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(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)

Havers: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* for a discussion given by Tom Conner about his book *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission*. I'm your host Rob Havers, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago and 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. Following WWI Congress recognized the need for federal control over the commemoration of American dead overseas in remembering and honoring the memory of the American soldiers who fought and died in foreign wars during the past hundred years. The American Battle Monuments Commission, ABMC, was established. Since the agency was founded in 1923 its sole purpose has been to commemorate soldiers' service and the causes for which their lives were given. The twenty-five overseas cemeteries honoring 139,000 combat dead and the memorials honoring the 60,314 fallen soldiers with no known graves are among the most beautiful and meticulously maintained shrines in the world. In *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission*, Tom Conner traces how the agency came to be created by Congress in the aftermath of WWI, how the cemeteries and monuments the agency but were designed and their locations were chosen, and how the commemorative sites have become important outposts of remembrance on foreign soil. Tom Conner is currently the William P. Harris professor of military history at Hillsdale College. He's held a number of administrative positions along the way. Conner was awarded the Harris Chair in military history in 2006 and regularly teaches a course on the two world wars. For forty years he has made nearly annual visits to our country's overseas war memorials, often with groups of touring students. Please join me in welcoming Tom Conner to the Pritzker Military Museum and library.

(Applause)

Conner: Thank you very much. Thank you, Rob, for that very kind introduction, and thank you all for coming tonight. I'm very grateful to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library for the warm welcome they've given me and for the grace of this invitation. The title of the book and the presentation is of course *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission*. The title, as I'm sure many of you might have surmised, was inspired at least to some degree by the Herman Wouk novel. This is not the first book entitle *War and Remembrance*, but I thought the title was especially suitable given what the history and the mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission have been since its founding in 1923. I said to an audience some time back that in entitling the book *War and Remembrance*--I don't want to overplay this--but you may remember back in 2000 that there were some people in Florida who voted for Ralph Nader thinking that they wee voting for Al Gore, and George W. Bush wound up carrying the state by thin margin. I guess perversely somewhere in the back of my mind rested the idea that perhaps some people would buy the book thinking that it was the Herman Wouk novel and wind up with something obviously different. Sales figures would suggest that that's not happening in great numbers, but perhaps it is happening. Who knows?

But why did I embrace this title so eagerly? Well, first of all, as Rob indicated, there would be no American Battle Monuments Commission had it not been for the fact that the United States fought not one but two overseas wars, very costly overseas wars in the 20th century. The ABMC was created by congressional action in 1923, and it was created because some means of providing for permanent internment of a portion, anyway, of the American war dead in Europe had to be provided. We had more than 100,000 killed in the First World War. We had never had an overseas war that bloody before. In fact the previous overseas war, really the only overseas war we ever had, was the Spanish American War of 1898 about 7,000 died in that war, and all the bodies were repatriated. But one of the reasons why the ABMC was created was because the war department made the decision in the immediate aftermath of the war that there would be permanent cemeteries created overseas, and that the families would be given the opportunity to decide whether they wanted their dead loved ones repatriated, brought home for burial somewhere in the United States, brought home at government expense and then the families would be entrusted with providing for the burial, or they could decide to have them buried permanently in overseas sites. During the early 1920s the war department sent out about 75,000 ballots--that's actually what they called this solicitation of the families--to families that had war dead, and about 30,000 decided that they wanted their loved one to remain in an overseas cemetery. The rest of course were brought home. Roughly 45,000. That was a percentage of thirty-nine to forty percent, if you take the number 75,000. The total number of American war dead is usually given an excess of 100,000, and frankly I've never been able to explain or find out for myself the disparity. Why were only 75,000 ballots sent out to families by the war department when more than 100,000 died? But in any case the percentage was about thirty-nine to forty percent of those balloted who decided to have their dead remain abroad. The same thing was done by the way at the end of WWII for a much, much larger number of dead, of course, but the percentage--the way the families split over the desire for repatriating their war dead versus leaving them in American cemeteries abroad was exactly the same at the end of the Second World War, roughly sixty-one to thirty-nine percent. What that means of course is that if you take in rough numbers and round numbers 500,000 as the total number of soldiers the United States lost in WWI and WWII together, about 200,000 of those dead are permanently commemorated in ABMC sites, whether with an individual marked grave or name on the walls of the missing. Each cemetery has some provision made for walls of the missing and the number that Rob gave, an excess of 60,000, is how many of those who are commemorated that way--bodies never discovered, but we know they were lost. So that comes out to 139,000 in the twenty-five or twenty-six cemeteries, plus the names on the walls of the missing. That's how we get about forty percent of the total number of war dead from the two world wars are commemorated in ABMC sites. Remembrance of course is the permanent and ongoing part of the ABMC's story, because remembrance is the principle object of the existence of this agency. And it's not just remembrance of those who were lost who made the ultimate sacrifice in our overseas wars, at least the two world wars. But the ABMC considers as part of its ongoing mission the fostering of the remembrance of everyone who served. If you were to go, if you permit me a quick commercial for the agency's website, www.AMBC.gov, if you monitor what's on that website with any kind of regularity, you will see that a lot of the programs and the large part of the educational mission of the agency going forward is devoted to fostering remembrance, not just the overseas dead but for all those who have borne the battle, you might say, particularly in the last century or so. The ABMC is two very closely related entities. It is a small independent agency of the federal government. There are a little more than 400 employees of the ABMC, and one of the interesting things about those employees is that

