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7 speakers (Theo Mayer, Jennifer Keene, Mike Shuster, Edward Lengel, Libby O'Connell, Michael Sandstr, Speaker 8)

[0:00:07]

**Theo Mayer:** Welcome to the World War I Centennial News podcast. It's about then; what was happening 100 years ago and the aftermath of World War I. And, it's about now, how the world transformed by World War I is very present in our lives today. But perhaps equally important, the podcast is about why and how we will never let those events fall back into the mists of obscurity. So, welcome to World War I Centennial News, Episode number 108. This week on the show, historian Dr. Jennifer Keene will tell us about the African American soldiers and communities' experience both during and after World War I. Mike Shuster provides a context and framework for the dynamics of the Paris Peace Conference. We have Part Four of the story of Sergeant Roy Holtz, the first American soldier on the streets of occupied Belgium, and he's riding on a Harley. Then, Dr. Edward Lengel with a story of service, not about a doughboy, but about a nurse. For a century in the making, this week we'll be presenting Part One of a multi-part series detailing the National War Memorial in Washington, DC, presented by Dr. Libby O'Connell. For education, we're joined by high school teacher Michael Sandstrom, offering us a great perspective on today's challenges for teaching history, and especially World War I. All this week and more on World War I Centennial News, which is brought to you by the US World War I 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 show. February is Black History Month, so we'll be bringing you perspectives and stories about how World War I and its aftermath deeply affected the African American community and led directly to the Civil Rights Movement some decades later. So this week, we've asked Dr. Jennifer Keene to join us to explore the subject. Dr. Keene is the former Department of History Chair at California's Chapman University. Her list of publications, her accolades and recognitions are, well, simply put, impressive. And with a heavy emphasis not only on World War I, but also on the teaching of the subject. And appropriate to this month's theme, some of her publications include The Long Journey Home, African American World War I Veterans and Veteran's Policies, The memory of the Great War in the African American community. A comparative study of white and black American soldiers during the first World War. Wilson and Race Relations, among others. Dr. Keene, it's really great to have you on the program.

[0:03:15]

**Jennifer Keene:** Very pleased to be here. Thank you.

[0:03:17]

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Keene, for context, could you summarize the basic segregationist position and policies of the US and the US Military in 1917, and how did the black community respond?

[0:03:27]

**Jennifer Keene:** The wartime Army is rigidly segregated, and the Army places about 89% of African American soldiers in non-combatant roles. And most African American units are officered by a white. It's not 100% because of pressure from the black community, and this is a really important point. It was really thanks to groups like the relatively recently founded NAACP, the black press, black universities putting pressure on the government that opened up some opportunities for African American soldiers to be placed in combatant roles, and basically be given the opportunity to prove that they could fight as bravely and as effectively as white soldiers.

[0:04:14]

**Theo Mayer:** And that really leads to the next point. During the war, the 369th, the 370th, and other African American units really distinguished themselves, not just as good soldiers, but as exemplary soldiers.

[0:04:27]

**Jennifer Keene:** It had been the hope of the black press, civil rights organizations, civil rights leaders, that by placing black soldiers in highly visible combatant positions, they would be able to demonstrate that they deserved equal rights. And so the exploits of units like the 369th infantry regiment that became known as the Harlem Hell Fighters, received a lot of publicity in the black press. Now, unfortunately, people, especially in the white community, are not looking for facts to challenge the racial stereotypes that they already held. So if you compare the way that the 369th infantry regiment was portrayed in the black press versus the white press, you see very important differences. The black press is going to emphasize their manhood, their heroism, their cool thinking under fire. The white press is going to emphasize their savagery, their... Really fitting the story into racial caricatures and stereotypes that already exists.

**[0:05:25]**

**Theo Mayer:** Now, one of the things we've tried to cover on the podcast are some of the other units. 369th is probably the best known. But there were a lot of others, weren't there?

**[0:05:34]**

**Jennifer Keene:** In terms of combatant units, there were four infantry regiments that were given to the French and fought with the French for the duration of the war. And then of course there was the 92nd Division, which was entirely African American division. And this was a complete division, meaning that it was not just infantry, but you had artillery, you had signal corps, you had all the component parts of division that were being staffed by black soldiers. So the 92nd Division stayed with the Americans, and had a very different experience than the four regiments that fought with the French. And so what we see in the post-war period is that the few stumbles of the 92nd Division get a lot of play within Army circles, and become used as evidence again and again to show the limitations of black soldiers to fight in modern warfare, where the exploits of the regiments that went and fought with the French get really de-emphasized in the post-war period.

**[0:06:27]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay. So the fighting's now over and it's time to come home. And I know it's not possible to generalize, but what are these men facing?

