

GEORGE C. MARSHALL

Legacy of Leadership

Leadership

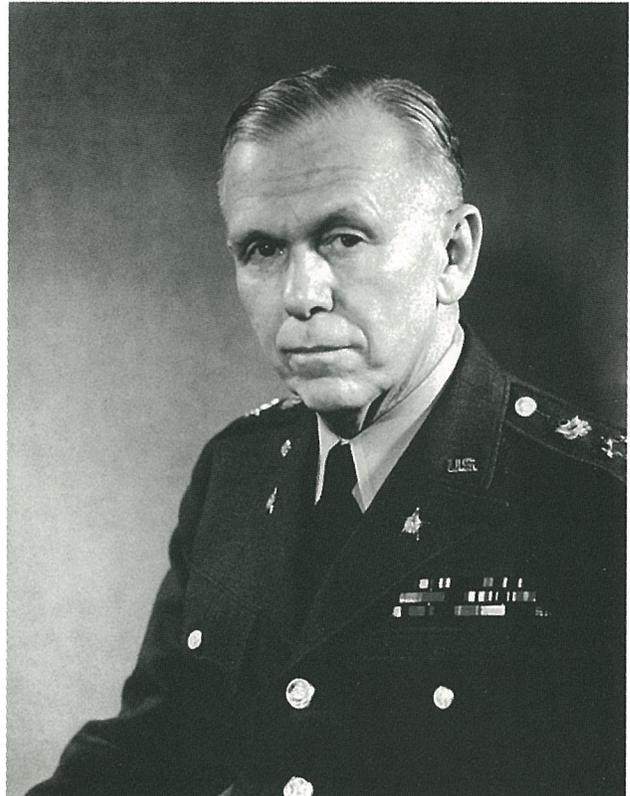
WHAT DOES IT MEAN? Like certain other concepts, such as “quality” and “service,” the word “leadership” has been thrown about so carelessly, it has almost lost its meaning. We have leadership seminars, leadership awards — even leadership schools. Perhaps it’s time to revisit what leadership really means.

Why George C. Marshall?

IT’S UNDENIABLE THAT GEORGE C. MARSHALL was a leader. He led America’s Army during World War II, was president of the American Red Cross, and held two Cabinet posts. Even so, positions of power do not make one a successful leader. By examining key moments in Marshall’s life and career, perhaps we can illuminate some of the qualities of effective leadership.

Five Stars — Five Leadership Qualities

CANDOR
SELFLESSNESS
COMMITMENT
INTEGRITY
COURAGE



MARSHALL'S LIFE

GEORGE CATLETT MARSHALL was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, on December 31, 1880. He graduated from Virginia Military Institute in 1901. The following year he received his first commission in the Army. He served in France during World War I, becoming General John J. Pershing’s most trusted aide. He was sworn in as Army Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939, the day Hitler invaded Poland. Churchill called Marshall “the organizer of victory” after the success of the D-Day invasion and the surrender of the Axis powers. Marshall served as Secretaries of State and Defense under President Harry S. Truman, and also as president of the American Red Cross. He married twice — first to Elizabeth Carter Coles, who died of a heart condition in 1927, then to Katherine Boyce Tupper Brown, who survived him along with two of her children. George C. Marshall died on October 16, 1959.

MAN OF WAR, MAN OF PEACE



Background

IN 1953, GEORGE C. MARSHALL traveled to Oslo, Norway, to receive one of the highest honors the world bestows — the Nobel Prize for Peace. The award recognized Marshall's humanitarian leadership in creating the European Recovery Plan, which even then was more commonly known as The Marshall Plan.