they're overwhelmingly--eighty to eighty-five percent of them--are foreign nationals, because the bulk of the work that the agency does in an ongoing way is preserve the site in the immaculate beauty that the government always intended for them. So when paychecks go out from the agency, the overwhelming majority of the recipients are actually Frenchmen, Englishmen, Belgians, Italians, wherever the cemeteries are maintained. There are two headquarters for the agency--one in Arlington, and the other in the Parisian suburb of Garches. And when I say the agency is currently headquartered in Arlington, that's not because it has anything to do with Arlington National Cemetery. The ABMC is exclusively involved in maintaining overseas cemeteries. The whole system, collection of national cemeteries, as we know them in this country, is administered by veterans' affairs, department of the army, and in some cases the park service. So, small independent agency. I've never been able to establish whether it is in fact the smallest of all federal agencies, but it is probably very close to the smallest if it's not actually so. The second entity, the ABMC is a commission of up to eleven members which serve without pay, and they are all presidential appointees, and they are basically the abroad of trustees or the oversight board for the ongoing work of the agency. They meet two, three times a year, usually in Washington, but I know this year they're gonna have a meeting in Paris in connection with the 75th anniversary observance of D-Day, which will come of course in early June, well, just a couple months away now. There is a chairman of the commission who is the equivalent of the chairman of the board, but he's not paid. He is appointed by the president. I'm gonna talk quite a bit because the book talks quite a bit about several of the most prominent of these chairmen because they happen to be some of the prominent soldiers that the United States of America has ever produced. The first chairman of the agency was John J. Pershing, for example. Pershing devoted the last twenty-five years of his life to his work as chairman of the ABMC. The second chairman was George C. Marshall. You're gonna hear from another speaker, a very knowledgeable Ben Steele and his excellent book on the Marshall Plan coming up, but George C. Marshall spent the last ten years of his life as chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission. Pershing presided over the founding era, if you will, of the commission, and he also presided very meticulously over the creation of the eight WWI cemeteries and eleven WWI monuments created on European soil. Marshall presided over the building of the fourteen WWII cemetery memorials. And you'll hear me say more about this later on, but this was one of the most fascinating things that I discovered in my own research for this book, that two of the greatest soldiers of American history--Pershing, by the way, held a rank that no other American had ever held while he was alive. He was general of the armies. He was given that rank by Congress literally as he was sailing home with his duties completed as the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in WWI. George Washington was given that rank posthumously in 1976, the Bicentennial year, but they're the only two generals of the army. And some military buffs and scholars like to think of the general of the armies as a six-star general. Marshall of course was a five star general, but that's eleven stars between the first two chairmen of the ABMC. General Jacob Devers was the third chairman. He served during the 1960s. An army group commander during the Second World War, and he left the chairmanship of the ABMC in his early eighties at the end of the 1960s, but he gave way to another WWII general, Mark W. Clark, who served until 1984. Clark died in this role, so the first sixty years of chairman of the ABMC were four very prominent, one WWI and three WWII generals. Since 1984 the chairmen of the ABMC have been perhaps less prominent, through no fault of their own. Fortunately we haven't had as big a military event as either WWI or WWII was, but the less fortunate thing about the most recent chairman--there have been six in number--is that politics has intruded. You heard me say that chairmen were appointed by whoever the sitting

