

Voiceover: This program is sponsored by The United States World War One Centennial Commission.

(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

(Applause)

Williams: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with Thomas Phillips discussing his book *In the Shadows of Victory II: America's Forgotten Military Leaders, The Spanish-American War to World War II*. I'm your host Jay Williams, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago. It's sponsored by The United States World War One Centennial Commission. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at [PritzkerMilitary.org](http://PritzkerMilitary.org). At the close of the nineteenth century, the United States moved into what has come to be known as the American Century, the period of expanding American cultural and economic influence on the global stage. Yet the base for this power rested largely on the shoulders of America's global military successes in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. Some of the military leaders responsible for establishing and reaffirming the place of the United States on the world stage during the American Century have been immortalized in our national memory. Others equally important and influential during their time have been forgotten over the years. In the second volume of his work *In the Shadows of Victory*, Thomas Phillips tells the personal stories of twenty leaders in the shadows from four major conflicts: the Spanish American War, the Philippine Insurrection, WWI, and WWII. Phillips also provides readers with key historical context for understanding the impact of each individual, including the origin of each of the four major conflicts and context for American involvement. Phillips also challenges the public to rethink their understanding of some notable figures whose contributions to the American military long preceded the conflict for which they came to be known. General John Pershing for example served with distinction during the Philippine Insurrection before becoming commander of the American Expeditionary Force in Europe during WWI. Likewise, some of WWII's best-known generals--Dwight Eisenhower, George Marshall, George Patton, and Omar Bradley--honed the skills necessary for leadership and victory during their service under Pershing in WWI. By exploring these stories of leaders in the shadows, Phillips reveals how we remember and how we forget. His research recognizes individuals whose contributions to making the American Century have been overlooked and restore them to our national memory. Thomas D. Phillips served for thirty-six years in the United States Air Force. He led an isolated unit through a terrorist episode, ran a think tank for the commander in chief of the Strategic Air Command, served as the director of the Air Force Personnel Readiness Center during Operation Desert Storm, and led some of the first American troops into Sarajevo. Following his military service, Phillips worked as a university administrator before beginning a fulltime writing career. Phillips is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College and the Air War College of the US Air Force. Please join me in welcoming Thomas Phillips to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.

(Applause)

Phillips: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. It's a very great honor to be here. And I thank you for those kind words and very gracious introduction. In the remote possibility that some of those achievements have been vastly overrated, let me thank the Pritzker staff for mistaking me for someone important and asking me to be here tonight. It's something

I've wished to do for such a long time, to be part of the Pritzker program, but I guess I had always visualized myself as being out there and not up here. So I hope that arrangement will turn out to be enjoyable for both of us, and I thank you. We're' gonna talk about this book tonight. We'll talk manly about the portion that pertains to WWI, but I would like to begin with just a few minutes to let you know the reason for the book and the idea behind it. And the idea behind it actually goes back a long way. A long, long time ago I was a kid on a Nebraska farm. Military history had always been appealing to me, and I found indeed that reading military history was a great way to get you through cold winter nights. And I will digress for just a minute and tell you that until you have spent a few winters in a Nebraska farmhouse with no indoor plumbing, you have no real appreciation for what cold really is. So I began by reading mostly obviously about Nebraska military history, and I found surprisingly a very rich heritage, which I was not aware of. There were lots of things including among them the last—the first battle after the Little Big Horn, probably the last great charge of the United States cavalry, and many many more. But what struck me about those events was—and many of those leaders of those military units had really done extraordinary things. And they had done extraordinary things over a long period of time, but they were extraordinary things that very few of us I think in the present day have much information about—don't know about them at all. For example the officer who led the Fifth Cavalry on that first battle after the little Big Horn was a young colonel named Wesley Merritt. Not a very familiar name, but Merritt fought a very excellent battle. He turned back hundreds of native warriors who were leaving reservations headed for the north to join war chiefs like Crazy Horse and many others after the Big Horn. That battle at a place called War Bonnet Creek turned those hundreds of native tribesmen back around, put them back on reservations, and really from that point forward the native bands really never won another major engagement with the United States Cavalry. And there were so many others like that. For example Officers Eugene Ace Acar, Randal Mackenzie who did exceptional things, consistent victories on battlefields for a long period of time, but their names are hardly known to this day. I then went into the military service, and for somewhat unfathomable reasons the air force kept sending me to school. Really an inexplicable number of schools in many ways, and I found myself at times recalling a story that was attributed to President Truman. When he got crosswise of a senator named William Fulbright from Arkansas, some policy that certainly upset Truman, and Truman said that Fulbright was a man who had been educated far beyond his intelligence. And I was being sent to so many schools, very frankly, I was kind of worried that I was going to be placed in that same category. But what I liked best about all of those schools, as you might expect, was the military history portion of them. And again what became clear was it just reinforced the idea that there were very deserving leaders whose contributions were little known and seldom celebrated, and those leaders existed in every conflict that this nation has fought. So that led to these books in an attempt to bring deserving leaders out of the shadows and introduce them to the American public. Indeed one of the first sentences in each of the prefaces to both of these books is that history plays tricks sometimes. And what I meant by that was the nation seems to have enshrined a select few leaders in our collective consciousness, and we have perhaps in many cases overlooked others often perhaps equally as deserving. So as was mentioned earlier, the books also provide some examples of leaders whose major achievements are associated with a specific war, but also did very very good things in another conflict as well. Pershing for example led forces extremely well during the Philippine Insurrection. Winfield Scott, America's towering genius during the Mexican American war, was indeed America's youngest brigadier general during the War of 1812, he took his 1791 French manual of arms and used it to train the American army and then became one of the very best battlefield

