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19 speakers (Theo Mayer, Dr. Ed Lengel, Katherine Akey, Kenneth Davis, Mike Shuster, Kyra Phillips, Announcer, Sage Steele, Magee Hickey, Libby O'Connell, James R. Europe, April Ellington, Ellington's Son, Jacob-Paul, Rolanda Turner, Female Turner, Tanveer Kalo, Nancy H., Susan Wefald)

[0:00:09]

Theo Mayer: Welcome to World War One Centennial News. Episode number 74. It's about World War I then, what was happening 100 years ago this week, and it's about World War I now. News and updates about the Centennial and the commemoration. This week, Dr. Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, and I sit down for our June 1918 preview round table. Mike Shuster updates us on the fact that it's not all quiet on the western front. Tanveer Kalo tells us about American immigrants from East India, and their World War I experience. Nancy Heingartner shares the story of her great-grandfather, the US Consul in Liege, Belgium, in World War I. Susan Wefald tells us about the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials project in Bismark, North Dakota. Katherine Akey, with the Commemoration of World War I in Social Media, and a whole lot more on World War One Centennial News. A weekly podcast, brought to you by the World War One Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, and the Star Foundation. I'm Theo Mayer, the Chief Technologist for the Commission and your host. Welcome to the podcast. Well in the first week of every month, we invite you to our preview round table, where Dr. Edward Lengel, Katherine Akey, and I, talk about the upcoming month, and the key events that are happening 100 years ago. The question on the table as we sat down was, what were the big stories and themes in June of 1918? What follows is our conversation. What's the main theme Ed?

[0:02:07]

Dr. Ed Lengel: The main theme is combat. American forces enter combat on a large scale for the first time. When they come in at the end of the German offensive of May 27, along the Chemin des Dames, initially for the 2nd and 3rd divisions to stem the German tide, which the Americans imagine is aimed at Paris. The 3rd division rolls in along the Marne River. The 2nd division comes in next door, and the 3rd division is involved in the initial defense, and the 2nd division starts hitting back at Belleau Wood. The German offensive, thanks largely to French defensive operations, with some support from the Americans, rolls to a halt. Then you begin to see through June, as combat continues at Belleau Wood and Hill 204, army units begin to be moved into the front lines in small pockets. Sometimes in company strength, battalion strength, regiment strength. Sometimes on a larger scale. Not just to, like occupy the trenches for a short period of time, but now actually to get involved in offensive operations and combat. And you see for the first time, French officers are actually instructing Americans in the line on how to fight. And then, toward the end of June, offensive operations really begin in earnest with operations around Vaux and in other places. You'll now see American divisions moving into the field, not just by ones and twos, but by three, fours, and fives. And eventually, even in corps strength.

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Theo Mayer: Katherine, what are some of the other themes that struck you for this month?

[0:03:48]

Katherine Akey: I would just add to what Ed said. We are seeing the pattern of the German offensive continuing. The third offensive ends on the 6th, that's the one that started at the end of May. It does get really close to Paris, like really close to Paris. They're within 35 miles of Paris. Civilians are fleeing the city. The French government is packing up and drawing up its plans to evacuate to Bordeaux. For reference, the first battle of the Marne, back in 1914, when the Germans arguably could have taken Paris, they were only 30 miles outside of Paris, so they're pushing pretty deep during this third offensive, and are only really halted by French troops and US troops at Chateaux-Thierry on the 4th. As that third German offensive ends, just a couple days later on the 9th, the fourth German spring offensive picks up, and it goes through pretty much the same pattern we've seen all spring. The Germans take a lot of territory, don't achieve their strategic goals. Their intent is to draw more allied reserves towards the south of the fighting fronts, widen the German salient, but they aren't successful. And in part this is because the Germans are getting captured in larger and larger numbers. The French are warned by German prisoners that it's coming, and so they're able to pull out of the areas that are going to be hit by an artillery barrage, not take those casualties, and then move back into place before the Germans can attack. So they're actually getting the upper hand in this fourth push that starts that second week of June.

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Theo Mayer: Ed, there's a term that keeps coming up and it comes up all the time, and the word is salient. What does that mean?

[0:05:34]

Dr. Ed Lengel: A salient is a piece of territory projecting into the line. So in other words, it's a piece of German held territory that juts out into French and American lines like a thumb. A salient is something that potentially is very vulnerable. It can be attacked on multiple sides, preferably at the base and cut off, but also if it's held strongly, it can be very dangerous. It can be like the thin edge of a knife sticking toward your heart. Salients are something that armies fight over, when you're looking for a place to attack from, or to attack, you go to a salient.

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Katherine Akey: I think the most famous example for Americans would be of course, the Battle of the Bulge, right?

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Dr. Ed Lengel: Right, right, yeah great example.

[0:06:23]

Theo Mayer: Is it a physical geographic thing or just an enemy position thing?

[0:06:27]

Katherine Akey: Often it is defined by geography and the idea that topography is fate in war.

[0:06:32]

Dr. Ed Lengel: Sometimes for example, rivers, or mountains, or other points of topography can help to define what constitutes a salient. Now for example, the Germans in 1916 launched a major attack against the French fortress of Verdun. And they were able to push the French back on either side of Verdun, but not actually to capture Verdun itself. And the result of that was that you have three salients. You have one French salient in the middle, poking into the German lines at Verdun, and you have two German salients poking into the French lines on either side of Verdun. The northern one of those salients would become the ... Called the Saint-Mihiel salient, and American forces would attack that in September in a major battle.