president of the United States was, and politics has intruded not just in the selection of the chairman and the secretary, where the secretary is basically the chief executive officer of the agency. He is a fulltime employee, always a retired officer, but the members of the commission also are all political appointees now, so when the administration changes, particularly if a party changes in the white house, typically the old commission goes out in toto and a new commission is created. But this is basically how the organization functions, and I've been told by some of the cemetery superintendents over the years--all the administrative personnel, by the way, of the ABMC are Americans, and one of the cemetery superintendents told me one time that the fact that the agency was created as an independent agency. The secretary of the chairman reports directly to the president. They're not attached to any one of the cabinet officers at all--has everything to do with John J. Pershing and the immense stature that he commanded in the aftermath of WWI. In fact when the WWI cemeteries and memorials were completed and dedicated by 1938, General Pershing actually expressed the opinion that this might mean the end of the commission because it had achieved the work for which it was created. And in fact President Roosevelt said to a press conference in 1939--I don't know that General Pershing was ever aware that the president had said this, but Roosevelt said that as long as John J. Pershing was alive, Roosevelt was not going to touch the ABMC. He was not gonna disband it, he was not gonna allow it to be merged into another government agency, and as fate would have it General Pershing outlived the younger Franklin D. Roosevelt by three years. So it's enough perhaps about the agency itself and what it's designed to do and how it's structured. I want to say very quickly why I wrote this book. It took me ten years to do it, but as a sixty-eight-year-old man now I never really expected to give birth to anything. It's the first book I wrote and probably will be the only one. But over the years, as Rob indicated, I've had the immense good fortune of traveling to these sites of remembrance repeatedly, often with student groups, oftentimes on my own. And I've come to appreciate, as anybody who has ever seen any of these sites would have to appreciate, just how beautiful they are and of course how much deep meaning is attached to each one of these places. But the fact of the matter is that very few Americans know about even the existence of the agency or the existence of these sites. Just about everybody knows because presidents go there with some frequency. They know about the Normandy American Cemetery, and as I indicated it will be the focal point of world attention really on June 6, 2019 because of the 75th anniversary. I expect President Trump will be there along with other heads of state. But few people know that there are other cemeteries from both WWI and WWII scattered in eight different countries. And in fact the Normandy cemetery is not close to the largest of these. The largest is--at least the largest European cemetery is a WWI cemetery. But the largest of all the ABMC cemeteries overall is outside Manila. There are 17,000 dead buried in that cemetery, and there are more than 35,000 names on the walls of the missing in the Manila cemetery. The large number of names on the wall of the missing are testimony to how difficult it was to preserve bodies or how easy it was for bodies killed in the tropics--because most of these dead were from the island-hopping campaign--how easy it was for bodies to deteriorate after just several days, even to the point where they couldn't be recognized for burial. So I'm hoping the book will bring some attention to the existence of the agency and also do some honor to the ongoing work that they do. But the second--and nobody had ever written on this topic before, at least not devoted a book-length study to it. But the other reason why I was so excited to write this book is because the story of the ABMC has actually more to do with WWI than with WWII, and WWI of the two world wars has always been the one that I frankly was most interested in. I was captivated when I read Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August* as a college sophomore captivated

