XVII

The First Star

"I am sure that you are destined to hold a very high place on the list of general officers before you reach the age of sixty-four."

—Pershing to Marshall, May 26, 1936.

CHICAGO did not cheer him up. Marshall was used to country living and always preferred it. But to be near his work at the National Guard headquarters in the Loop he and Mrs. Marshall took an apartment on the North Side—a thirty-minute walk away. Neither the walk nor the occasional game of tennis or squash at the Athletic Club nor the ride now and then in the armory reconciled him to the chafing confinement of the city. He had a wry vision of himself walking his Irish setter puppy in a vacant lot: "a very edifying sight," he wrote, "that proves how high-minded and seriously employed are colonels of infantry of the regular Army." [1]

Chicago was itself deep in depression. At the time Marshall arrived, a hundred and fifty thousand families in Cook County were out of work and in desperate plight.[2] The state legislature had adjourned without voting relief money, and the city treasury was so bare that for months teachers were not paid. Among the jobless there were rumblings of violence, and among financial and business leaders, signs of despair. The collapse of Samuel

Insull's utilities empire had pulled down banks throughout the Middle West. Those that survived were shaken by continuing business and speculative failures. The *Chicago Tribune* was running feature stories on financial debacles and bankers and businessmen who committed suicide in increasing numbers rather than face ruin. Marshall felt some of the personal impact of these tragedies through his old friend General Dawes, now chairman of the board of the City National Bank and Trust Company, Chicago. Concerned about him, Marshall wrote to Pershing that the newspaper stories "must open every wound." [3]

As the depression deepened, Army pay, already hit by the 1932 measure, was further reduced in the general 15 per-cent salary slash of government employees. The new legislation was particularly hard on the lower enlisted and junior-officer grades. Marshall prepared a spirited protest which he hoped one of the National Guard officers, a business executive, could use with politically influential friends. He submitted evidence to show that second lieutenants, after the depression cuts, were making substantially less than in 1908. Enlisted men through the loss of certain allowances were relatively even worse off. Yet these officers and men "must present a certain standard of appearance no matter how closely pressed they may be financially; they must accept the added expenses of moves and special service; they constitute the government's final backing in the event of grave emergencies; they must hazard their lives in the government service, with no chance of resigning if they do not care to serve. . . ." [4]

Marshall's sympathetic wish to help subordinates and old comrades deepened his sense of helplessness and frustration at his own failure to rise to a position of power. He continued to push—as he always had—the claims to advancement of bright young officers caught in the molasses of the Army's seniority system. He wrote so often to the Chief of Infantry to ask that certain Fort Benning graduates be assigned to the Command and General Staff School at Leavenworth that he feared the chief would "rightly" resent his importunities. On the same mission he often addressed his friend Major General Stuart Heintzelman, now commandant of Leavenworth. It irritated him that

he had to plead with the Army to look out for its own best interests. He wrote a friend: "Whenever I am conniving to get these young fellows with genuine ability put in a suitable setting, I deplore the fact that I have not gained a position of sufficient power to do what I think should be done. I am awfully tired of seeing mediocrity placed in high positions, with brilliance and talent damned by lack of rank to obscurity. There are so many junior officers of tremendous ability whose qualities the service is losing all advantage of that it is really tragic." [5]

To some of these junior officers of tremendous ability he wrote urging on them such patience and faith as had sustained him through his own career and only now in his middle fifties threatened to wear thin. He told Lieutenant Lanham, later a distinguished regimental commander in Europe and a postwar assistant to Eisenhower at SHAPE, to "keep your wits about you and your eyes open; keep on working hard; sooner or later the opportunity will present itself, and then you must be prepared both tactically and temperamentally to profit by it." To Joseph Lawton Collins he wrote that the War Department would be "showing signs of real modernization when they reach down and pick you and several others of your stripe, which I imagine will be done, and shortly." [6]

