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GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL - SOLDIER AND STATESMAN

It is fitting that this address of the Willis Jefferson Dance, Jr., lecture fund, established in memory of a member of the VMI class of 1941 by his father who also attended VMI, should concern the career of one of the greatest figures ever connected with this school. It is also interesting that Mr. Dance, who is here today, was a cadet at Danville Military Academy at a time when George Marshall, who had but recently completed his work here, acted as commandant of that school. It is a great honor to be selected to give this address and a privilege to talk about General Marshall.

In discussing with Colonel George, the General's aide, what I might use as a theme today, he said, "I like the words which General Marshall used in one of his addresses at VMI: 'Don't be a deep feeler and a shallow thinker.'" In many ways these are the epitome of the man. Analyzed completely they give the essence of General Marshall's character and his career.

The deep feeler is one ruled by emotion, the one who gives way to every prejudice. He sets his personal compass by the fads of the moment. The deep thinker is firmly set on a reasoned course. He avoids personal popularity for its own sake and the easy success of agreeing with temporary fashions. Able to look at himself and others in the light of experience, he does not shift easily from the way he has chosen to go. If you will study these generalizations, which doubtless appear to you as meaningless cliches, you will find that they explain exactly the man I am talking about.

I have spoken to many of the General's classmates and associates and they continually stress his tendency to think deeply and to avoid an emotional approach to problems.

He brought many of these characteristics with him to VMI. Whether there was something in his Virginia ancestry, his Kentucky ancestry or his Pennsylvania birth and early training there, I do not know. Although later some of his boyhood friends were to speak of his brilliance and their feeling that he was destined for great things, he usually said, "They didn't detect these things until I became Chief of Staff." Actually, he seems to have been pretty much like any other boy, engaged in pranks, an interest at one time in raising game chickens and at another in running a greenhouse. A little story, which he tells on himself, will show you that he was not above getting into mischief. Once when his sister was entertaining an out-of-town visitor, she made clear that her brother was to stay out of the house. He went across the street, determined to be

good, but he and his friend soon became interested in a swarm of bees and they began to engage in a game of fighting them. Soon one very angry insect started for the future general who retreated to his home across the street. As he went in the front door the bee followed. He made a sudden flank movement which deceived the bee. Unfortunately, it continued its direct course until it found the tea party. And it stung the guest of honor.

It has been said that the General came here because he failed to get an appointment to West Point. This story has been disproved by one of his early biographers, who notes that the General's older brother came here and that the General decided to follow in his footsteps. From the first he seems to have determined to be a professional soldier and he worked steadily at that goal. He was not a brilliant student at first and his early grades are often low. But the main thing is that they curved steadily upward and that he finished in the upper half of his class. In the drill and discipline which pertained to the career of a soldier, he excelled. He was selected first corporal, first sergeant and first captain.

He was not a cadet who made friends easily or who had many intimate friends. Some say he was aloof and even brusque. He was a person who worked incessantly at improving himself, at trying to find a better answer to his problems. I am afraid he might flunk some of the modern personality tests which emphasize the ability to lose one's self in the group or to integrate one's interests with those of others. I do not think he would be classed as an egghead, but certainly he would have been called a grind or some such other name which the people of the average apply to those who want to rise above their particular position. Don't get the view that he was a man who shut himself in with books. He was an athlete and in his last years here he made a name for himself in football. From the first he seems to have gained the high respect of his classmates and they believed he would do well at whatever he undertook to do. Years later more than one former cadet wrote to remind him how he had spoken commandingly as first captain.

His cadet traits were to stay with him to some degree the rest of his life. As I speak to those who knew him later, some of them say he was aloof, austere, difficult to know. Some say he was a born soldier and felt he had to discourage close friendships. But those who know him best speak of him differently. I have met him only on the plane of formal interviews and on the basis of reading his personal correspondence and of talking with his closest friends. This study reveals a mellower Marshall -- a man who has known the great of the world, but who can find time for a former soldier of his command or for the little boy from next door.

