

American Legion Post #43: Revitalized and Relevant!

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4 speakers (Theo Mayer, Dave Kramer, Fernando Rlvero, Lester Probst)

[0:00:08]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War I Centennial News, the Doughboy Podcast, episode number 137. The Doughboy Podcast is about what happened 100 years ago during and after the war that changed the world. And it's not only about. Then it's also about now. How World War I is still present in our daily lives in countless ways. 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. This week on the show, for 100 years ago, we're going to explore the headlines in the papers of the last week of August in 1919. But instead of focusing on the main headlines we're going deeper into the papers for an insight into what was on people's minds and interests 100 years ago in the aftermath of the war. We have our second installment of our new feature, Born in the Month Of, where you'll meet some famous, some notorious, and some interesting people born in the month of August and learn their connection to or service in World War I. For Remembering Veterans, we have a great interview with Fernando Rivero and Lester Probst from American Legion Post number 43. A post that has taken its unique location, community, and heritage and has leveraged those to revitalize and reinvigorate the Post, its membership, its standing in the community, and its revenue generating ability. It's a really great story. And we'll close with highlights from the Dispatch newsletter all this week on World War I Centennial News, the Doughboy Podcast, which is sponsored and brought to you by the U.S. 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, D.C. I'm Theo Mayer, the chief technologist for the Commission and your host. Welcome to the show. As we mentioned at the top of the show, this week we're going to do something we haven't done in a while. We're going back 100 years to the last week of August 1919 and we're going to explore the stories found in the newspaper. But we decided to change it up a little. We're not going to explore the front page headlines above the fold, where the generally obvious news about labor unrest, and congressional debate about the Peace Agreement, and the League of Nations is going on. Instead, we're looking at stories a few pages in, to get some insight into the mood and the interests in our nation during the aftermath of World War I. So with that, let's jump into our centennial time machine and go back to the last week of August 1919. Our first story is an excellent example of a famous quote usually attributed to Mark Twain. Quote, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme." As it would a century later, when certain calls for testimony before Congress is met with resistance or refusal as illustrated in the headlines of our first story from the pages of The New York Times. Dateline August 31, 1919. Headline. Pershing rejects call to testify. Too busy on last days in Paris to meet Congress War Expenditure Committee. Accused of contempt. The story goes on to describe that the committee in France investigating more than just the war department expenses is led by representative Royal Johnson and Oscar Bland. They want to interview Pershing on court marshal procedures, the possible abuse of American military prisoners, and other irregularities, as well as expenditures. An official statement from the committee said, quote "It is regrettable that there should even be the appearance of conflict between military and civilian authority at this time, when the world should become normal and be governed, not by armies or individuals, but by law." The congressmen vow that Pershing will testify before Congress when they're back in the United States. That hearing won't get underway until 1920. Ironically, while one congressional committee is declaring Pershing in contempt, another is bestowing upon him the honor of General for Life and planning a celebration in the halls of the capitol for him when he gets home. Oh my! As explored on a recent podcast, this is the era when American philanthropy defines itself. And one of the largest foundations that came to be was that of Andrew Carnegie, who intended to give away all of his money before he died, which happened this month on August 11th. As per the headlines this week in 1919, he doesn't quite make it and misses it by just about \$30,000,000. Again, from the New York Times. Dateline August 30, 1919. Headline. Carnegie estate at time of death about \$30,000,000. Had already made total philanthropic gifts including bequests estimated at over \$370,000,000. Will of remainder probated yesterday. Distributes \$10,000,000 to friends and philanthropies. Residue to public use. Just two weeks after his death on August 11th, Andrew Carnegie's will is probated with a few surprises like \$10,000 a year for the widows of Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Grover Cleveland. And the same amount to various public figures, both in the U.S., such as former President William Howard Taft, and also to foreigners, such as Britain's Prime Minister David Lloyd George. Although fascinating, there's no reason given for these bequests. The bulk of his remaining estate, some \$20,000,000, is to go to the Carnegie Foundation, thus following through on his earlier goal of giving it all away. Now, way in the paper on page 6 of the August 26th edition of the New York Times is a feel good story. Dateline August 26th, 1919. Headline. Girl ordered shot arrives here safe. Marie Gombier, who smashed German wireless plant, is to become an American. Wears her awarded French war cross, the Croix du Guerre. Now, the overall story is a relatively routine tale of passengers arriving in New York on the ocean liner Lorraine. But buried in the story, we learn of 21 year old Marie, whose life has been anything but routine. She's a Belgian orphan who hid from German soldiers early in the war, learned of a German radio transmitter, and set out to smash it. Marie was captured by the