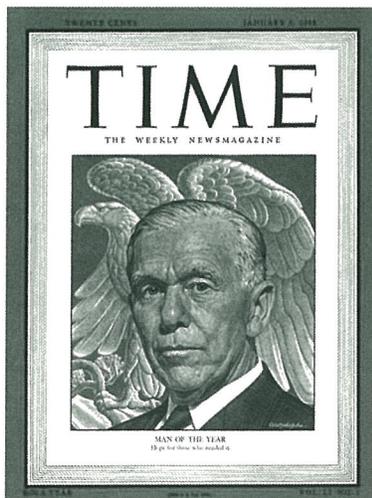
MARSHALL AND THE PRESS

IN THIS FICTIONAL SEGMENT, the reporter hits Marshall with tough questions, typifying the adversarial and skeptical relationship the press often has with politicians. In reality, Marshall was shrewd when it came to public relations. The famous "Why We Fight" film series was one of his initiatives, and he was also noted for answering attacks and dissent with silence. Respect for Marshall extended to the press — *Time* named him Man of the Year twice.



"...There has been considerable comment over the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to a soldier. I am afraid this does not seem as remarkable to me as it quite evidently appears to others. I know a great deal of the horrors and tragedies of war. ... The cost of war in human lives is constantly spread before me, written neatly in many ledgers whose columns are gravestones. I am deeply moved to find some means or method of avoiding another calamity of war."

— George C. Marshall



The NOBEL PRIZE

When Alfred Nobel, the Swedish chemist who invented dynamite, died in 1896, he bequeathed his fortune to creating five prizes to be awarded yearly. The Prize for Peace stands out as the one award that recognizes humanitarian instead of scientific efforts. Nobel's will stipulated the Peace Prize should be awarded "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." Well-known recipients of the award have included Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, and the Dalai Lama.

CANDOR

Background

IN 1917, THE UNITED STATES had a standing army of only 130,000 men. The First Division, hastily assembled from draftees and regular soldiers, was sent to France to boost Allied morale. Major General William Sibert, the division commander, placed Captain George C. Marshall in charge of combat training. Marshall knew his men would not survive the harsh reality of battle. They had little combat training and lacked basic equipment such as rifles — some men had to drill with broomsticks. But Pershing was under intense pressure to send his troops to the front lines to relieve the beaten-down French and British soldiers. He often dropped in on Sibert and soon realized it might be a year before his force was combat-ready. On October 3, during an inspection, he vocally attacked General Sibert and his new chief of staff in front of the men. Marshall, indignant with rage, grabbed Pershing's arm and shot back that many of their problems were coming from the top. He unloaded an angry but cohesive torrent of grievances that needed fixing. Pershing replied he would "look into it" and to "appreciate the troubles [he had]," but Marshall reminded him that "we have them every day... and we have to solve every one of them by night."



*Pershing conducts one of his famous reviews;
Right: Marshall in 1918.*



MARSHALL'S TEMPER and AFTERMATH

FOR A MAN famous for an even, stoic temperament, the episode with Pershing stands out. Even Marshall recalled his outburst as inappropriate, and later regretted speaking his mind. Pershing,

however, did not hold Marshall's candor against him. The following spring, he had Marshall assigned to his headquarters and soon made him his aide-de-camp and most trusted advisor. Pershing charged Marshall with the planning of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, which turned the tide of the war.

GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING

JOHN J. PERSHING served with distinction during the Spanish-American war. He was one of only two Americans ever to hold the rank of General of the Armies of the United States — the other was George Washington, who was promoted posthumously. Pershing had a reputation as a taskmaster who held his subordinates to high standards.



Questions

1. Top-down mismanagement prompted Marshall's outburst to Pershing. Are leaders encouraged to be honest in their comments in your organization?
2. Although Pershing was known to be a tough commander, he admired Marshall's candor. Why is honesty considered "uncomfortable" in most organizations? What can we do to change that view?
3. Marshall knew he was out of line with Pershing and worked from then on to cultivate his famous stoic persona. What are some concrete ways we can be truthful to our associates and yet maintain respect and civility?

SELFLESSNESS

Background

ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1939, Hitler's armies invaded Poland, igniting the Second World War. George C. Marshall, already in line to become Chief of Staff of the Army, was awakened at 3:00 A.M., informed of the invasion and rushed to the White House to be sworn in. From the very beginning, Marshall knew he would lead during a time of war.

Marshall never forgot how unprepared the U.S. Army was going into World War I. Determined to avoid the same mistakes, he knew that an army run by former cavalry officers would be ill-suited to lead battles fought with mechanized equipment. He had long compiled a list of promising young officers he had trained and worked with. He believed these men should ready America for war.