He has a sense of humor and he can tell a story on himself. Mrs. Marshall has preserved some of his and some of her stories in her book, TOGETHER. I like the story of his stop on the way to one of the great conferences, when he went to church and was asked to read the morning lesson. It proved to be a passage filled with the long and difficult names of the churches of Asia Minor. He read through the list somewhat haltingly, trying to say as quietly as possible some of the more difficult names. When he came to Philadelphia, he boomed out that name so loud that a lady in the audience was impressed and came up to say to him later that she could tell he was from Philadelphia from the fervor he put into pronouncing the name.

It has been my pleasure to go through hundreds of the General's papers with Colonel George and to see his many sided character through his marginal notes, his memos and his answers. The letters show sternness, even ruthlessness when he is dealing with incompetence, insistence on impartiality in the case of friends or relatives, strict adherence to the rules, a leaning over backward to be just. They also show warmth, gentle understanding, sympathy, paternal feeling, patience, a great capacity for friendship, and the ability to add a touch of humor. He has a dry humor for those who try to flatter him and a sharp edge for those who try to impose on him.

One of his great qualities is his memory. Early in his career as a soldier in the Philippines, he excited the admiration and wonder of his fellow officers by dictating a plan of operation for a maneuver without reference to notes. Lieutenant Hap Arnold has spoken of the way in which this lieutenant did a job which a lieutenant colonel would have been glad to have done.

In World War II, he astonished people by his ability to testify on statistics and dates without having to use notes. I find even now that if I ask him about points on which he spoke years before, he can still recall accurate figures. When I have spoken in amazement of his ability, he has said, "I was just talking about things I did every day."

When he became Chief of Staff in 1939, a young man wrote to say that he knew the General would not recall a small boy to whom he had fed chocolate candy during a fishing trip a number of years before. The General replied-- you are the boy who liked his black shirt so much you never would allow it to be washed. Another man wrote and said, "I was with a signal battalion and I came once to see you with another officer in France in August or September, 1918." General Marshall replied -- you came with major so-and-so, it was while I was writing on the plans for the St. Mihiel operation, and it was on August 17, 1918.

But lest we get too far afield, let us return to some of the high points of his career.

There is no time today for us to examine his career in detail. In the period 1901-1917 as he advanced from a newly-commissioned lieutenant to a 37-year-old lieutenant colonel in the 1st Division, a member of the first detachment to go to France in World War I, he served two important tours in the Philippines, was on duty in Texas, Arkansas, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, and served as aide to two high ranking generals. Perhaps the high point of this period of his life was his service at Ft. Leavenworth where he graduated first from the School of the Line, first from the advanced school, and was retained as the only lieutenant or one of the few lieutenants to teach in that school. We may say that in this period the deep thinker was coming to the fore.

This early phase of his life saw him attracting the attention of his fellows and his superiors, saw him develop in a great staff worker, a person who continued to seek more answers, who tried to know his profession a little better. More than one man has said to me -- and these were at least two-star generals -- "If I had my time to live over I would have worked harder at my job, like George Marshall." He worked not only from books, but he sought practical demonstrations of lessons. He developed not just his mind, but he had almost an

obsession on personal physical fitness. In particular, he liked hunting and fishing and horseback riding. He seemed to prefer sports which gave him a chance to reflect. One general told me that several times when they tried to arrange hunting parties for him when he visited their camp, he would ask for one man only, and that a sergeant. His reason: the sergeant knew where the birds were and he didn't chatter.

In the course of World War I, Colonel Marshall was sometimes assistant chief of operations and sometimes chief of operations in assignments at 1st Division, First Army, and GHQ. In his division, he planned the attack at Cantigny. Later, he wrote plans for the St. Mihiel fight, and still later the plans for the concentration of forces in the Meuse-Argonne offensive as well as operational plans for the fighting which followed. In this last action, he had the task of preparing and supervising plans to bring 220,000 French and Italian troops out of the line and to move up, in two weeks, some 600,000 American troops, together with vehicles, equipment and supplies. General Pershing, in singling out General Marshall for the credit for this operation, says, "It was a stupendous task and a delicate one to move such numbers of troops in addition to the large quantities of supplies, ammunition and hospital equipment required." Pershing also quotes the military correspondent of the LONDON POST as saying, "It was a fine piece of staff work and no other staff could have done it better."

With the war's close he became one of General Pershing's aides and he first toured the troop areas in Europe and then returned to visit with his chief many parts of the United States. More important he helped draw up plans for the peacetime army and in the period 1919-24 he became familiar with the American viewpoints on military activities and the problems concerned with establishing a proper national defense program.

