- This program is sponsored by the United States World War I Centennial Commission.
(Theme music)
- 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*.
- Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* for a discussion by author Nimrod Frazer about his book *The Best World War I Story I Know: On the Point in the Argonne*. I'm your host Rob Havers, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it is sponsored by the United States World War I Centennial Commission. This program and hundreds more covering a full range of military topics is available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. *The Best World War I Story I Know: On the Point in the Argonne* is a compelling story filled with grit and determined and untested doughboys. The story follows in the footsteps of Missouri Kansas Guard troops who put up resistance in the opening days of the battle. Their courage in the face of heavy fire was not enough, however to overcome poor leadership. They were replaced by what was considered the best of the regular army, the 1st division. This fine unit became physically and mentally exhausted after suffering horrendous casualties. Unable to fight on, the big red one was exchanged at the Cote de Chatillon with the 42nd division, otherwise known as the Rainbow Division. It too struggled to gain ground on the heavily contested hill until at the time Douglas MacArthur's determined 84th brigade forced their way past the Germans. The Cote was finally in American hands and the war all but over. Nimrod Frazer served as a tank platoon leader in the US Army during the Korean War with the 40th Infantry Division. He was awarded a Silver Star. He earned his MBA at Harvard University. His first book *Send the Alabamians: WWI Fighters in the Rainbow Division* tells the story of the 167th infantry regiment of the WWI Rainbow Division. And now here is army veteran Nimrod T. Frazer at the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.
- The slide above your heads is a photograph of Douglas MacArthur. He was readily recognized because he wore a soft cap and didn't wear a gas mask in combat situations as was required by regulations. The gentleman next to him on his right was French army captain, Georges—I'm not sure if I got the pronunciation right--but this guy was with Douglas MacArthur for a long time and was an invaluable aid often serving as a messenger. The gentleman on MacArthur's left was Walter Bare. He was a telephone company executive in Gadsden, Alabama. He organized F Company of the 167th infantry, was quickly promoted and became the regimental executive officer. A guy named Bill Screws was a regimental commander. Screws was a regular army captain from the Spanish American War days. A native of Montgomery, Alabama, so he was well liked and well known by all these National Guard people that were in his regiment. He was a firm, authoritarian kind of guy, but he was fair. When he relieved somebody, he tried to do it without embarrassing them or ruining their career. The other guys in this slide are extremely important because they were messengers. All of these infantry operations would start out with a wire, but only the artillery would be able to keep the wire up, so the wire would be blown out quickly, or in a moving situation it would be outrun, and the messengers were extremely important. In the Rainbow Division it was something like fifty-five soldiers who were actually--served as messengers, many of them wounded, many of them killed. Douglas MacArthur was associated with the 167th infantry from its beginning. He witnessed the regiments famous bayonet attack at Croix Rouge Farm in July of 1918 before being promoted to brigadier general and before he commanded the 84th brigade, to which the 167th infantry belonged. He saw that bayonet attack by those Alabama soldiers six months before this Argonne battle that we're discussing tonight. They all knew him. I asked my old man if he'd ever seen Douglas MacArthur in a combat situation. He was a corporal at the time of the Croix Rouge Farm fight, and he was wounded in the very first minutes of the assault, so he didn't get to see a lot, and he didn't know

a lot, but he was very respectful of MacArthur, and he told me he had indeed seen MacArthur that morning at about 11:30. The assault didn't jump off until 5:40 that afternoon. So MacArthur had been up there. He'd seen these troops who were gonna participate in this bayonet attack. I have no knowledge of whether he actually saw any of that bayonet fighting or not. MacArthur and the acting commander of the 167th, Colonel Bare, had worked together for a year at the time of the Argonne, but Bare was never in direct report to MacArthur until the last week of Argonne when he, Bare, replaced Screws who was unable to soldier on because of flu. The Argonne was the biggest strategic operation that the Alabama regiment ever participated in, the most important, and screws missed it, although he was a man who basically had recruited, organized, trained and led in combat up until then. The 83rd brigade under Brigadier General Michael Lenihan was originally ordered to lead the Rainbow assault on the Code de Chatillon in the Argonne. Probably because Wild Bill Donovan of the New York