George C. Marshall: An Enduring Model of Leadership Effectiveness

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Authors' Note: This paper is dedicated to the memory of the exceptional individuals who were interviewed for this project. The world is a lesser place without them. We give a special thanks to the Marshall Foundation for their support.

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Abstract

General George C. Marshall is universally recognized as a paragon of leadership. Marshall's effectiveness as the leader of the U.S. Army during World War II, the State Department during the early post-war era, and the Defense Department during the Korean War are well known and documented. As a result of his many accomplishments, a number of researchers and historians have explored traits and factors that underlie Marshall's success. While many of these efforts provide insight into Marshall's leadership style, none employ original data (interviews) specifically focused on leadership, management, and character. This paper is based on interviews conducted in 1998 of the last remaining Marshall subordinates. These individuals—Brigadier General Erle Cocke, Jr., General Andrew J. Goodpaster, General Walter T. Kerwin, Ambassador George F. Kennan, and Mr. H. Merrill Pasco—were interviewed specifically pertaining to Marshall's management and leadership approach. The findings, depicted in this article, outline and map Marshall's effectiveness in both personal and organizational leadership.

Introduction

The early 21st century is a period of rapid and pervasive economic and political changes. Organizations—both public and private—are struggling to adapt to these changes and complex environments with various levels of success. Exceptional leadership is critical to effectively address complex organizational challenges.

Today's political, economic, and business environments are not unique for their rapid and pervasive change and associated opportunities and challenges. The Second World War and the challenges of the early Cold War period reflect such times. The challenges faced by the U.S. government and military were extraordinary. A parochial and undertrained U.S. Army would grow from 190,000 to over 8,000,000—entailing profound organizational, cultural, and logistical challenges (U.S. Center for Military History, 2009a, 2009b). Similarly, governmental organizations capable of developing and implementing a robust foreign policy would have to emerge, which required a dramatic transformation.

This article explores the origins and foundations of General George C. Marshall's effective leadership during the pivotal period of WWII and the ensuing Cold War. George Marshall served as the U.S. Army chief of staff during WWII and led the rapid expansion, professionalization, and modernization of the U.S. Army. During the period after WWII, Marshall served as secretary of state and later as secretary of defense, leading the U.S. response to the expansionist Soviet threat and the rebuilding of Western Europe. These challenges required innovative public policy strategies, creative and innovative organizational development, and above all, exceptional leadership.

The leadership and accomplishments of General Marshall, who was referred to by Winston Churchill as "*the architect of victory*" and by others as "*the rebuilder of Europe*," were profound and enduring. Marshall was referred to by renowned management expert Peter Drucker as one of the greatest leaders and industrial managers of the twentieth century (Drucker, 1967, p. 64). Undoubtedly, General Marshall was an extraordinary individual with a combination of unique personal qualities that made him a highly revered and effective leader. The George C. Marshall Foundation, created at the suggestion of President Harry S. Truman in 1953, organized and documented Marshall's accomplishments. The foundation's research library is replete with an impressive array of information documenting the general's life and activities. Research materials include interviews of Marshall and his contemporaries, supporting government, and other data. Drawing on this documentation, a number of books and articles have defined and explored General Marshall's leadership. These efforts, however, did not employ data (particularly interviews) that specifically sought to understand his leadership and character as a public servant. This paper is based on original unpublished data collected exclusively to explore the effective leadership of General Marshall.

One pervasive theme that emerged from these interviews pertained to the extraordinary character of General Marshall as exemplified by the virtues of prudence, a type of practical wisdom which is farsighted, goal-oriented, and focused on the greater good, and temperance, a virtue marked by humility and self-regulation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Perhaps the most interesting and instructive aspect of Marshall's virtue was his ability to display it in a variety of settings: in personal situations, in leading large organizations, and in dealing with external stakeholders. Insights from the interviews show that Marshall was able to act as the polite gentleman, the stern commander, and the consummate salesman, all the while maintaining a sense of consistency and integrity, which are the hallmarks of strong character (Palanski & Yammarino, 2007).

Interviews

In 1997, the foundation sponsored a research project to conduct interviews with individuals who had served with General Marshall during his time as Army chief of staff, secretary of state, and later, secretary of defense. Five surviving individuals who had directly worked with General Marshall were identified—all have since passed on. The interviewees, extremely accomplished and distinguished in their own right, were interviewed regarding Marshall's leadership and management characteristics.

The five interviewees interacted with Marshall early in their careers; two served as direct reports. The remainder interacted directly with him but reported to higher-level Marshall subordinates. The group was diverse: two interviewees were career military officers who later achieved the status of four-star general (General Andrew J. Goodpaster and General Walter T. Kerwin); one became a successful corporate attorney (Mr. H. Merrill Pasco); another was a renowned diplomat, historian, and political scientist (Ambassador George F. Kennan); and one was a prominent public and private consultant (Brigadier General Erle Cocke, Jr.). Each interviewee enjoyed a unique relationship with General Marshall during his tenures as Army chief of staff, secretary of state, and secretary of defense. (An outline of the interviewees' background and interactions with General Marshall are provided in Appendix 1.)