Between 1927-1938, Colonel Marshall had a three year tour in China where he learned some Chinese, got an idea of how Chinese think and saw some results of Chinese civil war. Other assignments included duty in South Carolina and Georgia, responsibility for building Civilian Conservation Camps, the senior instructorship of the Illinois National Guard, and a brigade command at Vancouver Barracks, Washington. Perhaps the most important single assignment he had in this period was that of assistant commandant of the Infantry School, Ft. Benning, 1927-32, where he had charge of instruction. Here he was to influence deeply the training and the doctrine of the infantry. His faculty included at least 22 future generals -- captains and majors with names like Joe Stilwell, Omar Bradley, Joe Collins, Courtney Hodges. Here he stressed realism in training, brevity in orders, forcefulness in teaching. His officers were startled to be told one morning to produce a sketch map showing the route they traveled every day to work. He insisted that problems be conducted in the field as often as possible, and that the maps be the type they would have to use in combat. He refused to let his instructors use notes and he amazed them by suggesting that they dismiss class when they had nothing more to tell the students. He hammered on the need of producing manuals which could be understood by men who had little army training, and he demanded that drill procedure be as practical as it could be made.

In 1938 General Marshall was brought to Washington as head of the war plans division of the War Department. One biographer says that it was decided even then that he was to be chief of staff and this was in preparation for it.

Certainly, for several years, there were people throughout the Army who were saying that he was especially fitted for the job. After a few months in Washington he became deputy chief of staff and caused a flurry when he disagreed publicly with President Roosevelt in a conference of high ranking generals and admirals. It was nice knowing you, they said. Whether the President resented this we do not know. That it did not hurt his chances, we do know, because in April, 1939, he was promoted over the heads of several men senior to him and nominated for Chief of Staff to take effect when General Craig retired. As a result General Marshall became Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939, the day Hitler invaded Poland and precipitated World War II.

It was a rough day for the new chief of staff and one which called for all his powers of deep thinking. He needed caution and patience, because the United States was not prepared for war, and there was a chance that we might become involved. Many people opposed our participation in war and were disinclined to spend much on preparation. It was a situation which called for planning and building and statesmanship. General Marshall used the next two years to become familiar with the Army and Air Corps under his command. Preparing carefully for his appearances before Congress, he impressed the members with his thorough knowledge of his subject, his ability to rise above service rivalries, and his willingness to speak forthrightly. Opponents of the President's military programs often proved willing to back appropriations which General Marshall sponsored. Congress gave him a veto power over the President's power to ship our arms abroad and to vote him special funds for which he did not have to account.

General Marshall worked ceaselessly to get more troops; to train better troops; to improve materiel, to strengthen morale. Dozens of memos and letters show his effort to care for the soldier's health and comfort. One officer told me the story of how he called in a quartermaster officer one day and had him explain their efforts to make a more comfortable shoe and one better fitted to winter conditions. Before they finished they were down on the floor tearing the shoe apart to see how it could be improved. During and after the war he wrote again and again to commanders urging them to do everything possible to help their men.

The General could deal effectively with officers who did not pay close attention to his wishes. A story often reprinted is that of how he dealt with the fiery George Patton in 1942. There was some talk of sending an armored group to the Middle East and General Marshall summoned Patton to Washington from the California desert. Patton, who had a reputation for being difficult to handle, reported in and began to urge that the General send a corps instead of a division. General Marshall told him that he didn't have this much available and that he did not want to be bothered about the matter any more. Next morning he found on his desk a memorandum from Patton urging more. The General sent for an officer and said, "Put General Patton on the plane for California." Next time Patton reported he was ready to carry out the General's wishes. Yet he stood up for Patton when the latter had brought down heavy criticism on himself and there was some basis for removing him from command on the eve of the invasion. Despite the possibility of heavy criticism, General Marshall wrote General Eisenhower and said, "Make your decision on whether or not you need him. If so, between the two of us we can see the thing through."