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Theo Mayer: Great, great explanation, thank you. So in the meantime, that's what's happening on the ground. Anything particular happening on the water this month?

[0:07:30]

Katherine Akey: More and more transport ships and munitions vessels are being sunk by U-Boats. That's just continuing at a pretty rapid pace, and that doesn't let up until the war comes to a close. There are a lot of ships that get sunk pretty consistently over the course of the summer.

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Dr. Ed Lengel: And another thing that's pretty important is that the allied blockade of Germany is really beginning to tell on German civilians, because despite the sinkings, and you're absolutely right Katherine, despite the high level of sinkings of transport ships, munitions ships, and the rest, the British Royal Navy continues to maintain a stranglehold over the German coast. German civilians are really starting to feel the pinch now by the summer, and it's approaching starvation level.

[0:08:21]

Theo Mayer: Are there other international fronts, not just the Western front? Because it's been brought up by some of our guests that we tend to think of World War I as a Western front war, but it's really happening all over. Anything happening in other areas of the world that are significant this month?

[0:08:37]

Katherine Akey: Oh goodness, so, so much. We forget that Russia's technically not in the war anymore, but Russia is having a just complete meltdown, and a long, long running civil war between the Red and the White armies, and Finland's involved, and the Caucasus is involved, and Crimea's involved, and there's just a lot happening in Eastern Europe. This month in June, the Ottoman Empire signs a treaty with the Caucasus region, basically ending most of the fighting there. That would be where modern Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are. Similarly, in the Middle East, fighting's continuing. And in Africa, which is a front that we don't talk about a lot, there's actually a huge uprising against the British going on in Nigeria, that's drawing some of their forces away from where they've been. A lot of these countries that are part of these colonial empires, they're seeing this as an opportunity to fight for independence. So there's actually a pretty large force of German, French, and British in Africa, and in the Middle East, trying to hold on to all these valuable territories. One last thing I would mention is, Italy. There's still fighting going on in Northern Italy. And in fact in June, on the 15th, there's a huge battle that starts up, the battle of the Piave River, where the Austro-Hungarians launch an attack that's terribly ill timed because they're trying to fight along this river, there's a

huge spring thaw starting in June ... They're pretty high up in altitude, so spring's a bit later in the year ... And the troops ... The Austro-Hungarian troops ... Some get caught on the wrong side of the river and are easy targets, and some 20,000 of them drown trying to cross the river. And it's just a complete utter disaster for the Austro-Hungarians.

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Dr. Ed Lengel: This is a point when the so-called Easterners come to the fore in the Allied camp. These are people who had been arguing from the beginning that the war could not be won on the Western Front, and that the proper way to defeat Germany was to drive up through the Balkans, through Bulgaria and Serbia, and into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. And as the Balkan regimes, particularly Bulgaria, and Austria/Hungary begin to collapse, and the Ottoman Empire is close to collapse, there are loud calls in the Allied camp to pull forces away from the Western Front, and move them over into the Balkans and to drive up there. You can only imagine what would have happened if that had taken place.

[0:11:16]

Theo Mayer: Some very, very unhappy French and British Generals I suspect.

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Katherine Akey: Yes, exactly.

[0:11:21]

Dr. Ed Lengel: And unhappy Americans, too.

[0:11:23]

Theo Mayer: And unhappy Americans. What happens in June in the war in the sky?

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Katherine Akey: Well I know and maybe I can speak more to Cantigny, and how the planes were used. But I know that Cantigny is one of these first kind of all arms battles where you see, planes supporting infantry.

[0:11:42]

Dr. Ed Lengel: Most of what the aircraft were doing at this point, is spotting for artillery and reconnaissance. Billy Mitchell really does not see a direct air to ground support capacity for the American Air Services, and so he tends to use them in other ways. In fact, Cantigny stands out in the sense that it's basically the only major American battle of 1918, with the possible exception of Saint-Mihiel, in which aircraft really played a role over the battlefield, American manned aircraft, because usually they were off flying somewhere else.

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Katherine Akey: I do know one bit of sort of fun fact from the war in the sky, is that the Germans love their sort of mega gigantic bombers, right, we've talked about those previously on the podcast.

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Theo Mayer: Riesenflugzeug!

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Katherine Akey: Yes, well this is the Zeppelin-Staaken, which is a type of riesenflugzeug, or however you wanna pronounce that. It's got a wingspan of 138 feet. It's got four engines. It's a bi-plane. It's humongous, and the French shoot one down in June, which is pretty cool. They shoot a lot of ammo at this thing, and I'm pretty sure they have a lucky shot where they knock out some of the engines, maybe catch it on fire, and it comes crashing down. For the French anti-aircraft behind the lines, it's a pretty exciting moment.

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Theo Mayer: Did we miss anything that we haven't talked about?

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Katherine Akey: We do see this extra shift in the draft at the beginning of June, on June 5th, when all the men who have turned 21 in the last year get absorbed into the draft and that's an estimated extra 750,000 men being added to the forces.

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Theo Mayer: Do they actually conscript them or they just register for the draft?

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Katherine Akey: They're just registered for the draft, but as far as I know, pretty much if you're registered for the draft, you're being mobilized to training camps and cantonments. We don't know that this war is going to end in November. I know we've said that before but it's really important to keep in mind. We see this as, we just have to make it to September, October, November, and we're done. They really think they might have to be fighting until 1921.

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Dr. Ed Lengel: Is this the period like when Eugene Debs gets arrested and thrown in jail?