Prior to conducting the study, a literature review was conducted based on previous Marshall-related interviews, documents, and research located in the Marshall Foundation archives. Next, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed exploring the nature of such factors as management style, delegation, leadership characteristics, character traits, and approaches to alliances. This approach was consistent with Draft and Lewin (1990), who drew attention to the need to reorient research away from a tendency to incrementally develop conclusions footnote by footnote. The interviews were conducted from November 1997 to April 1998. The data, insights and stories gleaned from those interviewed, were derived from a retrospective understanding of General Marshall. For example, Generals Goodpaster and Kerwin were four-star generals and not only remembered their service with General Marshall, but also recalled how his leadership philosophy, wisdom, and organizational insights influenced the Army and military throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. In many ways this paper serves as a celebration of the insights and stories of the extraordinary men and heroes involved in this study. For this reason, and to avoid repeating previous analysis, this paper emphasizes the insights developed from the original interview data. This paper's findings, while guided by previous Marshall research, are not intended to be comprehensive, but are original in exploring the nature of Marshall's leadership and character.

Findings

Two major themes emerged from the data related to Marshall's unique leadership style—his personal leadership effectiveness and organizational leadership effectiveness. These themes were based on a combination of attributes not aligned with a specific trait or context, but are more reflective of overall character.

Theme I: Personal Effectiveness

Marshall's personal effectiveness was grounded in his basic understanding of the role of leadership, a highly structured work environment, and his ability to make quick yet informed decisions. Marshall was unique because he stayed out of most tactical decisions. He created "structured environments" within his organizations that were complementary to his work routines and that facilitated speedy and informed decision making. Marshall's personal effectiveness was also magnified by a persona that enabled him to control his emotions and display high levels of personal

integrity, placing the public good over personal aspirations.

One powerful message extracted from the interviews concerned General Marshall's unique ability to remove himself from the temptation to micromanage or become involved in non-essential decisions. Retired Generals Andrew Goodpaster and Walter Kerwin, accustomed to the challenges of command, independently identified Marshall's ability to remove himself from non-command decisions. When asked how General Marshall differed from other successful generals and leaders, Andrew Goodpaster paused for a moment and observed, "Marshall differed from other generals in that he kept himself out of most [tactical] decisions. It was not that he was uninterested; it was that he was disinterested in the sense of having no special interests" (A. Goodpaster, personal communication, February 10, 1998). General Kerwin supported this example of prudence:

> He focused on the big-picture issues and problems and left the details to others. I've known quite a few other [high-level] officers who got caught up in details, and they lost the big-picture focus of their objectives.… He mainly wanted to know what the [big-picture] problems were, that is, what's going on. He always asked [about] major issues and questions [that were related to such issues]. (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998)

George Kennan observed that Marshall's efforts as secretary of state were focused almost exclusively on large-picture issues associated with surveying the new world situation, developing recommendations and building political support.

> He asked them [senior-level subordinates] to refrain from bothering him beyond the minimal unavoidable degree with demands that would distract his attention from the major diplomatic problems… which he had been appointed [to address]. In the major matters that preoccupied him, he had a limited amount of time at his disposal. And he was very good and very firm in deciding what was of first importance and what was not. (G. Kennan, personal communication, January 29, 1998)

Earl Cocke (personal communication, April 29, 1998) also observed that Marshall wanted most [nonstrategic] issues handled at lower levels.

Freed from lower-level decision making, Marshall could build his personal effectiveness around structured environments that allowed for strict personal work routines, concise and direct information flows, limited internal access, and accelerated decision making, which were appropriate to the war and early Cold War eras. As an example of self-regulation, Merrill Pasco noted Marshall's highly structured daily routine:

> He got to the office at 8:00, he had a presentation from the Operations Division of the activities of the night before—very well done, very articulate officers—and then he had whatever appointments with staff heads that had been requested. Then, about 11:00, he had a period of time when he could see people outside, but you didn't make any appointments without his approval. And they ranged from all sorts of people in the Congress and in industry, from Mr. Bernard Baruch to John Martin, who was president of Pennsylvania Railroad. He left at

> lunch to go to Fort Myers, had lunch with Mrs. Marshall—took five minutes to get there—he was back after a short nap, which he could always take very easily, and then he worked until about 4:30. He spent a lot of time reviewing the requests from the field and reviewing staff studies that were presented to him. He had a very strict schedule, and he had a lot of balls in the air. (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997)

George Kennan described a similar work routine while Marshall served at the Department of State. He added that he did not work weekends, which were reserved for his wife and family, and as a result "it was very difficult to engage him during weekends" (G. Kennan, personal communication, January 29, 1998). Kennan further hypothesized that Marshall's work-hour limitations were largely influenced by his advanced age, but this analysis was not noted by Pasco (who worked with Marshall several years earlier). Pasco observed that Marshall made great distinctions between work and off times—implicitly for effectiveness. Marshall had a familiar saying that "nobody had an original thought after 2:00" (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997).

Marshall's daily routines were tightly controlled by his chief of staff, who limited internal access. Both Pasco and Kennan noted that only very senior-level subordinates had open access to Marshall, a privilege they did not abuse. Kennan recalled,

> Access to him… was very closely controlled, largely in the tactful and highly competent hands of custodian of his outer office… Colonel (later General) Carter. He always was prepared, I think, to receive officials of the department when they asked to see him. But he did not like anyone coming to see him to pass the day or to expose him to problems that people had been unable to agree upon at lower levels. (G. Kennan, personal communication, January 29, 1998)

Pasco observed a similar process, noting, "You had access and came to discuss an issue or you didn't come in" (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997). Kennan, analyzing the role of Marshall's gatekeepers, continued, "I personally thought at the time, and remain of that opinion today, that the restraints on access to him were… wise ones. In the major matters… he had limited time at his disposal, and he was very good and very firm in deciding what was of first importance and what was not" (G. Kennan, personal communication).