commanders during the course of the war. When I was putting these books together I solicited comments from the military departments at the military academy, the naval academy, the air force academy, the Citadel and some other institutions. Got very good comments, suggestions, recommendations from them. Then as you might suspect there was really nothing approaching unanimity, and I suspect that's to be expected when you have people of such diverse backgrounds, academic credentials, personal interests, and so forth. So in the final analysis the choices were mine after some very, very good input from a lot of people. As a curiosity the officer whose name was mentioned most as I was putting together these books as a leader in the shadows who was not deserved the respect or knowledge about his performance that perhaps he's very deserving of was George H. Thomas, a Union general during the Civil War who was indeed extraordinary. So as was mentioned, the first volume essentially covered the first one hundred years of America's existence from the Revolutionary War, the Barbary Wars, the War of 1812, the Seminole War, war with Mexico, the Civil War, and then the Indian wars in the American West. The second volume, which we'll talk mainly about tonight, picks up with the Spanish American War, the Philippine Insurrection, we'll talk most about WWI, and it closes with WWII. If fate allows there will be a third and final volume, which will begin with the Cold War and take us through the present day. And I'm rather curious to see how that one plays out for a lot of reasons. One is, and it's my sensing that in the present day that the latitude often given to on-scene commanders is much more limited perhaps than earlier days. There are a lot of reasons for that. And also I think the rules of engagement are probably much more restrictive. Again there are a lot of reasons for that. It's been going on for a long time. President Lyndon Johnson was quoted as saying, telling a group of newsmen that they, meaning the American military, can't bomb an outhouse in Vietnam without my approval. So I think because of communications and teleconferencing and so forth, we have these remarkable images like that picture of President Obama and his staff actually tuned in live to the assault on Bin Laden's compound. So I'm very curious to see how this one will play out because I'm wondering if identifying the level of decision and where that--who actually made the decision might be a little bit more entertaining than it was on some of the previous books. So with that I think what I'd like to begin with is some general observations, and we'll start with WWI. General observations, and I'd like to turn to a couple of very intriguing what-ifs about the war, and then we'll close with some discussions of leaders how perhaps are in the shadows who did some rather remarkable things during WWI but their names are not often well-recalled today. Observation number one I think is that the war was aptly named. It was indeed a world war. And I mention that because I think that perhaps because America's participation in that war was of relatively short duration and because in terms of land combat it was restricted to rather, fairly small geographic area, that often American audiences doesn't appreciate the scope of that conflict. There were for example considerable battles deep in the heart of Africa. Africa at the time was a nation of colonies, European colonies. The Germans had some considerable ones--Togo, Cameroon, German Southwest Africa, which is pretty much the present day Namibia, and German East Africa which is Rwanda, Burundi, Tanganyika, parts of other countries. So it's pretty substantial pieces of real estate. But the difficulty for the Germans was that they really did not have the manpower to garrison those colonies effectively, and the colonies were too separated to be mutually supportive. There was considerable naval combat in places such as the Indian Ocean, where for the first few months of the war German commerce raiders such as the Emden just wreaked havoc on British shipping of raw materials and supplies headed for Europe. There was a very substantial battle in the south Atlantic off the coast of South America, in fact near the Falkland Islands. A fairly good-sized German armada called the East Asiatic Squadron, happened to run afoul of