Germans, only to be rescued by Canadian troops while she was being transported to her execution. That brave young woman served with the Canadians as a nurse until the armistice, even being injured at Ypres. Now she faces a new and very different life, as she's been adopted by a woman in Los Angeles. Hey Netflix! Hollywood! Amazon! Are you paying attention here? It's summer and that means baseball. In 1919, a headline from the August 29th New York Times sets up a nearly 100 year long baseball legend. You see, last year, the Boston Red Sox won their 5th World Series title and are clearly one of the most successful professional baseball franchises in history. So, fans are definitely fascinated when the headline on August 29th in the Atlantic Constitution newspaper reads "Record prices offered for Babe Ruth. New York Yankees make bid of \$75,000 plus two players in trade for the Tarzan of baseball." That deal launches one of baseball's most famous rivalries, as the previously lackluster New York Yankees become a winning team and the hapless Boston Red Sox hit a nearly century long dry spell, not winning a series pennant until well into the next millennium in 2004. A losing streak that would be named in the 1990 book as the curse of the bambino, a curse that will start in August 1919 in the aftermath of the war that changed the world. It's time for our new monthly segment called Born in the Month of, where you'll meet some of the famous, notorious, and influential people whose lives and careers were affected by World War I. Now, as you hear the facts about them, can you guess who we're talking about? And if you can't, don't worry, we'll tell you. Born in the Month of August will be presented by Dave Kramer. Dave!

[0:09:28]

Dave Kramer: Our first August birthday is for our sports fan listeners. He was in the spotlight well before he enlisted and entered World War I at age 38. He started as a right hand pitcher for the New York Giants in 1900. This hall of famer notched up 20 wins in his first season and a whopping 30 wins in each of the next three seasons. One of his finest moments came in the 1905 World Series, pitching three shut outs in three starts. During the war, as a captain in France, he was accidentally and tragically gassed during a training exercise. As a result, he suffered pulmonary complications, including tuberculosis, and died in 1925. He was posthumously elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in its very first class in 1936. His name was... Christy Matthewson. Our next August birthday gained his fame as result of family connection and personal talent. Born in 1880 in the windy city, he spent his early years dabbling in Chicago politics. In 1909, he joined a newspaper owned by his mother's family. He quickly rose to become the paper's president by 1911. He introduced plenty of innovations to this famous trendsetting daily, including color printing. As an activist editor, he fought hard for freedom of the press and against prohibition, the New Deal, and interventionism. In spite of his opposition to interventionism, after America entered World War I, he joined the Army and was assigned to General Pershing's staff. Eventually, he received a combat assignment with the 5th Field Artillery. He retired from the Army as a Colonel and returned to his family's paper, where he remained its president until his death in 1955. What was the paper? It was the Chicago Tribune. Who was the man? He was Robert R. McCormick. Our next August birthday lived a very colorful life and, as a woman, gained a lot of notoriety for her actions during World War I. Born in the Netherlands, abandoned by a father as a young girl, she then lost her mother when she was only a teen. While preparing to become a kindergarten teacher, she answered an ad placed by a Dutch officer seeking a wife to join him in the Dutch East Indies. She went. They married. It didn't work out. She left. Returning to Europe, she considered teaching but, instead, decided to go to Paris and become an exotic dancer and entertainer. During World War I, she was approached by both Germany and France to become a spy. Rumor has it that she said yes to both. Even though very controversial, she was tried and executed by the French in October 1917. Her name was Margreet MacLeod, but she was notoriously known as... Mata Hari. Our final born in August is a U.S. President who did not serve in the military during World War I, but served nevertheless. Born to Quakers in Iowa, he gained wealth early in life as a mining engineer and businessman. When World War I broke out, he was in Europe and helped organize the evacuation of 120,000 Americans trapped there. That was just the beginning. He used his own funds and raised more from wealthy friends to buy and ship food to starving Belgian children. Impressed, President Wilson tapped him to run the U.S. Food Administration, ensuring that allied troops didn't go hungry. He also served as Secretary of Commerce. He ran for President and took office in 1929. With that background, it's ironic that this 31st President of the United States served during our own nation's starving times, under the weight of the Great Depression. His name... Was Herbert Hoover.