Marshall was particularly galled when valuable time and energy were wasted on internal bureaucratic or petty issues. Goodpaster recalled,

> Colonel Lincoln [Goodpaster's supervising officer] came back and said that he had never seen General Marshall so upset—red in the face and very tense. Marshall apparently told a small group, "I want to tell you what I've been doing for the last hour. I've been deciding which lieutenant general's wife lives in which lieutenant general's quarters." That type of political busy work disturbed him very much. (A. Goodpaster, personal communication, February 10, 1998)

Marshall sought to be well informed of major changes and events, but also sought to keep all meetings and communications as brief and concise as possible. The interviews revealed a number of

mechanisms and routines to achieve this objective. Kerwin described his operational briefings to Marshall as very short, between 15 and 20 minutes:

> In essence, what he wanted was to know what happened, and what went wrong and the problems that existed. He didn't want a dog and pony show… I'll always remember how the general would question people in briefings and other discussions…. He would ask, "Why do you say that?" many times during the meeting. (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998)

In another example of prudence, Pasco also noted Marshall's well-known and invariable rule that all memos and reports had to contain a one-page summary. "He said if you can't place the situation or solution in one page you hadn't thought it out" (M. Pasco, personal communications, November 11, 1997). Most activities that were not productive were avoided. Pasco (personal communication) observed that outside of the joint chiefs of staff meetings, he never recalled Marshall participating in roundtable meetings. Marshall felt these types of activities were a waste of time.

Marshall structured meetings and reports to quickly access information and analysis. He also demanded that his staff possess a thorough understanding of the underlying issues related to the situations. Marshall used this information to make quick and effective decisions. Goodpaster recounted an experience with Colonel Maxwell Taylor which involved two major generals in disagreement:

> Marshall read through this and finally said, "Well,…Taylor, what do you think I should do?" And Taylor said, "Well sir, I haven't thought about it." Marshall handed it back to him and said, "Please do so." Taylor said, "He never had to say that to me again." (A. Goodpaster, personal communication, February 10, 1998)

At times, Kerwin noted, "[Marshall] would review a summary… he would send it back to the group and say, 'Find out A, B, and C for me.' And then when it came back he would make a decision and move on to the next issue" (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998).

While Marshall's personal effectiveness was positively impacted by his routines and structured environment, much was also based on his personal wisdom. His ability to make effective decisions and retain large amounts of information, along with his self-confidence, formed the core of his success. Goodpaster stated succinctly,

> [He was able to] get to the heart of a problem to comprehend complex issues and put them in an orderly fashion. He had the ability and guts to make hard decisions and to carry good decisions to fruition, even in the face of strong opposition. He also had a unique [personal] ability to balance and prioritize complex issues in order to respond to them. (A. Goodpaster, personal communications, February 10, 1998)

Goodpaster recounted a story shared with him by Eisenhower while he was president. Eisenhower was tasked with providing overall strategic recommendations for winning the war. He determined, through detailed analysis, that Germany would be our first strategic target because with additional time, the Germans could both defeat

the Soviet Union and capture the Suez Canal. From this analysis, and other analysis, Marshall quickly concluded that the US should defeat Germany first. Even there, though Marshall faced political repercussion for this plan, he moved to implement.

In major decisions, Marshall listened to all sides of an issue but sought to avoid protracted debate. The interviews suggest he was critical of too many issues reaching his office without a consensus from his senior leadership staff. Kerwin noted that "He wanted to know what they recommended, and [for important command issues] he would make the decision" (W. Kerwin, personal communications, March, 20, 1998). Summarizing the structure of Marshall's policy meetings, Cocke observed, He would… start the meeting with "We're here to make a decision on this [issue]. I'd like to hear from the opposition here and the proponents here." And he'd let each one talk three to five minutes. Then the decision would be made. (E. Cocke, personal communication, April 29, 1998)

Cocke later observed that Marshall was "[critical of] Roosevelt during the war for allowing too many things [lower level issues] to come to him without a consensus" (E. Cocke, personal communication, April 29, 1998). Once Marshall made a decision, all of his subordinates were required to support that decision, but he carefully reflected on the competing opinions prior to making a decision.

Marshall respected subordinates who could provide advice and even dissent prior to a decision. In this manner, he appreciated subordinates who could disagree with his analysis—reminiscent of some of Marshall's earlier military experiences. Marshall's admonishment of General Omar Bradley and other junior officers in 1939 was well known. After joining the Army secretariat in 1939, Bradley and his cohort were called into Marshall's office, where they heard his displeasure for their lack of insight and independent thinking: "You haven't disagreed with a single thing I had done all week.… Unless I hear all the arguments against something I am not sure whether I've made the right decision or not" (Bradley and Blair, 1983, pp. 83-84). Marshall is also recorded as having admonished Eisenhower for not disagreeing with him more forcefully: "When you disagree with my point of view, say so, without an apologetic approach" (Pogue, 1993b, p. 410).