regiment was in Lenihan's brigade. MacArthur was given the job of taking the Cote to Chatillon after Lenihan and the 83rd brigade failed to do so. Failure in the Argonne would have cost the US its position at the peace table. The last offensive included all of the final Allied and American attacks on the western front. They extended from the English Channel to the Swiss border. It was a big, big operation. The Americans were placed in the key spot in the Meuse Argonne sector because Pershing asked for the job. He told the supreme commander that he would like it to be an American-led and an American-fought battle, and they were happy to give him the privilege. The Meuse Argonne Offensive in WWI was the biggest US offensive ever. It was bigger than Normandy in WWII. There were multiple battles fought in it including nine divisions that were ultimately expanded to sixteen divisions. My narrative is about the American point operations, and it's based on testimony from veterans in the battles that were taken at the advanced course of the infantry school at Fort Benning in 1922 and 1923. These guys had been platoon leaders and junior officers in the Argonne with the 1st division, and after the war they were trying to get promoted in the National Guard or regular army, and that's why they were at the advanced course. Somebody in the advanced source had the good sense to recognize that these guys were really like solid gold in terms of the nation's memory. And so these--there were four papers that were written during that 1922-1923 school year for the infantry school, and to me as a writer they were just like solid gold. I'd spent seven and a half years researching and writing about the Alabama regiment in my earlier book *Send the Alabamians*. This book about the Argonne absorbed me in a different way. The 35th, 1st, and 42nd divisions each served for a time on the point in the Argonne attack, as Rob told you. Each had orders to take the Cote de Chatillon on the Hindenburg line. It was a major point on the Hindenburg line. It was to require taking a total of ten miles, fought ten miles of fighting cross-country open infantry assaults. They wee opposed by veteran German soldiers, very experienced and very highly motivated German soldiers who were fighting for their homeland. That's the significance of the Argonne. The German army had been retreating up until this time, but they were just a step away from the Rhine River and the occupation of Germany by the Allies. Ultimately crossing those ten miles from the 26th of September until the 12th of October required three divisions and more than three weeks of fighting. The terrain was mixed. You see here a really torn up piece of terrain left over from the 1914 fighting when the Germans took it from the French. Not all of the Argonne was this bad of shape, but some of it was. I'll speak first and only briefly about the 35th division. It was a National Guard division, as Rob said, from Kansas and Missouri. It was successful on the first day of the offensive. That was September the 26th. The attack had been kept totally secret. It was a huge attack that for some reason was kept totally secret. Highly unusual for a US Army operation, then or even now. The capture of Vauquois Hill on the first day by the 35th division was a major accomplishment, but from that point on it started to break down. Lieutenant Colonel George Patton, pictured here, was wounded and evacuated on the first day. He was not mounted on a tank. There wasn't a tank big enough to have an observer, but he was commanding the experimental regimental tank regiment that participated there and was pretty

much a failure from that point on. Patton said he saw too many causals, too many stragglers, and officers who were not properly engaged. Patton wrote to his wife, "There were no officers but me. Some of my reserve tanks were stuck in trenches, so I went back and made some Americans hiding in the trenches dig a passage. I think I killed a man, an American. He would not work, so I hit him over the head with a shovel." Some objectives were reached on that first day of fighting, but the advance usually stopped as soon as the enemy was met. A supreme effort was called for on the second day, but it did not materialize. Some units broke formation, some went missing, some commanders did not command, and others tried to control every man in every squad. Some tanks came to the front but did not fight. There's a photograph here of an artillery unit similar to that commanded by artillery battery commander Harry Truman. He would later become president of the United States. In describing his artillery battery's destruction of a German artillery battery to his wife, Truman said that he would not have swapped the experience for anything. Pershing ordered another full-blown attack by the 35th division on September 29th. The photograph here is a traffic jam at the beginning of that second effort. This is the kind of mess that happens when units do not stick to a schedule. When they start to break down and come apart. There was a lot of lost motion, lot of lost energy, and a lot of lost effectiveness because it took them three days to get reorganized after the 35th fell apart. Major General Tobb, a West