**[0:06:35]**

**Jennifer Keene:** Well, one of the things that they were facing was a sense of resistance on the part of many white communities, and so Red Summer is the nickname that's given to the summer of 1919, because of the 25 race riots that sweep through the country, and this is really emblematic of the way that they are going to have, in some communities, a violent reaction to any sense that they've come home expecting an improved status. They are also coming home to a post-war recession, where it's difficult for all veterans to find jobs. They're coming home, especially many of the combatant veterans, with their own readjustment difficulties, their own mental health issues, their own physical challenges. And I think that for many of these African American veterans, they had a decision to make. Most of them had come from the South, but of course the great migration during the course of the war had brought many African Americans to northern communities. And did they want to be part of that great migration, or did they want to go back to their original communities?

**[0:07:38]**

**Theo Mayer:** Okay. Then how would you characterize what World War I meant to the self-image of the African American community in the US, and how big of a driver did it turn out to be for the Civil Rights Movement?

**[0:07:50]**

**Jennifer Keene:** Fighting back was the new ethos within the African American community after the first World War, and this was really a result of a few things that had happened during the war. First was the idea of being in uniform, fighting a war for democracy, and this just really highlighted the discrepancies between reality and this hopeful vision that Wilson had given the world. They also had the experience of being in France, where they had been treated quite differently. They didn't have the social practice of segregation or racial discrimination that really regulated daily life for so many African Americans. So living in this sort of freer environment really demonstrated to many African American soldiers that it didn't have to be this way in the United States. And then finally, groups like the NAACP, their membership exploded during the war. And so, this transitional moment that the first World War represents that really sets the foundation for the modern Civil Rights movement.

**[0:08:51]**

**Theo Mayer:** Before we close, I'd like to talk just for a moment about the role of African American women in World War I. Now, they did play a large role in a number of ways, and we're going to be doing a whole segment on this in an upcoming episode. But some African American nurses actually did serve in France, didn't they?

**[0:09:08]**

**Jennifer Keene:** There were African American nurses who were brought in after the war was over, due to the influenza epidemic. This was because the flu was so overwhelming to Army medical services, and many black soldiers were falling ill with the flu. But this was an interesting dilemma. The nurses in general faced a lot of resistance in terms of being considered true professionals who had valuable services to give to the military, but for African American nurses, they had opposition not just from men, but also from white women, who felt that black nurses in this event brought the reputation of the whole nursing profession down, rather than elevating it the way that they wanted to.

**[0:09:51]**

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Keene, thank you for coming in and enlightening us on a subject that needs a whole lot more exposure.

**[0:09:58]**

**Jennifer Keene:** Absolutely. Thanks so much for having me.

**[0:10:00]**

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Jennifer Keene is the Department of History Chair at California's Chapman University. Learn more about her, her accomplishments and her work by following the links in the podcast notes. Now we're joined by Mike Shuster, former MPR correspondent and curator for the Great War Project blog. Mike, your post this week goes back to the middle of January, and you provide a really wonderful positioning, context and framework for the dynamics of this literally world- defining peace conference in Paris. And the tensions between the Allied nations who, understandably, were wanting a pretty punitive and punishing treaty, which is certainly different than President Wilson's vision for a more egalitarian and democratic world that he described in his famous 14 points .

**[0:10:49]**

**Mike Shuster:** The headline reads "The peace conference begins in Paris. Representatives from most of the world's peoples, the Allies want payments, Wilson wants the League of Nations ." This is special to the Great War Project. On January 18th, 1919, in the gilded Salle de la Paix of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Quai d'Orsay, the Paris Peace Conference finally begins. So reports historian Thomas Fleming. Bearded, pudgy Raymond Poincare', the President of France, opened the first plenary session with a speech that he read in a monotone, perhaps on the assumption that only a small percentage of the room understood French. Before him , around a horseshoe- shaped table sit representatives from 32 Allied and associated States , representing about 75% of the world's population. Absent from the table were any representatives from Russia or from Germany and its allies. Russia's Bolshevik rulers had refused to come. The enemy had not been invited. The French President's speech had worrisome overtones for true believers of the American President's so- called 14 points , the goals President Woodrow Wilson had mapped out earlier in the war. It also reveals why the French had delayed the opening date of the peace conference. The President declares on this day 48 years ago, the German Empire was proclaimed by an army of invasion in the Chateau at Versailles. Born in injustice, it has ended in disgrace. This is a reference to Germany's occupation of French territory in 1870 in the Franco- Prussian War. Poincare' had made this lost territory the centerpiece of his political career. Poincare' was the architect of France's pre- war alliance with Russia and Britain, which had convinced the Germans they were being encircled as a prelude to extermination, Fleming observes." You are assembled to repair the evil this occupation has done," Poincare' continued, " and to prevent a recurrence of it. You hold in your hands the future of the world," he declares. After a moment of embarrassed silence, President Wilson rises to nominate the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, as Chairman of the Peace Conference. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, follows with a second motion. Clemenceau's opening remarks go to the heart of the peace conference, the participant's task, Clemenceau declares, was to decide who was responsible for the war, who should be punished for it, and how much Germany should pay for the terrible depredations that had devastated and ruined one of the richest regions of France. Fleming notes there was not so much as a mention of a League of Nations, Wilson's key issue. Observes historian Fleming," This was confrontational diplomacy of the most blatant kind. A veritable declaration of war on Wilson's 14 points." Wilson came to have no illusions, though, about what the other Allied powers wanted from the conference; loot, payments from Germany, gold, and territory. Wilson concentrated his mind on this primary goal, according to Fleming, winning support for the League, which would be intertwined with the peace treaty. Paris is awash in experts, with each major power bringing to Paris the staff to negotiate the details. The American delegation numbers more than 1, 000, but according to historian Fleming, no one had thought to create an agenda. That's the news these days a century ago from the Great War Project .

