian and writer, penned an article about World War I pilot PTSD for the Smithsonian Air and Space magazine. He's going to be releasing a book in September of 2019 called *Aero-Neurosis: Pilots of the First World War and the Psychological Legacies of Combat*. Of course, we have links for you in the podcast notes. In April of 2018, we ran the profile story on arguably America's most famous World War I ace. One of the most famous of the American flyers of World War I is every bit as flamboyant a character as we imagine World War I aces to be. Before joining the service, he was a famed race car driver who set a land speed record at Daytona of 134 miles an hour. He was a pretty tough guy. Technically, too old to be accepted into flight school and a guy who claimed he was afraid of heights. His name was Eddie Rickenbacker. Born the oldest son of five siblings in 1890, young Eddie had to step up and become the major family breadwinner, quitting school at only 12 years old when his father died in a construction accident, a tough beginning for what would turn out to be quite a guy. Having developed a passion for the new technology of the internal combustion engine, by 16 he landed a job with a race car driver named Lee Frayer who liked the scrawny, scrappy kid and let him ride in major races as his mechanic. By 1912, the young 22-year-old was driving his own races and winning and crashing and surviving. When war broke out in 1917, Rickenbacker volunteered, but at 27 years old, he was already too old to get accepted to flight school, something the speed demon really wanted to do. Because he had a reputation as a race car driver, he was enlisted as a sergeant and sailed to Europe as a driver. Fortuitously, Eddie Rickenbacker got assigned to drive a flashy twin six-cylinder Packard owned by Billy Mitchell, the man who would wind up commanding all-American combat units in France. So Eddie talked himself into flight school through his boss. His World War I flying exploits are legend, and the kid from Ohio came home from the war a national hero. But that was just the beginning of a colorful life for a scrappy and scrawny kid, turned ace of aces, famed rat survivor of a B-17 plane ditching in the Pacific during World War II, the founder and chairman of Eastern Airlines, and almost a presidential candidate. Eddie Rickenbacker lived large and in full living color. He died in 1973 at the age of 83 having launched his aerospace career as a World War I fighter pilot in the war that changed the world. One of the shared national tragedies during World War I was the death of President Theodore Roosevelt's son, Quentin Roosevelt. Dateline, Paris, July 17, 1918, a headline in the New York Times reads, "Lieutenant Roosevelt falls in air fight. Believed killed. Quentin plane tumbles down inside the enemy lines in Marne battle. Colonel Roosevelt and wife accept with fortitude the fate of their youngest son." The story reads, "Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt, youngest son of the former president, has been killed in an air fight. It is stated that his machine fell into the enemy lines. Lieutenant Roosevelt was last seen in combat on Sunday morning with two enemy airplanes about 10 miles inside the German lines in the Château-Thierry sector. He started out with a patrol of 13 American machines. They encountered seven Germans and were chasing them back when two of them turned on Lieutenant Roosevelt. Reports of the fight state that the Germans appeared to be shooting at the lieutenant from the rear, the three machines being very close together. Then one of the machines was seen tumbling through the clouds. A patrol which went in search of Lieutenant Roosevelt returned without a trace of him. He appeared to be fighting up to the last moment. One account of the combat states that the machine caught fire before it began to fall. Another report says that 'Roosevelt's plane was not in flame as it went down. Phillip Roosevelt, Quentin's cousin, is said to have witnessed the air battle in which Quentin was engaged in the vicinity of Château-Thierry and that he saw the machine fall but did not know until later that the airplane was in fact his cousin,' the journal said today. Sadly, the story is true. Quentin Roosevelt, the beloved youngest son of the former president is killed in air-to-air combat." Dayton, Ohio, is considered by many as the birthplace of powered aviation. It was there that the Wright Brothers, two bicycle mechanics, conducted experiments in flight that eventually led to the first powered flight in 1903 at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Dayton is home to Wright Patterson Air Force Base, and on the base is where you'll find the rather amazing National US Air Force Museum. Now sitting in front of this museum is a brand new memorial that honors the Air Service and the American pilots of World War I. O'Neal, president of the League of WWI Aviation Historians and Robert Kasprzak, US Air Force (Retired), worked tirelessly during the centennial period to get this memorial built including becoming awardees in the 100 Cities/100 Memorials matching grant program. Here's our interview from Episode 42 in October of 2017. Welcome gentlemen.