a British fleet who happened to be refueling in the Falklands at the time. Considerable battle resulted. All but one German battleship was sunk. The admiral was killed. There was also fighting on the Chinese mainland. Before the war the Chinese had granted the Germans three concession areas, the biggest one around Shanghai. The Japanese declared war on Germany in WWI. Fought on the side of the Allies. The Japanese took those three concessions from Germany, and more important I think from the American perspective they also took the German islands in the Pacific. After the war was over the League of Nations apportioned those islands to the nations of some of the countries had been involved in the war, and the Japanese were given those north of the equator, and those turned out to be the Marianas, the Marshalls, and the Carolines--nations bought at a considerable price by blood by American servicemen during WWII. I'll turn now to a little bit--just a few words on the apportionment of the frontline. If you visualize that enormous trench line all the way from the border of Switzerland zigzagging across France all the way to the North Sea, at the end of the war it was pretty much segmented into thirds: the British with the northern third, the French in the middle with a third, the Americans pretty much a third in the south. That made imminent good sense because it untangled the national lines of supply. The British in the north were able to be supplied directly from Britain just across the English Channel to their one third in the north. The French shielded Paris in the middle, and of course had access to the entire Atlantic seaboard, all those--the ports on the Atlantic seaboard for anything that had to be shipped in. The Americans in the south benefitted because they had sole access to the ports in the south of France such as Bordeaux and in the Mediterranean such as Marseilles. A very good arrangement because again that left the national supply lines pretty much untangled. The casualty rate in WWI, I don't think that any historian or any novelist who has ever written about the war has found adjectives sufficient to describe it. Even today the Battle of Verdun in 1916, there is considerable discussion about how many casualties really occurred there. The low figure--the lowest figure is typically in the range of 714,000. It was a battle that lasted for eleven months. There are some estimates however that it might have been as high as 976,000, and there are many reasons for that. It depends on kind of how you count the beans--those killed and wounded directly then, those that died later on, those thousands that are absolutely unknown, pulverized as a result of the forty to sixty million, million, artillery rounds that were fired during that war. The battle began with a solid week of artillery fire. There is an ossuary on the battlefield at Verdun shaped like kind of a thin silo that is estimated to have the remains--that one place alone--of something like 130,000 unknowns, because the bones and partial bone fragments have been placed in there. So forty to sixty thousand artillery rounds. And I'll just comment about that a little bit. The last organization I was with in the military had a detachment at Mons, Belgium, SHAPE headquarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, which is the military arm of the NATO alliance. I had a conversation with a Belgian army officer there who mentioned even at that point--this conversation as probably eighty years after the last shells had been fired--even at that point there was a reserve unit in the Belgian army whose pretty much sole purpose was to go out and recover and in some cases disarm those shells that were still being dredged up and uncovered by plows and so forth. And he was very certain that the French army had to have some similar sort of arrangement. On the Somme, the British lost 60,000 in a single day. Even at the end of the war the French and British were burning through a division equivalent on the average of every couple of weeks. The nature of the wounds suffered in that war changed also. Because it was--so much of it was fought in trenches, a higher portion of the wounds suffered by those casualties were from the shoulder up, so the placement on the torso was different considerably. Because the casualties were so massive in number, the triage concept