Marshall's extraordinary zest and energy made him take his disappointments hard; it was as though he hit the roadblocks at full speed, looking and thinking far beyond them. Yet the same zest and energy made it impossible for him to remain long in a state of depression. Mrs. Marshall recalls that by Christmastime of 1933 he had lost that gray, drawn look that had worried her and began to recover his enthusiasm.[7]

He could already see improvement in the training of the 33d Division. He had begun by setting, both by order and example, a standard of military correctness and discipline. As usual there had been a flurry of alarm at the arrival of this new colonel, meticulously turned out in well-tailored uniform and shiny boots, a lean, tall, straight figure whose cold blue and seldom smiling eyes could make a man feel singularly silly and superfluous—a self-possessed officer who asked hard questions in his soft voice and from time to time relapsed into a cruelly discon-

certing silence. One discovered quickly enough, moreover, that the manner was not put on for effect. The colonel was a taskmaster who in drill demanded smartness, promptness, and precision—the head-high military snap—and exact obedience to orders.

In time, however, the officers and men of the 33d Division learned that he was a disciplinarian on principle and not out of a martinet's love for giving orders. He was tough because he believed that the men wanted to belong "to a highly disciplined, hard-working, businesslike organization" they could be proud of and boast about. "The stricter the better," he said, "within the prescribed hours." At the same time he had no patience with the bureaucratic forms perhaps even more readily proliferated by volunteer than by professional groups.[8] He urged his officers to cut down paper work and fight against the tendency to overelaborated, unrealistic drills. He tilted with the War Department over its formalisms, observing on one occasion that he had signed a report of a twenty-eight-dollar property loss twelve times and had counted twenty-eight other signatures on it.[9]

After hours Marshall became not easy and familiar but reflective, expansive. On his first visit to one of the Chicago regiments he was cool and businesslike while he observed the drill but afterward went with some of the officers to the Red Star Inn on Clark Street and there talked warmly about the record of the 33d Division in the war, its achievements and weaknesses, what he remembered himself and what he had learned as in effect the First Army's official historian. Not long afterward he and some of the Guard officers (chiefly those who were veterans of the 1st Division) were invited to a picnic at Colonel Robert R. McCormick's farm.[10] It is perhaps less remarkable that Marshall played in the scratch ball game after lunch than that his officers later thought the fact worth recalling.

That summer the federal inspectors found every unit of the division at least satisfactory—the first time in years that all had passed muster. The season's training ended with a division march, bivouac in Grant Park, and review on the Exposition grounds before thousands of visitors to the Century of Progress Fair, which continued in its second year to be a spectacular

popular success despite the depression. Shortly thereafter the 33d Division staff was ordered to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, to take part in a staff exercise to test a mobilization plan newly worked out by the War Department. In the exercise itself various corps and division staffs set up command posts in New Jersey from which they prepared orders to defend against an assumed enemy invasion of the Jersey coast.[11]

Marshall brought the exercise back with him to Illinois, modified it, and used it as the basis for the next year's training. He assumed the area of enemy attack to be twelve square miles between Camp Grant and Rockford. All winter he had the division staff studying maps and issuing orders. In the spring they worked through the problem on the ground. Without money or other sinews of war—except imagination—they nevertheless went through the games with great enthusiasm. Mussolini, then on the verge of invading Ethiopia; Hitler, not many more months from his defiant occupation of the Rhineland; both within a year of testing their forces in real war in Spain, would have been surprised, and perhaps even amused, at the Guardsmen working out their problems.

"The right gun of every battery," Marshall wrote later, "would be marked with a stake, the successive locations and movements of special weapons would be traced; the [observation posts] would be checked and the wire calculated; the command posts would be sketched in exact detail; the exact location of every kitchen, cart, dump, and what not, would be actually determined. And all this between 10:00 A.M. and 1:30 P.M. of a Sunday. . . . I have seen the cavalry officers go over the ground involved in all the attacks and counterattacks of the [command post exercise] with almost as much excitement as in a maneuver." Then, to finish off, Marshall in the final exercise assigned different staffs to fourteen rooms in the Chicago armory and himself from a central control room developed a single night's action to which the staff had to respond with orders to troops.[12]