**[0:14:25]**

**Theo Mayer:** Mike Shuster is the curator for the Great War Project blog. The link to his post is in the podcast notes. And that brings us to Part Four of our multi- part story about Sergeant Roy Holtz of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin , the first US soldier on German soil after the armistice of World War I . Captured on film in occupied Belgium, and he's riding on a Harley Davidson . Our good friend, citizen historian and author, Rob Laplander wrote this researched account of the history, what actually happened. Intended for high school students. Well, Rob has given us permission to read to the story to you in serial form. So here is the unabridged, first into Germany, Sergeant Roy Holtz, and he did it on a Harley. By author Robert Laplander. Part Four. Oh, you've got to be kidding. Finally, on the night of November 5th, 1918, Roy Holtz's unit, the 128th Infantry Regiment of the Red Arrow division, crossed the bridgehead over the Mews River. They were backing up the 5th division, and they knew they were getting closer to Germany all the time. Now, there were rumors of an armistice floating around, but nobody was really sure of what was going on with that. Communications as the units rapidly chased the Germans had become confused. That was really important, to know if there would be a ceasefire, in order to spare lives from being lost unnecessarily. And so, on the evening of November 8th, Corporal Holtz was detailed with his Captain to head back to headquarters and get the full picture of exactly what was going on. It was a dark night, and it had been raining for several days, making the roads

just paths of slimy mud. Roy wasn't particularly anxious to drive out through it, but he had no choice. Orders were orders. He and his captain, a fellow only remembered as Sam, set out and almost immediately there were problems. The captain insisted on choosing the route, and it soon became clear to Roy that they were headed in the wrong direction." Captain, I know this area." Holtz shouted above the sound of their motor in the windy rain driving into them , " And it isn't the way. I think we're heading towards German lines , not away from them."" Don't you worry, son. I know what I'm doing. Drive on, Corporal Holtz." Disgruntled, and convinced he was right, Roy nevertheless did as he was told. But after several more miles of sliding along the slimy, mud- choked roads through the rain, Holtz felt that he just had to try again." Captain, I'm telling you, we're heading deeper into German lines. This is the wrong way, sir."" Dad gum it, Corporal, I told you I know what I'm talking about, and this is the way. Now, you drive where you're told, son." Famous last words. Eventually, even for all of his certainty, after miles and miles of slipping along on terrible roads in the rain, and seemingly to get nowhere, even Captain Sam had to admit they were lost. Coming to a stop as they crested a hill, at the bottom, they could see the light coming from a farmhouse. Now, that proved that they were nowhere near the front, that's for sure. Any light show near the front would instantly draw enemy fire. Carefully, Roy maneuvered the Harley and its bulky sidecar through the heavy rain, down the slippery road to the bottom, where Captain Sam ordered him to pull up to the farmhouse and ask for directions. Just literally seething inside, Roy shut off the motorcycle, dismounted, and walked awkwardly to the door. They'd been riding for hours, and he was stiff and cold and soaked to the bone. Roy pounded on the door, and soon enough, it flung open. Instinctively, Roy stepped inside quickly, out of the rain, and the door slammed shut behind him . Wiping the rain from his face and adjusting to the light in the room , he looked around, and his heart just about jumped out of his mouth . To his shock and surprise, down the center of the room ran a long wooden table, and sitting all around it were a dozen or so German officers. They had stumbled upon the headquarters of the 5th Bavarian Division. A really dispirited, oh, you've got to be kidding, was about all the angry Corporal could get out before he was seized by a German guard and relieved of his 45 automatic pistol. Asked if he were alone, he admitted that his Captain was outside waiting for him. Told to call him in, Roy later confessed that it was with fiendish delight that he did so, and hollered out the open door just a crack," Hey, Sam. Come in here." No sir, no Captain, no military courtesy at all. So in stomped an angry Captain Sam, whose jaw dropped plumb near to the floor when he saw what the situation was. They were now prisoners of war. " See what your blasted directions got us into?" Snapped a seething Roy, but Captain Sam said nothing. Just then, a door flung open from one side of the room, and a German General stepped through, demanding to know what was going on. Told that they had just taken two American prisoners that had simply wandered in, the General called an orderly over and told him to go fetch the interpreter, but Roy stopped him." Es is nicht notwendig , Herr General, ich spreche Deutsch. It's not necessary General, Sir, I speak German." The general officers were thunderstruck, and even Captain Sam seemed impressed. The General, smiling, assumed a kindly air, and steered Roy into a side room, before calling the orderly to bring in some Schnapps, some fine German whiskey. Pouring out two glasses, he toasted Roy and started to interrogate him, asking questions about American troop positions and strengths, supply conditions , battle plans, stuff like that. But the Corporal wouldn't talk. Another glass of schnapps and more questions, but still, Roy wouldn't talk. Clearly , the armistice talk was all bunk. Yet another glass of schnapps and yet more questions, but Roy's lips were sealed. Finally giving up, the frustrated General led Roy back into the main room, where he found Captain Sam sitting very uncomfortably among the grinning German officers. The General announced that they were going to send these errant Americans on to main German headquarters near Spa, Belgium, and one of the General's own officers would accompany them to see that they got where they needed to go. As the German Captain was picked to go got ready for the rainy trip, Roy tossed it over in his mind. Spa , Belgium. If they were anything close to Spa, that meant they had gone a huge distance in totally the wrong direction. And that was Part Four of First Into Germany, Sergeant Roy Holtz. And he did it on a Harley, by author Robert Laplander. Rob Laplander is a citizen historian, author of the book Finding the Lost Battalion, and importantly, the man behind the Doughboy MIA project. We have links for you in the podcast notes to his story, Harley and the Doughboy MIA site. Join us next week for Part Five, the final installment of this Great World War I story. Next, we have regular contributor to the podcast, historian and author, Dr. Edward Lengel. His blog is called A Storyteller Hiking Through History, and this week , the story is not about a doughboy, but about a very special woman . Sarah Sand, a nurse who was all about caring for our boys.