was invented. That's where we got that. All these enormous artillery rounds and the overpressure they created, the concussive effect, did in fact cause concussions, cause head injuries, cause brain damage, the shell shock that we read about. It was a war of science, poison gas, tanks, mobility on the battlefield, aircraft in a major way for the first time. It was a total war, total economics. The economies of most of the combatant European nations were absolutely shattered. Conversely because of our circumstance, the Americans during that war went from a debtor nation to the world's largest creditor nation. I want to talk about a couple of rather intriguing what-ifs associated with WWI. This gentleman is Leonard Wood. It's a name not often recalled today. At the beginning of WWI he was the senior American army general. Very interesting, extraordinary man. Really he was a physician by training, Harvard medical school began his career indeed as a medical officer in the United States Army. Received a medal of honor for his participation in chasing Apaches across to Arizona and New Mexico. Then kind of networked his way into a position in Washington D.C. and eventually became what we would now call the White House physician to Presidents Cleveland and McKinley. In that latter role he met Teddy Roosevelt. They were kindred spirits, hit it off immediately, and became best of friends and eventually with Roosevelt's assistance Wood was able to transfer his commission from the medical corps to the combat arms. He became a line officer, which was something he always aspired to do. As the war with Spain approached, Wood and Roosevelt primarily organized what became known as the Rough Riders, the first volunteer cavalry regiment. Wood equipped it extremely well--probably the best-equipped unit perhaps that fought on Cuba, and he led it extremely well in combat. After the war was over he stayed in Cuba, became the military governor of the city of Santiago, and cleaned up what was probably one of the most pestilential cities in the world, and then after a period of months became the governor general of Cuba and gained worldwide renowned. He reformed the court system, the penal system, the education system. He put 230,000 Cuban youngsters in school, whereas during the previous year there had been 21,000. He paid the Cuban school teachers at rates exceeded only by three school districts in the United States, reformed--streamlined the bureaucracy so well and managed it so efficiently that he actually wound up with a surplus in the budget at the end of the year. Most notable, however of course, is his work with Walter Reed in eradicating the scourge of Yellow Fever. In 1909, President Taft appointed Wood as commanding general of the United States Army. Wood was appalled that even at that stage in the early twentieth century the United States Army was really not much bigger than that sort of constabulary force that had chased Indians across the Great Plains in the 1870s. He became a very vocal cheerleader for increasing the size of the military, increasing the training requirements, the equipment, and so forth. He was absolutely appalled by what he found. In fact had he had his way he would have opted for universal military training and conscription even then. In 1912 Woodrow Wilson was elected president of the United States. There was an enormous clash of wills. Wilson was a liberal democrat, a near pacifist. If not pacifist, then certainly a most reluctant warrior. Wood was a very conservative republican of the Teddy Roosevelt mode. Loudly vocal in his demands for a bigger and better army. Wilson resisted those demands, so Wood hit upon the idea of service-run training schools. He began in 1914, and by 1916 he had 16,000 young American males enrolled at ten army camps across the country. It was all on a volunteer basis; they all paid their own way. He knew that in four weeks time, which was the length of the camp, that he could not train qualifying officers, but what he was hoping to do was to educate them about the military and pique their interest in military service. It was in some ways the forerunner of the ROTC program. Meanwhile events were unfolding. The Lusitania was torpedoed, Zimmermann Telegram, unrestricted submarine warfare, and eventually in April of 1917, the United