As the Illinois division developed in experience, its own officers were able to take over a large part of the training from the regular Army instructors. Marshall himself began to find a little leisure time and to use part of it in a new venture for

him—supervising the editing of the division's house organ, the *Illinois Guardsman.* Like many another editor, he coerced his colleagues to contribute and drew on his friends—notably Lieutenant Colonel Harding, now editor of the *Infantry Journal,* and Lieutenant Lanham on Harding's staff—for suggestions, cuts, and reprints of articles. But even so he had frequently to fill some of the pages himself. He wrote short accounts of American battles of the past, compiled division gossip, wrote copy to fit pictures the *Infantry Journal* sent him, and composed a bit of humor, "Ducks and Drakes"—an anonymous account of a duck hunt and poker game which Colonel Scott Lucas (newly elected representative and later senator from Illinois) had arranged for General Keehn, Marshall, and some of his staff. Through the stiff and self-conscious prose one can glimpse, if not share, the high spirits of the occasion in which allegedly both ducks and farmers got the better of the party of "careless city fellows." [13]

Busy now and successful, Marshall was mostly in good spirits. General Dawes, cheered by the success of the exposition which he and his brother had helped to underwrite, had recovered his old dash and was holding small luncheons for important visitors to the city. Marshall was a frequent guest, and his contacts resulted in invitations to speak, which he accepted as opportunities to talk about the Guard, the citizen army, and urge its support. Another old friend, Major General Frank McCoy, the VI Corps Area commander, moved with his wife into an apartment across the hall from the Marshalls. McCoy, a close friend of former Secretary of State Stimson, was widely known as a fine soldier and one of the top diplomats of the Army. Onetime aide to Leonard Wood (whose niece he had married), he had been summoned in 1917 from his attaché's post in Mexico City by Pershing to be a member of his staff in France. After commanding the 165th Infantry in the war, he had a succession of diplomatic assignments, the most recent of which was his service on the League of Nations Commission to inquire into the Japanese aggression against Manchuria in 1931. His international prominence would make him a strong contender for the post of Chief of Staff in 1935. Marshall liked and admired him. McCoy "as a

friend and companion," Marshall wrote, "displayed qualities of charm and affection, cultivation, breadth of vision, and wide experience rare among men." [14]

Despite the attraction of the McCoys as neighbors, however, the Marshalls, after two years in the apartment, decided they had had enough of the city. They moved into a cottage thirty-eight miles to the west, near Wayne, Illinois. The daily train ride to town was made tolerable for the colonel by such National Guard companions as Chester Davis and William Spencer. Weekends he had a truck garden beside his back yard, a riding club nearby, a swimming pool and tennis court convenient, "gas, electric lights, eggs warm from the hen, and rich milk straight from the cow." [15]

Occasional glimpses one has of Marshall outside his work suggest that he was enjoying his new family. Clifton, Mrs. Marshall's oldest son, was in the real-estate business in Chicago; Molly, not yet married, was away during the second winter on a world tour, but the rest of the time she lived at home; Allen had entered the University of Virginia in 1934.

In the spring of 1935 Mrs. Marshall had to have an operation for which she went to an Army hospital in Arkansas. She spent the summer at Fire Island convalescing and apparently in good spirits. In June, Marshall, reporting on her progress to a friend, wrote that she was recovering nicely and that "as Allen has a job as lifeguard at thirty bucks a week, she not only has the interest of people around her and the sea to admire but she can gaze on his manly form as he sprints around keeping order and protecting life—very much set up because he has been sworn in as a deputy policeman and can make arrests." [16] Marshall was on Fire Island himself for three weeks at the end of a summer spent mainly with regimental and divisional exercises. To General Keehn, recuperating from an automobile wreck in which he lost his right arm, he reported that the division had improved in all respects over the preceding year and that the men at last understood the importance of severity in training.[17]

So two years passed pleasantly enough from day to day, despite the continuing deep frustration of being where he believed he was off the track, if not out of the running, for high position

in the Army. The third year was much the same. All during it he pointed the training program toward the Second Army maneuvers which were to take place in August 1936 and, as it happened, would mark the climax of his own tour and its welcome conclusion.