Pointer who had been highly regarded and was expected to lead the 35th to greater glory sent this message to his commander at I Corps. "Can't advance beyond crest south of Exermont. Thoroughly disorganized. Request that we be replaced with fresh troops." General Pershing called for a three-day halt. For the first time in the war, the Americans were forced to retreat. While withdrawing the 35th division, Pershing changed the assignments of about 125,000 men in the three-day delay. The regular army's most combat experienced unit, the 1st division, was sent into battle to replace the 35th. Many of the 1st division soldiers were immigrants from Germany and Russia. A German officer called them semi-Americans, but they fit the 1st division's regular army culture that set an extreme standard of discipline, had an unquestioning way of executing orders, and took military courtesy to the highest possible standard. A total new offensive was started on the 4th of October. Here you see Hill 240, first major obstacle, and in front of it was the Exermont ravine. It was capable of providing cover and some camouflage for about 25,000 men. The troops wee spread out on the south side of the Hill 240 and were under fire from German artillery and gas. The ravine was like a moat in front of a castle that was big enough to hold 25,000 soldiers. The dawning Hill 240 covered its entire north side, and you're looking at the hill as it had to be taken then. Behind it were rows of German hell hills. The Argonne battles described on this slide were to be mostly battalion and smaller unit fights on each of these positions. For those of you who are familiar with the campaigns in Korea, will recognize that the terrain in South Korea was very similar to what was facing the 1st division when it engaged in the Argonne. There were multiple hills. Rarely could you get together a unit any bigger than a battalion to assault them. When it was over in eight days, nine days, every single infantryman in the 1st division had participated in an assault on one of the hills in the Argonne. The order of battle for this fighting by the 1st division set aside the 1st battalion of the 16th infantry and a supporting machine gun battalion—combined, about a thousand men. They were to be used for an important but as yet unknown assignment. It was a--they didn't use the word in those days, but it was a commando. It was a reinforced battalion that was to be used in a desperate situation. The commander of the 1st division was a guy named Summerall. Kill 'Em All Summerall. The rest of the battle was to be fought by the 1st brigade in one element, the 16th and 18th infantry regiments with two battalions of the 16th, one battalion had been set aside. So the two battalions of the 16th and all of the 18th regiment were the 1st brigade. The 2nd brigade was the 26th and 28th infantry regiments. In this slide you see the lineup of the regiments at the bottom of the slide: the 16th, 18th, 26th, and 28th. That was the order in which they were to cross the Exermont ravine. They all crossed it on the morning of the opening of the battle. Got up to the base of Hill 240 that you saw in an earlier picture. The only objective that

was obtained by the 1st division on that first day was at Fleville, which was, if you look at this slide, it would be on the upper left-hand slide, and it was a tough fight. The 16th infantry had the two battalions to get there, and they were able to hold this village. It was extremely well defended and extremely well fought for by the Germans. The regiments had crossed the Exermont ravine by different routes, but the fighting quality of the 1st division was of a very high order. But Fleville was the only objective on the western front that that was taken on that first day of the October 4th attack. Bear in mind that we're talking about the success or failure of J.J. Pershing, the success or failure of the United States in this Allied effort. On the second day, the 26th had orders to attack Cote 272, which was at the base of--the north base of the photograph that I showed you of Hill 240. It leapfrogged the 1st battalion, and there was no support by any Allied tanks whatsoever and little support from artillery. The fighting started very quickly. There was no time for reorganizing. There was no waiting for the barrage to come down. There was only time to rush across the valley and meet the enemy, but the battle unfolded slowly because of an intense fog and smoke from white phosphorous rounds that were being fired in there by artillery to provide some camouflage. The 3rd battalion's commander Major Frazer said, "There was no use for scouts now. We knew exactly where the enemy was. He knew exactly where we were." Company I advanced to position 400 yards from Cote 272. Company K crossed the valley, spread out in squad columns. Company I advanced to within 200 yards of Hill 272, but none went further than the commander. He fell sixty yards from the woods of Cote 272 with a bullet in his head. The second wave was decimated and soon became assimilated with the first wave. Also on the second day the 28th infantry passed over the crest of Hill 240, and things continued to go badly as they were going for a sister regiment, the 26th, that had