[0:22:50]

**Edward Lengel:** Sarah Sand was a professional. When the United States entered World War I, she was Director of Nursing at Evangelical Hospital in Bismark, North Dakota. Like many other nurses, she immediately volunteered for service overseas. It took a year, however, for what would become her service organization, Base Hospital number 60, to be organized. After extensive training at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, Sand departed the United States in September, 1918. She arrived at the front in time to help care for the massive wave of perhaps 100, 000 casualties resulting from the Meuse- Argonne offensive. Her life would never be the same again. Because of her supervisory experience, Sarah Sand was placed in charge of a surgical ward where she, one other nurse and two corpsmen had to care for around 100 patients at any given time. Many of them were badly mangled. Because of the sheer volume of casualties, the men passed through her ward so quickly , and some of them died there, that she barely got to know them . Still, her heart filled with compassion for the wounded doughboys, who she observed endured their suffering with stoicism, dignity and often good cheer. At the time of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, Sand was in charge

of a pneumonia ward, supervising care for many gravely ill patients. There was little time to rejoice at war's end. Everyone was either too sick, or too busy. At Christmas, though, Sand and her fellow nurses did everything they could to bring some joy and hope to the men they had come to call our boys. They hung festive decorations, prepared a feast, and gave each patient a basket filled with treats, like fruit and candy. Living conditions for nurses on the Western Front were far from ideal, even after the Armistice. The winter of 1918 to 1919 was exceptionally frigid, and the windows in their living quarters didn't fit their frames. The nurses had few opportunities for washing up, usually ate cold food, and rarely slept in beds. Not until February did Sarah Sand get an opportunity for leave, a welcome two week vacation that she and the other nurses used to visit Paris. When leave ended, however, it was back to work at Base Hospital number 60, caring for sick soldiers and civilians, and others recuperating from wounds. In April, the nurses learned that their return home was approaching. Doctors and administrators of the hospital threw a huge party for the nurses, with a huge cake emblazoned with a picture of Florence Nightingale. There followed an inspection by General John J. Pershing, and weeks of cleaning up and waiting, before they finally boarded a ship home on June 10th. But the war had no more ended for the nurses than it had for the millions of servicemen who had seen duty at the front. Shortly after Sarah Sand and her fellow nurses arrived in New York City, they were treated to a play called the Follies of 1919. It lightheartedly traced the experiences of a Red Cross nurse behind the front lines, and ended with her marrying and settling down to a life of happiness and tranquility. For Nurse Sand, the whole thing rang hollow. "Of course it was only a play," she said. "In true life, the World War nurses could never entirely escape from the thoughts of their wounded and dying comrades who had started out so bravely to save democracy for the future, and who had taken part in this war to end all wars. We had stood by their bedsides in their misery and suffering, and in spite of our best efforts, we had seen the light fade from their eyes, and their bodies stiffen in death." Typically, Sarah Sand's thoughts were not for herself, but for our boys. Thousands of soldiers were coming home wounded, she remembered, with broken, handicapped bodies. Some are diseased, others injured with slow and deadly gases that would destroy their lungs, and still others with shell-shocked minds. Will these comrades ever again know real happiness? Or must they spend the remaining days of their lives on some hospital cot, suffering for their devotion to their country? Even as she asked, she knew the answer.