The interviews suggest a strong relationship between Marshall's professional style—widely viewed as austere and impersonal—and his personal productivity. Pasco noted that Marshall intentionally created a firewall between his professional and personal lives:

> On trips and on many other occasions, he would ask about families, but only during off-duty times. Whenever you were with him away from when he was performing his duties, he was interested in your family and children and what they were doing. When he made tours, however, he would focus on military training and the adequacy of supplies.… He did not mix [personal interest in others]; he did that separately. (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997)

While this approach is widely credited as a "command face" by many, it was viewed by the interviewees as, in part, a productivity mechanism. Younger officers interacting with Marshall were both in awe and "scared as hell" of him. As Kerwin,

Pasco, and Goodpastor described, no one wanted to displease him. Marshall's time and energy were dedicated to high-level efforts during WWII and later at the State and Defense Departments. Kennan said, "I cannot recall ever seeing him go very far from his office [at] the Department of State. He stayed there, by himself, and dealt with the people he thought it his duty to deal with" (personal communication, January 29, 1998). Kennan (personal communication, January 29, 1998) further mentioned a story where Department of State officials were chasing after Marshall as he was leaving for the day. Marshall completely ignored them.

General Marshall's personal effectiveness was based in large part on his temperance, that is, his ability to be in control of his feelings, moods, and impulses. He viewed anger as fatal and exhausting. Pasco noted continually throughout the interview Marshall's self-control and paraphrased the comments he heard firsthand:

> He would say, "I cannot allow myself to get angry, it would be fatal; it is too exhausting and too time consuming," [and he] recognized the [potentially] adverse impact of emotions on decision making… "Don't be a deep feeler and poor thinker," that sort of thing. He'd just say, "Don't let the emotions wrangle and whirl in you. Get to the bottom of it and make a decision." (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997)

Cocke added that he had witnessed Marshall unhappy with subordinates' work, but noted that Marshall was sensitive to them, "never admonishing anyone in front of somebody else" (E. Cock, personal communication, April 29, 1998). Kerwin recalled that

> He didn't overly react. I never saw him get mad in a briefing or meeting. I could tell when he wasn't pleased by his steely blue eyes and body language. He got mad when you didn't give him what he wanted. I never saw him overly mad, just irritated. The general… didn't get mad in the sense that a lot of people do when they get frustrated, sort of shooting off, pounding the desk, or something like that. He never got exasperated, and he never used any bad language, always polite. (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998)

Pasco observed a number of other things, besides poor performance, that frustrated General Marshall:

> [Marshall got mad at verbosity, people talking too much… long-winded reports, anything that wasn't concise and right to the point. And people that were unjustly critical of what the Army was doing—that used to outrage him a great deal. Of course he saw a lot of that, and he'd often write a Congressman and inquire about something that he read in the paper that he disagreed with. Those sorts of things made him mad. (M. Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997)

An essential aspect of General Marshall's personal productivity was the quality of placing the public good above any personal interest, thus exemplifying prudence and integrity. His selflessness, combined with his demand for excellence, motivated and sometimes frightened those around him. As Pasco observed, "We wanted to please him" (M.

Pasco, personal communication, November 11, 1997). Each of the interviewees hinted at being in awe of General Marshall—awe based on his superior judgment, demeanor, and selflessness. Paul Hoffman, head of the European Cooperation Administration, observed, "I have never known anyone who in my opinion was as completely selfless as George Marshall was in the handling of any problem. I don't think he ever gave it any thought as to how this would affect George Marshall" (Nitze, 1993, p. 8). Sexton stated, "I feel that George Marshall is just one notch below Jesus Christ" (Pogue, 1958c).

Theme II: Organizational Effectiveness

Marshall viewed organizational effectiveness through a holistic lens. Organizational effectiveness was facilitated by decentralized organizational structures and outstanding subordinates. He set overall strategy and priorities and allowed his subordinates to carry out those activities. Marshall provided subordinates with both authority and autonomy, but in return demanded clarity of thought, calculated risk-taking, and accountability. His organizational effectiveness was also related to his concern for building morale and keen ability to sum up political situations with important stakeholders and act accordingly.

Marshall possessed a holistic view of an effective organization. For Marshall, well-organized structures and competent and empowered subordinates were required for effective operations. As General Kerwin observed toward the beginning of his interview, "If you're looking for a real management forte, he reorganized the Army so that it could respond quickly and he picked the best and brightest for leadership roles" (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998). Effective and responsive command/organizational structures and people management skills were the themes that emerged throughout the interviews. Marshall clearly understood the importance of clear reporting lines. He also strongly emphasized delegation and accountability among subordinates. In all cases he expected and demanded that all members of his organizations put forth their best efforts. Given the complex realities of the milieu in which he served, these actions were exceptionally prudent.

Generals Kerwin and Goodpaster, both accomplished and experienced military leaders, provided the greatest insights into Marshall's organizational effectiveness. Marshall's well-documented Army re-organization of 1939 was central to their views on how he approached organizational effectiveness. As an insider, he was painfully aware of the difficulties associated with process and people and how these factors could adversely impact the U.S. Army during a critical period in history. When asked about Marshall's abilities, General Kerwin's observation was about his understanding how to organize. "He was a great organizer. I think the most important change he made when he became chief of staff right before the war was to reorganize the Army. He realized that the existing Army structure was not conducive to fast work" (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998). Goodpaster added, "The whole place was ossified before the reorganization, and that is why the restructuring had to occur" (personal communication, February 10, 1998). Marshall's long Army career provided ample evidence that organizational fiefdoms and ineffective commanders created an organization that could

plan voluminously but not act. Marshall served as a reformer and innovator, breaking up bureaucratic fiefdoms that sought authority and influence for the sake of personal power.