with the story of how the world just seemed to stumble into the First World War, and then of course all the dead that resulted from it. But of course also captivated as an American by the decisive role that we played in it. So I hope somehow telling this story, particularly I was fortunate enough for the book to come out while the centennial of the First World War was still underway, I hope that might kindle or renew some interest. And what to me is largely among the general population anyway of our country, a forgotten story. One of the most interesting things that I discovered and wrote about was the very unseemly public debate that developed at the end of WWI over what to do with the bodies of the American war dead. I said earlier that the families were given the choice, and that's exactly how it played out, but it was very interesting to me that there was a large public debate that developed about whether families should choose to bring their loved ones home or leave them in permanent cemeteries abroad. In other words many of the people who were engaged in this debate did not have loved ones that they lost that they had to decide about. They were just trying to steer the decision that others were making in a particular direction. There were what we would call perhaps political action committees developed. It was a Bring Home the Soldier Dead League that was developed that was advocating for the repatriation of all the war dead, or at least as large a portion of it as possible, and there were a lot of very negative charges leveled against the French, for example, since most of our war dead died in France, there were some aspersions cast on what kind of custodians the French people would be of our war dead. So that was one part of the debate. There was a Field of Honor Association created to try and encourage families to leave the war dead abroad in permanent American fields of honor, and one of the arguments used by those who were trying to persuade families to leave their dead abroad was that the funeral directors lobby in this country were trying in a unseemly way to influence choices of families just because they didn't want to lose a lot of business to the degree that war dead were left abroad, that meant funeral directors weren't going to get the opportunity to work with the bodies. So I've used this term unseemly over and over because that's I think exactly the kind of debate that developed. We'll talk about additional controversies surrounding the work of the creation of the cemeteries as we go and with the slides, but second thing--I've already alluded to this--that interested me greatly was what I discovered about the very noble and honorable and vitally important service given to the ABMC by a group of generals that had already served the country with great effectiveness in battlefield commands and in other ways--George C. Marshall of course was the chief of the army general staff in WWII. Never a battlefield commander, but he was the great organizer of victory, as Forrest Pogue dubbed him. Yet the last ten years of his life he devoted with great fervor to the ABMC. And finally the third thing is how deeply revered these American sites are by people in the host countries. I've been able to attend a number of Memorial Day ceremonies. I've even made it to a couple of the D-Day anniversaries at Normandy, where you can see close up how the local people have at least in an emotional way, adopted these sites as their own. The majority of people who visit our overseas cemeteries and monuments are in fact Europeans. They're people from the host countries. There was a study done of visitor-ship to the Normandy cemetery back in May of 2003, I believe it was, and only about one out of every six visitors to the Normandy site were Americans then. Well more than half were Frenchmen and British and then other European nationalities following. But the citizens in the locality surrounding the cemeteries turn out in great numbers on commemorative occasions; memorial days every year there are ceremonies held at the cemeteries. I was to one at Belleau Wood ten years ago, and I'm guessing there were probably three or 4,000 people there, and in large part they were local folks from a twenty-five to thirty-mile radius, perhaps even farther away from the cemetery. I dare say that of all the European people though, no one has taken these sites to heart quite like