**[0:27:05]**

**Theo Mayer:** Dr. Edward Lengel, World War I expert, author and storyteller hiking through history. We have links to Ed's posts and his author's website in the podcast notes. Okay, let's fast forward into the present with World War I Centennial News Now. As our regular listeners know, this part of the podcast focuses on the present, and explores the ongoing World War I documentation, commemoration, education and exploration. Here is where we try to show you how the echoes of the war that changed the world are still very present in our everyday lives. Our weekly segment, A Century in the Making, is where we're offering our listeners a really rare view of how a national memorial project goes from concept to reality. This week, we're joined by Dr. Libby O'Connell, a US World War I Centennial commissioner, former chief historian for the History Channel, and a member of the Memorial Planning Task Force. Dr. O'Connell recently gave a one hour brief where she presented an amazing array of details and nuances that have been developed for what we believe is going to be one of the most unique and powerful memorials in our Nation's Capital. I've broken out segments from her briefing into bite-sized nuggets that will be included in the podcast over the coming weeks. Combined with our other ongoing interviews, you who follow the podcast are going to be treated to a very unique insight into how this national memorial, intended to be significant today, tomorrow and into the distant future, is being defined, refined and honed into a major monument in the Nation's Capital.

**[0:28:56]**

**Libby O'Connell:** Well, thank you Theo. And we're going to start here with the vision for the Memorial Park. You know, this is an existing park right now in Washington, DC, Pershing Park, and we have the honor to get to reinvigorate an older park, which we now call the National World War I Memorial Park. It's not just a memorial, it's not just a park. It has two goals. One is to recognize the service and sacrifice of World War I, and the other is to serve as an urban green space, because it's right smack dab in the middle of Washington, DC. So we have two agendas to achieve, and that's made it challenging. But I think also really rewarding, and I'm really excited about how this is turning out. There are three primary commemorative elements that we're going to be talking about, and also the secondary, interpretive elements. One of the things that we mean when we talk about interpretive elements, it just means really the learning elements. Think of it as a different language, and we help translate what that language is, so that people who come to the park receive interpretation through an app that we're going to be developing, and that way they learn more. When you go to a museum, you get an interpretive framework for the museum. Here, we're in a park. So the park vision has an outline that's very clean, and I'm pleased about that. First tier is the Great Man, that would be General Pershing. And that section was developed a long time ago, and it's a very traditional one. So we talk about General Pershing, who he was, you look at the statue, and we look at the walls that surround him that provide information about who he was, what was going on in World War I before the war broke out. The war broke out in 1914, we joined in 1917, so it's talking about some of that timeline. And then also we're going to be talking about why did America join this war across the ocean. We're talking about the traditional interpretation of military history, leadership in battle, the role that Pershing took, and then there'll be other significant bits of information. And we're calling those bits of information poppies. Poppies are a symbol of World War I and veterans. They continue to

be a symbol of veterans today. We're using the symbol of little poppies at the park as a way to learn more about a topic. So the first section is Pershing's statue. We call that the Pershing, the Great Man section, obviously. The second one is Every Man. And by every man, we mean not just the doughboys, but the average person who was there participating in the war and also on the home front. So instead of being a General, which is the traditional way we looked at military history, today we're looking at, who were the people who fought? Who were the women who served overseas for the first time, in uniform? Who were the men that were fighting from different backgrounds for the United States Army? Most of this is focused on the United States experience. So we're going to be looking at the main sculpture on the sculpture wall and the diverse voices that are there as well. We'll be talking about the technology and innovation in war, and we'll be talking about home front and homecoming experience. And then there will be other poppies that expand. You don't have to go all the way through this. You could decide, well, I just really want to know the top line. Or, you can dig deeper. That's one of the great things about getting information through an app. The third section is called Peace, and it's the commemorative area represented by a fountain, the big wall, and it will have a very apt quote, which we're choosing just right now. We're really happy to make those choices, because there's some good selections. And talk about the search for peace, the Versailles Treaty, how difficult peace was to achieve after World War I, but also about peace today. You know, peace is a process, it's not just a moment when you sign a document. It's including justice, it includes a sense of restitution and recognition. And then there'll be other aspects of songs and poetry that have been written about peace, and other poppies. I think this is our section where we encourage people to think about the notion of peace. What does peace mean in our lives as a nation? What does peace mean globally, and what is peace in our lives personally? And ways of achieving that. So I think that will have resonance for people in all different ways, and actually, we hope that the three sections do have meaning for most people that come to the park. Although we understand that some people are going to come to the park to have a sandwich and sit by the sound of running water, and be refreshed in that way. So here we are, back at our primary commemorative elements in the park. Here we're looking at the existing Pershing Memorial, is what we call the Great Man. See, the statue Pershing, there's a bench, you can just sit there and think about life or contemplate the statue. And then there are walls on each side that tell a traditional story about the sacrifice and service of the American Army. It also explains some of the action using maps. Maps are always handy when you're moving people around. And we're very pleased that this area has been highlighted with gilding so that it's easier to read. In the picture you see it in front of you, you can't see that there's any writing really on the walls, but if you go there now, it really pops, and it makes it much more accessible to everyone. When you leave the Pershing Memorial, you can walk over to the sculpture and the fountain. The sculptural wall, that's the Every Man sculpture, and behind it is the fountain. And from my point of view, both of them are equally important. Equally important in how you understand and see this park. But for many people, it's going to be the sculpture that really speaks the loudest, because it tells the universal story of soldiers... Of particularly one soldier it focuses on, his journey from leaving home into warfare, into battle, the horrors of battle, and then slowly building back up and the return to home, and the passing of his helmet to his daughter, in a way of handing this to the next generation. So it's a universal story, these type of friezes have been sculpted for thousands of years. You see them in ancient Greece. But this is more than just a story that is a general universal tale or mythology. It also speaks to the specifics of World War I, and we'll talk a little bit more about that later. Behind the wall of the sculpture, is the Contemplative Fountain. There'll be a quote there, as I mentioned, and the sound of rushing water which will, I think, provide a wonderful refreshment and sort of a curtain of sound that will provide a privacy from the loud noises of the urban area in which this park sits.