States declared war. Wilson was pushed into war essentially. Wilson by this point disliked Wood intensely, and probably that foreclosed any possibility of Wood being named commander of the American Expeditionary Force. That role quite obviously went to John Pershing instead. To his credit Wood soldiered on and spent most of the war training troops in Kansas. At the end of the war he actually recommended a concept rather similar to the Marshall Plan at the end of WWII as a way of revitalizing the European economies. Wilson disregarded the plan. Teddy Roosevelt died in 1919, and when he died the plans were well afoot for Roosevelt to run for a third term a president. Roosevelt supporters approached Wood because their views were quite similar and asked if Wood would run for president. He agreed to do so, and indeed did so with considerable political backing. He ran a very poor campaign, was ill served by a marvelously inept campaign manager, but despite that through the first seven ballots of the republican convention, which was held here in Chicago, he led in the balloting. When his support seemed to peak at the--after the seventh ballot, the republican party leaders met that night--and this is where the phrase "fifteen men in a smoke-filled room" comes from--those fifteen men in a smoke-filled room chose a compromise candidate which turned out to be Warren Harding. Rather interesting to think what might have happened had it been Leonard Wood and not Warren Harding who had become president of the United States. The other what-if I want to tell you about is this gentleman. All five feet, four inches, 120 pounds of him. His name is Frederick Funston. Funston grew up mostly in Kansas, had a very eclectic young adulthood, finally found his calling in the United States Army, and Funston was America's foremost hero really during the Philippine Insurrection. He commanded forces in nineteen major battles, lost very few men, was awarded the Medal of Honor for an episode in which his force was attacking a well entrenched insurrectionist force on the other side of a river. They couldn't get over the river because the bridge was under fire and mostly damaged anyway. So Funston and a few enlisted guys found a—it's variously described as a small boat or raft, took the raft to cross the river under fire, held that portion of the riverbank, and then jerry-rigged a rope back and forth where they ferried reinforcements across the river on this raft or boat or whatever it was. In the meantime Funston and these people were holding that small bridgehead until sufficient forces were available for the attack. So Medal of Honor for that. He also, and there's a near Hollywood quality to his planning of an audacious action that captured the Philippine insurrectionist leader. His name was Emilio Aguinaldo. Really a movie ought to be made of that. But Funston personally led that attempt. The capture of Aguinaldo essentially ended that first uprising. He emerged as America's, as I said, foremost hero. On April 18, 1906 he happened to be in San Francisco as commander of the Presidio when that massive earthquake struck the city. It was overwhelming, far beyond the capability of the civilian resources to handle it. Funston moved in with the army, dynamited entire city blocks to create firebreaks that stopped this, the conflagrations that were destroying the city, and for the next several weeks then he privileged food, water, shelter, some clothing, security to those 300,000 citizens in that area. The civilians did not resume control in the city until July. So again he was a hero. He became the man who saved San Francisco. In 1914 President Wilson sent him to Vera Cruz. The United States had a conflict, and argument with the Mexican government. Funston became the governor general of Vera Cruz. He spoke fluent Spanish, did the job very well, and if contemporary reports are to be believed, indeed many of the citizens of Vera Cruz were rather reluctant to see him leave. He then became the overall commander of what was known as the punitive expedition that sent Pershing into Mexico to chase--an attempt to chase, and attempt to catch Pancho Villa. So Pershing was actually Funston's subordinate. Funston was responsible for the entire border security along the border with Mexico. In February 1917, two months before the