But the political situation was touchy. Republicans, including isolationist "America Firsters," held the majority in Congress and might seize an opportunity to halt moves that looked like a build-up to war. When Marshall, who was about to turn 60, proposed retiring the "old brass," he also offered his resignation to show that he was serious about reform, and to spare his commander-in-chief embarrassing charges of hypocrisy.

HARRY HOPKINS AND FDR

HARRY LLOYD HOPKINS never held a Cabinet

position, yet he was often remembered as President Roosevelt's closest advisor. One of the architects of the



New Deal, Hopkins promoted an aggressive policy against Nazi Germany in the prelude to the war.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt also believed war was inevitable, but took a more cautious approach, backing only material support to the Allies until the attack on Pearl Harbor. His casual style contrasted sharply with Marshall's formal demeanor. Still, FDR had immense respect for Marshall. He refused to accept his resignation.

Below: Marshall and his senior staff in 1940.



Marshall stated that America in 1939 "might be compared at this hour to a very young giant in a position of tremendous power, possessing all those youthful qualities of virility, idealism and directness of purpose, undeterred by the wisdom of years."

Questions

1. What is the state of selflessness in your organization? Are people committed to goals that benefit the whole organization and its mission?
2. Marshall was very well-respected by the Republicans in Congress, so his own reputation probably wasn't at stake. Why, then, would he resign the highest post in the Army?
3. Marshall said, "I have but one purpose, one mission, and that is to produce the most efficient army in the world." To that end, as House Speaker Sam Rayburn remembered, "He would tell the truth, even if it hurt his cause." This meant leaving partisan politics out of his arguments to build a wartime military. In the end, his strategy succeeded. Would Marshall succeed in today's Congress? What do you think is behind our need for self-promotion and adherence to party philosophy in lieu of a common mission?

COMMITMENT

Background

WITH THE UNITED STATES deep into a two-front war, Marshall became increasingly concerned with a manpower shortage on the battlefield. To head off this potential disaster, he met with Massachusetts Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers, who had drafted a bill to create a Women's Army Corps. African-Americans were already serving in the military, but in non-combat positions — their ability and courage on the frontlines suspect in the eyes of some. Marshall had already promoted the first African-American general, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., and was prepared to send more African-American troops into action over the objections of some Southern commanders and politicians. Two Nisei (second-generation Japanese-American) battalions were also formed. They also encountered vocal resistance — General Dwight D. Eisenhower refused to command them.

The TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

More than 900,000 African-Americans served during World War II, but no unit is more famous than the Tuskegee Airmen. Commanded by Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., son of the first black general and a West Point graduate, the Airmen were deployed to the Mediterranean, earning not only the eventual respect of the Allied bomber crews they protected, but also the German pilots, who dubbed them "Schwarze Vogelmenschen" (Black Birdmen). The Tuskegee Airmen also flew attack missions, but they are best known as the only escort group to have never lost a bomber to enemy fighters.



The WACs

"REPLACE A MAN FOR COMBAT" was the slogan of the Women's Army Corps. But that didn't protect women soldiers from war's perils. Five WACs on the way to the North African theater saw

their ship torpedoed, and they barely escaped with their lives. After helping to rescue others, they reported to General Eisenhower, who later said,

"During the time I have had WACs

under my command they have met every test and task assigned to them . . . their contributions in efficiency, skill, spirit and determination are immeasurable." Women — including a battalion of 800 African-American WACs — served in many important roles, including the cracking of key enemy codes.

The "NISEI" BATTALION

COMPRISED OF MORE THAN 1,400 AMERICANS of Japanese ancestry ("Nisei"), the 100th Infantry Battalion fought with valor in the Italian theater, spurring commanding General Mark Clark to wire, "Send me all you got!" The War Department complied, recruiting even from internment camps. The 100th sustained heavy casualties and proved beyond any doubt where its national loyalty lay. To this day, the 100th Infantry Battalion is the most decorated unit in U.S. military history.

