

*General of the Army
George C. Marshall*



Then-MG Alexander M. Patch



Photographs: U.S. Army

*From left: LTG
William H. Simp-
son, commanding
general, Ninth U.S.
Army; MG Troy H.
Middleton, com-
manding general,
VIII Corps; and MG
Donald Stroh, com-
manding general,
8th Division.*



Marshall's Forgotten Men

By COL James Scott Wheeler
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COL Cole C. Kingseed's article in the December 2009 ARMY, "Marshall's Men," provides an excellent discussion of GEN George C. Marshall's "uncanny ability to identify and develop commanders who displayed 'aggressive and determined leadership' in the conduct of their duties." Marshall identified, promoted and nurtured an amazing number of fine Army leaders during his six years as Chief of Staff of the Army (1939–1945).



GEN Jacob
L. Devers



Above, LTG Lesley J. McNair,
commanding general of U.S.
Army Ground Forces. Left,
then-MG Courtney H. Hodges.

From left, LTG Hodges, commander of the First U.S. Army; then-LTG Omar N. Bradley, commander of the 12th Army Group; and then-LTG George S. Patton Jr., commander of the Third U.S. Army.



Most of these officers came to Marshall's attention before he became Chief of Staff, and their names were entered in a "black book" that he reportedly kept in his desk drawer in the War Department. As the Army expanded from 174,000 men in 1939 to more than 8 million by 1943, Marshall's most important task was to select the general officers needed to command, sustain and lead this force in battle.

The "Marshall men" mentioned in Kingseed's article were Dwight D. (Ike) Eisenhower, Joseph Stilwell, Omar N. Bradley, Mark W. Clark, George S. Patton, Terry de la Mesa Allen, Matthew B. Ridgway, Maxwell D. Taylor, J. Lawton Collins and Walter Bedell Smith. Stilwell, Clark and Patton commanded armies, and Bradley commanded the 12th Army Group under Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander. All of these leaders contributed immensely to the success of the Allies. A few of Marshall's picks did not work out, as was the case with Lloyd Fredendall and John Lucas. Nonetheless, Marshall usually found the right leaders and put them into the right assignments. This was one of his greatest contributions to Allied victory.

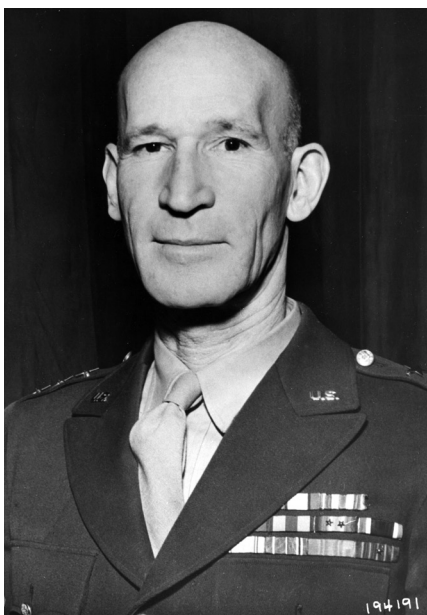
Kingseed's article, however, did not mention several of the most important of Marshall's picks for high command. William H. Simpson, Courtney H. Hodges and Alexander M. Patch all commanded American armies. Lesley J. McNair commanded the Army Ground Forces, and Jacob L. Devers commanded the 6th Army Group in France. These are "Marshall's forgotten men."

It is useful to expand our under-

standing of how George Marshall identified promising leaders. Most historians mention that Marshall met roughly 200 of the men he promoted to command divisions, corps and armies while he was the assistant commandant at the U.S. Army Infantry School. This list prominently includes Stilwell, Bradley, Hodges and Allen. Marshall's Infantry School years, however, were in some ways the culmination of a selection process that began much earlier.

Marshall came to know of many of his future picks while he served in France with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in 1917-19. As the operations officer of the 1st Infantry Division, Marshall worked with Patch, McNair, Clarence R. Huebner and Teddy Roosevelt Jr. In the stress of battle, Marshall assessed the qualities of these combat leaders. Later, as operations officer of First Army, Marshall learned of combat leaders such as Simpson, Patton, Clark, Allen and Hodges. These were some of the original Marshall men.