United States entered WWI, Funston was dining at a restaurant in San Antonio and died suddenly of a heart attack, age fifty-one. There is considerable sentiment among historians and scholars that, had Funston lived, it would have been Funston and not Pershing that led the American Expeditionary Force. Funston was well known as a national figure, he was liked and well respected by Wilson, and so there is that supposition that perhaps it might have been Funston. As we get into some specifics of WWI, I'd like to begin with some snapshots of famous names that we associate with WWII and trace their involvement in WWI where some of them saw their baptism under fire. Dwight Eisenhower was not one of those. He spent most of the war training troops at Camp Colt near Gettysburg. Trained them very well, but spent much of his career worrying that his absence of combat experience would hinder his potential. He spent sixteen years as a major, which was not unusual for his contemporaries at the time. He was promoted to Colonel in March of 1941, and by December of that year he was a five-star general. Douglas MacArthur came to France as chief of staff of the 42nd Division--it was called the Rainbow Division. He later on became commander of the 84th Infantry Brigade. He compiled an otherworldly seven Silver Stars, two Distinguished Service Crosses, and a host of awards from foreign governments. This is George Marshall as a young colonel, and temporary colonel because after the war he reverted to his permanent rank of captain. Marshall's claim to fame in the First World War was an extraordinary job of planning an event that moved 620,000 American troops, 200,000 French troops with all the associated equipment, supplies, and ammunition. Moved them fifty miles very quickly and positioned them at a point then that was conducive to the final attacks that led to the end of the war. It happened quickly because general Pershing had made a promise to General Foch that the United States could not only win the battle, take care of the problems at St. Mihiel, but still do it with sufficient time to move forces to conform to Foch's timeline and reposition those forces. So almost a million men by the time you count all of them. It was extraordinary in other ways as well because the movement was mainly conducted at night. It used only three rather marginal roads, and it maintained complete security, so really a rather formidable job of planning. This is George Patton. He actually began his career as an armored--leader of armored forces in WWI. He went to France as General Pershing's aid and after a short period of time became his adjutant on Pershing's headquarters compound. He was apparently about to be given command of an infantry brigade when he had a chance conversation with a general named Fox Conner, who I think you've had a presentation on. Conner it also turns out became Eisenhower's mentor in later years. In that conversation Patton mentioned that he had an interest in armored forces. Conner urged him to pursue it. Pershing happened to agree, so Patton was sent to a French training school where they were training their officers to lead armored forces in their Renault tanks. Patton completed that school, and then the French loaned him ten tanks that he was able to use to establish his training school for American crews. Rather interesting thing, story told with that, because apparently when the railroad train arrived at the training sight, the tanks were on flat cars. It turned out that it was George Patton who had to back them off the flat cars because he was the only guy in the American Army who knew how to drive a tank at the time. So he later on became leader of an armored brigade, led it through St. Mihiel and in the Meuse Argonne and on the 26th of September was actually wounded in action leading a tank assault. Omar Bradley was the furthest removed from combat in WWI. He actually spent much of the war guarding copper mines near Butte, Montana. In August of 1918 he was assigned to a unit that was scheduled for deployment to France. That deployment was postponed first by the flu epidemic and secondly by the Armistice. So like Eisenhower he worried greatly for a long period of time that an absence of combat experience would be harmful to his career. I want to talk

about, very briefly, two other names that are usually associated with other endeavors. John Lejeune was perhaps the United States Marine Corps' most legendary officer, although when I've used that term some have quarreled with me saying, "No, really it was probably a guy named Chesty Puller later on in WWII." Lejeune's experience in WWI was rather notable because as a marine general he led the US Army's 2nd Division, and he led it very well through the very heavy fighting at the end of the war and then stayed with the division through policing the Armistice when the war ended. That is not unprecedented by the way. A marine general named Roy Geiger led for a short period of time the US Tenth Army on Okinawa when General Buckner, the army general, was killed. And later on we're gonna be talking about a US Army general named Harbord, James Harbord, who led US Marine Forces during WWI. This is Billy Mitchell. Of course we associate him with the nation's primary advocate for air power during this period of time. It's overlooked I think often that Mitchell during WWI organized and led what was then the largest force ever assembled for an air combat operation. Almost 1,500 airplanes--1,481 exactly. 600 American pilots, British pilots, French pilots, Italian pilots, Portuguese pilots. Quite an extensive operation. Led it through the St. Mihiel operation, which we'll talk about soon. I had mentioned earlier when we were discussing Leonard Wood how miniscule the American army was when the war began. 1914, 100,000--this at a time when the European armies were in the millions. When the United States entered the war in April 1917, 127,000, and the flow of troops increased dramatically, although of course they were not relatively untrained and raw. December of 1917, by that time the United States had 183,000 soldiers in France. July 4, 1918, General Pershing announced the arrival of the one-millionth American soldier in France, and by the end of the war, the signing of the Armistice, the United States had two million soldiers in France, about a million-and-a-quarter of which saw action in a conflict. Many of the histories that your dad don't devote much more than a sentence or two or a paragraph on American leaders other than John Pershing. That's perhaps to be understandable. His position was indeed transcendent in terms of scope and responsibility, and the US participation in the war was fairly short. There were however others who contributed in very, very major ways. Perhaps one of those who is least in the shadows is this gentleman, Hunter Liggett. Liggett arrived in France in February of 1918. He was at the time commander of the 41st Infantry Division. And then as the American army ramped up in terms of personnel, he later on became commander of the First Corps and then the First United States Army. His arrival in France and the buildup of American forces was coincident with what I would call the last cosmic roll of the dice of the German army. These enormous offensives in February and March 1918, as an attempt to win the war before United States' participation could be decisive. They were called the Spring Offensives. They were called Ludendorff Offenses. The Germans were attempting to make use of these fifty or so divisions that were now released to them after Russia had withdrawn from the war. So the attempt was made, as I said, to win the whole thing before America's role could be decisive. They began with a series of major attacks in about the March 1918 timeframe, and they were kind of rolling attacks all the way down the front. In the north, the British around the Somme, the British fifth army was pretty much destroyed during the course of these attacks. In the center around Soissons, the French were pushed back. In a matter of days the Germans had reached the Marne River near Chateau Thierry, and by May 27th they were once again within forty miles of Paris. The Allies responded obviously by trying to stop this deluge, but they--the series of attempts were with a series of small attacks, which would slow the momentum, stabilize the line. Around the southern portion of the line where by this time Liggett was commander of the First Corps, his units including the marines held a portion of the line at that time about twelve miles wide that was in proximity of Belleau Wood,