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Katherine Akey: He gets jailed on June 30th, so that is a good thing to mention. We spoke in May about the sedition act, and Eugene Debs. And on June 16th, he makes this speech urging resistance to the military draft, and on June 30th, that's when he's charged. He's arrested and charged with 10 counts of sedition.

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Theo Mayer: And of course, there's another disaster in process, the flu.

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Katherine Akey: The flu is still happening, and in June, I think, is when you can pretty confidently say it's reached pandemic levels. And it's not just a virulent flu. This is really starting to take its toll all across the world, and especially amongst the troops. We had someone come on recently who has written a new book about the flu.

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Theo Mayer: Yeah, Kenneth Davis.

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Katherine Akey: That's his name.

[0:15:00]

Kenneth Davis: This was the most deadly pandemic in modern history, and probably the most deadly pandemic after the Black Death of the Middle Ages. And it struck with such suddenness, that's what made it so extraordinary. And, because of the war, it went around the world so quickly.

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Theo Mayer: And he was very, very clear that in his research, it was 100 million. Twenty million in India alone.

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Katherine Akey: I mean it's just batty to think about.

[0:15:35]

Theo Mayer: Let's move on to the Great War Project with Mike Shuster. Former NPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project blog. Mike, in your post this week, you talk about Pershing telling the Allies that the American forces would not really be ready until the end of the year, and maybe not until 1919, which totally freaks everybody out. Now the French are quite certain that they can't last until then, aren't they?

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Mike Shuster: They certainly are, so the headline reads, Americans Not Ready Until 1919 Pershing Tells Shocked Allies; Lesson for Germans: Americans Not a Rabble of Amateurs. French Government Fleeing Paris. And this is special to the Great War Project. On the Western Front, at the village of Cantigny, the Americans take back lost ground. Despite significant losses and exhaustion, the Americans held Cantigny, reports historian Martin Gilbert. It gives General John J. Pershing a further argument for an independent United States command, and it provides the first cold foreboding to the Germans that this was not as they hoped, a rabble of amateurs. Nevertheless, according to historian Gilbert, the onward German thrust continued. These days a century ago are crucial to the outcome of the war. On May 29th, German troops entered Soissons. Gilbert reports that after three days of fighting there, more than 50,000 French soldiers had been taken prisoner, as well as 650 artillery pieces, and 2,000 machine guns seized. The Germans press harder, reaching the River Marne. That night, General Pershing meets with the Supreme Allied commander, French Marshall Foch. Reports historian Gilbert, they contemplated the terrible situation the Allies were in, what was probably their most serious situation of the war. At this moment, the Germans are just 40 miles from Paris. Once again, reports Gilbert, the French Government was preparing to leave Paris and move south. Tens of thousands of civilians were fleeing from the capitol, as they had done in 1914. So, once again the French make urgent appeals to Pershing to transfer his now considerable force to French control in the collapsing French sector. Pershing resists Foch. As always, Pershing is loath to give up control of the American forces which he sees growing

larger at the rate of some quarter-million men each month. It turns out these numbers are not true. Pershing stuns the Allied leaders when he tells them in a meeting in Versailles, that the Americans have only one month's supply of soldiers to send to France. This was far fewer, writes historian Gilbert, than the Allies had imagined possible, but it was the true figure. The great American contribution to Allied manpower would not be ready til the end of the year, possibly not even until 1919. The French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau remarked acidly, "That is a great disappointment." Clemenceau urges that new American troops be trained in France, not in the United States. "Men learn quicker in France," he says. Pershing stubbornly answers, "I would not surrender my prerogatives in this matter." "But for the Germans, the threat of an American Army gathers like a thundercloud," a German officer writes in his diary. And every week brings that threat closer. The brief window of opportunity for a decisive German victory was starting to close. Indeed, as the Americans rushed to block the Germans at the River Marne in northern France, they are helped by the Germans' own exhaustion, reports historian Gilbert. At the end of a six-day struggle and by the great distance created by the German advance, writes one French officer, "We all had the impression that we were about to see a wonderful transfusion of blood, life was coming in floods to reanimate the dying body of France." And that's the news from the Great War Project, for these days, a century ago.

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Theo Mayer: Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. And that's what was happening a hundred years ago. But now it's time to fast forward into the present, with World War One Centennial News Now. Now this part of the podcast focuses on now, and how we're commemorating the centennial of World War I. This past weekend, we celebrated Memorial Day. And World War I commemorations were front and center in communities all across the country. The Commission had a pretty busy weekend as well. First of all, we had a float to commemorate the centennial of World War I in the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington DC. Besides being joined by a number of really cool World War I era trucks and vehicles, General John J. Pershing himself, and a bunch of re-enactors, we also introduced America's National World War I Memorial, asking the crowds: Did you know that every major war of the 20th century has a memorial in the nation's capitol except World War I? The unbelieving shock at this revelation is pretty universal. Everyone assumes that there is one, but there isn't.

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Kyra Phillips: The National Memorial Day Parade honors those who served in the Great War, World War I.

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Announcer: More than 116,000 Americans died in service during the first world war, in what all hoped would be the war to end all wars. However, lingering resentments led to the rise of Nazi Germany, and eventually World War II.

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Sage Steele: Did you know that World War I is the only major war without a national memorial in our nation's capitol. I did not know that until I spent the day here Saturday, touring and discovered that. But our next float is from the organization charged to fix that. The World War One Centennial Commission is leading America's efforts to honor the 100th Anniversary of the Great War, and bring a national memorial to Washington DC.