Questions

1. What was Marshall's tactic when confronted with opposition to his plan to diversify the armed forces?
2. Would this be an effective strategy in your organization? If not, how else can a leader express his or her commitment to a worthy vision?
3. Marshall should have tried harder to attain "buy-in." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? How does this apply to your organization?

INTEGRITY

Background

ON JUNE 5, 1947, SECRETARY OF STATE MARSHALL delivered the commencement speech at Harvard University. In the 1,500-word oration, he called attention to the plight of post-war Europe. Starvation, poverty and ruined infrastructures were leading to despair and chaos. The United States and other prosperous countries should help, he said, if the European nations themselves took the lead in planning the recovery.

Marshall had not suggested a specific amount of aid in the speech, but when the number came, it proved hard for Congress to swallow — \$17 billion. The new Republican majority was wary of Truman and the proposed outlay of dollars. But Marshall's reputation kept the plan on the table. Through his factual, persuasive arguments, Marshall gained the support of Senate majority leader Arthur Vandenberg. It would take almost a whole year before the European Recovery Act was signed.

MARSHALL the POLITICIAN

AS A GREAT LEADER, Marshall gave decisive orders and knew how to persuade. Although he worked in two Democratic administrations, few Republicans viewed him as a partisan figure.

"It is imperative that cold factual analysis prevail over enthusiastic emotional outbursts," he observed. Truman's view of the Plan's success was even more blunt: "Can you imagine its chances of passage in an election year in a Republican Congress if it is named for Truman and not for Marshall?"

Marshall painted European recovery as being in America's best interests. Without it, he said, we would be looking at a Communist sweep of the continent, and then perhaps another world war. This tactic was essential, as isolationists like presidential aspirant Robert A. Taft wielded considerable power in the GOP.



The MARSHALL PLAN

AFTER WORLD WAR II, Europe lay in ruins. Many feared that the situation echoed the depression that precipitated the rise of Nazism and Fascism. In fact, native Communist parties seemed poised to take over in Italy and France. While debate raged on in Congress, Czechoslovakia fell to Communism in February of 1948. This solidified bipartisan support for the Plan. President Truman signed the European Recovery Act into law on April 3, 1948, shortly before elections in Italy. The Communists were defeated in those elections.

Although everyone called the European Recovery Plan "the Marshall Plan," the details were hashed out by George Kennan, William Clayton, and others in the State Department. Marshall was also adamant that Europe should oversee its own recovery; the United States was not interested in a soft imperialism or micro-managing how the funds were spent.

At the conclusion of the Plan, the economies of Europe (with the exception of Germany) had risen to their pre-war levels. The Plan also paved the way for European economic cooperation. To this day, the name of George C. Marshall is spoken with reverence in the nations his Plan benefited.

Questions

1. According to the (fictional) senators in the segment, what were some of the qualities that made them trust Marshall? Is it difficult to foster those qualities? What are some of the challenges in building a reputation like Marshall's?
2. Would the Marshall Plan pass in today's Congress? Discuss the factors that would help or hinder its passage.
3. In addition to integrity, Marshall displayed extreme patience. The journey from proposal to passage of the Plan took almost a whole year. What are some of the challenges to persisting in this sort of long-term process?



COURAGE

Background

ON SEPTEMBER 15, 1950, GENERAL DOUGLAS MacARTHUR staged a risky invasion of Communist-held Korea at Inchon. The gambit was so successful, MacArthur was able to push the Communist forces all the way to the Chinese border. He requested permission to pursue the enemy into China. Secretary of Defense Marshall refused, wary of antagonizing the Soviet Union and perhaps bringing it into the Korean conflict.

MacArthur was livid. He viewed the situation in Korea as a personal rejection of his victory. The politically-connected MacArthur found allies in Indiana senator William Jenner and the junior senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy.

The ACCUSATIONS

SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY'S accusations against Marshall were numerous. He felt that Marshall, as FDR's proxy at the Yalta conference, had ceded too much of Europe to Stalin in exchange for his help. McCarthy also charged that as special mediator in the Chinese civil war, Marshall was personally to blame for Mao's rise to power. The rally of enemy forces in Korea was the capstone on what McCarthy viewed as Marshall's soft attitude toward Communism. The senator published his charges in a 60,000 word report titled *America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall*.