gotten there first. According from the book, two pieces of German artillery on the edge of petty wire fired point blank into them. Sheets of steel from machine guns on the other side of the valley swept knee-high over the ground, mowing down the advancing ranks and killing them after they fell. One of Frazer's companies broke and ran toward the rear but were stopped by noncommissioned officers. When you're a writer of military history and you've got first person comments about battles, then I have the authority to write that material up as if I were interviewing Major Frazer and that he was telling--that he was talking to you through my judgment. It's rare that a writer of military history gets to see so much material. It was a thrill to do this research and to be acquainted with these brave men who were taking such horrendous casualties. Another diary quote: "Artillery requested for company M came down on Hills 272 and 273." Those were two separate hills being targeted by separate battalions, and the artillery was supporting both of them in the assault. But some of it fell on the 3rd battalion's Company K, killing and wounding about forty men. Friendly fire, folks. Friendly fire. I have experienced friendly fire. It happens. Thirty-five minutes are lapsed during the 3rd battalion attack on Cote 272. Nine battalion officers and 150 men were killed in that thirty-five minutes of fighting that included hand-to-hand fighting. One medic treated 120 wounded at an aid station that was cut off from the northern edge of Cote 240. Over eighty wounded soldiers died at that aid station with only one medic to patch them up. They couldn't get them out to friendly lines. Remains of that aid station were found in recent year by a guy named Damien Georges of the French National Forest Office. I was introduced to him by Dr. Seefried who is a WWI Centennial commissioner. He kept it secret for a long time for the avoidance of scavengers. People would get into the Argonne and scavenge for souvenirs. A wounded soldier reaching an aid station did not necessarily mean that he would survive or even receive care. That aid station's lone medic struggled to perform triage over the 120 wounded men. The fighting then stalemated for three days. General Summerall, 1st division, commander released the 1st battalion of the 16th infantry that had been held back for an unknown crisis. It was to make the last of the five attacks on 272. Every one in the division knew that all previous attacks on 272 had been failures. Quoting, "The 1st division history said with a dash that was worthy of its mission, the attackers of the 1st battalion of the 16th infantry and its attached machine gun battalion crossed the valley

and reached the base of 272. They took fire from slopes ahead and from the left rear until they were stopped--until they stopped in a swell in front of 272 and reorganized. The rolling barrage had outdistanced them. In heavy fog, the men fell so far behind the barrage, they could not even hear the barrage that they were supposed to be following." Still quoting, "Thickets near the base of 272 are filled with German machine guns. German mortars were sited to cover every avenue approach to it. Casualties mounted as the Americans crept up the steep slopes. Soldiers helped pull each other up or pulled themselves up by holding on to shrubs and small trees. Visibility was spotty. A soldier might see for 150 to 200 yards at a time and then nothing. The men continued to advance, running across small islands of good visibility, stopping to catch a breath in places that were covered by fog. Capturing German machine guns became a matter of flanking a position and taking it in the fog. An unseen machine gun would fire, and a company commander would order one of two squads to surround it. Depending on the American soldier's preference, a German prisoner was either sent to the rear or to his maker." As the fog thinned, artillery fire, machine gun bullets, and mortar rounds came in on the Americans from all directions, hitting men every few minutes. There were lots of halts. Enemy machine gun fired at close range. There we several hundred American casualties. About half of the assault force was killed or wounded in a few hours. Everybody could see what was happening, but there was no let-up in the hard fighting. Cote 272 fell by late morning. On the next day, October 11th, the survivors of the 1st battalion of the 16th infantry and their attached machine gunners, the survivors of that thousand men, which was about half of them, moved to Cote de Maule, closer to the Cote de Chatillon, and by that time half of the attackers had been killed or wounded. Total 1st division casualties, in all its Argonne battles, were 8,969. General Pershing replaced it with the 42nd Rainbow Division on October 11th and 12th. My father was there. I don't think he knew what was going on. He was just a kid soldier, an infantryman, but he was there. And it was incredible that I had the experience of knowing a lot of these guys who had been through such a battle together. In today's world, in today's army, there is not that kind of local cohesion. There are reasons for it, but there are no longer local units fighting as they did at that time. The front