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Kyra Phillips: And I am with this Commission. The Commission established by Congress is working to raise 40 million dollars in private funds to build the memorial that you see depicted here on the float. This should be real, this should be something we can all go see. The memorial will be 60 feet long, 11 feet high, and set in Pershing Park near the White House. Perfect place. The float entitled, "They Deserve Their Own Memorial" encourages every American to donate today, so that future generations of Americans will never forget the sacrifices of the Great War.

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Theo Mayer: Oh New York City always has quite a Memorial Day. Besides their own parade, the Navy coming to town for the much beloved Fleet Week, this year, the Commission was instrumentally in sponsoring a very special event for the occasion. The musicians of the 369th Experience brought turn of the century rag time and jazz onto the decks of the USS Intrepid, at the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum at Manhattan's Pier 86. Carrying on the legacy of the famous Harlem Hellfighters Regimental Band, the 369th Experience pulled together talented modern day musicians from HBCUs, historically black colleges and universities from all around the country. The musicians competed to participate in this 369th Regimental Band tribute. And a number of amazing and amazed young men came to New York for a truly memorable experience. Here's a clip from New York's PIX11 News.

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Magee Hickey: They were perhaps the best military band ever, and they were also a band of brothers. The 369th Regiment Harlem Hellfighters of World War I. Now their music is being recreated 100 years later by young jazz musicians from traditionally black colleges across the country, on the Intrepid this Memorial Day. For everyone, it was a lesson in history as well as music.

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Libby O'Connell: The Harlem Hellfighters, a New York based regiment, went to Europe, fought for the French because the white officers didn't want to have them under their command in America. They fought heroically. They also had a regimental band, led by James Reese Europe.

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James R. Europe: It started out as ragtime and it progressed into jazz, and my grandfather, James Reese Europe, was one of the men most important in that transformation. They brought jazz to France and the world.

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Magee Hickey: These college musicians learned their music separately in different parts of the country, and just started rehearsing together a few days ago. Quite impressive to the son and daughter of jazz great Duke Ellington.

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April Ellington: To hear these young, talented musicians is just phenomenal. It's just, it gives me goose bumps.

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Magee Hickey: Your father would have loved this?

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Ellington's Son: Oh, absolutely. I know he's looking down smiling right now.

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Magee Hickey: And to these young jazz musicians, they say it's just an incredible experience to be playing the music of the Harlem Hellfighters, 100 years later, on the deck of the Intrepid. To aspiring professional tuba player, 20 year old Jacob-Paul Tatum of Houston, it's a dream come true.

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Jacob-Paul: For just this opportunity to be on Memorial Day is truly special, because we're representing something great. And the fact that we get to stand here and accept the honor for the 369th Regiment makes it that much more special.

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Magee Hickey: For the Turner family of Coney Island with both veterans and musicians in the family, it was the perfect Memorial Day.

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Rolanda Turner: This is amazing. They practiced on Skype. That's great, great, great.

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Magee Hickey: What do you think of the music you're hearing?

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Female Turner: I love it, it's very exciting.

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Magee Hickey: From the flight deck of the Intrepid, Magee Hickey PIX11 News.

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Theo Mayer: We collected the social media posts from the 369th Regiment, Regimental Band, and the Memorial Day concerts from everywhere, and put them in a special gallery, at ww1cc.org/369th. Or follow the various links in the podcast notes to learn more. It was great. This week for remembering veterans, we wanna end the month of May, which is Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month, with a focus on Indian American Immigrants in World War I. Our guest for the segment has an unusual background in his World War I expertise. He's become one of the leading go-to guys, when it comes to Indian participation in World War I. He just graduated as the Ronald E. McNair scholar from St. Lawrence University, but before that, he was an intern at our own World War One Centennial Commission. His name is Tanveer Kalo. Tanveer, thank you for joining us.

[0:26:14]

Tanveer Kalo: Thank you for having me.

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Theo Mayer: So Tanveer, it's really exciting to see an intern from the Commission continue what they became passionate about in their intern period. Can you tell us the story of your intern experience, and how it shaped your interest in the Indian-American experience a hundred years ago?

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Tanveer Kalo: So my supervisor when I was at the Commission was Chris Christopher, and he was looking for content for the Commission's website, and we had a discussion, and I briefly mentioned that I knew of an Indian soldier that served in the US military during World War I, Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, and Chris Christopher was really excited and said, well, find more information. As I continued my research on him, I came across the South Asian-American judicial archives, which has six photographs of Indian-Americans that were serving in the US military during World War I, and just used ancestryinstitution.com to explore their military services and their lives, and created this whole original historical data base for the Commission.

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Theo Mayer: When you interned, you helped a journalist named Suruchi Mohan, put together one of the publishing partner websites called Vande Mataram, and it's dedicated to the Indian-American experience in World War I. How did that come about, and did she find you or did you find her?

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Tanveer Kalo: So we were connected through Chris Christopher, and we exchanged conversations, and we thought our research worked really well together. One, talking about the military service of Indian-Americans and the other talking about independence activities of the communities on the West Coast for the most part. It was really well rounded research and just focusing on Indian participation during World War I. A great experience of having the chance to meet with her and work with her.

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Theo Mayer: The website's called Vande Mataram. What does that mean?

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Tanveer Kalo: It comes from a poem, from I believe the 18th century or later, and has become a slogan for Indian independence movements, especially during the 20th century under people like Gandhi and so forth. Mostly it's a rallying call for independence.