Marshall also learned about the difficulty of winnowing out senior leaders who could not accomplish their missions. As he wrote in his book *Memoirs of My Services in the World War, 1917-1918*, "The development of the American Expeditionary Forces was marked by a series of personal tragedies suffered by officers assigned important tasks and who ... were unable to produce the desired result. ... But war is a ruthless taskmaster, demanding success regardless of confusion, shortness of time and paucity of tools. ... The hurly-burly of the conflict does not permit commanders to draw fine distinctions; to succeed, they must demand results ... and drive



LTG William H. Simpson

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Then-LTG Devers (right), Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, receives the Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath from King George VI of England during his visit to the Mediterranean Theater in 1944. Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S. Navy, center, also received an award.

subordinates beyond what would ordinarily be considered the limit of human capacity. Wars are won by the side that accomplishes the impossible.”

Marshall’s appreciation for the kind of combat leaders needed by a modern army to win wars came from his personal experiences and observations of war. The men whose names he entered into his black book from the AEF had helped accomplish the seemingly impossible task of turning raw conscripts into capable soldiers in 1917–18. Marshall never forgot them.

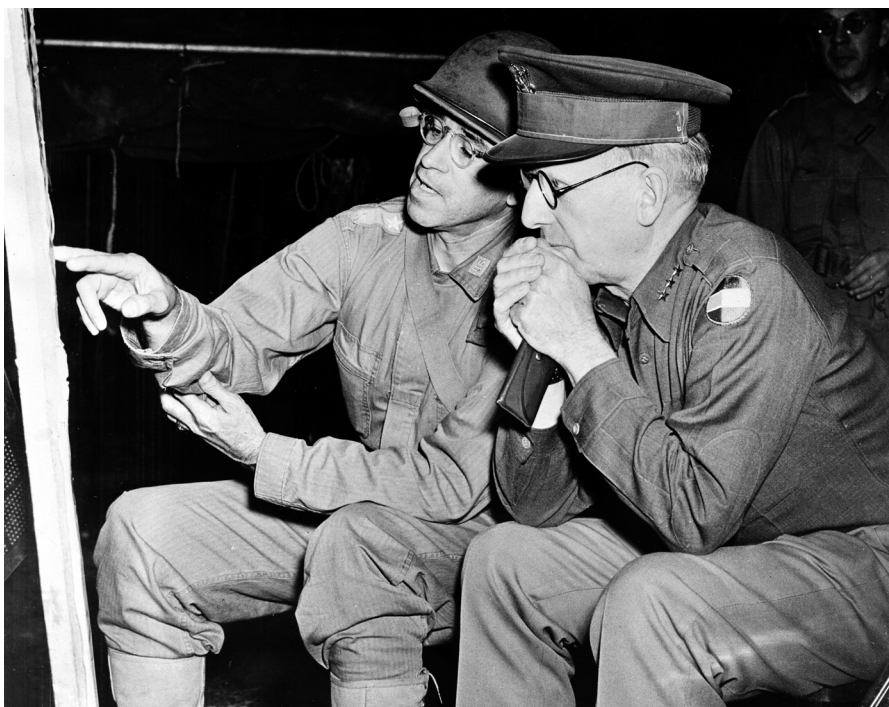
During the interwar years, Marshall served as GEN John J. Pershing’s aide while he was Army Chief of Staff (1921–24). This brought Marshall into contact with men like Eisenhower, who worked on the American Battle Monuments Commission. Marshall also had close relationships with the two Chiefs of Staff succeeding Pershing: John L. Hines (1924–26) and Charles P. Summerall (1926–30). Even while he was commanding the 15th Infantry Regiment in Tientsin, China, in the 1920s, Marshall stayed in touch with Pershing, Hines and Summerall, and certainly heard about the best and brightest officers they knew. His five years as assistant commandant of the Infantry School brought him into contact with many more promising officers. By then, Marshall knew many of the men who would hold senior commands in the Army in World War II. During the two years before the United States entered the war, Marshall added others to his list of men whom he believed could get things done regardless of confusion, shortness of time and paucity of tools.