line of the 42nd division was uneven at first, just as the 1st division had left it in place. The 42nd moved in and took over those positions just as they were left by the 1st. The infantry regiments were side by side, but the configuration of the battlefield forced them all to be echeloned in irregular steps across a staggered front. The entire US Army paused on October 12th to prepare for the general attack on October 14th. The battlefield went quiet, except for intermittent German artillery. Orders were for all four regiments of the Rainbow to attack from the staggered line at 0830 on October 14th, then go forward alongside each other. Since they were not evenly places side by side, the 165th New Yorkers and the 167th Alabamians were given three hours to draw even with each other. That was how they worked it out on paper. None of these battle plans last much beyond the first few shots. Germans had air superiority. Total air superiority. But the New Yorkers opened the battle on October 14th with artillery at 0500 and fired for that day a total of 2,723 rounds. Lieutenant Colonel Wild Bill Donovan, age thirty-five, New York commander of the 3rd battalion, the Shamrock, was the de facto commander of the 165th infantry regiment in its assault. He conducted the battle from a shell hole near the rise, near the top of the rise in front of the German barbed wire. Quote, "In the beginning the New Yorkers went touch with the Alabamians on their right flank. But contact was soon lost. The Alabamians were unable to cut off German fire from the Cote de Chatillon into the 165th. Donovan said it did not look as if that regiment, the Alabama 167th, despite its wonderful fighting qualities, could get the Cote de Chatillon before we would ourselves find ourselves in the open catching fire on our right flank." The attack of the New Yorkers was renewed on the morning of October 15th. Donovan was hit in the knee by a sniper. Unable to walk he ordered the replacement battalion of the 3rd battalion, Shamrocks, to turn back, thereby ending the 165th assault on the Cote de Chatillon. Five of the fifty-three officers in the New York regiment were killed in that battle, and twenty were wounded. Donovan would be awarded the Medal of Honor, but Brigadier General

Lenihan commanding the 83rd brigade and the colonel commanding the 165th infantry were both sacked. There was doubt by some senior officers that MacArthur could take the Cote de Chatillon with his 84th brigade alone, but he agreed to make the attack and was given permission by I Corps to make it. That night Summerall visited MacArthur at La Nerve Forge, 84th brigade headquarters. One version said the meeting was brief and to the point with Summerall saying--and let me pause here to say, Summerall had commanded the 1st division up until the 42nd went in there. Pershing then got rid of the corps commander who was in place first with I Corps and promoted Summerall, who was a major general, into the 5th corps commander so that there was continuity from the fighting of the 1st division that continued over into the fighting by the 42nd division, but because the corps commander who was commanding the 42nd had earlier commanded the 1st as the division commander. It's very clever, vey fine movement of senior officers, utilize of assets. One version of that meeting said that it was a brief meeting and to the point, with Summerall saying, "Give me Chatillon, MacArthur, or a list of 5,000 casualties." MacArthur is said to have replied to the corps commander, "Alright, General, we'll take it or give you a list of 5,000 casualties, and my name will head the list." American artillery barrages went out all night on the night of October 14th and 15th. The R regiment cleared much of the forward slope of Hill 288, another one of those hills that had to be taken that morning. Then they had encircled it and took it, eliminating the last formidable obstacle before the final assault by the two regiments on the Cote de Chatillon. That would come on the next day, October 16th. Both regiments of MacArthur's 84th brigade were exhausted. There were men to whom the danger of death was nothing as to the torture of living. They lay in flooded and cold foxholes all night on October 15th as German flares lighted the battlefield. They were approaching their sixth day of battle with constant losses while receiving no replacements. Under cover of darkness, I Company of the 167th moved an assault force of 120 men under Captain Robert Fallaw of Opelika, Alabama. They went to a five-yard gap in the wire at the base of Cote de Chatillon called a chicane. It was previously used by Germans to pass their reliefs and supplies to the area before they were pushed back by the 1st division the week before. The gap was about 500 yards to the right of the 167th position north of Massard Farm, but was in the 168th infantry's sector, fighting sector. The Iowans understood the Alabama 167th plan of attack and approved its encroachment on that sector. It was cold, and everybody had on summer underwear. Fallaw of the 167th and his men moved to the right in the open space and crossed through the wire of the chicane. They then turned left and stopped at a hedge in front of and to the left of the Cote de