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Theo Mayer: And with that, let's fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. Here's where we spotlight ongoing World War I related news, information and events. For Remembering Veterans, it's the 100th anniversary of the American Legion. Having been conceived in Paris as the war ended by veterans who served in World War I, the American Legion, its history, its advocacy on behalf of veterans, and its accomplishments are truly amazing. But one of the more interesting aspects of the organization, and one that I've come to appreciate during my years working on the World War I Centennial project, is the American Legion's structure and organization. It seems to me that it's all about the actions and activities of individual Posts that gives the organization its real strength. So with that as a set up, I'd like to invite you to join me in exploring one of those Posts, its history, and its unusual role because of its unique location. It's Post number 43 in Hollywood, California. And joining us to talk about the Post's history and its current projects are Fernando Rivero, the Post's past commander and chairman and founder of the

Legion Theater, and Lester Probst, Post chairman of the Americanism Committee, which is one of the four pillars of the American Legion, and co-chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. Gentlemen, welcome to the podcast!

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Fernando Rivero: Hi Theo. Thanks for having us.

[0:16:00]

Lester Probst: Yes. Thanks very much, Theo.

[0:16:02]

Theo Mayer: So, let me start with a quick overview of your personal histories. Lester, where and when did you serve?

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Lester Probst: Well, I served from 1953 to 1954 in the DMZ in Korea. As you know, that separates North and South Korea to this day. And hopefully at some point in time, it may even end.

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Theo Mayer: Lester, what branch were you in?

[0:16:25]

Lester Probst: I was with the Infantry. I was actually drafted out of New Jersey and I ended up in the 40th Division, which is the California National Guard. However, that California National Guard was not in Los Angeles. It was physically on the DMZ in Korea. Not as much sun and beautiful flowers.

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Theo Mayer: Interesting. Interesting. Well, your whole family has a tradition of service, doesn't it?

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Lester Probst: Yes. At the age of 16, my dad actually enlisted in the Coast Artillery. At the age of 17, he was actually Sergeant Major, Junior Grade. And at the end of that year, he made Senior Grade. And he taught Artillery in Seattle and never got overseas, and I guess that was lucky. In addition, I had four uncles, one of whom was in the infantry in the trenches in France, and he actually was wounded by shrapnel. And, I guess, lucky for him, he came home.

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Theo Mayer: Fernando, how about you? What's your story of service?

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Fernando Rivero: Well, I joined pretty late. I actually went to film school first in Florida and was on my way, moving to California to pursue a career in Hollywood, when the September 11th attacks occurred. And, although I'd had some interest in joining the military in high school and my dad had served in the Army... He was drafted during Vietnam... I chose a different route. But after 9/11, I was compelled to do something. And so, I joined the Navy Reserve, ended up deploying to Afghanistan, and later to Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, which is the ISIS fight. And so, yeah. I ended with sort of this unexpected military career that's defined my life in ways that I would not have expected. But alongside that, I did end up working in television. I've worked in television now for nearly 25 years.

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Theo Mayer: Turning our focus now to the Post. First of all, I've personally had the pleasure of being there, and it sits literally directly below the Hollywood Bowl on Sunset Boulevard. It's an iconic location. But more than that, it's a really iconic building. It's beautiful. Could you tell our listeners a quick history of this beautiful art deco building? And which one of you would like to do that?