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Theo Mayer: The site features a story of the Hindu conspiracy. Can you give us an overview of that incident?

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Tanveer Kalo: That was a group of individuals called the Ghadar party. They were operating outside of California and somewhat in the East Coast. They were receiving support from the German Empire, mainly because the Germans thought that they could open up another front essentially to the British Empire, by fighting them on the Western Front, and supporting the Irish Revolutionaries, and also the Indian Revolutionaries to basically distract them. The Ghadar party on the West Coast was receiving support and arms from the German Empire. They were found by American authorities with assistance with the British, and they were put on trial for trying to obstruct the war effort and eventually harm Britain. And their goal was essentially to help liberate India from the British Empire.

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Theo Mayer: I think a lot of people don't know that there was a fair sized East Indian population in America at that time. How big was it?

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Tanveer Kalo: So right now, we're looking at three million or so Indian Americans. Back then it was less than 100,000. Mainly these people were skilled laborers. Others went on to have successful professions. Very diverse backgrounds, but also a very small population under this period.

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Theo Mayer: You recently did a profile on Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind. Who was he and why did you choose him for the focus of your story?

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Tanveer Kalo: He's definitely one of the pioneers for the South Asian community of the United States. He immigrated here about 1912, and for higher education to become a scholar and a teacher of spirituality and religion. He was one

of the first Indians and the first Sikhs in the US military. He served out in Camp Lewis during the war, he didn't serve overseas. But US government at the time introduced the policy that could allow foreign nationals to become naturalized in the military and Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind was one of the soldiers that obtain naturalization while in the military. And after the war, the US government revoked many naturalizations of South Asians, and other Asian communities, simply because they were not white. And he fought against this, leading up to the 1923 cases, US versus Thind. US Supreme Court ruled against them, saying, people from India are not white, therefore cannot apply and obtain naturalization. He continued to fight this, petition after petition, and eventually, in 1936, he obtained naturalization through the state of New York. And so that's why he's one of the pioneers from the community, fighting for what he thought was right, and also what he thought was his right.

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Theo Mayer: I actually did not know that it was government policy to revoke the citizenship post war.

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Tanveer Kalo: The government also introduced policies to naturalize foreign nationals because of the need for manpower. And it is very interesting too, for the South Asian communities. They could be exempt from military service because they were British subjects, but then the war started, manpower was needed, and they naturalized them to make them "American", or Americanized them. And then after the war, you know the government didn't really want these individuals to be seen as Americans, because of the color of their skin.

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Theo Mayer: Wow. Okay, Tanveer, what's next on your horizon?

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Tanveer Kalo: Next is I go to ... I'll be attending the University of Delaware, part of the Hagley Fellowship Program, for a Masters in History.

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Theo Mayer: Well Tanveer, we're really proud and excited for all the work that you're doing and this expertise that you're building up and the voice that you're carrying. Thanks so much for coming and speaking with us today.

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Tanveer Kalo: Thank you for having me.

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Theo Mayer: Tanveer Kalo, just graduated as the Ronald E. McNair scholar from St. Lawrence University, and a former World War One Centennial Commission intern. Read his articles and learn more about the Indian American Service in World War I, by following the links in the podcast notes. In a special Remembering World War I Segment, we're going to hear about a very touching and heartfelt tribute, made by Belgian refugee children, 100 years ago. For this, we're joined by Nancy Heingartner, the Assistant Director for Outreach at the University of Wisconsin, Madison's Institute for Regional and International Studies. Nancy also happens to be the great-granddaughter of Alexander Heingartner, the US Consul in Liege, Belgium in 1915. Her discoveries in a family attic has gifted her with a very special collection of letters sent to Alexander. Letters of thanks from the Belgian school children 100 years ago. Nancy, welcome to the podcast.

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Nancy H.: Thanks Theo, I'm delighted to be here.

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Theo Mayer: Could you start off by telling us a bit about your grandfather? Was he in Belgium when the war broke out?

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Nancy H.: Yes, he was and let me give you a little bit of background on that. Alexander Heingartner, my paternal great-grandfather, was born in 1857 in New York City, but spent most of his youth in Canton, Ohio, where his father owned a paper mill. On December 6th, 1898 when he was 41 years old, President McKinley, a friend from Canton, nominated him to be the US Consul to Catania, Italy. After seven years in Italy, Alexander's next two posts were in the Russian Empire. On August 19th, 1911, Alexander received his commission to serve as Consul in Liege, Belgium. Kind of a strange coincidence is that my great-grandfather died in Liege on March 30th, 1917, a week to the day before the US entered the war, and he is buried in the main cemetery in Liege.

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Theo Mayer: Now the children writing him letters were thanking him for the support and provision given to them by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, The CRB. That organization was led by a young engineer and mining consultant named Herbert Hoover. What is the Commission and how was your great-grandfather involved in it?

[0:34:15]

Nancy H.: That's a great question. From 1911 when my great-grandfather reported to Liege, until the early part of 1914, Belgium was considered one of the most prosperous countries in the world. That ended abruptly when Germany invaded Belgium in early August of 1914. In late August, due to a British Naval blockade of all Belgian ports, the supply routes to the country were cut off. And in a country where three quarters of the food was imported, food supplies dwindled very rapidly. Herbert Hoover became aware of the plight of the Belgians, and decided to step into action. According to George Nash, a historian and Herbert Hoover biographer, and I quote, "So began an undertaking unprecedented in world history. And organized rescue of an entire nation from starvation." This organizational structure was called the Commission for Relief in Belgium. So as the highest ranking American official in Liege at this time, Alexander Heingartner was made a member of the CRB, and was put in charge of making sure that Belgian relief supplies that reached the US Consulate in Liege, were distributed to the people who needed them. And then if not for a discovery that my father and I made in the attic of my parents' house just a few years ago, that would be the end of this story.