The year 1936 brought war in Europe perceptibly closer. Hitler and Mussolini were already skirmishing along the road, proclaiming their ambition for empire. Mussolini, having attacked Ethiopia in October 1935, ignored without difficulty the League of Nations' economic sanctions and got on with his clumsy but ruthless conquest. The system of collective security, rejected by America at the outset, breached by Japan in its invasion of Manchuria in 1931, collapsed in 1936. Hitler, recognizing his opportunity, marched into the demilitarized Rhineland in the spring. In midsummer civil war in Spain would provide Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin a bloody maneuver ground on which to test their developing military machines.

By contrast America's war games belonged to another world. The Second Army, which was to conduct the 1936 maneuvers, did not exist—except on paper. The part of Army headquarters was played by VI Corps command under Major General Kilbourne, a VMI classmate of Stuart Marshall, who had just replaced General McCoy. The original plan had been to concentrate troops of both VI and V Corps Areas, but the War Department found it could not afford the extensive troop movements that would have been required. The maneuvers, therefore, were split in two: V Corps assembled near Fort Knox; VI Corps in Michigan between Camp Custer and Allegan. The Michigan maneuvers involved more than two thousand officers and twenty-four thousand men of the 32d and 33d Division together with attached troops and some regular Army units. They lasted two weeks.

Marshall found them unusually useful; he wrote a friend that he had "never learned more in my life in a similar period of time." What he learned—or more accurately what he found confirmed—was the impracticality of much of the current technique and theories. Particularly he was impressed with the way higher headquarters deluged combat units with detailed orders and reports. He himself commanded the chief "enemy" force,

the 12th Brigade, in the exercises and found that he spent a good part of his time "with the troops protecting them against my own staff." He wrote that "the sight of paper inflames me. So many officers never seem happy unless they have pages of highly paragraphed something or other." [18] The complaint was against current doctrine, not against the caliber of the officers he worked with. He considered that two headquarters staff members, the G-3, a friend from China and Benning, Major Ridgway, and Major George P. Hays, later a division commander in World War II, turned in "perfect" jobs.[19] His own staff in the maneuvers were all reserve officers who had never seen him or each other until they arrived on the ground to cope with the movement of some six thousand troops, under almost every conceivable handicap. "We lacked everything," Marshall wrote later, "and were given seemingly every possible administrative and supply responsibility, in addition to the tactical requirements. We covered sixty miles of country in a campaign against twenty thousand troops. These reserve officers did a beautiful job. . . ." [20]

One unexpected handicap was the hostility of the natives. Farmers in the area joined the war as irregulars, gave false directions to the Red (enemy) Force and even erected barricades to hinder his advance. Since Blue Force's defense was admittedly "designed primarily to head off our senior instructor who commanded the enemy 12th Brigade," [21] it is not surprising that Marshall narrowly escaped capture on several occasions.

Over this hostile country the invading forces flew a single reconnaissance plane. Its pilot was a reserve officer, E. A. Goff, Jr., who had been flying since 1916 but never on this sort of mission. As he could not read maps or identify objects from the air, his information required some interpretation. Spotting a detachment of motorized field artillery on the road, he radioed back that he saw some trucks pulling wheelbarrows. A cloud of dust disappearing into a wood, Marshall concluded, meant a motorcycle courier. When Goff flew over a cavalry unit he reported, "I see one, two, three, five, six, eight horses moving in a northeasterly direction." Marshall thereafter twitted him as the "officer that counts the horses." [22]