The General did everything he could to impress on people the need for speed and the need to come to the point. On occasion when he had a new officer to send to a new post, he would ask him when he wanted to go. When the man would say, "I am ready now," he would send him to the proper office for his travel orders and then give word, put him on the plane and not send him back for his hat. It was understood that people coming to report to him were to come in without saluting or formality and sit quietly while he finished doing what he was working on when they came in. When he raised his head they were supposed to start talking. Then, to the horror of those who were unprepared, after listening carefully he would start snapping a number of precise questions when the man had finished. People didn't go to him unprepared for the second time. It was not that he was noted for tongue lashings. Rather he froze people with a disapproving look.

His insistence on saving time extended to the numerous inspections throughout the United States. A standing order was no parades, bands or honors.

Despite his efforts to save time, he would find the opportunity to do thoughtful and gracious things. As often as he could he would visit the Walter Reed hospital to brief his former chief, General Pershing, on the war. The memos show his directing that occasional conferences or briefings be held before retired generals in the Washington area who were beginning to feel they were being left out. When he visited cities where there were a number of retired officers, he would arrange for a dinner so that he could talk with them and make it clear that they were not forgotten.

The General was a wise counselor to the President; a trusted adviser to the Congress; a leader the country trusted. Some of you who may recall some criticisms in the Congress and in some of the national papers and magazines would find it of interest to read the Congressional Record and some of the back issues of these publications in 1943 when the President wanted to put General Marshall in charge of the invasion forces in Europe. They argued that General Marshall could not be spared from Washington, and some of the people who later criticized him said then that he was the one man in Washington who stood above politics and that he was the one person no one controlled. One tremendous quality was the fact that although he was entrusted with enormous powers -- Congress voted him a special fund for which he did not have to account and directed him to approve or disapprove Presidential orders for shipment of arms to our allies overseas -- he never once attempted to usurp civilian authority. No general in our history has been more observant of the primacy of civilian control. It is strange to hear critics say that he failed to fight a war on the basis of political considerations. His career and thinking were based, and I think rightly, on the view that the military are supposed to support the policy of the President and Congress and not attempt to make it. He was prompt to say what was needed to carry out that policy, and vociferous in his defense of proper military programs, but he wanted no battle between military and civilian authorities in the government.

We have no time today to discuss in detail his activities in World War II. We may list briefly some of the main contributions: (1) He was the chief leader in the proposal to appoint allied commanders in the various theaters; (2) he was a leading voice to hold fast to the prewar decision to make our main effort against Germany instead of Japan; (3) he was a leading voice in the demand to go directly

into northwest Europe instead of making peripheral attacks; (4) he supported strongly General Stilwell's efforts to make an effective fighting force of the Chinese soldiers; (5) his was the leading voice in the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is described by a British official historian as "first among equals" in the British and U. S. Chiefs of Staff meetings; (6) he had administrative supervision of the development of wartime atomic energy, for a time supporting the program from his own secret fund.

Perhaps one of the General's most difficult decisions in the war was that involving command in Normandy. As a soldier he had always wanted a combat command. It had been denied him in World War I, and he probably desired above anything else the opportunity of leading the forces he had developed into combat. In 1943 it had been tentatively decided that he would be made supreme commander of the invasion forces when they entered France. As the time for final decision drew near, President Roosevelt hesitated. The other U. S. Chiefs of Staff held that General Marshall was needed in Washington. At Cairo in December, 1943, President Roosevelt asked General Marshall what he wanted to do. It must have been a difficult decision. Technically, he did not decide, for he said he would do what the President decided. Actually, he knew it meant staying in Washington. As you know, he remained at home and to General Eisenhower went the honor of leading the troops to victory. Here was a case where deep feelings undoubtedly pointed to taking the command and then, honors that went with it. But deep thinking said he could do more at home. There he supported the great operations in Europe and, increasingly as more men and supplies were available, in the Pacific. It was this role that prompted President Truman to say at the close of the war that General Marshall was the great organizer of victory.

With the close of the war, General Marshall retired to Leesburg, only to be recalled by the President to undertake a mission to China where he would try to bring peace between the Nationalist and Communist Chinese. His feelings undoubtedly inclined him toward the peace of retirement; his sense of duty made him accept a mission which many felt was hopeless from the start. Too many hatreds, too many missed opportunities; too much war -- many factors made a proper solution difficult. Yet for more than a year he worked with members of all factions. The records show incredible patience and personal willingness to accept criticism and abuse calmly in the effort to get peace. Near the end of 1946, General Marshall suggested he be called home. As he was leaving the President announced that he was to be Secretary of State. D.A.