[0:18:30]

Fernando Rivero: I'll take it, just because I've been telling this story now for the better part of seven years. The Hollywood Post of the American Legion, when I discovered it after I came back from Afghanistan, was just like any other Post in America, and also unlike any other Post in America in the sense that, what I found there was a level of camaraderie and acceptance and fellowship that you expect to find when you walk into American Legion Posts. And a lot of the life there was centered around the bar. But the history of the American Legion in Hollywood is interesting because it was started by World War I veterans who all worked in the motion picture business in Hollywood. It got its charter in 1919, along the national organization. We're celebrating our centennial this year. So, our members have included guys like Walter Long, Charlton Heston, Micky Rooney, Gene Autry, Ronald Reagan, Clark Gable. So, really, a who's who of Hollywood notables. And ten years after they chartered, they built a 30,000 square foot Egyptian

revival building right below the Hollywood Bowl that is stunning. It's just a gorgeous building. But, you know, 90 years, it had become sort of run down. Of all that space, you know, largely member activity centered around the bar and the meeting once or twice a month and there didn't seem to be a bright future ahead for the Post when I joined.

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Theo Mayer: Lester, at the very start of the World War I centennial period, you and I met because you got directly involved 100 Cities 100 Memorials Grant program to restore World War I memorials, and you had one in L.A. That you were working on. Could you talk about that? And the Post's role in that project?

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Lester Probst: Yeah. That started under the leadership, really, of Fernando before he became commander. And, of course, my interest was because of my family and their history in the first World War. But also because the American Legion... It was getting to be the 100th anniversary of World War I. World War I and the American Legion are directly connected, obviously. And I thought it was very important and would be really interesting if we could win one of the 100 cities. And so, I got involved directly with Courtland and Bill Betten, who led the Centennial L.A. Committee. And there's a Victory Memorial Grove actually overlooks the Dodger's stadium. And, as you turn around in 360 degrees, you're actually looking at the Hollywood sign, you're looking at downtown Hollywood. It's a beautiful spot. And, unfortunately, it had been run down. Graffiti was all over the place. And we managed to get the L.A. Parks Commission involved. We got the El Pueblo Park Association involved. We just got all of L.A. Involved, especially in Elysian Park, and we restored that memorial. And it's beautiful today, and there are actually poppies and other native plants growing. The Park Commission takes care of watering. And every year, especially on Flag Day, which occurs in June every year, we're there replanting, restoring, if you will, and making sure that this memorial lives on.

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Theo Mayer: I think a lot of organizations got involved, including the DAR and you all and the city. Really great job of just pulling it all together and creating community remembrance. Really great project.

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Lester Probst: Yeah. And it's being remembered every year in Elysian Park and in LA. And that will continue now.

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Theo Mayer: Well, Fernando, you're the chairman and founder of the Legion Theater project. When I toured the facility when I came out, I think it was 2014 or 2015, you were waving your arms around and talking about this project and, you know, what it was going to be. And now that it's complete and it's pretty amazing, congratulations. Can you tell our audience about the project and its inauguration?

[0:22:21]

Fernando Rivero: Yeah. We've come a long way. It's really hard to believe. Yeah. A few years ago, much like the American Legion in general, we're seeing a decline in membership. Preserving this as a place where we could continue to grow our membership and really have that community and that camaraderie was important. Because our clubhouse was built by veterans who worked in the motion picture business, it seemed natural that they would build it with a movie theater in it, and so they did. It was where they held their meetings. It was kind of a multipurpose auditorium. But it had a projection booth and back in the 30's they had gotten studios to donate film projectors, where they would show movies in addition to having all kinds of other activities. We were trying to grow our membership and we were trying to find ways to use the amazing building, not just to save it, but to generate some activity and revenue and be something in the community, because it was really falling apart. We looked around and said, well, we have a theater. We should really see if we can have a movie theater. And one of the things about L.A. Is that we always have movie premiers here and there's always some sort of big event going on. We said we have this crazy venue right in the middle of Hollywood that nobody knows about. And so, we set out in 2014 to determine the feasibility of having a movie theater and how we would use that to rent it out, but also to be kind of a flagship premier event space that was state of the art, that we could be that place where we could have events that centered around the military, national defense, veterans' affairs, so that we could have almost like a convention center or a venue to have these conversations and to have events. And so, one of the very first things that we did there was to have the World War I Centennial Film Festival. You know, when we started this project, I had just gotten married. I didn't have any children. We just finished the theater project. I now have two kids. And one of them got to see his first film in a movie theater in our theater at the American Legion, which was amazing for me. And it was Sergeant Stubby, which is a really wonderful animated film about the legendary Sergeant Stubby. Not only do we do digital, but we can also do 35 and 70 millimeter film, which is kind of a big deal here. It's becoming a niche thing. It's almost like being able to listen to music on vinyl records. And some of the most elite film makers, like Christopher Nolan and Quentin Tarantino, Steven Spielberg, are great promoters of traditional film exhibition. And so, we also have this mission of being involved in film preservation and being able to exhibit it. So the anniversary D-Day that just passed, we had a special screening. We borrowed a print from 20th Century Fox of the Longest Day, Darryl Zanuck's epic production of D-Day. And we had,