the Dutch have. We only have one cemetery in the Netherlands. It's a WWII cemetery obviously. There are 8,301 graves there. Every single one of those graves has been adopted by a Dutch family. What that means, and we're talking all the way back to the creation of the cemetery in the late 40s, early 1950s. To adopt a grave means that the family undertakes the responsibility to visit the grave on a regular basis, to decorate it particularly on the most important commemorative occasions. But there's a waiting list, even the 1,300 names on the wall of the missing at the Netherlands American Cemetery have been adopted as well. And there are waiting lists. And in many cases the graves that have been adopted get passed down through the generations. I visited the cemetery in connection with the research for the book back in the fall of 2010. I was there on a Sunday, and I remember just sitting in the parking lot just watching who was coming in, and carload after carload after carload would come in. Dad would be driving, grandmother would be in the front seat, and mom and one or two children in the back seat. So three generations of the same family, I assumed, would come to visit the cemetery. And remembrance is being fostered then across the generation, not just in Holland but in many other places. And this is a story I think that many Americans perhaps would even have difficulty imagining since our natural instinct seems to be-- claim that the Europeans aren't grateful enough for the service and the sacrifice that American soldiers have given on their behalf, particularly in the last century. This picture would probably be kind of heard to make out the individual faces on the photographs, but this is the kind of picture that one sees upon entering the reception area of an American cemetery. You see the photograph of the commander in chief. That's President Obama. This picture was taken six or eight years ago. Underneath President Obama to the left, a photograph of Max Cleland, former veterans administration secretary, a senator from Georgia who was then serving as secretary of the commission. To his right is General Hawkins who was the head of the European office at that time, and then underneath you have the whole run of chairmen. John J. Pershing to the left, General Marshall, so forth and so on. This is a statue of General Pershing in his hometown of Laclede, Missouri. And one of the most exciting things about doing the book was to get to know Pershing quite a bit better than I ever had before, and I hope the book at least comes close to doing justice to the enormous contribution he made to shaping the American Battle Monuments Commission and literally shaping how the monuments themselves were designed and made. This is the major WWI monument in Europe. It's about twenty-five miles to the north, a little bit west of Verdun in the northeastern part of France. It sits on a hill called the Butte de Montfaucon, and it's a 175-foot high Doric column with a statue of liberty looking off into the infinity of time and space in the direction from which the American troops came when they attacked the Meuse Argonne, which was the last battle for us of WWI. And you see this statue with hand upraised there. She's holding an olive branch. But the original design for this statue, the sculptor had the statue of liberty sort of perched like this with her finger against her right temple, kind of--he actually said he wanted it to be a Rodin-esque-- Rodin's "The Thinker"--that kind of pose. But when General Pershing saw that design for the statue, he overruled it immediately because he said, "I want my soldiers to be honored. I don't want them to be grieved over. I don't want the statue to suggest that the first impulse should be to grieve for these men. We should honor them." We should remember their sacrifice, yes, but that's how the statue came out looking like it does to this day, was Pershing's doing. The statue, or excuse me, the monument rests on the grounds of a village by the name of Montfaucon, which was one of dozens and dozens and dozens of French villages completely destroyed in the fighting of WWI. That was the ruins of the parish church. This is the view, by the way, from up top, and as you look at these next couple slides here, realize please that this is the bloodiest battlefield in our