At 67, the old soldier turned to the field of diplomacy. The picture was no less dark than it had been when he became Chief of Staff on the day war opened in 1939. Europe was in the throes of a dreadful winter that had made postwar reconstruction worse than expected. Communism made use of suffering to extend its power in Greece, Italy, and France as well as in the satellite countries. Britain's power was weakened and the Soviets threatened Turkey and other countries friendly to the United States. A few weeks after becoming secretary, General Marshall spoke of the need of helping Europe. In March he attended a conference at Moscow, where he became aware of the extreme problem of dealing with Russia and the dreadful problem which faced Europe. While he was gone his assistants were drawing up plans to give military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey. When he returned he worked with them on a plan to aid the whole of Europe against hunger and want. In the Marshall Plan speech at Harvard in June, he invited the countries of Europe to unite to make a joint effort to

help themselves and then to ask the U.S. for aid. Russia forced the satellites to abstain but most of the other European countries came forward and bills for the European Recovery Program were introduced in Congress. There was considerable opposition, and it seems definite that without General Marshall's personal stand above party politics and his ability to get the wholehearted cooperation of Senator Vandenberg who brought aid from his party to the assistance of the Marshall program it would not have passed. Of this plan, Mr. Churchill has said that without this aid "Europe might well have foundered into ruin and misery in which the seeds of Communism would have grown at a deadly pace."

Mr. Churchill says further in his article, "General Marshall's decision was on the highest level of statesmanship, and it was a source of great pleasure, but not surprise, to me that my old friend should have presided in America over the two great enterprises of the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Treaty." Because under the General, the treaties regarding the organization known as NATO were negotiated. When he became Secretary of Defense, the organization was put into effect and he helped to speed to Europe a subordinate of World War II, General Eisenhower, to head once again the supreme headquarters in Europe.

General Marshall, as you know, resigned as Secretary of State in 1949. Shortly afterwards he became head of the American Red Cross, a job at which he worked most earnestly -- increasing the funds of the organization and stressing the blood bank program.

Shortly after war began in Korea, General Marshall was called again to high place -- this time to the office of Secretary of Defense. His efforts here were turned to getting men and equipment for that battle, while he was also pressing for the defense of Europe, under NATO, against communism. In one year he gave new courage and new impetus to our defense efforts. In September, 1951, he retired for his last time.

In 1953, General Marshall was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace at Oslo in the presence of members of the royal family and a distinguished audience. The Prize, given for the first time to a professional soldier, was given for his work for peace. It drew a demonstration from Communists in the gallery who yelled insults until they were put out. They succeeded only in starting a demonstration for the General and exciting indignation against their action.

A few years ago alumni of VMI started a committee, headed by Mr. John C. Hagan, Jr., of Richmond, to collect the General's papers and a Foundation was organized to raise money for a museum and library and a program of research. For nearly two years we have been engaged in a program of interviewing his former associates and in doing preliminary work on a biography.

In talking to many people and reading many books and articles about the General, I have found many tributes. He has been compared to Washington who built a great reputation as a soldier and then showed the finest qualities as a statesman. Others see in him similarities to Lee who fought well for his beliefs and who worked for the binding up of the wounds of war afterward. Again we can say he has the steadfastness of Jackson. One word is used more than

any other to describe this man -- that word is integrity -- a characteristic, the General said, they taught him at VMI. President Truman has called him the greatest living American; Churchill has said perhaps he was the noblest Roman of them all. You here at VMI, knowing the tradition of this school for teaching discipline and devotion to duty, knowing of General Marshall's desire to put his country above his personal feelings, will, I think, agree with me that Secretary of War Stimson's tribute probably best characterizes the man. On VE Day, he said:

"I want to acknowledge my great personal debt to you, sir, in common with the whole country. No one who is thinking of himself can rise to true heights. You have never thought of yourself. Seldom can a man put aside such a thing as being the commanding general of the greatest field army in our history. The decision was made by you for purely unselfish reasons. But you have made your position as Chief of Staff a greater one. I have never seen a task of such magnitude performed by man.

"I have seen a great many soldiers in my lifetime and you, sir, are the finest soldier I have ever known."