which the Germans would have to go through to get to Paris. It was a series of very violent battles in early June in which the marines and the French stopped the momentum. On the 6th of June the marines and the French launched a limited counterattack which put the marines on Hill 142, which was a key terrain feature, which allowed them access to the southern flank of the German army and in a violent series of struggles resulted, ending finally on June 26th when the marines and the French took control of that wood. And again I'll mention this a little bit more when we talk about General Harbord who commanded--actually commanded the marines at that time. After Belleau Wood the American forces were involved in actions that became known as the Second Battle of the Marne. The dates subscribed to that are generally July 15 to August 5, 1918. The Germans again were on the attack with forty divisions aimed at splitting the French forces primarily. The French were driven back over the Marne. The Germans at one point had a bridgehead nine miles deep, four miles wide. Foch directed a counterattack--at the time, the most significant part of that was around Chateau Thierry, certainly the most interesting I think to American audiences. The battle occurred in a time, this was still pretty early days really in some ways in the Americas being ramped up and trained. They were relatively untrained at the time, very green. Chateau Thierry was a major proving ground, and some historians use the phrase that Chateau Thierry defined the American Army to not only its allies but to the Germans as well from their performance there. It was a twenty-mile front. The attack surprised the Germans, in part because there was none of this usual massive artillery barrage. Instead the Americans stuck just with a rolling barrage right ahead of the forces. By nightfall they had cleared the area. It was a watershed accomplishment because it primed the United States Army for the first large-scale independent offensive, which then occurred rather quickly at a place called St. Mihiel in September. The Germans had held the area since the first days of the war really in September 1918. It was a large protruding area south of Verdun, kind of configured like a misshaped triangle. Two hundred square miles, fourteen miles deep. The Germans had had four years to entrench that area, so the American forces that attacked had found a little bit of everything: multiple trench lines, interlocking machine gun nests, barbed wire. The Americans attack occurred from the 12th to the 16th of September. 550,000 men in two corps, one of which was Liggett's First Corps. They tacked on four additional French divisions, had 3,000 artillery pieces, air attacks. This was Billy Mitchell's magnum opus as well in supporting the attack on St. Mihiel. The first objectives were taken by noon, the second by the close of the second day. The United States Army benefited a little bit because it turned out the Germans were withdrawing parts of their defenders in that area to move them back to the Hindenburg line, but nonetheless a bitter battle. St. Mihiel was the first large-scale American operation, the first victory by an independent American army, so it assumes considerable significance. Then two weeks alter--this was a massive shift that George Marshall orchestrated--much of that army was shifted sixty miles from south of Verdun to points north and northeast of Verdun to align it with Foch's visualization of where he needed troops to conduct what turned out to be the last major offensive of the war along the Meuse Argonne. It was the largest battle of the war--began in late September, September 26th and essentially fought over the remaining six weeks of the war. The US' initial objective was Sedan. It was a railhead that supplied the German forces in occupied France. So when Foch positioned this realignment it brought the American Expeditionary Force, mainly the US First Army, to positions along a thirty-mile front. The Allied defensive began at 5:45 in the morning on September 26th. The barrage lasted for six hours. 600,000 men, three corps abreast--I Corps, III Corps, V Corps of the US Army. As I said before they essentially attacked natural forces. It became pretty much a twenty-mile wide killing zone with the forest on one side, the river on the other. Rugged