history. The Meuse Argonne battle cost us 122,000 casualties, of which 28-or-29,000 were dead. It's the bloodiest battle in terms of number of casualties in our history. When I say this, people often have the inclination to challenge on the grounds of, well, Civil War battles were far more bloody. Well, if Civil War battles had lasted forty-seven days, yes, they probably would have surpassed that grizzly number. But it's the long battles of WWI and WWII that are at the top of the list. The second bloodiest battle in our history was the Battle of the Bulge in WWII. And the interesting thing about Meuse Argonne and the Battle of the Bulge is they're only about thirty-five or forty miles from each other, but almost 4,000 miles from home. That's how lucky we've been that, except for the Civil War, the bloodiest battles and the bloodiest wars in our history have been somewhere else. This is the second most prominent monument, a WWI monument. Pershing, by the way, wanted the three, especially the three most important monuments to kind of rank in terms of his three most important battles. The Meuse Argonne was number one to him, the Battle of St. Mihiel earlier in September of 1918 was the second most important battle. This monument on the Butte de Montsec is to commemorate that battle. It sits on a very prominent site that can be seen from miles and from which visitors can also see for miles. That's all quite deliberate. Pershing wanted these places to be seen, and every time they were seen he hoped they'd attract visitors, but at the very least the wanted people to see the ongoing impact of American sacrifice on European soil, the impact that those sacrifices had going forward. This is the third most important battle monument, outside Chateau Thierry, which is where—well, the second Battle of the Marne was actually fought there in May of 1918. This is one of the early interventions of sizeable numbers of American troops in the closing battles of the First World War. Belleau Wood is only six or seven miles from this spot, and American troops made a real impact on this battle. The designer was the first consulting architect for the American Battle Monuments Commissions. A native-borne Frenchman, adopted Philadelphian, by the name of Paul Felipe Cret, C-R-E-T. There are maps on all the monuments emphasizing that the ABMC understands the large part of its mission, and that stands from directives that General Pershing made. A large part of their mission is education. He wanted people who visited these sites to know what happened there. So you see maps. Cantigny, perhaps for a Chicago audience particularly well-known place. McCormick fought there with the First Division, and there's a Cantigny Museum west of town. This was one of the first stops where American troops saw independent action. The First Division took this village in late May 1918 and managed to hold it against furious German counterattacks. The American memorial is right in the middle of the village square there, the ubiquitous map and explanation in both French and English. This monument is on a ridge, again in the Champagne region of France near the village of Somme-Py. There's an observation deck at the top of it. This is the commemorative plaque expressing gratitude not just for the soldiers of the United States that gave their all in this region, but also to the soldiers of France. Pershing was very dedicated to the idea of commemorating the Franco-American partnership in WWI. You can see German trenches to this day from the top of the memorial, and that's all deliberate, too. And as a matter of policy, the monuments and the cemeteries tend to be located right in the middle of battle sites. Individual plaques commemorating the activities of various divisions. 42nd Division of course was the Rainbow Division. General MacArthur, Douglas MacArthur, fought with the Rainbow Division, so called because whereas many of the divisions in the American Army in WWI were organized by state, the National Guard from various states, the Rainbow Division had men in it from all over, coast to coast. This is what the ABMC cemeteries look like, and it's a very different look from the national cemetery. For example you see the unabashed religious symbols. The headstones are in the form of crosses. They don't just have crosses on the headstone as a small reminder perhaps, but they are the form of

