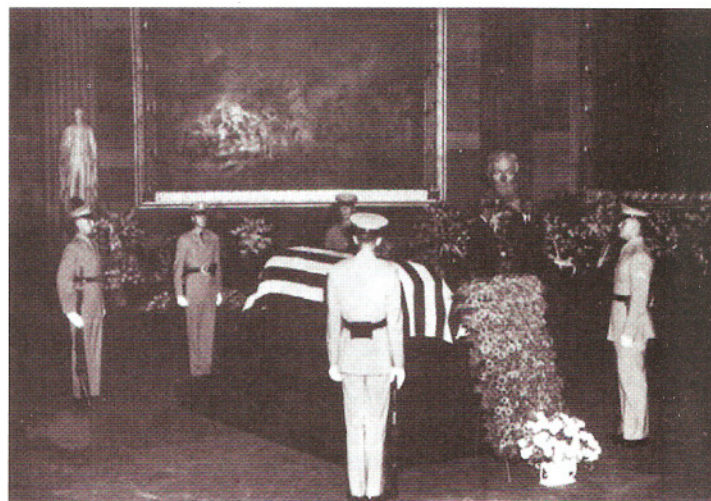


## G/A Pershing Memorial Ceremony: Honoring Him Among His Soldiers

BY GSO LTC RUTH L. HAMILTON, USA (RET)  
MG MEADE (026) CHAPTER, MD

the soldiers he commanded in Europe. Two of General Pershing's grandsons are buried within about 20 feet of the General gravesite. Honored guests, largely comprised of military attaches of the 18 Allied Nations that fought with the United States in World War I, laid wreaths at General Pershing's grave site as a part of this impressive ceremony.



Honor guard keeps vigil in the rotunda of the US Capitol.  
Source; www.history.army.mil

On a windswept rise on a cold, Virginia day in Arlington National Cemetery on the afternoon of Friday, November 11, 2011, Companions of Region IV and the MG George G. Meade Chapter participated in a time-honored memorial service at the grave site of General of the Armies John J. "Black Jack" Pershing, AUSA (Ret). General Pershing was an Honorary Past Commander-in-Chief of The Military Order of the World Wars (MOWW). After a state funeral held 15-19 July 1948, General Pershing was buried near the grave sites of

Region IV and the MG Meade Chapter assumed responsibility for the ceremony that was started by World War I veterans to pay their respects to General Pershing. This year's Pershing Memorial Ceremony began with a musical prelude by "Pershing's Own," the US Army Band. MG Meade Chapter Companion COL Kenneth McCreedy served as Master of Ceremonies. The Pershing Memorial Service began with an invocation, presentation of the colors, the singing of the National Anthem, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, retirement of the colors, and the reading of the Preamble to the Constitution of the Order. COL McCreedy then introduced MG Michael S. Linnington, USA, Commander of the Military District of Washington (MDW), who gave a warm welcome to everyone in attendance—despite the cool autumn afternoon.

Representing CINC CAPT Russell C. Vowinkel, USN (Ret), SVCINC COL M. Hall Worthington, USA (Ret), heartily welcomed attendees to this annual memorial ceremony on behalf of the Order. PCINC LTC Alfred H. M. Shehab, USA (Ret), then introduced guest speaker Vice Admiral Sally Brice-O'Hara, Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. VADM Brice-O'Hara assumed her current position on May 24, 2010. As second in command and Chief Operating Officer, VADM Brice-O'Hara executes the Commandant's strategic intent, manages internal organizational governance and serves as the Component Acquisition Executive.

PCINC Shehab first met VADM Brice-O'Hara when she was a Captain serving as the Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard



From page 8, L-R: G/A John Joseph Pershing, AUSA (Ret), General Headquarters, Chaumont France, 19 October 1918; "The Old Guard" (Source: VCINC HPM Jennie F. McIntosh); SVCINC M. Hall Worthington, USA (Ret); VADM Sally Brice-O'Hara, USCG (Source: PCINC COL Bert L. Rice, USA (Ret)); MOWW Companions represented the MG Meade Chapter, MD; G/A John Joseph Pershing's gravesite Source: MOWW File Photo

Training Base at Cape May, NJ. He recruited her into the Order. Subsequently, he was reacquainted with her at the funeral of Corporal Frank W. Buckles in March 2011 (the last surviving US military veteran of WWI) and asked if she would be willing to serve as guest speaker for the Pershing Ceremony, which she happily agreed to do.

VADM Brice-O'Hara presented thoughtful remarks titled "The General's Cross," that included information about General Pershing which was unknown to many attendees. In 1922, when Pershing served as the Army Chief of Staff, he heard that he was to be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his heroic actions in the Philippines. He didn't like that.

The highly-principled officer turned down the honor claiming that he did not deserve it. He explained that he turned down many recommendations for the same award for actions of Soldiers who were more deserving. The war concluded nearly three years earlier and, perhaps, Pershing "...always the war soldier, was not quite used to being the war veteran." He also turned down an opportunity to run for President, and an offer to have a special memorial built in his honor at Arlington National Cemetery. Instead, he preferred to be buried "under a simple government-issued marker...among the soldiers he led on the battlefields."

She added that General Pershing was again offered the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions in the Philippines on his 80th birthday in 1940. He didn't refuse it this time. We will never know his reasons, but perhaps he ultimately became comfortable with accepting it on behalf of the Soldiers he led. President Roosevelt personally presented the Distinguished Service Cross to him at the White House this time.

Vice Admiral Brice-O'Hara commended MOWW's Companions for honoring General Pershing. She said, "In a way, you are the living, breathing Pershing memorial...you're the very worthy substitute for the monument Pershing would

not allow to be built for himself." Following Vice Admiral Brice-O'Hara's presentation, a beautiful rendition of Pershing's favorite song "My Buddy" was sung by Sergeant First Class Robert P. Burner, USA, from "Pershing's Own."

As a special addition at this year's ceremony, Susannah Buckles Flanagan also laid a wreath in remembrance of her father, Corporal Frank Buckles, "The Last American Doughboy," at his grave, which is within about 35 yards of General Pershing's gravesite.

The traditional wreath laying ceremony at General Pershing's was conducted with the assistance of Soldiers from "The Old Guard," the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment, MDW, providing assistance. SVCINC Worthington led the way with the presentation of an MOWW wreath. He was followed by representatives of many veteran organizations and the Embassies of several Allied Nations who also laid wreaths and rendered their respects to General Pershing.

Following the wreath laying ceremony, Taps was played by Sergeant First Class Troy McKay of "Pershing's Own" with "Pershing's Own" concluding the ceremony with some lovely postlude music.

All attending thought the memorial ceremony to General Pershing was very dignified and mindful of General Pershing wishes to "...rest here under a simple government-issued marker...not on a lofty hill, but among the soldiers he led on the battlefields." ★



LTC Ruth L. Hamilton, USA (Ret), was commissioned as an Adjutant General's Corps officer in February 1985. She served in a variety of positions in US Army and NATO assignments worldwide. GSO LTC Hamilton currently serves the Order as an EXCOM Member (Appointed), as a General Staff Officer (Elected), as the Chair, Legislative and Resolutions Committee, and as the Vice Chair, Magazine Committee.