A look at two of the most important of Marshall’s forgotten men, McNair and Devers, rounds out the picture of how Marshall selected and nurtured senior leaders. These men contributed immensely to American success and were among the most important of his senior leaders. Unfortunately, their service, and that of the other forgotten Marshall men, is unknown to most Americans.

Lesley McNair was an artilleryman who served in the Mexican expedition in 1916 and in the 1st Infantry Division with Marshall in World War I. McNair was the youngest brigadier general in the war, and Marshall knew that he got results. During the interwar period, McNair helped to transform and modernize American artillery doctrine and practice while serving as the assistant commandant at the Army Field Artillery School (1929–1933). In 1939, Marshall turned to McNair to direct the Command and General Staff College and modernize its instruction.

When mobilization began in 1940, Marshall entrusted McNair with the daunting task of organizing a general headquarters and then, in 1942, with transforming that organization into the Army Ground Forces, whose mission it was to organize, equip and train the rapidly expanding Army. McNair shouldered some of the greatest responsibilities of Marshall’s men. The results were impressive, as the ground forces grew to 90 divisions and more than 4 million men. McNair had Marshall’s full confidence and relieved the Chief of Staff of incredible burdens. Unfortunately, McNair did not live to see the final results; he was killed in combat in July 1944.

Then-MG Bradley describes a maneuver of the Third Army in Louisiana to LTG McNair in 1942.



McNair brought Jacob Devers to Marshall's attention in 1939. Devers graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1909 and joined McNair's battery in the 4th Field Artillery in Wyoming. The two officers worked together for three years, forming a close bond. Devers then served in one of the Army's first motorized artillery units in Hawaii before joining, in 1917, the faculty of what later became the Field Artillery School. Like Eisenhower and Bradley, Devers did not serve overseas during World War I. Instead, he trained artillery units for service in France. During the interwar years, Devers served at the Military Academy and the Artillery School, where he demonstrated that he knew how to cut through red tape and get things done. In 1939, Devers was assigned as Chief of Staff of the Panama Canal Department. Marshall observed his work firsthand during inspection tours. In mid-1940, Marshall promoted Devers to brigadier general—the youngest at the time—and assigned him to command the Provisional Brigade in the District of Columbia. Devers quickly became one of Marshall's "fire brigade" troubleshooters, working on special assignments for the Chief. Marshall was very impressed with Devers' work. In October 1940, when Marshall needed a major general to train the 9th Infantry Division and to build Fort Bragg, N.C., he selected Devers. As Marshall noted in a letter to MG Daniel Van Voorhis, "Devers ... is now a Division Commander, and making a fine job of it. We want to find more men of the same type, and I am willing to go down the list quite a way to get them." Jacob Devers displayed the energy, initiative, organizational ability and ruthlessness that Marshall knew were essential for successful senior leaders.

Marshall continued to recognize Devers' potential for higher command and, in 1942, promoted him to lieutenant general and entrusted him with command of the Armored Force at Fort Knox, Ky. Devers was instrumental in the fielding of the Sherman tank, the creation of 13 new armored divisions and the development of the amphibious truck known as the Duck (DUKW). Devers and McNair worked closely and successfully on doctrinal and organizational issues concerning the creation of a balanced field force. As Marshall told Devers, "I congratulate you on your ability to get things done, and I send my personal thanks for your highly efficient manner of doing them. Only the vast importance of the Armored Force program

has barred you, for the present, from employment in active operations."

In May 1943, Marshall selected Devers to take over Eisenhower's position as commanding general, European Theater of Operations. Over the next seven months, Devers supervised the buildup of American forces in the United Kingdom and played an active role in the strengthening of the Eighth Air Force. Marshall appreciated his drive and energy, and his efforts to keep the preparations for Operation Overlord—the D-Day assault—on track. Devers hoped to play a role in Overlord but was disappointed when Roosevelt selected Eisenhower to command the operation. Eisenhower, in turn, turned down Marshall's offer of Devers as an Army or Army group commander, instead opting for Bradley and Hodges, whom Eisenhower knew from the Mediterranean, where he had been commander.