One could not fault the spirit of the troops, and Marshall did

not. The very unmilitary mind of Pilot Goff, moreover, had endearing overtones of Yankee ingenuity and of the "hurriedly assembled hosts of democracy." But the professionals in the circumstances could not help being impressed with the very serious military weaknesses which the exercises revealed—or rather underscored. General Kilbourne's report—just three years before the unveiling of German "blitzkrieg"—paid particular attention to the power of mechanized forces, commanded by Colonel Bruce Palmer and his executive, Lieutenant Colonel William Crittenberger, in the attack. "Unless effectively opposed," the General concluded, "mechanized forces can not only open the way to the occupation of key positions in the warfare of movement, but can disrupt communications, interfere with supply, tap lines of signal communication." Furthermore, armor in defense was capable of spoiling an offensive "by rapid movements threatening in succession many vital points" and so compelling the attacker to divert troops from the main effort.[23] Less attention was given in the report to the role of the airplane, but it was notable that planes operated regularly from Chanute Field in weather which formerly would have grounded them and that a special bomber flight from far-off Langley Field simulated an air attack on the Allegan airport.[24]

Five days after the maneuver was completed and the troops sent home, Marshall had a letter from the War Department that resolved a long unhappiness. It notified him of his appointment as brigadier general, effective October 1. He would presently receive a new assignment. The letter arrived the day Mrs. Marshall was coming home from a visit to Canada. Hoping to surprise her with an announcement in appropriate style, he was just getting set when the telephone rang and Mrs. Marshall answered, heard the voice at the other end ask for General Marshall. So the new General was deprived of a small moment of drama, but nothing could detract from the real sense of triumph and gratification.

That star, almost within grasp eighteen years before in France, had been long and hard in coming. The reasons were as complicated and as difficult to evaluate precisely as were the cross-weaving of influence and cut-and-dried seniority rules which

composed the Army's baffling promotion system. Almost from the beginning of his career Marshall had been tabbed time after time as an officer destined to become a general. There was never any doubt that the star would eventually be his. What was uncertain—and what made both Marshall and his friends rail against the system—was whether it would come in time to permit him to compete for higher command positions, including Chief of Staff of the Army. The principle was firmly established that no one would be considered for appointment as Chief of Staff who did not have at least four years to serve before retirement. In 1930 when Marshall himself suggested submitting the name of General Hanson Ely, who was only a year away from retirement, Pershing wrote that the President was unlikely to change the established rule.[25] In 1930 when President Hoover appointed General MacArthur, he considered as eligible for the job only the two lowest-ranking major generals on the list. To serve four years Marshall would have to be appointed by 1940. He believed that in order to be in the competition he would have to have his second star. That in turn meant that the first had to come early enough for him to acquire seniority among the brigadier generals.

Less than a year after his name was first put on the eligibility list, at the end of 1933, Marshall heard from two friends who were also among the highest-ranking generals in the Army: General Moseley, commanding the corps area headquarters at Atlanta, and General Hagood, corps commander at San Antonio. They wrote to say that they had seized the opportunity during a recent visit of Secretary of War Dern to their headquarters to urge George Marshall's name for promotion. Marshall sent copies of these letters to Pershing, noting that they were unsolicited. In his own accompanying letter he revealed his impatience. "Two or three vacancies now exist," he wrote. "I want one of them as I will soon be fifty-four. I must get started if I am going to get anywhere in this Army." He wanted that start badly but he was nevertheless reluctant to appear to be scrambling for it. He preferred to be judged on his record but asked Pershing to make sure that Secretary Dern looked at it. "I am determined not to use political influence in my effort

to be recognized and I do not want to follow the usual course of writing to a number of senior officers soliciting letters from them. . . . I am prepared to gamble on my written record in the War Department before, during, and after the war, for I have been told no one else in the list of colonels can match mine." [26]

That was quite probably true; at least his efficiency reports had uniformly rated him as an exceptional officer. There was irony in the fact that he had now to use influence to bring his recognized merits to the attention of an authority that could act on them.

The irony echoed the confusion in the system in which the principle of promotion in turn according to length of service was never reconciled with the principle that the best officers ought to be selected out as rapidly as possible for top command and staff positions. In practice an officer's efficiency reports, which recorded his performance as judged successively by his superiors, could bar promotion if they were poor but could not often, by being good, secure advancement out of turn. When exceptions were made to the rule of promotion by seniority, they were made most often by the direct intervention of a general or sometimes a political leader in position to exert the necessary pressure in the proper places. Such exceptions had brought Pershing and MacArthur into top rank ahead of their colleagues. They were, however, more common in war or the immediate aftermath of war than in the relaxed stretches between, when few civilians concerned themselves about a soldier's merit and when the War Department itself was normally trying to absorb more high-ranking officers than its always shrinking budget provided places for.