Marshall's view of organization effectiveness, however, was more than just the organization and process. He was renowned as a master manager of subordinates. The interviews revealed both Marshall's vision of command and his ability to implement that vision within a large, complex organization. Regarding the military context, Kerwin stated it very succinctly: "He was an outstanding commander and leader" (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998).

While history notes Marshall's mastery over delegation and people, what is less certain is what exactly this means. Interviews suggest that Marshall's approach was unique, not so much because of its objectives, but due to his ability to implement them. He identified the most talented individuals for critical roles, granted them authority, and then held them accountable for their success and failures. Goodpaster, speaking from the perspective of military history, observed that "Marshall had a reputation in the Army of being a free thinker and internal reformer" (personal communication, February 10, 1998). He was deadly opposed to the highly documented decision making that was currently employed by the U.S. Army. Goodpaster continued, "[Marshall] conducted a running battle with the commanders of the general staff school in Leavenworth, which was addicted to voluminous and ponderous plans and techniques" (personal communication, February 10, 1998).

In another example of wisdom, Marshall's ability to identify and advance talented young officers in the Army is well known. When asked what Marshall did best as a leader, Pasco, without hesitation, stated, "judge people's abilities" (personal communication, November 11, 1997).

The people equation was essential for Marshall. He identified and selected talented subordinates. Equally significant was Marshall's willingness to remove those subordinates who were not performing up to expectations. Once he became secretary of the Army, Marshall began a painful replacement of older officers with younger, highly talented officers. These older officers were Marshall's contemporaries, and such removals and retirements were personally painful. Pasco described the situation as "difficult and painful for Marshall" (personal communication, November 11, 1997). Marshall's willingness to remove subordinates, however, was not limited to officers of his generation. Any officer or subordinate who was not achieving his objectives would be removed. Pasco describes several of these circumstances:

> I saw him relieve three officers at Fort Jackson one day. He just saw the condition of those divisions, and he knew how long they'd been there and he thought it ought to be better, and somebody else would just have to get this corps in shape. He thought, they're going overseas soon, and they're not ready. He just saw that. Other times he'd get reports from the head of the armored force or whoever was handling the infantry divisions. They'd ask to have people reassigned and relieved, and of course, if they were of general officer level and in command

> of a division, the chief of staff had to approve the change. So he did it himself, but he got a lot of information too. And he could tell from the reports, efficiency reports and from the maneuver reports, which divisions were moving along and which weren't. He'd find out why and order their relief real quick. (personal communication, November 11, 1997)

Supporting this philosophy, Goodpaster noted that Eisenhower often mentioned that Marshall had "encouraged him to cut the deadwood" (personal communication, February 10, 1998). Interestingly, Marshall assigned authority based upon performance. Pasco's interview, in particular, was replete with his perspectives on those subordinates who the general personally enjoyed and those he did not. In all cases he treated his subordinates with respect and gave authority to those with the greatest ability. Pasco noted,

> There was no great love lost, but General Marshall respected MacArthur. He always called every officer by their last name, including McNair… you name them all, except George Patton… But whenever he referred to MacArthur, he always said "that fellow MacArthur." McCarthy always told me that that's the code word for "SOB." (personal communications, November 11, 1997)

There were close subordinates with whom Marshall would occasionally socialize, and others with whom he would not. Even so, his personal likes and dislikes did not count within the office—he found and promoted the best and brightest.

While Marshall was a taskmaster by any standard, he delegated significant authority and autonomy to subordinates, especially to theatre commanders. Marshall's view of tying authority to accountability was the essence of his leadership philosophy. Goodpaster said, "I used to speak with Eisenhower, often late in the afternoon, when he was President and I was working with him as staff secretary. On a number of occasions he stated that Marshall taught him the finer points of how to decentralize and delegate" (personal communication, February 10, 1998). Based on his broad experience as a general and commander, Kerwin observed that it is often difficult for a commander not to get caught up in details; however, Marshall did not do this (W. Kerwin, personal communication, March 20, 1998). At the Department of State, Kennan also observed a similar pattern of Marshall granting authority to subordinates but holding them accountable (G. Kennan, personal communication, January 29, 1998).

The interviews provided a number of examples of General Marshall's granting of support and authority to subordinates. Goodpaster observed that

> The earliest point of guidance provided to me was that General Marshall did not try to conduct military operations out of Washington, DC. He did not attempt to run the operational aspects of the war, but rather, he looked to the theatre commanders to do that. I was told if an officer took a proposed directive in to the General Marshall that told Eisenhower or MacArthur just what to do, he would ask, "What does General Eisenhower [or MacArthur] say about this?" And if he was told, "I don't know,"

then he would say, "Well, I think you had better find out." And if the same man did it twice, he would say, "Get rid of that man" (personal communication, February 10, 1998).

He later provided a number of examples, two of which are cited below. The first was told to him by Eisenhower, the second he witnessed when Marshall served as secretary of defense under President Truman.