[0:29:06]

**Michael O'Neal:** Thanks Theo.

[0:29:07]

**Robert Kasprzak:** Thanks for having us.

[0:29:08]

**Theo Mayer:** Gentlemen, your grant application opens with, "Even though the US Air Service of World War I was the forerunner of today's Air Force and is a major part of US Air Force history, no monument dedicated to the World War I airmen who served at the front exists today at the National Museum of the United States Air Force." Michael, as an aviation historian, can you give us a quick overview about how air power was organized over there in World War I?

[0:29:36]

**Michael O'Neal:** Certainly Theo. It might become a surprise to most of our listeners that the US had very little in the way of an Air Service in 1914, although the US was first in flight with the Wright Brothers of course. By 1917, we still had less than 50 trained military pilots. By the end of the war, we would have more than 14,000 US Air Service trained pilots, and we had airmen also serving with the French, the British, and Italian air services. The US Signal Corps at the time, which is what the Air Service was organized under, was part of the US Army. The Navy had their own branch of course. Both of those units serve in France, the US Air Service and US Naval Air Service serve in France attached to various infantry divisions and armies for purposes of observation, artillery ranging, reconnaissance and of course more well-known fighter groups.

[0:30:29]

**Theo Mayer:** Robert, you've been the rally point and the cheerleader for getting this memorial to the World War I aviators built. Why is it important?

[0:30:37]

**Robert Kasprzak:** Well, this memorial represents a bridge between the original history of the Air Force which started back in the early 1900s and today's Air Force which is the most powerful air force in the world. The National Museum of the Air Force has a memorial park which has monuments to various organizations and groups that served during World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Persian Gulf, etc. But there was no monument to the early airmen who formed the basis for today's heritage. This monument seeks to remedy that by bridging the gap between World War I and today's Air Force.

[0:31:21]

**Theo Mayer:** Gentlemen, your project is a perfect example of amazing, important, and wonderful memorial projects. You have a video on YouTube about the project that's pretty compelling. Let me play a clip.

[0:31:32]

**Narrator:** In 1918, the American Air Service was founded and helped achieve victory in the First World War. One hundred years later, the League is seeking donations to build and erect a World War I monument in the Air Force Museum's Memorial Park. It will be dedicated to the air crews and ground personnel who were the foundation of the modern US Air Force.

[0:32:08]

**Theo Mayer:** You've been busy gathering support for your project. How's the response been?

[0:32:13]

**Robert Kasprzak:** I think thus far pretty good. We started working diligently in July of this year to raise \$28,000, which is the cost of the monument, design, construction, and installation. Since that time, we gathered over \$8,000 primarily from our 300 plus League members, organizations such as the Daedalians, historical societies, local organizations, libraries, etc. We're reaching out to corporate sponsors, philanthropists, and soliciting grants from charitable foundations such as the World War I Centennial Commission. Our goal is to dedicate the monument next September as a fitting conclusion to our World War I centennial activities. So we sure can use whatever help folks like to offer.

[0:33:04]

**Theo Mayer:** Michael, you have some project milestones coming up. Can you tell us more about them?

[0:33:08]

**Michael O'Neal:** Sure, Bob sort of just alluded to that. January 1 we have our first payment due for the monument erection. That's half of the \$28,000, so we're looking at \$14,000 by 1 January. As Bob pointed out, we're about

\$8,000 up on that, so we've got another \$6,000 to go. The remainder is due on 1 June, and we'd like to have the project closed up by then. Have the remainder of the \$28,000 collected by then. Then on 21 September 2018 during the dawn patrol rendezvous which is the Air Force Museum's World War I commemorative fly in, there'll be a public dedication of the memorial on site.