The often repeated story that Marshall's promotion was held up by General MacArthur because of differences between them dating back to World War I is not borne out by the record at any point. The truth seems to be that MacArthur was reluctant to listen to Marshall's claims only as he was reluctant to listen to all claims that required setting aside promotion by seniority, perhaps because of the resentment aroused by his own spectacular jump up the ladder. For whatever reason, he preferred

not to seem to play favorites and chose to risk the inequities of the seniority system. These were glaring and damaging. One of the most obvious was that a senior colonel who barely made the eligibility list for general by split vote of the board moved along ahead of others like Marshall, who not only had the unanimous recommendation of his board but virtually the unanimous recommendation of everybody in the Army who knew him well enough. Seniority thus worked striking anomalies. Marshall told Pershing he had "had the discouraging experience of seeing the man I relieved in France as G-3 of the Army promoted years ago, and my assistant as G-3 of the Army similarly advanced six years ago. I think I am entitled to some consideration now." [27]

It is not clear what, if any, steps Pershing took immediately, but in the spring of 1935 he spoke to both Secretary Dern and President Roosevelt. "General Pershing asks very strongly that Colonel George C. Marshall (Infantry) be promoted to general," Roosevelt wrote to his Secretary of War. "Can we put him on the list of next promotions?" [28]

Alas, apparently they could not. Dern's reasons are not on record. Probably he told the President of MacArthur's plan to put Marshall in as the next Chief of Infantry, a post that carried the rank of temporary major general but which would not be vacant for several years. In any case the decision was to do nothing for the present. When Marshall got Pershing's report he wrote: "I can but wait, grow older, and hope for a more favorable situation in Washington." [29]

Pershing did not give up. He talked to the President and Secretary of War without success. He discussed the matter "a good many times" with General MacArthur but found the Chief of Staff apparently set on holding Marshall for the post of Chief of Infantry. In August, Pershing wrote an old friend, John Callan O'Laughlin, onetime Assistant Secretary of State under Theodore Roosevelt, more recently an official of the Republican National Committee, and publisher of the influential *Army and Navy Journal.* Marshall, Pershing said, "will never turn his hand to help himself, and I cannot blame him for that, but he is such an outstanding man that I am going to ask you to put in a

good word for him if you have the opportunity." [30] O'Laughlin found an opportunity within the next few weeks to talk with the Chief of Staff and reported to Pershing in Paris. MacArthur still thought Marshall should wait for the Chief of Infantry opening, which might not be long in coming since the incumbent was ill and might soon resign. Nevertheless, in deference to Pershing's wishes, he had recommended Marshall for promotion to brigadier general in the next list after Secretary of War Dern returned in January from the Philippines.[31]

On that information Pershing wrote to Marshall on October 4 to say that "the Chief had still intended to make you Chief of Infantry but as no one knows when the vacancy will occur, I told him that you would prefer to be in the line, and so it will be done, at least that is the plan at present." [32] But both Pershing's report and the commitment had been made ambiguous by the appointment two days before (October 2) of Malin Craig as Chief of Staff.[33]

MacArthur, who had headed the Army for five years, had accepted an offer to command the defense forces of the newly created Commonwealth of the Philippines. While he, of course, anticipated the change at the time he talked to O'Laughlin and knew that Craig was to be his successor, he had understood that Roosevelt would not formally replace him until after he arrived in Manila. To his surprise the announcement was in fact made before he left the country, purportedly because the President was uneasy about having both the Secretary of War and the Chief of Staff out of the country at the same time. It is possible, though not clear, that this change in procedure interfered with the plan to put Marshall's name on the list of promotions.