> Eisenhower told me a story about Marshall visiting him during the North Africa campaign. When the operations in North Africa had been successfully completed, Marshall made a trip over to speak to Eisenhower… to congratulate him on his accomplishment.… Eisenhower said that one thing that he wanted to tell Marshall was that he was very much appreciative of an instruction that Marshall had sent him… that no American officer who served under Eisenhower's command was sent unless he wanted them there. And Eisenhower said, "I appreciated that greatly." General Marshall then stood back a moment, thought about it, and said, "Yes, Eisenhower, but it was more than that. If you had failed, you would not have had that as an excuse." (A. Goodpaster, personal communication, February 10, 1998)

> And [Marshall's propensity to delegate and empower] was not just limited to his role as the Army's chief of staff during the war. I remember when Marshall served as secretary of defense near the end of his career. At the time, I was working on Eisenhower's staff, which was attempting to establish NATO's nuclear command. General Gunther, Eisenhower's chief of staff, was the man charged with making that happen. In order to get the operation established as soon as possible, we tended to staff the command with individuals who had performed similar duties during the war. There was this one individual we desperately needed for the Military Assistance Program (a program that provided military equipment to NATO allies needing to build up their arms). We asked [Brigadier General Frank] Bogart and later his chief, Major General Stanley Scott, to have this man reassigned. Bogart, however, didn't want to give him up. So as reported to me, Major General Stanley Scott wrote a memo to General Marshall… a very good memo, stating the case really well… Marshall sent back with one line: "It is my policy at this time to give General Eisenhower anyone he needs—GCM." (A. Goodpaster, personal communication, February 10, 1998)

Another time, Goodpaster recalled Lincoln returning from a meeting with Marshall where he stated, "General Marshall reminded us again that man is made for action. He asked what action we recommend that we should take" (personal communication, February 10, 1998). Kerwin, a young Lieutenant Colonel at the time, repeated throughout the interview that one of Marshall's distinguishing characteristics was how intensely he would question subordinates as to their thought process and facts. He described the events in a meeting during the war that he remembered vividly. It was the only time he witnessed any hint of General Marshall not receiving the insights he expected.

> I sat in on the first series of briefings for [potential]

> military landings in Japan. I was mainly there because my boss was unavailable, and there were always some important questions about landing craft availability. During that meeting, I was sitting with all the generals and junior officers. General Marshall asked a whole series of questions on landing crafts. After about the third or fourth question, it was quite obvious that the group (General Hull, six to eight other generals, and a host of lesser ranking officers) didn't have the answers. I will always remember that meeting: General Marshall looked around the room, and everyone got up and filed out. It was like a death knell. When we [the lower ranking officers] left the meeting, I was pretty sure that all hell broke loose because he was very unhappy with the outcome of the meeting. (W. Kerwin, personal communications, March 20, 1998)

Kerwin and Goodpaster also remarked on the latitude they possessed when working in the Operational Division during the war. While neither was directly supervised by Marshall, their efforts were no more than two levels from Marshall's watchful eye. Kerwin joked that "I had more [real] power as a lieutenant colonel in the operation division than as vice chairman [of the joint chiefs of staff]" (personal communication, March 20, 1998). He recounted various stories where he led initiatives, including the establishment of a UK Command and leading an international training initiative involving radar equipment. Each initiative went to Marshall for review. Goodpaster also described projects where he and his group received high levels of authority and autonomy. One was the release of the deadly variable-timed (VT) fuse anti-aircraft weapon for land-based operations. The VT fuse had been employed on water during the war with deadly effects to destroy enemy aircraft, but it had never been used where the Germans could pick up the VT fuse and reproduce it. Goodpaster played a major role in the study and the later release of this weapon for land-based operations.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Marshall's leadership was to unlock the potential of subordinates to thrive in uncertain environments. This insight was identified by Goodpaster, Kerwin, and Pasco—those who interacted with him during the complex and uncertain years following Pearl Harbor. Goodpaster was most explicit in explaining what Marshall sought from his subordinates:

> Marshall didn't expect perfection from his subordinates. He knew that in times of war both sides were going to be caught by surprise. He was unique because he demanded that his people prepare for and quickly respond to surprises so that no event or series of events would be catastrophic. He demanded commanders take calculated and well thought out risks. MacArthur going into Leyte without air cover was a good example of the type of risks that Marshall encouraged. The whole operation was a big risk but probably shortened the war by six months to a year. (personal communication, March 10, 1998)

The observations of the interviewees, referencing Marshall's frequent quizzing and demand for intricate and complex decision making, also fit in this portrait of Marshall's view of an effective organization. Creative and dynamic thinking was expected from the entire organization.

Marshall's perception of people in the organization, however, was much broader than subordinate performance. He placed great emphasis on morale—especially when serving as Army chief of staff. At a student graduation in 1941, he said, "Where there is high morale… all things are possible; without it, everything else—planning, preparation, production—count for naught" (Hambro, 1953). Pasco, who frequently travelled with Marshall, said, "The general kept his finger on the Army's pulse by frequently visiting Army posts. [Whenever he] had any break in time he immediately wanted to see the troops being trained at Fort Jackson and Fort Bragg" (personal communication, November 11, 1997). On these trips, he questioned soldiers about what was on their minds. Pasco adds that he "was interested in the details of the soldier's life because that was the basis of good morale. And good morale was what the Army fought on" (personal communication, November 11, 1997). Marshall "was a great believer in doing the right things for the morale of troops" (personal communication, November 11, 1997).