landscape had been held by the Germans for four years. Bitter, bitter fighting, gains, delays, seesaw action back and forth, attacks, counterattacks. Liggett was busy plugging gaps, counterattacking, and so forth, replaced several underperforming commanders. And on October 3rd there was this famous episode of what became known as the lost battalion of the 77th Infantry Division. It was the last battalion at the west end of the American line, was cut off and surrounded on the 3rd of October. Liggett attacked with almost the entire First Army, and eventually relieved it on the--relieved that battalion on the 8th of October. Soon after Pershing reorganized the American Expeditionary Force. We are at the stage now where about two million men, two million American soldiers, were in France. And it was clearly time to establish a second field army. So he did that. He moved up then to become the overall commander of the American Expeditionary Force. Hunter Liggett took his job as First Army commander and held that job through the remainder of the war. Liggett did an interesting thing when he was named commander. After first visiting all his corps and division headquarters and line units, he was surprised at what deplorable shape many of them were in. Some of the line units were down to twenty-five percent of their authorized manpower after attrition over the many weeks of combat. He was short of draft animals to pull the artillery, found several problems like that. What he did next made him famous among the American commanders and the Allied commanders. In the face of enormous unrelenting pressure, he stood down the First Army for two weeks to rest and refit, and during those two weeks he trained special units to attack strongpoints, he revised the infantry tactics to accommodate to lessons learned in the war at that point, retrained the artillery in interdiction and counterbattery fire, and retrained them also to provide better support for the infantry and in fire suppression. Then he launched this series of small attacks to try these things out but also to even out the line to prepare it for the final offensive. He also built several roads leading to the battle zone to provide--that would carry supplies to the zone, casualties away from it. And those were enormous by the way. At St. Mihiel for example the US used sixty-five trains, railroad trains, to carry supplies to the front and to transport casualties back, and they made accommodations, initial accommodations for 26,000 cots to be provided for the casualties. Much the same thing in the Meuse Argonne. So he built the roads to funnel the supplies. It was well that he did. It became a very, very fast moving front. The lead elements of the first day, to the surprise of everybody, gained six miles. On the second and third days, five more miles in total. And you must recall that this was at the point where the experience over four years that the gains typically were measured in yards if at all and hundreds of casualties. So the explosive offense was a surprise to everyone, including the Germans forces. By November 3, lead elements of the First Army were over the Meuse River. By November 8 they were on the hills overlooking the city of Sedan. And then Liggett and the American army did a very classy thing. He shifted his boundary to allow the French to take Sedan, which was of enormous psychic importance to them. It was a city that had an awful lot of psychological baggage associated with it, so the French took the city. On the 10th of November we had these massive west to east crossings of the Meuse River, considerable advances through the German-held territory, and perhaps the beginning signs that some of the units at least of the German army were coming apart. On the 11th again further considerable advances, which were stopped then on midmorning when the Armistice was announced. By the end of the campaign Liggett and the First Army had pushed the German army back by more than thirty miles over perhaps some of the most difficult, heavily defended territory in occupied France, certainly on the western front. Meuse Argonne was really in many, many ways Hunter Liggett's legacy to the American army. Liggett remained in France after the war, after the Armistice was signed, as commander of the First Army, and he stayed with it until April of 1919 when the First

Army was deactivated. And then as a compliment to him, and I think probably with the encouragement of the Allies, he remained longer and became the first commander of the newly activated US Third Army, stayed with that then all the way through occupation duty. Thank you so much. It's been an absolute honor to be here.

(Applause)

Williams: Thank you to Thomas Phillips for an outstanding discussion and to the United States World War One Centennial Commission for sponsoring this program. The book is *In the Shadows of Victory II: America's Forgotten Military Leaders, The Spanish-American War to World War II*, and it is published by Case-Mate. To learn more about the United States World War One Centennial Commission, visit [WorldWar1Centennial.org](http://WorldWar1Centennial.org). To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit us in person or online at [PritzkerMilitary.org](http://PritzkerMilitary.org). Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

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