Marshall, on receiving Pershing's letter dated after the announcement of Craig's appointment, assumed that the "Chief" pledged to his cause was Craig.[34] He had some reason to believe that this represented just the "favorable situation" in Washington to which he had looked forward. Craig was the same cavalry officer whose troop nearly thirty years before had contributed one horse to Lieutenant Marshall so that he might map a piece of Texas desert. Since that time he had known Craig during

the war when Craig served on Hunter Liggett's staff in the 41st Division and I Corps, and afterward when both were members of Pershing's staff. The year before his nomination as Chief of Staff, Craig had been a member of the board that recommended George Marshall for promotion to brigadier general and on that occasion was reported to have remarked that a proper promotion system would assure that officers of Marshall's caliber were made generals. Craig apparently complained to Secretary Dern about the quality of many of the senior colonels who were being promoted and said that Marshall in his view should have the next appointment.

So it was with especially bitter disappointment that, in mid-December, Marshall received a warning from Pershing that Craig was not finding it easy "to overturn an established practice of appointing dead timber to the high positions." In fact Marshall was not on the next list, and two days after Christmas he wrote in darkest vein to Pershing: "I have possessed myself in patience, but I'm fast getting too old to have any future of importance in the Army. This sounds pessimistic, but an approaching birthday—December 31—rather emphasizes the growing weakness of my position." [35] He would be fifty-five. Contrasting the many years of frustration with the few years remaining, he could hardly avoid profound discouragement. Friends were better able to see that while time was short there was still time enough.

One friend, Colonel Campbell Hodges, accompanied Secretary Dern to the Philippines in late 1935 and took the occasion to urge not only that Marshall be given a star at once but that he be considered for the next appointment as Chief of Staff. Hodges made a precise calculation of the prospects and spelled them out in a letter to Marshall: "If you should be the next brigadier general made, you would reach major general in 1939 or 1940. Assuming that every brigadier general with at least one year to serve (omitting those already jumped) is promoted in his turn, you would get Stone's vacancy, August 1940; if they adopt a 'two-years-to-serve' rule for brigadier in order to be promoted to major general, you would get Craig's vacancy in 1939, and MacArthur, Drum, DeWitt, Rowell, and yourself,

would be the only major generals with four years to serve. Spalding will not get two stars under either a 'one-year-to-serve' or a 'two-years-to-serve' rule. . . . General Drum seems like logical man for next Chief of Staff, but as he [Drum] remarked —anything can happen in four years." [36]

In April 1936, when Secretary Dern came to Chicago to make the Army Day speech, General McCoy and General Herron saw that the Secretary and Marshall had a chance to talk. A month later Pershing reported that Marshall was "positively and definitely" on the September list of brigadier generals. He had attempted to get his former aide promoted ahead of the others in his group in order that he would have a better chance for his second star, but this had proved impossible. He assured Marshall, however, that the men ahead of him were all older men and would not be in the way. Despite all the delays, he added, "I am sure that you are destined to hold a very high place on the list of general officers before you reach the age of sixty-four." [37]

If Dern, as the result of various pressures, placed Marshall's name on the list in May, it was one of the last things he did as an active Secretary of War. By June he was so ill that he could not attend cabinet meetings and by late July his condition was critical. He died on August 24 as the proposed list of brigadier generals containing Marshall's name, signed by Acting Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring, went forward to the President.[38]

The extraordinary fact is that all the pressure exerted over a three-year period in Marshall's behalf, coupled with the unusual excellence of his own record, resulted in his promotion just one month before he would almost certainly have had it merely by coming to the top of the eligibility list.[39] At the time Secretary Woodring acted, six colonels eligible for promotion were senior to Marshall. As the man just ahead of him had made the list by a three-to-two vote of the eligibility board whereas Marshall had had a unanimous recommendation, the Acting Secretary of War proposed that Marshall should have the sixth vacancy.[40] While this was recognition of a sort, the two men who followed Marshall on the eligible list were promoted, as he presumably would

have been, next month, on the list of November 1, 1936. Marshall was pleased, of course, to have made it at last, but not optimistic. The first star had come too late to give him any advantage in the competition for two.