Pasco also observed Marshall's creation of the Army morale officer, with the rank of brigadier general. The position was not a career graveyard. Pasco observed,

> It was supposed to be an important job. And he was very insistent on that. He thought that it was very important [to have people] who were articulate and capable… not people who were put there because they couldn't do anything else. (personal communication, November 11, 1997)

Much has been written about the success of General Marshall in his interactions with Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, Congress, the press, and the U.S. Navy. The interviews suggest a more complex explanation for Marshall's effectiveness in working with external stakeholders: his keen ability to sum up political situations and nuances and act accordingly. Within these political environments, he placed great emphasis on forming and maintaining alliances. In these settings, his personal embodiment of integrity, public service, and non-partisanship served him well. Marshall, as a holistic leader, possessed a strategic vision of what actions would be most effective and acted within the existing political environment to achieve the best outcome. He did so with candor and integrity in the context in which he operated, but he displayed considerable savvy and salesmanship where appropriate. Pasco observed that Marshall was "one of the greatest salesmen who ever lived and knew exactly how to approach people… [but] he rarely used this sales ability inside the Army" (personal communication, November 11, 1997). This observation provides considerable insight into how Marshall interacted with external stakeholders.

The interviews provided a number of stories and insights on Marshall's modus operandi with various external stakeholders while serving as Army chief of staff and in the Department of Defense. Given that three of the interviewees worked within the Operations Division during WWII, the majority of examples were related to that period and context.

Goodpaster and Pasco described interactions between Marshall and the U.S. Navy during WWII. Collaboration and information sharing between the Army and Navy was of paramount importance for the war effort, both for effective campaigns and to present a united front to the president.

Pasco (personal communication, November 11, 1997) observed that Marshall was keenly aware that President Roosevelt, an ex-Navy man and former under-secretary of the Navy, was reputed to have a bias towards his branch of the military. While Marshall possessed strategic and tactical differences with the Navy leadership on waging the war (especially with prioritizing the German over the Japanese fronts), he placed great emphasis on effectively collaborating with Admiral King, the commander of the U.S. fleet and chief of naval operations in WWII. Pasco continued,

> He made it a point of getting along with the Navy, made it a point of getting along with Admiral King. When anything came up, he would always get up and go to Admiral King's office. He "stroked his fur" that way quite often. And he recognized the importance of the Marines and the Navy and wanted to cultivate them, but it was very difficult with King because King was a very rigid, indoctrinating officer, with not a lot of small talk and personality, either… but a very good Naval officer. (personal communication, November 11, 1997)

Marshall was also well known for his effective interaction with presidents, Congress, and the press. He was also known for influencing public opinion. He clearly understood the unique dynamics of interacting with these external stakeholders. Clearly, part of Marshall's ability to affect outcomes was based upon the trust he engendered through the traits/characteristics of competency, strategic insights, integrity, faithful service, submission to civilian authority, and his apolitical nature.

In an exercise of practical wisdom, while Marshall always displayed candor and loyalty to the president, he also sought to adjust his methods in a way that would lead to his intended policy objective. For example, a staff officer came away impressed after witnessing a method Marshall employed to gain the president's support for the Army's reorganization and professionalization. FDR always declared himself a sailor, so Marshall ordered the creation of a visual consisting of a large cardboard diagram representing a ship: "Comprising the forward section, or bow, of the ship was a newly designated regular army triangular division. Back of that were two or three square National Guard divisions, and at the stern were the service elements to support the forward divisions" (Rosenblum, 1998). By encasing these organizational facts in a nautical container, however unrelated the two subjects may have been, Marshall succeeded in catching FDR's eye.

Marshall also placed great emphasis on his relationship with Congress. Pasco noted the significant effort Marshall dedicated to serving and effectively interacting with Congress. Pasco, who handled many Congressional requests, would continually interact with General Marshall on these requests with a summation of the request and a proposed solution. These were issues that Marshall was keenly interested in personally addressing. History reveals Congress's great respect for General Marshall. Pasco continued,

> Congress had great respect for him because of the way he performed when he went up there… they were willing to leave him alone. When he got called to the Congress, he'd get a staff study that told it all—its outstanding problems and solutions. He'd read it, but he wouldn't take it

> with him. And he'd arrive up there, always got there about two minutes late, so there'd be a… bit of suspense. He'd say, "You gentlemen want to talk to me? What do you want to know?" And after about the fifth question, he'd unload the staff study on them out of his head. He didn't memorize it, but he just had it in his head, and he had the ability to put it all in a logical way. He could make a case in the most amazing way you ever saw. If he believed in something, he knew how to sell it. And his character just sold itself.… Congress never doubted his integrity.… There was no question about whether what he said was right. If Marshall said it, it was true. (personal communication, November 11, 1997)

Marshall demonstrated great skill, loyalty, and integrity in dealing with Congress. As Pasco described, "When a request [from Congress] was submitted to Marshall, if it had merit they got it, if it didn't he told them no and why" (personal communication, November 11, 1997). There was no question that General Marshall's insight and analysis were correct. Congress accepted it. Like in his relationship with the president, Marshall was always gentlemanly and respectful. Goodpaster added that Marshall's persona in Congress was that of a "straight shooter" who never lied or wasted anyone's time (personal communication, February 10, 1998).