[0:35:38]

Theo Mayer: Yeah, you found some letters, tell us about the letters.

[0:35:41]

Nancy H.: Yeah, so one evening while I was visiting my parents, my father and I were carrying out what I like to call an archeological dig in the attic. On this occasion we selected an old steamer trunk made in Liege to go through. We found a treasure hidden at the bottom. The treasure was wrapped up in handmade paper, tied with pink ribbons, with two small note cards attached. When we removed the ribbons and paper, we found a book, roughly 24" tall by 12" wide. It's cover is of hand-painted silk, with the words, "Glory and Gratitude to the United States" written on it. The book contains a collection of hand written and decorating letters, expressing the gratitude of Liege school girls to the American people, for the support they and their families received from the Belgian Aid Campaign. And they're all from 1915. So here's one, and I'm sorry that a podcast cannot do them justice because these are truly works of art. Okay, these are translated from the French: "Dear little friends, calculation arithmetic is not our strong suit because we're only eight years old. However, we know how to add up good deeds, even if we do not personally know the benefactors. It's precisely because our little hearts feel so strongly, that we are so eager to thank you, and your fathers, and mothers, for doing so much for Belgium. You are luckier than us, as every evening you can give a big hug to your beloved parents. You do not see them suffer, and your beautiful country is not miserable like ours. We are happy for you, dear little friends, and we pray that good Jesus looks after you, along with all your loved ones, and that peace reigns in the beloved America that sends us food as well as clothes, because we have benefited from the generosity that has flown from your country. Ask him, dear girlfriends, for our fathers to come back quickly, so that the smile returns to our mother's faces and to ours as well. Farewell, dear little friends, from far away. We hold great affection for you in our hearts and remember you in our prayers. On behalf of all the second grade pupils, a young school girl from Liege, , eight years old. "

[0:37:58]

Theo Mayer: That's delightful, that really is delightful.

[0:38:02]

Nancy H.: Aren't they beautiful? Yeah they're very touching.

[0:38:05]

Theo Mayer: So what happens to this treasure now?

[0:38:08]

Nancy H.: That's a great question. You know, since I discovered the letters, I brought them to the attention of the Belgian embassy in the US. Together with their tremendous support, we actually mounted an exhibition back in Liege where the letters came from. It went from December 2015, until early spring of 2016. And my great, great, hope is to create a book based upon the letters. I continue to be conflicted about whether to create a small children's book, to bring to the attention some of the great deeds our country did, or whether to present the letters in sort of their full glory, as maybe like a coffee table book. Or perhaps I could do both.

[0:38:54]

Theo Mayer: That's a really wonderful story, and the letters are truly touching. Thank you so much for bringing them to us.

[0:39:01]

Nancy H.: Oh, it's my great pleasure to do so. Thank you.

[0:39:04]

Theo Mayer: Nancy Heingartner is the Assistant Director for Outreach at the University of Wisconsin, Madison's Institute for Regional and International Studies. Learn more about her discoveries by following the links in the podcast notes. Moving on to our 100 Cities, 100 Memorials Segment, about the \$200,000 matching grant challenge, to rescue and focus on local World War I memorials. This week, we're profiling a project from Bismark, North Dakota. It's the capital city of North Dakota, located on the bluffs of the Missouri River. With us, to tell us more about the World War I Memorial Building Project is Susan Wefald, Vice Chair of the North Dakota World War One Centennial Committee, an active volunteer, and a retired elected state official. Susan, welcome to the show.

[0:39:54]

Susan Wefald: Thank you very much, Theo. Happy to be with you today.

[0:39:57]

Theo Mayer: Your project involved a World War I Memorial Building, rather than a statue or a monument. What made your community decide to build a World War I Memorial Building in 1929?

[0:40:07]

Susan Wefald: Well after World War I, General John Pershing, who of course was Commander of the American Expeditionary Forces, he encouraged living memorials. Public facilities that could serve citizens, and honor those who had served in the great World War. North Dakotans embraced this idea, and built 23 public buildings dedicated to World War I veterans. More than any other state, except California. Money was tight in the 1920s and 1930s in North Dakota, but people approved special taxes for these World War memorial buildings, in commemoration of the people of their county who rendered services during the great World War.

[0:40:48]

Theo Mayer: Well Susan, actually I just realized, you built this literally when the economy crashed in 1929. That must have been tough.

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Susan Wefald: That's exactly right, and it was amazing that the people put forward their dollars for this special purpose of building a memorial building, which of course cost a lot more than a monument would have.

[0:41:07]

Theo Mayer: Well now in its early years, the building housed the state legislature for a time. How did that come about?

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Susan Wefald: Well the capitol burned down in December of 1930. The memorial building was to be dedicated in January of 1931. The legislators moved in immediately.

[0:41:25]

Theo Mayer: How long did they legislate from that building?

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Susan Wefald: The sessions in North Dakota only last for four months. And in that time, sessions only lasted for three months, every other year. So by the time the state capitol was rebuilt, was in 1934, legislature occupied the World War I Memorial Building for several months, every other year until 1934.