In December 1943, Marshall put Devers in Eisenhower's old job as commanding general of the North African Theater and as the deputy Allied commander in the Mediterranean. In a January 1944 diary entry, Devers recognized the enormous challenges facing him.

We seem from preliminary survey to be extravagant in personnel in certain spots and very short in others. From the Fifth Army front, there seem to be too many cases of exhaustion, running into something like 75,000, with a very slow turnover and return to duty. ... In addition, there is Troy Middleton, an excellent officer, sitting around doing nothing; Patton, relieved of his command, with no instructions; Clark assigned two jobs. This should be straightened out in the next 48 hours.

Devers worked closely with the War Department to improve the replacement situation in the Mediterranean and

On May 5, 1945, LTG Patch, commanding general, Seventh U.S. Army, meets Gen. Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, former commander of the German army, who was captured by the U.S. 36th Infantry Division on May 1.



to get Mark Clark's Fifth Army divisions back up to authorized strength. Marshall also depended on Devers to rein in British ambitions to expand the scope of operations in the Mediterranean, which Marshall feared would weaken or delay Overlord. By mid-1944, Devers had earned the dislike of Winston Churchill as he prepared Seventh Army for Operation Anvil, the invasion of southern France, by moving American service troops from Italy to the new operation. He also recommended Alexander Patch to command Seventh Army and ensured that Lucian Truscott remained in the theater when Eisenhower attempted to raid the Mediterranean for more combat-proven generals. In this last endeavor, he did not endear himself to Ike.

When Marshall created a new Army group to command the Seventh U.S. and First French Armies in France in July 1944, Devers asked for assignment as commanding general. Marshall, after clearing it with Ike, assigned the Sixth Army Group to Devers. The forces of the Sixth Army Group pulled off a nearly flawless invasion of southern France in August and, by November 1944, were the first Allied armies to reach the Rhine River. When Devers saw an opportunity to cross the Rhine, Eisenhower halted the effort, further souring relations between the Supreme Commander and his senior American subordinate. In early January 1945, the two generals again clashed over how to respond to the German *Nordwind* offensive. Devers resisted abandoning more than 500,000 French civilians in and around Strasbourg to reoccupation by the Germans. Eisenhower relented only after the French government refused to abandon Alsace without a fight.

Devers also shouldered the difficult task of commanding a French Army in his Army group. He dealt diplomatically, yet firmly, with Gen. Charles de Gaulle and Gen. Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, two of the most brilliant and difficult of the French leaders. Devers spared Eisenhower from having to work directly with the French, something at which Ike did not particularly excel.

In January 1945, Marshall asked Eisenhower for his recommendations for the commanders who should be selected for four-star rank. Eisenhower ranked Bradley and

Carl A. Spaatz well ahead of Devers. Marshall saw things differently and selected Devers ahead of Bradley, Spaatz, and Patton for promotion to full general. In the summer of 1945, Devers was selected to command the Army Ground Forces for the last four years of his service.

Jacob Devers was outside of Marshall's AEF and Infantry School acquaintances. As an artilleryman, he owed his opportunity for promotion in 1939 to McNair. He quickly proved that he was exactly the kind of senior leader the Chief of Staff needed. His elevation shows that Marshall was comfortable reaching beyond his immediate pool of potential senior leaders. Marshall also understood the need to protect generals such as Devers—who were outside of Eisenhower's clique—from Ike's weakness of working comfortably only with his own men. Devers was a very successful Army group commander and loyally served under Eisenhower, even though Ike never warmed to him. After the war, Devers chose not to write a memoir, which has accounted in part for his current obscurity. He certainly was a preeminent Marshall man.

When we study World War II, we need to pay a lot more attention to men like Devers, McNair and Patch. They illustrate the depth of Marshall's brilliance at selecting senior leaders who resolutely dealt with the daunting tasks the Army faced. Devers' service as an Army group commander provides particularly valuable lessons for our Army today, since he alone worked closely and successfully with allies who spoke a different language and came from a different culture.