in the audience, a number of new enlistees into the army who had just been sworn in, along with World War II veterans, including Normandy D-Day veterans, in the audience. And that was just a really amazing event. We also did a partnered screening for the community along with the UCLA Film and Television Archive, in partnership with Warner Brothers, and we showed Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old*, which is The World War I documentary where they restored all the footage. And if you haven't seen it, it's really amazing. So, for me, I feel like we accomplished the mission, not only of restoring a beautiful building, keeping it current, opening it to the community, having something that can generate revenue for our Post so that we can continue to do our programs and have sort of financial survival, but also have this thriving and living cultural center where we can share our stories with the community. We can honor veterans. We can do it in a very classy way. And, being in Hollywood, we have a unique opportunity as the culture factory here to educate and influence the Hollywood community who are out there writing movies and making television shows, and give them an opportunity to have a touch point with our community and say, you know, come and learn about World War I or come and interact with our veterans. We're not all just sort of victims of PTSD. We are restoring historic buildings. We are a powerful cultural force in the community. We're a significant player in the cultural landscape here.

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Lester Probst: And I want to put an addendum to what Fernando was talking about. He alluded to the bar, both past and present. I think the theater, and all the other activities that we've been involved with and continue to be involved with, is taking emphasis away from the bar. We got there because it's vibrant and because it's exciting. And because the members are vibrant and exciting. Maybe because I'm 86 years old and I have seven children, nine grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, what I want to say is that it's kept me young in mind, if not in body. And I go there because I'm invigorated by talking to all these young people that have just served, and getting involved with them. And this theater and the revenue that we can derive from this theater and all the other events surrounding it will give us the opportunity to provide more benefits for our members and future members. And as you know, the government has just opened up the American Legion to all veterans, not just those that served in the war. And so, I'm hoping, over the next year or so, that we will go from something like 1,100 members of Post 43 to maybe even double that amount.

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Fernando Rivero: I mean, we have more than doubled our membership-

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Lester Probst: Yeah.

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Fernando Rivero: - Since we started. One of the things we did was just simply was redesign our website. But we set a goal back in 2013 that we would, by 2019, double our membership. At the time, we had just fewer than 500 members and we said we're going to try to hit 1,000 members by 2019. Well, we hit 1,200 by 2018 and a lot of that is due to aggressive outreach, to kind of a snowball effort of diverse and vibrant group of veterans coming in really of all ages. We've had Vietnam vets and Korean vets. We had a World War II vet join that had never joined the American Legion before. So, it's not just post-9/11. It's all kinds of people that are rediscovering the American Legion, at least at our Post. And we reversed that trend of decline to really explosive growth. It's really been an amazing thing to be a part of. Working with guys like Lester is such a huge reward, because he is a delight and a great American. I would never have had this opportunity to meet a guy like that and be friends with him, and a lot of men and women like him that, if I had A, not joined the military and B, not joined the American Legion.

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Theo Mayer: Well, your guys' story is really a wonderful one. And, clearly, you guys have a success story in all the ways you would want it to be. What advice would you give to somebody sitting somewhere else? How do you self-examine? How do you look at yourself as an organization, a Post, and go, okay, so, how do we do that in our community? Any suggestions?