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Theo Mayer: Well so, you are clearly the spearhead for the restoration effort on the building. How did you get involved?

[0:41:56]

Susan Wefald: I'd been researching World War I monuments and memorials in North Dakota for three years. I started in January 2015, when I saw an article in Preservation magazine, asking people to start to do research on their memorials and monuments in their state. I called and I asked whether anyone was doing North Dakota, and the person I spoke to said, no, We don't have anyone doing North Dakota. So I got busy on that. I love a project where I

can do some detective work. And I called small towns, read old books, talked to people, looked at old pictures, and found over 40 monuments and memorials, here in North Dakota.

[0:42:35]

Theo Mayer: And probably most of them hiding in plain sight, I mean that's what we've discovered from the whole 100 Cities, 100 Memorials project is, that people have been walking by these things their whole life and going, "Oh really? It's a World War I Memorial."

[0:42:46]

Susan Wefald: Right, and for example, this particular building is called the World War Memorial Building, and it doesn't say World War I, so I think many people in our community may have thought that it was from World War II, but it actually was a World War I Memorial. And many of those were built in North Dakota in the 1930s, and that was quite a few years after the war, and but it was because there was federal assistance also available to help those communities build those buildings, along with the local community funds that were raised.

[0:43:17]

Theo Mayer: Well and you bring up a good point. Until World War II happened, nobody knew that there would be a World War I and a World War II, so they called it the World War.

[0:43:25]

Susan Wefald: I was looking for monuments, memorials, dedicated between the years 1918 and 1940. We found that in North Dakota, what we have what appears to be the very first monument dedicated to local war dead in the United States. That's up in Minot, North Dakota. It was in excellent condition, so it didn't need any additional work on it, so we couldn't nominate that one for this particular recognition, but it certainly is a very special memorial to have in our state.

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Theo Mayer: What stage is the project at now?

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Susan Wefald: This particular project was a lobby restoration project, and the project now is completed. They put in a new service station in the lobby. They also repolished the floors and did some painting in the lobby, so that it would be more presentable as people go into the building. There's a lot of traffic going into the building these days for the gymnasium that has been in place for years.

[0:44:22]

Theo Mayer: Are you gonna be rededicating it?

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Susan Wefald: I'm talking to the people at the Parks and Recreation District Office today about that effort. And I anticipate that'll happen this summer.

[0:44:33]

Theo Mayer: Well Susan, thank you for coming in and telling us about the project.

[0:44:36]

Susan Wefald: Your welcome. Thanks for having me.

[0:44:37]

Theo Mayer: Susan Wefald is the Vice Chair of the North Dakota World War One Centennial Committee. Learn more about the 100 Cities, 100 Memorials Program by following the link in the podcast notes. Welcome to our weekly feature, Speaking World War I. Where we explore the words and phrases that are rooted in the war. After April 6th last year, we started talking about the cantonments that the US government was building all around the country to train our millions of new recruits. Everybody got the idea that cantonments were big old training camps, from the context we used it in. All the historians and military experts around me, were using the word like it was something I should have known. But, you know when I started asking around, who the heck uses the word cantonment on a regular basis. Seriously. Turns out that the word cantonment comes from a 16th century Middle French term for a corner or an angle. Which leads to the definition for an area, and that leads to a section of land, and then a segment of a region. By 1917, cantonment was the name for a permanent military camp or garrison. And for World War I, the US build some 30 of these camps to accommodate the training of our new army. Cantonment. A pretty esoteric term for my money, and this week's word for Speaking World War I. Next week, we're going to look at the word bootcamp, which also shows up at this time. And unlike cantonment, it sticks around and is popular even today. Now for World