**[0:36:33]**

**Theo Mayer:** That was Dr. Libby O'Connell about the National World War I Memorial in Washington, DC. That was Part One, the overview. Learn lots more about the Memorial, and help us build it, by going to [WWIcc.Org/memorial](http://WWIcc.Org/memorial), or follow the link in the podcast notes. One of the most important parts of the World War I Centennial Commission's focus is education. To that end, last year we put together an education consortium, consisting of the Commission as a sponsor, the National World War I Museum and Memorial, which is America's leading institution dedicated to remembering, interpreting and understanding the Great War and its enduring impact on the global community, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, a non profit organization devoted to the improvement of history education, and National History Day, another non profit education organization that offers year long academic programs that engage over a half a million middle and high school students annually in conducting original research on historical topics of interest. Last week we were joined by National History Day Executive Director Kathy Gorn. But this week, we're going to go directly to where the rubber meets the road, as we're joined by a foot soldier in the campaign to win the mind share and interest of our youth in both history, and for the legacy of World War I. With us today is Michael Sandstrom, Social Science teacher at Chadron High School in northwestern Nebraska, about 20 minutes from the South Dakota border. Michael, welcome to the podcast.

**[0:38:12]**

**Michael Sandstr:** Well thank you very much. It's great to be here.

**[0:38:15]**

**Theo Mayer:** So Michael, you're quite literally the first high school teacher that we've had on the program, and I'm really happy to speak with you.

**[0:38:24]**

**Michael Sandstr:** Well thank you. I think education, as we can all agree, is a cornerstone of American democracy, and I appreciate what you guys do on a weekly basis.

**[0:38:33]**

**Theo Mayer:** Nowadays, how is history treated in high school at large, and then I want to talk about how World War I is treated in high schools in current curricula.

**[0:38:44]**

**Michael Sandstr:** So I'll take the history one first, because I think we saw this alarming picture of what's going on nationally. We looked at science, math scores, and we kind of noticed this trend. And what ended up happening, in my opinion, was the putting of history on sort of a back burner. So I think where history is, and you can tell by the less scrutiny on standards at times, is I feel like it's marginalized to a degree. But if there's one subject that might be extremely important yet marginalized to the highest degree, it might be World War I. In my opinion that's because World War I is seen as just something that came before, but doesn't really affect the things that came later which, as your podcast will attest to, that's certainly not the case.

**[0:39:29]**

**Theo Mayer:** Well, it's interesting that the whole STEM focus de-emphasized history. I didn't know that.

**[0:39:35]**

**Michael Sandstr:** I do like to provide the precursor that I am from a small school in Western Nebraska, but I since have noticed that there's, in almost every school I've been in in Colorado and Nebraska, there seems to be a focus on those subjects more, and a little bit of a de-emphasis, in my ... I think there's a thought now, you can look everything up like history on an iPhone. You know, well, if I need to know any of those sorts of facts, I can just look it up. So I see that as kind of a negative.

**[0:40:06]**

**Theo Mayer:** So Michael, what you're saying is that people think that history is fact.

**[0:40:10]**

**Michael Sandstr:** Absolutely. And kids wonder, in my classroom, why the first few days or even weeks, we're talking about a lot of historical thinking skills and all sorts of different sourcing activities. And looking at the source; how does this work, who created it, that sort of thing. So it is a little bit different.

**[0:40:28]**

**Theo Mayer:** With the internet, how do you point your kids to primary sources?

**[0:40:32]**

**Michael Sandstr:** Several different ways, I guess. I am a part of several different sites that have quality primary sources. Gilder Lehrman Institute is a very reputable site. I also use Sanford History Education Group. I point students to several different sites that are well documented and I trust very much, but at the same time, we talk quite frequently about how to find the primary sources that you want. So I depend a lot on hoping that you've instilled skills. I'm sure it's much like a parent attempting to instill certain lessons, and kids know you won't always be there. And so deciding what sources are quality sources, it's something we focus on in class.