Chatillon. Again quoting, "On the morning of October 16th, two companies of the 168th advanced toward the link-up with the 167th. Major Lloyd D. Ross told the Iowans officers that the Cote was to be taken that day. If they failed on the first try they were to try again that afternoon." At 6:10 on October 16th—and you see a picture here of Fallaw--he'd been an enlisted man on the Mexican border. Somebody in that Iowan regiment had enough sense to give him a direct commission when they were on Long island on the way to France, and by the time of this battle he was ranking rifle company commander in his battalion. Major Ravee Norris who commanded the battalion before handing responsibility of the assault to Fallaw positioned himself to the rear to prevent stragglers and to reorganize casuals. German barbed wire on the hill's left side stopped about halfway up the hill. Fallaw set to make the attack beyond it called a council of war in which everyone was told to charge across over the hill to the front at the sound of Fallaw's whistle. Everything was in place to attack the hill. The 167th was in position on the left, and the 168th had orders to assault the Cote de Chatillon from the right after taking Thierry Farms, which is pictured here. Major Cooper D. Winn, Jr. of Macomb, Georgia was set to execute his indirect fire plan for the Georgia 151st machine gun battalion barrage. At 10 o'clock all sixty-four of the machine guns of the 151st opened fire for thirty minutes over the heads of the attackers. It had a supply of a million rounds that were brought up to the hill on the terrible rain and mud conditions over four days. Here you have a picture of Grady Parrish. After his platoon in G Company of the 167th was cut to prices,

Grady Parrish led it to finish the attack and to help stop the German counterattack of about 250 Germans. The two regiments of the 84th brigade drove the Germans over the hill and down the reverse slope toward Landes Saint Georges. Any German not killed, wounded, or captured promptly ran north. During that fight an automatic rifleman and M Company private Thomas C. Neibaur of Sugar City, Idaho was shot three times after his loader and scout were killed. Originally in the Idaho National Guard, he was placed in the 167th infantry when they were at Camp Mills on Long Island waiting to go to France. Early in the fight Neibaur fired fifty rounds of his automatic rifle into about forty attackers, killing many of them before he was cornered. After being taken prisoner he recovered a pistol with seven rounds, killed four Germans and captured eleven, all in full view of his fellow soldiers. He was the first Mormon ever in the second man in the 167th infantry to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. The objective was taken by mid-afternoon. The day was won with equal honors for the Ohio and the Alabama regiments. The 167th infantry had 117 killed and died of wounds, and 550 were wounded. The 168th lost 143 killed and died of wounds and 566 wounded, a total of 260 killed and 1,120 men wounded in six days. Dr. Seefried is now gonna tell you a little bit about the Argonne Forest.

- One of the projects we have endorsed was an incredible project that was started by the French National Office of Forestry. And it is in fact after meeting this forester Rod spoke to you about, Damien Georges, and discovering what the French National Office of Forestry was doing that Rod decided to write not only about the 35th, the 1st, and the 42nd division. In fact he wanted to write about the 42nd division at Cote de Chatillon, and so he wrote also about the 35th and the 1st division after learning what the French Office of National Forestry was doing. After for those foresters who have lived for years in this forest where you see everywhere hundred years later the mark of the war, this battle is still present today for them. They wanted to do something to honor those 1,700 1st division soldiers who died in those woods in three days of combat. And so they replanted 1,700 trees in the shape of the coat of arms of the 1st division. Sequoia and Douglas fir, and in the middle, American red oaks to mark the shape of the Big Red One. Those trees are now about this height. I was this May with soldiers from the 1st division who came and visited this plantation. We took in August soldiers of the 42nd division, and soldiers of the 35th division came later in September and early October to visit the site where their unit had fought a hundred years ago. And you need to realize that what you see today, not only do you still see those pieces of guns intertwined inside of the trees, you also see what to me is the most incredible. Those stumps of trees were shot down during the battles of which you saw the pictures of before, because you need to think that when Rod was showing you some of those hills, those hills had had forests on top of them before the war in 1914. By 1918 all those trees have disappeared, and they were the size of a stump. But out of those stumps have grown now trees like this one, who are hundred-years-old tree. And so you are in a forest that you can witness. You can witness the regrowth of the forest. It's a forest haunted by the dead soldiers. You still find bones, and there