Summary

General George C. Marshall stands out as one of the most effective public servants of the twentieth century. This paper reported the results of conversations with the last remaining individuals who had served and directly interacted with General Marshall. This cadre provided their stories and perceptions of Marshall as a leader, stories that can be categorized into personal and organizational effectiveness that derived from Marshall's character. Marshall clearly behaved differently within alternative contextual environments while still enjoying universal respect as a man of integrity.

Marshall understood the importance of people, reporting relationships, and organizational structures that were necessary for an effective organization. He knew that the power of individual initiative could be undermined by a bureaucratic and ossified organizational culture. To change this, he both radically re-organized the old Army and empowered his subordinates. Empowered subordinates, however, are not always competent and effective subordinates. He provided great authority, but also great responsibility. Those who were not effective were removed quickly. Marshall established structured but flexible environments, with the delegation of decision making and adherence to an organization's mission.

One of the more interesting aspects of General Marshall was his ability to remove emotion from his decision-making process while still empathizing and respecting subordinates. History reveals that among the most difficult tasks for Marshall were removing his peer generation from command positions or passing them over for promotion, but still he did these things. He removed junior officers who were not performing. Marshall was also well known for employing talented and flamboyant individuals, such as Douglas MacArthur, who he may not have liked personally but respected. Marshall treated individuals with honor and respect. The leadership literature often describes this attribute as "emotional

intelligence" (Goleman, 1995). One could argue that Marshall could command others because he could command himself.

The interviews also suggest that Marshall was a master at balancing the somewhat contradictory forces of principle vs. pragmatism. Marshall was a man of great principle. History reveals his unique mixture of traits and characteristics, which include honesty, selflessness, intelligence and a keen ability to understand complex issues, reverence for the US constitutional system, and general leadership. On the other hand, Marshall's ability to articulate stories and "sell" his visions as the best policy outcomes is legendary. Gardner and Laskin (1995) observe that Marshall's messages were geared toward and sensitive to different audiences, but his personal ethos as a person of integrity and non-partisanship served him well. Cocke clearly notes that Marshall's speeches were related to specific outcomes. In fact, he was a master at simultaneously demonstrating integrity and non-partisanship while advancing his preferred solutions—he was in essence a non-partisan with strong political skills. He clearly perceived the intricate complexities of the political environment. He understood what he could achieve and what he could not achieve. As his actions with the Navy demonstrated, he would lose little battles to gain positive overall outcomes.

Marshall stands out among the full ensemble of American leaders in the excellence of his direct leadership in a military institution, in the larger society, and as a cabinet member with two portfolios. He assumed power because of his position in an institution, but he helped redefine that institution and others by the way he filled his role.

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Appendix 1:
Interview Participant Background

Brigadier General Erle, Cocke, Jr. (1921-2000). Erle Cocke, Jr. was a renowned WWII hero and public servant. He collaborated with General Marshall as national commander of the American Legion (1950) and later served as a consultant and civilian aide to General Marshall and the Defense Department. He maintained a relationship with General Marshall after Marshall's retirement from government service.

General Andrew J. Goodpaster (1915-2005). General Goodpaster, a well-known and leading general and public servant of the twentieth century, served under General Marshall during WWII and later during his tenure as secretary of defense. He was assigned to the Operations Division (formally the War Plans Division) after being wounded during WWII. There he served under Colonel G. A. Lincoln and regularly interacted and observed General Marshall. Later, he worked on special projects for General Marshall during his tenure as secretary of defense, most notably on Study 360, which explored the US's role in Greece and Turkey. General Goodpaster also assisted Marshall in writing his now famous 1953 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. General Goodpaster's close relationship with President Eisenhower also serves as a source of rich insights into Marshall's management and leadership. Goodpaster served as President Eisenhower's staff secretary and defense liaison officer from 1954 until 1961. During this time, Eisenhower shared with Goodpaster a variety of details about serving under General Marshall. General Goodpaster retired from the Army with the rank of four-star general.

General Walter T. Kerwin (1917-2008). General Kerwin, another leading general of the twentieth century, served as an operational briefer in the Operations Division after being injured in battle during WWII. General Kerwin was the Army's second highest-ranking officer in the mid-1970s and is considered the lead designer of the all-volunteer army launched in 1973. General Kerwin retired from the Army with the rank of four-star general.

Ambassador George F. Kennan (1904-2005). Mr. Kennan worked with General Marshall at the State Department from 1947 to 1948. Kennan served as a diplomat, scholar, and foreign policy advisor, is widely recognized as the early intellectual force behind the "Soviet Containment Policy," and was a major contributor to the Marshall Plan. Working with Marshall, Kennan created, and became the first director of, the Policy Planning Division within the Department of State. The Policy Planning Division served as a strategic think tank for Marshall.

Mr. H. Merrill Pasco (1915-2008). Merrill Pasco served under General Marshall in the Operations Division throughout WWII. During that time, he served both as assistant secretary and then as secretary of the general staff. Mr. Pasco interacted extensively with General Marshall and continued a warm social relationship after the war. After leaving the military, he joined the law firm now known as Hunton & Williams, based in Richmond, VA, where he served as managing partner and later as senior counsel.