**[0:41:13]**

**Theo Mayer:** And how long have you been involved with National History Day, or how are they involved with your school?

**[0:41:19]**

**Michael Sandstr:** I started out in the Fifth Grade with a Jackie Robinson project, but since then, when I returned to Nebraska, I started doing the sponsorship for NHD again, so I've been with NHD as a sponsor at Regional and State competitions for about two years. We send anywhere from five to 10 kids the last few years, who compete at the Regional. And many make it to the State level, and several in the school have made it to National competitions. So National History Day's kind of played a part, especially in our Middle School levels, but also in our High School curriculum.

**[0:41:53]**

**Theo Mayer:** You were selected as one of 18 teachers, by National History Day, to participate in a deep study of World War I. Can you tell me about how you applied, and what the program is?

**[0:42:06]**

**Michael Sandstr:** So I was fortunate enough to be a part of National History Day's Legacies of World War I course that they did throughout the fall, and I heard about the Memorializing the Fallen program, and essentially how the process works was it was a fairly simple application, but there were several different essays that you wrote on what you would provide to the program, what you hoped to gain from the program, what you hoped to bring home for students. And so, after completing those essays, I was notified in early December by Lynne O'Hare, the Director of Programs at National History Day, and was informed that I had been officially accepted as one of the 18 teachers.

**[0:42:45]**

**Theo Mayer:** So, what are you hoping to get out of the program?

**[0:42:48]**

**Michael Sandstr:** I believe history is about passion, because kids don't always really understand or know why something would be important. I know this if I've been to a place, I can really put place to a series of events or context, it really helps me and it thereby extends to the students. So my hope is to go to some of these battle sites and memorials that I've read about and heard about, and really be able to bring that back.

**[0:43:14]**

**Theo Mayer:** How will you bring some of that experience back to the students, specifically?

**[0:43:19]**

**Michael Sandstr:** One way that I will do it is, I've found, for whatever reason, that pictures are extremely powerful. And not just photographs from the internet; things I've taken. If I can explain exactly where you walked, or how I specifically walked in these areas. But in addition, the research. As I've been getting into my Silent Hero profile. His name is William Herman. I've been noticing a lot of skills that I've learned picking up in research. Specific research that I feel can help a lot of the MHD students potentially with their projects in the future.

**[0:43:56]**

**Theo Mayer:** Yeah, it's interesting. So, his name is Herman, which is a German surname, which has got to have some kind of effect in what happened to him.

**[0:44:05]**

**Michael Sandstr:** It's very interesting. His father was born in Austria in 1861, and emigrated to the United States. Spoke German, eventually learned English. But his mother had two German parents. She was born in Wisconsin. But he specifically had four German speaking grandparents. And I just find that interesting, because when he was called to the service, he had to have known he would be fighting people from kindred nation. And so, the experience that he had, coming from Alliance, Nebraska, fighting against people who, one generation before had been his family, is just an amazing fact.

**[0:44:44]**

**Theo Mayer:** Organizations like the World War I Centennial Commission and so forth, we're trying really hard to assist you and your students from an educational standpoint. What else is it that an organization like us can do to help?

**[0:45:00]**

**Michael Sandstr:** In my opinion, it's about introducing them to resources, and kind of giving them some training or at least the desire to get the training. I really like the goals with the World War I Memorial and actually getting a space for Americans to think and ponder about the sacrifices by our Armed Services men and women. But I definitely think resources are good, just with education and with an understanding of a framework.

**[0:45:28]**

**Theo Mayer:** Michael Sandstrom is a Social Science teacher from Chadron High School, from the Great Plains region of the United States in Nebraska. Follow the link in the podcast notes to learn more about the National History Day, Fallen American Heroes Program, and its teachers. And that brings us to this week's Speaking World War I, where we explore the words and phrases that are rooted in the war, with many still in use today. And this is a perfect example. This week's Speaking World War I word is, airport. They used to be called aerodromes, and airfields, mostly because they were literally fields. But according to the FAA, in 1919, a New Jersey reporter named Robert Woodhouse coined the term airport. Speaking about a local facility called Batter Field near Atlantic City. Today, the same location is called Atlantic City Municipal Airport, but according to Google, it's permanently been shut down. It's