Senator William Jenner was harsher. He tore into Marshall, calling him "eager to play the role of a front man for traitors." "General George C. Marshall," he said on the Senate floor, "is a living lie."

Marshall's response to these charges was quintessentially Marshall. When accused of helping to suppress a report on the Chinese civil war, Marshall stated bluntly, "I did not join in the suppression of the report. I suppressed the report." Mostly, Marshall refused to justify these attacks with a response. He observed, "If at this stage in my life, I still have to defend my patriotism, then what's the point?" Disillusioned by the smear campaign, Marshall chose to retire from public life in 1951.

Questions

1. What do you think of McCarthy's criticism of Marshall? Why would Marshall have pursued the policies that McCarthy attacked?
2. What is your impression of Marshall's response to McCarthy and Jenner? How do you deal with critics in your organization?
3. How do you view Marshall's commitment to his ideas and actions? What gave him the confidence that he was right and his opponents wrong?

KATHERINE MARSHALL

BOTH MARSHALL AND KATHERINE BOYCE TUPPER BROWN were widowed when they met. A strong-willed woman who loved the outdoors, Katherine proved a worthy match for the general. Marshall had always wanted children, and he regarded his three step-children as his own. When his sons signed up for service during World War II, Marshall took pains to avoid any appearance of favoritism, refusing to review their postings. The youngest son, Allen, was killed by a German sniper while commanding an armored unit.

Marshall eschewed social contact with his associates after work. This added to his reputation as an unbiased leader, but it also meant Katherine was his only constant companion. Marshall spent most of his free time with her alone. Katherine would have often been the only one privy to her husband's emotions. Marshall preferred it that way. In urging Dean Acheson, his second-in-command at the State Department, to speak openly and even criticize him, Marshall said, "I have no feelings except those I reserve for Mrs. Marshall."



CHRONOLOGY of GEORGE C. MARSHALL'S LIFE

December 31, 1880: George Catlett Marshall born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

September 1897 to June 1901: Cadet at Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, Virginia.

February 11, 1902: Marries Elizabeth Carter Coles.

February 2, 1902: Commissioned Second Lieutenant.

March, 1907: Promoted to First Lieutenant.

June 1917 to July 1918: Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations), and then G-3, 1st Division, American Expeditionary Forces (AEF), France.

May 1919 to July 1924: Aide-de-Camp to General John J. Pershing.

September 15, 1927: Elizabeth Coles Marshall dies.

October 15, 1930: Marries Katherine Tupper Brown.

September 1, 1939: Sworn in as Chief of Staff of the Army in the grade of General.

January, 1944: *Time* Man of the Year.

December 1944: Promoted to General of the Army (five stars).

November 18, 1945: Retires as Chief of Staff of the Army.

January, 1947 to January, 1949: Serves as Secretary of State.

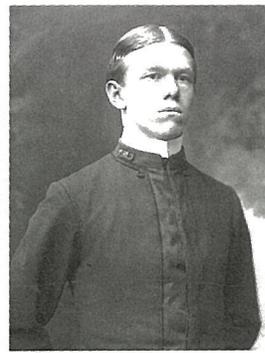
June 5, 1947: "Marshall Plan" speech at the Harvard University commencement.

September 1949 to September 1950: Head of the American National Red Cross.

September 1950 to September 1951: Serves as Secretary of Defense.

December 1953: Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the Marshall Plan.

October 16, 1959: Dies at Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C.



For Further Discussion

1. We have discussed five qualities of effective leadership. What are some others?

2. Marshall was not born with connections or great wealth. He did not attend West Point and was an outsider among officers. Marshall had to cultivate and nurture his leadership abilities in the lower ranks even as contemporaries leapt ahead of him. In the end, his leadership is remembered as the more effective and successful.

Discuss whether leadership is innate or willfully developed. What are the strengths and liabilities of being a "late bloomer" like Marshall?

3. Are there any common threads to Marshall's thinking?

Why were his plans for World War II and European recovery so successful? Discuss whether these successes were a consequence of great leadership, or of other factors.