[0:33:48]

**Theo Mayer:** As you may know, I'm a big World War I aviation fan. Thank you for taking on the mission. I don't mean it as a pun, but it is a really monumental task.

[0:33:58]

**Robert Kasprzak:** Thank you for that.

[0:34:00]

**Michael O'Neal:** We're happy to have the support of the commission, and of course, the podcast should go along way towards helping us reach our \$28,000 goal to have the monument erected.

[0:34:09]

**Theo Mayer:** As a follow up, we're happy to report that this monument was dedicated on September 21st, 2018 on the grounds of the National United States Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio. So thanks to these gentlemen and their colleagues, today there is a memorial dedicated to those who flew in World War I and it's sitting at the National US Air Force Museum in Dayton. That wraps up Episode #135 of the award-winning WW1 Centennial News, the Doughboy podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, talented crew, and supporters including historian Mark Wilkins, biographer Lieutenant Colonel Doug Jacobs, US Army (Retired), historian Michael O'Neal, and US Air Force veteran Robert Kasprzak. Special thanks this week to Dave Kramer and Mac Nelson for their extra effort in producing this episode. Thank you to Tim Crowe, part of our interview editing team, JL Michaud for web support, and I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was authorized by the US Congress in early 2013 to honor, commemorate, and educate the nation about World War I on the occasion of the centennial of the war. For over a half a decade, the commission, the commissioners, staff, and supporters have labored to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I. We brought the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators, their classrooms, and to the public. We've helped to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country. Now as the commission's charter to honor, educate, and commemorate the centennial of World War I has been successfully accomplished, the full focus of the commission is turning to its capstone mission, to build a national World War I memorial in Washington, DC, that after a century of being MIA in the nation's capitol will finally stand in this important international nexus to honor the memory and the sacrifice of the men and women who served this nation during those transformative years of World War I. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as the major contribution of the Starr Foundation. Thanks to our podcast sponsors, the US World War I Centennial Commission and the Doughboy Foundation. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can found on our website at [ww1cc.org/cn](http://ww1cc.org/cn). That's Charlie Nancy. You'll find WW1 Centennial News, the Doughboy podcast in all the places you get your podcasts including iTunes, Google Play, TuneIn, Spotify, Radio On-Demand, even on YouTube, asking Siri, or using your smart speaker by saying, "Play WW1 centennial news podcast." The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both @ww1cc, and we're on Facebook @ww1centennial. Thank you for joining us. Don't forget, we need your help to keep this story alive for America. Please contribute to the memorial which will stand to tell the story for generations to come. Just text the letters, WWI or WW the number 1 to the phone number 91999 and make a contribution of any size.

[0:37:43]

**Speaker 7:** Look, there's an enemy air scout. And there's another. Fire guys, there's a thousand of them. Ah, there goes Murphy and the bunch to meet them, and if I [inaudible], he'll know he's been in some fight. Murphy's crippled. He's coming down. No! He's up again. That's a boy. Give it to them. Hurray! Send them our fire, one, two, three of them.

[0:38:11]

**Speaker 8:** Look out. Under cover quick. They're dropping bombs on us.

[0:38:17]

**Speaker 7:** The mission is [inaudible].

[0:38:20]

**Speaker 8:** It's all over. [inaudible]. That makes 15 the boys have bagged today.

[0:38:28]

**Crowd:** Hurray!

**[0:38:30]**

**Speaker 7:** There's Murphy again. He's landing. Come on boys. Give him a lift. Get that belt off there. Are you hurt, Murphy?

**[0:38:42]**

**Murphy:** Don't make me laugh, man. Who the devil got out me?

**[0:38:45]**

**Speaker 7:** But you're wounded Murph.

**[0:38:47]**

**Murphy:** Sure, it's only a scratch, and scratches don't count. Earn your war [inaudible] for Uncle Sam.

**[0:38:53]**

**Speaker 7:** Ha, ha! That's the spirit!

**[0:38:58]**

**Crowd:** Hurray!

**[0:38:58]**

**Theo Mayer:** Thank you for listening. So long.

**[0:39:00]**