



The German Capitulation, Marshal Foch's Railcar, Compiègne Forest, 5:00 a.m.

ARMISTICE DAY 1918: The Guns Go Silent

The 100th Anniversary

By Jerry L. Wallace

On this November 11th, we shall mark the 100th Anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that brought the Great War to an end. In modern history, this anniversary is among the most significant, for the Great War was a powerful engine of change, destroying, crushing, obliterating the old, while raising up the new. The decade of the 1920s, which was soon to follow, embodied this new order of things, which became the 20th Century that we know. This anniversary also has a special meaning because, among us, are still many individuals who knew men who fought in that war. That will not be true for future anniversaries.

Background

The Great War, which we now label World War I, began on July 28th of 1914. What set off the conflagration was the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the imperial throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife, Sophia, Duchess of Hohenberg, and the failure of diplomacy to resolve the ensuing crisis.

The outbreak of war came as a surprise, especially to those Americans enjoying a peaceful summer in the Heartland. At the outset, the United States was determined not to be drawn into the Old World's conflict. President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed a policy of neutrality towards