a great hybrid term, combining an aviation term with a nautical term. Air, port. Keeping this in perspective, this is only 15 years after the first powered flight at Kitty Hawk. Airplanes have captured the public imagination. These are new, fascinating, wood and canvas flying machines that are destined to be a lot more than a novelty, and Woodhouse seemed to have seen it. Think about it. A port isn't just a place to dock ships. A port sometimes refers to an entire city and its infrastructure that supports the whole idea of seacoast transportation. Well, today, that's true for airport. It's a complex and sophisticated system of spaces and resources, infrastructure and technologies, that design and support moving people and materials from one airport to another. Good job, Mr. Woodhouse. It makes me wonder whether you were just very prophetic, or whether your insight and your moniker helped to shape what this industry became. Words are powerful. According to Air and Space's writer, Roger Mola, by the end of 1920, there were 145 municipal airports, and the nationwide air travel system was beginning to form. Airports, a key part of 21st Century life, and this week's word for Speaking World War I. We have links for you in the podcast notes. This week in articles and posts, where we highlight the stories you'll find in our weekly newsletter, the Dispatch. Headline: Revamping Pershing Park, giving World War I remembrance its due. The Commission had the opportunity to brief the Federal City Council in Washington, DC on the plans for the National World War I memorial. The Federal City Council is a very important and influential group, and they actively expressed their excitement about our project, as they've long been involved in the redevelopment of the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor. Headline: Senators Tester and Blackburn introduce bipartisan bill to honor Hello Girls. Great news. The girls connect the conversation across the aisle, as US Senator Jon Tester, Democrat, Montana and Marsha Blackburn, Republican, Tennessee team up to honor the groundbreaking service of the women who connected American and French forces on the front lines of World War I. Headline: American Legion supports review of minorities World War I valor medal. The commission is promoting the first systemic review of World War I veterans who may have been denied a medal of honor due to racial or ethnic discrimination. The Valor Medals Review task force is starting with the records of approximately 70 African American soldiers, in particular those worthy of the Nation's highest military award, who may have been downgraded to a Distinguished Service cross, or received a French Croix de Guerre with Palm. This past month, the American Legion officially declared its support for this endeavor. Headline: Telling the story of how the flu wiped out 675,000 Americans. Commissioned historian Dr. Libby O'Connell penned an op-ed for the New York Post about the still mystifying outbreak of influenza during World War I that killed tens of millions worldwide, including 675,000 Americans, 43,000 of them doughboys. Headline: Peter Jackson's They Shall Not Grow Old marches on. Warner Brothers releasing widely across North America. Warner Brothers Pictures is widening the front for Peter Jackson's widely acclaimed World War I documentary They Shall Not Grow Old. The screenings are going into general release in major markets across the US and Canada, starting the weekend of February 1st. Headline: New PBS art series to feature the 369th experience. The Centennial Commission got a wonderful communication last week. An email from Judy Meschel, Producer for Local Projects at WETA television, the PBS broadcasting TV channel for greater Washington, DC. Judy was letting us know that she had just finished producing a segment for WETA on James Reese Europe, the legendary World War I Harlem Hell fighters jazz band leader. You'll find links to the full length articles for all of these stories we've highlighted here in our weekly Dispatch newsletter. It's a short and sweet guide to World War I news and information, and it's free. Subscribe at [WW1CC.Org/subscribe](http://WW1CC.Org/), or follow the link in the podcast notes. And that wraps up Episode number 108 of the award-winning World War I Centennial News podcast. Thank you for listening. We want to thank our great guests, crew and supporters, including Dr. Jennifer Keene of Chapman University, Mike Shuster, curator for the Great War Project blog, Dr. Edward Lengel, military historian and author, Rob Laplander, for graciously allowing us to serialize his short story about Roy Holtz, US World War I Centennial Commissioner, Dr. Libby O'Connell, Michael Sandstrom, Social Science teacher at Chadron High School in Nebraska. Thanks to Matt Nelson and Tim Crow, our interview editing team. Cath Laslow, the line producer for the show, JL Mischow and Dave Kramer for research, and I'm Theo Mayer, your producer and host. The US World War I Centennial Commission was created by Congress to honor, commemorate and educate about World War I. Our programs are to inspire a national conversation and awareness about World War I, including this podcast. We're bringing the lessons of 100 years ago to today's educators and their classrooms, and the public. We're helping to restore World War I memorials in communities of all sizes across the country. And of course, we're building America's national World War I memorial in Washington, DC. We want to thank the Commission's founding sponsor, the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, as well as the Star Foundation for their support. The podcast, and a full transcript of the show can be found on our website at [WW1CC.Org/cn](http://WW1CC.Org/cn). You'll find World War I Centennial news in all the places you get your podcasts, and even using your smart speaker by saying "Play WW1 Centennial News podcast." And as of this week, I found out you can also ask Siri on your smartphone. Invoke Siri and say, "Siri, play WW1 Centennial News podcast." And she will. The podcast Twitter handle is @theWW1podcast. The Commission's Instagram and Twitter handles are both at WW1CC, and we're on Facebook at WW1 Centennial. Thank you for joining us, and don't forget, keep the World War I story alive for America by helping us build the memorial. Just text the letters WWI or WW1 to the phone number 91-999.

[0:54:14]

**Speaker 8:** Don't forget the Salvation Army, always remember my donut girl. She brought them donuts and coffee, just like an angel she was their best pal. As brave as a lion, but meek as a lamb, she carried on beside the sons of Uncle Sam. So don't forget the Salvation Army, remember my donut girl.

**[0:54:41]**

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

**[0:54:43]**