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## Honoring a 100-year legacy

WSU professor receives ROTC award; audience commemorates the 'war to end all wars'

By Taylor Nadauld, Daily News staff writer 8 hrs ago



Kai Eiselein

Dressed in the uniform of a WWI German Imperial Marine captain, Lt. H. William Safford, left and Army ROTC member Katrina Reid laugh as Reid examines the difference between an officer's sword and a battle sword Thursday afternoon. The pair were attending a ceremony at Washington State University commemorating the United States' entry into WWI 100 years ago.

Dr. Raymond Sun, an assistant professor of history at Washington State University, received an Honorary Cadet award from WSU's Reserve Officer Training Corps on Thursday evening as part of a small ceremony to commemorate 100 years since the U.S. formally entered World War I on April 6, 1917.

"It feels wonderful," Sun told the Daily News after the event with the framed award in hand.

As it was being reported by national news sources that the U.S. military had launched approximately 50 cruise missiles at a Syrian military airfield - the first direct U.S. assault on President Bashar

al-Assad's government in six years - Sun spoke to a small audience in the WSU library atrium about what was supposed to be "the war to end all wars."



"America was to be the defender and champion of the best values of civilization," Sun said, describing then President Woodrow Wilson's vision for World War I.

There is a strong legacy of service at WSU, Sun said. More than 1,000 Cougars - students, alumni and faculty - served in the war. Forty-four died in uniform. Nearly 800 of the approximately 900 cadets who came to WSU to train were hospitalized when the Spanish flu hit Pullman.

"These are the peers who went before you," Sun told the audience, mostly composed of ROTC students - the Cougar Battalion.

Attendees picked red poppies made of crepe paper from a cardboard box and pinned them to their clothing in reference to a line from a famous World War I era poem, "In Flanders Fields," written by a Canadian military doctor and artillery commander, Major John McCrae, in 1915.

Two tables covered in U.S. and Germany military antiques were set up in back, along with two re-enactors dressed in their respective World War I uniforms.

Ryan James Stubbins, a U.S. re-enactor, pointed to a crisp, army-green overseas cap on his table of personal collections.

It was an original - never worn. But it has no story or connection to a soldier, Stubbins said.

"This hat," he said, pulling a different, more weathered cap from his pocket, "belonged to a man from Nebraska whose name's lost to history. It was found in a barn and it was worn oversees," he said, pointing out how the cap was sewn shut to achieve a certain look.

"It has a personal touch," Stubbins said. "It has his original emblem on it. I don't know the man's name, but I know that it was a U.S. serviceman who was in France."

Stubbins has dozens of antique war items he's collected since he was 12. He had a grandfather in World War I.

Stubbins said he feels the war is largely overlooked. He tries to preserve veterans' stories and their personal connections to the items he collects by giving such presentations as part of a private service.



Army ROTC member and WSU history student Ian Melendez said Stubbins came all the way from Rochester, Wash., and German re-enactor Lt. H. William Safford from Olympia when no one else would travel the distance. Melendez had been organizing the event since the first of February, coordinating participants and studying the war.

"It's been a very emotional study because the war is so depressing," Melendez said.

To him and others, World War I made America the power it is today, ending years of European dominance and leading independence movements across the globe.

He said it also paved the way for future conflicts.

"We're fighting in the countries we are now because of World War I," Melendez said, citing the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, often credited as creating borders in the Middle East that have resulted in conflict.

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