the headstone. This fact is attributable to Pershing's advocacy that these overseas cemeteries weren't going to look like little Arlingtons. Rather they were gonna have their own unique design. 14,200 soldiers are buried in this cemetery on the Meuse Argonne battlefield. Every cemetery has a chapel. This is the largest of all the WWI chapels. You see it there from a distance. And one of the saddest things, frankly, about this cemetery, I believe anyway, is that no American president has ever visited there. Donald Trump visited a WWI cemetery outside Paris on Armistice Day this year. He was supposed to have gone to Belleau Wood the day before but declined for some reason that trip, and I'm wondering if anybody bothered to tell him, well if you had gone you would have been the first president to go there as well. This is a commemorative palm that was left at the Meuse Argonne by the president of France, who attended the dedication of the chapel back in May of 1937. This is what the cemeteries look like on Memorial Day, or what used to be known as Decoration Day. Individually placed French and American flags at the cemeteries in France. If it's in Belgium there would be Belgian next to American flags, so forth and so on. But it makes for a very poignant, very beautiful appearance. The interior of the chapel--this is Belleau Wood, but each chapel of course has its own individually designed interior. You see unabashed religious symbols and religious inscriptions in these chapels. This is a WWI cemetery. At the end of WWI American families who lost loved ones were given an opportunity to have some personal verse or personal inscription inscribed on the back of each headstone. This was an idea that we borrowed quite frankly from the British. And if any of you have visited a British overseas cemetery, either WWI or WWII, you know that the families have left behind on the headstones some just beautifully crafted and inspiring verses. For some reasons the American people did not take to this opportunity. Only nineteen of the nearly 30,000 headstones in WWI cemeteries have any of these inscriptions, and the option was not even given at the end of WWII. The WWI cemeteries, the headstones are made of Carrara marble. Michelangelo used Carrara marble to sculpt the David statue, for example. But for being an Italian stone the American Granite Association put up a rather furious fight with the commission to try to get granite taken over this. The problem was American granite would have been two or three times more expensive, and for being a European stone it was much easier to get the Carrara marble to the various sites. So Italian marble was chosen for both the WWI and the WWII sites. Carrara in the former instance, Laase marble in the latter instance. Paul Cody Bentley was the son of one of the original American Battle Monuments Commission members. A lady, Mrs. Frederick--Cora Bentley was her name, Frederick Bentley was her husband. She was a Chicago native. Her son was killed in September 1917, and there you see his grave. It's in the Oise-Aisne cemetery, the second largest of our WWI cemeteries. This statue here is the only piece of privately donated artwork that I know of in any of our cemeteries. It's in the St. Mihiel cemetery, and it was given by the daughter of James G. Blaine, who was the republican nominee for president in 1884. General Pershing admired Mr. Blaine. When he found out that the woman wanting this statue to be placed there was James G. Blaine's daughter--she had lost a son who's buried in the cemetery, although this statue is meant to commemorate all the doughboys, Pershing relented and made just one exception to allow this piece of art. But it's a beautiful statue. Paul Manship who was a very famous sculptor in the early 20th century created that piece. This is the superintendent at St. Mihiel taking the flag down at the end of the day. The flag goes up in the morning, symbolizing, as is done on all military establishments, a duty day begun, a duty day completed. And one of the most moving things I ever heard said about the dead who remain, will forever remain in these cemeteries is, that they're still serving their country by helping to remind us all of the price of freedom, we might say. This is the Cambridge American Cemetery in England. There are about 3,500 buried there, another

5,000-plus on the wall of the missing. A lot of flyers are buried in this cemetery or commemorated on the wall of the missing. This is the wall of the missing, and I'm sure there are two names on there that most of us would remember. Glenn Miller and Joseph P. Kennedy Jr., both of whom died. Their bodies were never recovered. Battle maps to remind us of the actual action there. This plaque is meant to symbolize the Ten Commandments and also meant to memorialize the Jewish dead. The Jewish dead get individual Stars of David as their headstone, as distinct from the Latin crosses. This is a WWII chapel at Cambridge, another WWII cemetery in Brittany. It's the Brittany American Cemetery. The chapel is designed in the style of a village church in the actual region. Some of the religious inscriptions that one can see inside the chapel, meant to console the relatives of the dead and anyone really who would come to pay his or her respects. And finally we get to Normandy, the best known of all the ABMC sites. This is on Memorial Day 2011. French and American flags flying side by side from the standard as well as by each grave. You can see the channel, the English Channel off in the distance because this cemetery occupies bluffs right above Omaha Beach, and the battle came right through there in June of 1944. This is the new interpretive center. It's not new anymore although it's being revamped for the 75th anniversary. It's been open about ten years, and it's really enhanced the visitors' experience at Normandy. It's designed to tell more fully the story of what actually happened on the beaches there, and a number of these interpretive centers on a smaller scale have been opened in other cemeteries as well. And finally this picture. The lady on the left who's being presented with a red rose there is a woman named Peggy Harris. And her husband Billie was a flyer in his early twenties, shot down two weeks after the Normandy landings, in the vicinity of the cemetery. He was actually placed in the cemetery, and for sixty years she did not know that he was there through a series of snafus. But then when she finally discovered it—she's a Texan—she has been making annual visits to Normandy cemetery to pay her respects to her late husband. She never remarried claiming that her love for him was indivisible, and of course she never knew until just recently that he was actually resting in the cemetery. I don't know that she's able to make this trip anymore, but to me it's just a reminder of the fact that every one of those headstones commemorates a life cut short in service to the United States and to the cause of freedom, and I think that should be an encouragement, even an inducement, to all of us to remember and honor all these soldiers. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

