

WWI – 100 Years Ago

This is something new for the column. With some research, I found some events that occurred 100 years ago during WWI. Some of these events are new to me and maybe to you. On 21 October 1918, Serbians who were advancing on the Germans, liberating their county, paused to allow the French troops to join them. You may remember that one of the causes of the war was the assassination of the Austrian Archduke by a Serb. After the French joined, the Serbs pushed the Germans back, liberating Serbia. Germany's ally Austria did not help the Germans. The French had reached the Romanian boarder and the Allies sent a letter to the Romanians to re-enter the war.

Many people have forgotten the Ottoman Empire's role in the War, they were allied with the Germans and Austrians. This week one hundred years ago, British troops had reached the Turkish border and sent out peace feelers to the Turks. The Turks wanted to have Syria and Mesopotamia if they surrendered. This was rejected The Turks also only wanted to deal with the British, not the French. This was accepted.

About this time, President Wilson's demand that Germany stop using submarines to attack passenger ships was accepted by the Kaiser. This upset the submarine commander so much that he ordered all submarines to return to home bases in Germany. There were still some attacks as German submarines returned to Germany from the Mediterranean. Germany denied that they were using a scorched earth policy as they retreated from France.

Meanwhile, Allies with the US troops in action, including artilleryman Adolph Bakke, continued its drive through Flanders and Belgium liberating areas that had been under German control for more than four years. Moving onward, Allies reached the Dutch board, taking ports cities along the way denying the Germans ports for their submarines. A few submarines were captured.

On 18 October Tomas Masaryk, a leading campaigner for Czech independence both prior to and during the War published a Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation. Masaryk was living in exile in the US at the time. The declaration was co-authored by Gutzon Borglum who later became famous as the creator of Mount Rushmore. Mazaryk became Czechoslovakia's first President with its creation at the close of the war. President Wilson recognized the Czechs as Allied co-belligerents and supported their aspirations for freedom.

The War still had weeks before the Armistice was signed on 11 November. Information on celebrations and observances for Armistice Day, now Veterans Day will be in this column as they are announced. Please remember Melvin Hearle for whom the American Legion post is named. Hearle was injured by shell fragments that damaged his stomach and lower limbs on November 1, 1918 while in his dugout in France. He died a few days later. Also remember Albert E Johnson for whom the VFW post is named. Johnson was killed in action in early November 1918.