War I war tech. This week, we're looking at one of the truly, truly horrific World War I weapons. Tweaked up by the Germans and called der Flammenwerfer, which quite literally translates as the flamethrower. A hundred years ago, as the Americans entered the fray at Cantigny, French flamethrower troops were part of the offensive forces used against the Germans. Now the idea of the flamethrower goes way back. Back to the fifth century BC, with some of the earliest working examples dating back to the Byzantine era. Centuries later, by the first century AD, hand-pumped flamethrowers on board ships were being used and known as Greek fire. The more contemporary version of the weapon was developed in the early 1900s by the German inventor Richard Fiedler. Now there's two types. The Kleinflammenwerfer and the Grossflammenwerfer, which appropriate to the very literal nature of the German language means, the small flamethrower and the big flamethrower. The small ones were one-man portable backpack devices, and the large ones were three-man, big hose, big pressure long throw monsters. Although it was initially placed into the German arsenal in 1911, the flamethrower wasn't used extensively until the summer of 1915. The shock, and the fear, and the terror caused by the cascading sheets of fire led to quite a panic among the defenders. It's a generally horribly grisly weapon. And like so many of the other devastations of World War I, the Allies quickly began developing their own flamethrowing machines. Meanwhile, flamethrower operators typically don't live very long. The first threat is not from the enemy, but from the potentially fatal malfunction of the weapon. I mean, after all, with the portable ones, you're essentially carrying around an explosive backpack with a lit fuse. Now with the big ones, well it's just sort of nutty to squirt huge quantities of flammable liquid out of a nozzle and then light it on fire. Enemy gunfire is a pretty big threat too, you know. That nicely lit up guy with a flame stick, well he's just a natural target to shoot at first. The Flammenwerfer. Another genuinely horrific World War I weapon, and this week's subject for World War I war tech. Learn more by following the link in the podcast notes. For articles and posts, here are some of the highlights from our weekly dispatch newsletter. Headline: In DC Memorial Day Parade, Heir to the Pie Man From Georgetown Recalls Efforts Which Provided Dough for the Dough Boys. Writer Anthony Hayes, in the Baltimore Post Examiner tells the amazing World War I history behind the quaint pie truck. A black Model T box truck, replete with its creamy white Connecticut Copper Height Pie Company World War I logo. Headline: Politico Article Offers In-Depth Look at Current Status of New World War I Memorial at Pershing Park in Washington, DC. Politico published a broad ranging and insightful article on May 28th, that takes a hard look at the obstacles facing the progress of the new national World War I Memorial at Pershing Park in Washington, DC, and the opportunities which may emerge from moving forward on the project in the coming months. Headline: Lowdermilk Book aims to "shine the light of awareness" for the next generation about World War I. Upon receiving the diary of his grandfather, a World War I Veteran, writer and photographer Jeffrey Lowdermilk was inspired to honor his grandfather's memory by taking the same journey across Europe. Learn more about his book: Honoring the Doughboys: Following My Grandfather's World War I Diary. Headline: 'There But Not There' silhouettes honor WWI fallen, raise funds for military charities. A new nationwide campaign to commemorate the centennial of World War I and raise funds for military charities was launched across the United States this week. Read the article titled 'There, but not there'. Headline: This Week in the Wwrite Blog: I Never Saw Him Drowning: Great-Uncle Charlie and the Great War. Philip Metres tells the story of his great-uncle Charlie, his veteran father, and his own exploration of war through writing and poetry, in the Wwrite Blog. Finally, our selection from the official online Centennial Merchandise Store. This week we're featuring the Centennial Key Tag inscribed with the slogan Nothing Can Stop These Men. Inspired by an original World War I poster, this quality key tag features the dramatic image of a bayonet advance on the enemy, with the United States flag in the upper corner. I have to admit, I've been carrying one of these in my pocket three years and it still looks awesome. It's got a great heft to it. And you can get yours in our official merchandise store by following the links in our weekly newsletter, The Dispatch. And you can subscribe to the Dispatch by going to wwonecc.org/subscribe. Or follow the link in the podcast notes. And that brings us to the Buzz. The Centennial of World War I this week, and Social Media this week with Katherine Akey. Katherine, what are this week's picks?

[0:51:51]

Katherine Akey: We have so many photo albums, links, and articles to share with everyone for memorial day weekend. In the podcast notes, you'll find photos and reports from the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the US Army Center of Military History, both of whom participated in the Grand Opening ceremony of the new visitor's center at the American Monument in Chateau Thierry, France, on Sunday, May 27th. You'll also find links to videos of the Memorial Day Commemorations at the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial, and a video of World War One Centennial Commissioner Monique Seefried speaking from the fields of the Meuse Argonne. There's also an article from NPR about the temporary poppy memorial set up on the National Mall in DC over the weekend. 645,000 synthetic flowers, one for each American killed in an international conflict since the start of World War I, pressed against acrylic panels, and backlit. Finally, the team behind the film "Sergeant Stubby: An American Hero", have teamed up with the American Legion to bring the film to communities across the country. Fun Academy Motion Pictures is offering American Legion Posts nationwide opportunities to screen the animated film beginning Memorial Day weekend and continuing through Veteran's Day in November with the help of Veteran's outreach nonprofit Vetflix.org. Read more about it and how to organize a screening at your local American Legion post by following the link in the podcast notes. That's it this week for The Buzz.

[0:53:29]

Theo Mayer: And that wraps up the last week of May. For World War One Centennial News. Thank you so much for joining us. We also want to thank our guests. Mike Shuster, Curator for The Great War Project Blog. Dr. Edward Lengel, Military historian and author. Tanveer Kalo, a quickly developing expert on Indians in World War I, and a former Centennial Commission intern. Nancy Heingartner, educator and custodian of a great century-old collection of thank-you letters from Belgian students. Susan Wefald, Vice-Chair of the North Dakota World War One Centennial Committee. Katherine Akey, World War I photograph specialist and line producer for the podcast. And many thanks to Mack Nelson, our hardworking sound editor, who makes us all sound like we never make mistakes. And of course, I never do. I'm Theo Mayer, your host. The World War One 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 100 years ago into today's classrooms. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes around the country. And, of course, we're building America's National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC. We want to thank the commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzger Military Museum and Library, as well as the Star Foundation for their great support. The podcast can be found on our website, at wwonecc.org/cn. Now with our new interactive transcript feature for students, teachers, bloggers, reporters, and writers. You can also access the World War One Centennial News podcast on iTunes, Google Play, TuneIn, Podbean, Stitcher Radio on demand, Spotify, using your smart speaker by saying "play WWOne Centennial News podcast", and it's also now available on YouTube. Just search for our [wwone Centennial YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwonecc). Our Twitter and Instagram handles are both [@wwonecc](https://twitter.com/wwonecc), and we're on Facebook at [wwonecentennial](https://www.facebook.com/wwonecentennial). We want to thank you for joining us, and don't forget to share the stories that you're hearing here today, about the war that changed the world. In closing, we have discovered a fact that is very, very strange but true. Did you know that there are over 26,000 people in the United States that tend to use the word cantonment multiple times a week, and have for decades? They all live near Pensacola, Florida in, you guessed it, the only town in the US called Cantonment. So long!

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