1: When I tour with people in Europe, I always take them to German cemeteries and commonwealth cemeteries. So my first question is, do you see a difference between those cemeteries as compared to the American cemeteries? And your book, I noted, provides an explanation for why Patton's grave is centered away at the Luxembourg Cemetery. My follow-up question, since you've answered that question for me, is whether or not you think Mrs. Patton's ashes are buried with her husband?

Conner: Oh, whether they should be or whether they--

1: Whether they actually are?

Conner: Yeah, I can't answer that because I honestly do not know. I heard that the family snuck into the cemetery under darkness of night, I gathered, to spread the ashes, but I don't know, and I've never asked anyone. I don't know whether anyone on the commission would officially acknowledge whether that had taken place. But I always try to take student groups especially to the other cemeteries as well so that they can see for themselves. I don't necessarily try to persuade them to view the contrast in any particular way. I just am always curious though to see how they react. The British cemeteries I think are actually a bit more intimate, if you'll permit me to say, because of the verses placed on the headstones by the family, but also because they have floral

decorations. The model for a British cemetery is an English garden, and so they're very beautiful each in their own way. The German cemeteries are darker, and of course they lost. So, and I think one of the differences between brightness and darkness really does speak to the nature of the causes for which the respective soldiers of the respective countries fought. But students often say when I ask them--we always go, when I take student groups to Normandy, we always go to the American cemetery last, and we visit the big cemetery at La Cambe beforehand, and I've been quite struck how moved the students are by the German, and I think they're moved because they get the sense that just in the presentation of the graves that those guys are certainly not remembered in the same way. There are monsters in that cemetery, that German cemetery, but they're not all necessarily. They were not all SS. They weren't all wanton killers. A lot of those guys were draftees who may or may not have believed that strongly in Hitler's cause. So--

1: Thank you.

Conner: Sure.

2: Thank you for this presentation. During WWII the--was there any damage done with all of our bombing to any of the WWI cemeteries?

Conner: I'm quite sure our bombers were particularly careful to miss our cemeteries. But there's a whole chapter in the book on how our cemeteries—how our WWI cemeteries fared during WWII, and for being located in the north of France the only exception to that is a WWI memorial that was create at Gibraltar. But the eight cemeteries--well, the British, the cemetery in England was not in a warzone, but all the others were, and the other monuments as well. And the war not only came through there in 1940, but then it came back through there in 1944, and the amazing thing to note about all that is, no, there was very little damage done. For the most part, I only uncovered in my own research one instance of deliberate vandalism on the part of German troops, and it occurred to the Jewish graves, some of the Jewish graves in St. Mihiel. But the source that I read about all this said that the minute the commandant of the German troops in that area was made aware of that, he put a stop to it immediately. So the Germans, I really haven't seen any convincing evidence apart from that--and they also blew up a naval memorial that we created at Brest, the great port city at the tip of Brittany. The Germans blew that up in early July 1941, I believe. But apart from that, such damage as did occur was incidental and accidental and easily enough repaired. The cemetery at Belleau Wood has an indentation in it to this day that came from a German shell, or it might have even been a French shell, from the fighting in 1940. And that was kept that way deliberately, and General Marshall was in on this. He was all for leaving some battle scars on the WWI cemeteries to remind people that not just one war but two were fought.

(Applause)

Havers: Thank you to Thomas Conner for a great discussion, and thank you to the World War I Centennial Commission for sponsoring this program of *Pritzker Military Presents*. The book is *War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission*, published by the University Press of Kentucky. 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*.

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(Theme music)

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(Theme music)

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