are still bones in fact in the roots of a lot of those trees. And so the National Office of Forestry has created a shroud forest for the soldiers of the 1st division. In order to remember the soldiers of those divisions of the Germans, the French, who died in those woods, you have many cemeteries. You have the beautiful American Meuse Argonne Cemetery, a haven of peace. You have here a German cemetery. For some reason, those German cemeteries give you a Val Halla sense. They have been meant to be organized without order. And it's a very strange, and the crosses are black, whereas American crosses are white. So there is a sense of somberness in those German cemeteries, which is rather overwhelming. Here you see the way the soldiers were buried just where they fell. And then they were disinterred and buried again about five years later when those beautiful American cemeteries were laid out. For the Germans, it took much longer for them to be organized. So the National Office of Forestry has devised, if you want, a trail, a history trail which starts in a place called Corne, which is the highest hill of all the hills you saw on that map where you saw a lot of different hills. From that hill in Corne, you can see all of the hills below you. And you can see far

in a distance the American monument in Montfaucon. You can really understand this battle fought by the 35th, the 1st, and the 42nd division, and they have put an orientation table where you can see exactly what you are looking at and follow the path of the Americans. They have panels, which commemorate the sacrifice of the men of the 35th division. Then you go to the shroud forest down in the valley and everything is indicated, and you can then walk to see this forest where the trees are very small, but where now and in the years to come the 1st division will try to send some of its soldiers every year to be photographed next to those trees and to create the link with their companions and with their history. And then you continue the trail, and you arrive just facing the Cote de Chatillon in a place where the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia and the Rainbow Division Veteran Association have inaugurated a plaque in honor of General Douglas MacArthur. So you can really follow very well all the stories that Rod has described in his book. And so this is why this book can be read here to learn the story of those three divisions, but it's also a very useful tool for anyone wanting to walk on the footsteps of those soldiers of hundred years ago. And that is something which has been really a gift from the French National Office of Forestry to those men in honor of their courage and of having liberated France in 1918 and pushed back the Germans to the Rhine Valley. So now I'm turning back to Rod for questions.
(Applause)
- You mentioned that cohesion in today's US Army is not as strong as in WWI army. Why is that the case?
- Probably because the 45th division, which was the national guard division from Oklahoma, took so many casualties in Italy in WWII that there was a scandal in that state with so many of its people killed and wounded from one part of the United States, so that—from that time on there was an attempt made to diversify.
- Have you seen Peter Jackson's WWI movie that just came out?
- Absolutely, and I went to see it under duress because I knew that the Americans had been left out of it. And I have been to the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Nebraska that has a wonderful collection of original WWI films, one of which has been digitized and put together, but we didn't--this country didn't produce a Jackson. Jackson's a gifted artist, and he did an absolutely remarkable job of that. I'm grateful to him for doing it. But I feel embarrassed that there wasn't an American soldier in the picture.
- I was surprised to hear you say that the Germans had local air superiority, and I was just curious as to what effect that had on the battle and whether there are any American air units involved at all?
- They had air superiority all the way through, and it didn't have any effect. There was a little bit of strafing, a little bit of bombing, but it wasn't material.
- Thank you very much.
(Applause)
- Thank you to Nimrod Frazer for a great discussion, and thank you to the United States World War I Centennial Commission for sponsoring this program of *Pritzker Military Presents.* The book is *The Best World War I Story I Know*, published by the University of Alabama press. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit us in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.
Voiceover: Visit the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago. Explore original exhibits on military history or be a part of a live studio audience. Watch other episodes of *Pritzker Military Presents*. Find out What's On at PritzkerMilitary.org.
(Theme music)
- *Pritzker Military Presents* is made possible by members of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library and its sponsors. The views and opinions expressed in this program are not necessarily those of the Museum and Library.
(Theme music)

- The preceding program was produced by the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.