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Lester Probst: Join, number one. And then show up and mix with the members and get to know what they like, what they dislike. Find out what we can do for the community around us that only helps us. But we have a group here at Post 43 where we actually, ten of us veterans got together and wrote a play about PTSD. We've had it read by actors on stage four or five times in the last year. And it's not only helped the audience, and hopefully audiences in the future, but hopefully it's helped individuals get up and talk about their issues. You know, learn to live. People say that they join the military for a family. Well, joining the American Legion is the same. We have basically a family at Post 43 and we support each other. And we look to have others join us and we can help them, also. So, show up. Get to know us and we'll get to know you and we can help each other.

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Theo Mayer: Anything to add to that, Fernando?

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Fernando Rivero: Les said it right. I think joining and showing up are first. If you just join and never show up, that's great, because it helps all veterans to have a strong American Legion that is represented in Congress and Washington, D.C. To lobby for our benefits and for our interests. But the American Legion is kind of a grassroots. I think the strength of it and why it sort of survived for 100 years is really the way it was set up, which is on the foundation of local Posts that create a community for their veterans and their families. For me, that happened when I had just gone to war and come back. And now, in a very real way, right in front of me, I was seeing that I was a member of a long line of service. A long fraternity of folks that sign on the dotted line. That connection to my country, that opportunity to continue to serve with a family, as Les said, is something I think that, at small Posts, you need to do. You need to talk about your history. We need to talk about our purpose, which is the four pillars of the American Legion and serving fellow vets, of preserving American values, of taking care of children and youth. Getting back to those principles and creating community. Being welcoming is important. And each Post is going to find, in sort of the tactical ways, what is their thing for their community. If you're in a community where grilling outside or doing, you know, outdoor activities is important, then that's what gets you guys together. That's great. If you're in an urban area where arts, entertainment, or culture is what that membership in that local area wants, you'll figure that out. But what binds everybody together and the reason people show up, I think, is that community and that sense of history and really being in touch with that past.

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Theo Mayer: You guys are doing a great job. Congratulations.

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Fernando Rivero: Thank you, sir. We really appreciate you reaching out to us and helping us tell our story. It's validating for me, after the years of hard work that we've all put into this, to see that it's being well received. So, thank you.

[0:32:23]

Lester Probst: Yeah. I want to thank you also, Theo. And I want to invite you back down and take a look at what we've done.

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Fernando Rivero: Yeah, come and see us.

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Lester Probst: It's fantastic.

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Theo Mayer: Guys, thank you so much.

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Fernando Rivero: Thank you, Theo. Thank you.

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Lester Probst: Oh, you're welcome.

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Fernando Rivero: And thanks to [crosstalk]. Appreciate you guys.

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Theo Mayer: Fernando Rivero is the Post past commander, as well as the chairman and founder of the Legion Theater. And Lester Probst, post chairman of the Americanism Committee, which is one of the four pillars of the American Legion, and co-chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. We have links for you to the Post in the podcast notes. And that brings us to Articles and Posts, where we select stories that you'll find in our newsletter, the Dispatch. The Dispatch points to online articles with summary paragraphs and links, providing a rich resource to World War I news and activities. Here are some selections from the current issue. Our lead story. World War I Dispatch newsletter becomes monthly publication in September 2019. Beginning in September, the weekly World War I Dispatch newsletter will transition to a once a month publication format. The first new monthly issue will arrive in the middle of September, sent to the same distribution list as the weekly publication has been for the last three years. So, if you're a subscriber now, you'll continue to receive the ongoing updates and news, especially the latest

updates about the National World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C. And the Doughboy Foundation activities. A hero of the great war, North Carolina Agriculture and Tech instructor, Robert Campbell. At North Carolina Agriculture and Tech, like most universities, the buildings are named for people who played important roles on the campus. The original main building is named after a past university president. So, too, are the library, the current administration building, and four academic buildings. And then, there's Campbell Hall, home to the school's ROTC program since 1955. The building's namesake, Robert Campbell, served in World War I. But that's only the beginning of this amazing story. Read more about how Campbell was, quote "The definition of an officer and a gentleman." And an inspiration to many with his life and service. Middleborough, Massachusetts town square renamed to keep promise to World War I soldier. That somewhat disorienting five-way intersection located at the top of Center Street in downtown Middleborough, Massachusetts, known locally as Everett Square, is going to be re-designated in 2020. Everett Square is going to be renamed or, better yet, reestablished, as John F. Glass, Jr. Square, as it was always supposed to be. Read the entire story of how members of the American Legion Post 64 and other local veterans fought a decade long campaign to have the square rededicated in keeping with a 1929 town meeting vote, which established the spot as Glass Square, in honor of the last serviceman from Middleborough to be killed in action in World War I. Update. The 100th Anniversary Transcontinental Motor Convoy reaches Iowa this week. Retired Army Sergeant Mark Ounan drives his restored 1918 Army staff car as the Military Vehicle Preservation Association Convoy of Historic Military Vehicles makes its way through northwestern Ohio. Ounan noted, quote "Five of these cars went on the original convoy in 1919 and Eisenhower was on the trip with the Army. So, he probably rode in one just like it." The convoy honoring the 1919 U.S. Army's Transcontinental Motor Convoy reached Iowa this week, heading west toward San Francisco. Read more about the Clinton, Iowa stop and how to track the convoy's position on its way to the west coast. The definition of a boom town in World War I. The U.S. Government put its own version of the Big Bang Theory into action during 1917, when it established the town of Nitro, West Virginia to manufacture nitrocellulose, also known as gun cotton because of its explosive characteristics. It was all in support of the war effort in World War I. Read more about how the government wanted the residents and plant employees there to do a bang up job of supplying explosives to the U.S. Army forces, and also hoped that living and working in Nitro didn't end up being too much of a blast. Oh dear! I did not write this, but it's kind of cute. 2019 marks 101 years since death of pioneering aviator Louis Bennett, Jr. August 24th will mark the 101st anniversary of Louis Bennett, Jr.'s death during World War I. Bennett, Jr. served in the Royal Air Force in the United Kingdom. At the time of this death, Bennett had flown 25 maneuvers against the Germans. Earlier in his career, he'd form the West Virginia Flying Corps, which was commissioned by then-West Virginia Governor Cornwell on July 26, 1917. The U.S. Army, however, refused to accept the Corps, which led Bennett, Jr. to enter flight school with the British Royal Air Force in Canada. Read more about Bennett's unfortunate death in combat and how the aviator is now honored by memorials in three nations. You can access the full length version of all these amazing stories and more through the summary paragraphs and links that you'll find in our weekly Dispatch newsletter. It's a short and easy guide to lots of World War I news and information. You can subscribe to this wonderful, free guide at ww1cc.org/subscribe, all lower case. Or just follow the link in the podcast notes. And that wraps up episode number 137 of the award-winning World War I Centennial News, the Doughboy Podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, talented crew, and supporters, including American Legion Hollywood Post 43 members Fernando Rivero and Lester Probst. Thanks to Mac Nelson and Tim Crowe, our show editing team, Juliet Cowall, the line producer, Dave Kramer, research and writing and the narrator for Born in the Month of August, JL Michaud for web support. And I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission was authorized by the U.S. 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 our many associates and supporters have labored to inspire as 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, including this podcast. We've helped to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across our nation. 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 D.C. That, after a century of being MIA in the nation's capitol, will finally stand in this important international nexus to focus the memory and 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 Star Foundation. We also want to thank our podcast sponsors, the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and the Doughboy Foundation. The podcast and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at www1cc.org/cn. That's Charlie Nancy. You'll find World War I Centennial News, the Doughboy Podcast, in all the places that you get your podcasts, including iTunes, Google Play, Tune In, Spotify, Radio on Demand, even on YouTube. You can ask Siri or your smart speaker by saying "Play WW One Centennial News Podcast." The commission's Twitter and Instagram handles are both [@ww1cc](https://twitter.com/ww1cc) and we're on Facebook at [ww1centennial](https://www.facebook.com/ww1centennial). Thank you for listening, and don't forget we need your help to keep the story alive for America. Please, contribute to the memorial, which will stand to tell the story for generations to come. Just text the letters W-W-I or W-W-1 to the phone number 91999 and make a contribution of any size. Thank you for listening. So long.

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