



George Marshall

1880-1959

Picture this: you are a career army officer. Ever since you were young, you have wanted to be a soldier, to serve your country, to feel the glory. You have had a fine career with many promotions and now you are a general. But you are a desk soldier, the one who does the planning for the soldiers in the field, and you hate the desk. All of your life you have wanted to lead troops into combat, to see “action,” but because of your talents with planning, you are always assigned to the desk.

Then your country finds itself in the middle of a huge war. From your desk you plot how to win that war. Finally it comes time to decide who will lead the key battle that could end that war forever. Many people think you should be that commander. They believe you deserve it after all these years and that you’d be the best one for the job. As an officer under orders, however, it’s not for you to say—or is it? Incredibly, the President himself calls you into his office. He knows the planning you’re doing is very important, but he asks you, point blank, if you’d rather lead that invasion. You’re standing there, looking at the President and he’s waiting for an answer. What do you say?

More than fifty years ago, a man named George Marshall faced that decision. Several years into World War II, the Americans and British were ready to flood into Europe, liberate France, and defeat the Nazis. Who would lead the Allies into victory? All Marshall had to do was ask for the job and a big place in history would be his. The President waited for a reply. What did Marshall say? To answer that question, we first have to answer an even bigger one: just who was George C. Marshall anyway?

Boy Becomes Man

George C. Marshall, Jr. was born on the last day of the last month of 1880, the last of three children born to George C. Marshall, Sr. and Laura Bradford Marshall. He had an older sister (Marie) and an older brother (Stuart) who were already in school by the time Marshall could walk. Though his parents had roots in Virginia and Kentucky, the Marshall family lived in Uniontown, Pennsylvania (near Pittsburgh) where business with the coal industry provided a good living for his father.



Marshall was the youngest of three children.

George Marshall grew up at the end of the 19th century, which in many ways was the end of one era in American history and the beginning of another. It was a simpler time, before radios and movies and airplanes or cars, and Marshall spent much of his time outdoors, playing with friends and getting into trouble. Real trouble began, though, when Marshall went to school and did not live up to his parents' expectations.

Marshall's sister and brother both did well in school, but Marshall did not. He was behind in reading, math, spelling, even handwriting and he felt ashamed about it. Marshall very much wanted others to respect him, but only in one subject did his great intelligence shine through—history. Back then, would anyone have believed that this struggling student would one day make history? It seemed impossible, just as impossible as imagining a world of cars, airplanes, televisions—and global war.

Marshall never had an easy time with school. In fact when it came time for Marshall to go to college, his own brother begged their mother not to send Marshall to the college he had attended. That college was the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, Virginia, where Stuart had already graduated. In Stuart's opinion, sending Marshall to VMI

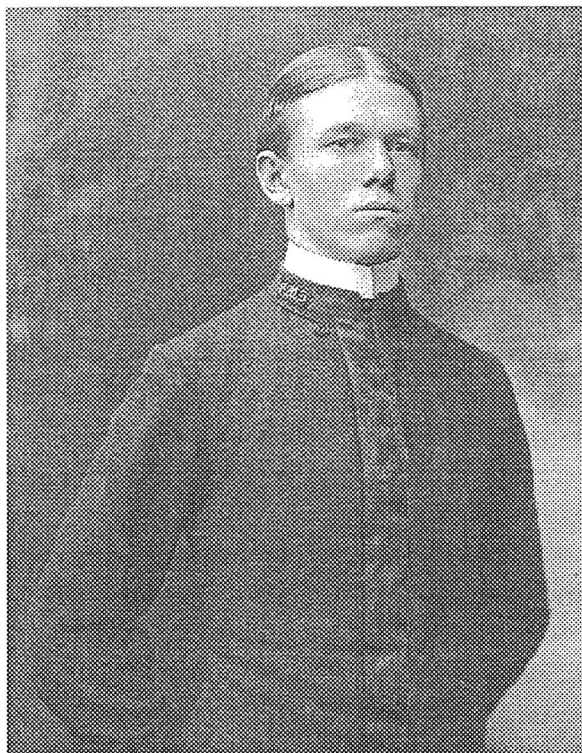
would disgrace the family name. By accident, Marshall overheard that conversation. It hurt him greatly. He resolved to prove his brother wrong. But could he do it?

Marshall was only sixteen years old when he arrived at VMI that fall of 1897. He had committed himself to doing well but knew he had a tough challenge ahead of him.

Fortunately, Marshall was a good observer of situations and saw how the "game" at VMI was played. Unlike other colleges, VMI offered students two ways to succeed. Cadets could excel as students, and they could also excel as soldiers-in-training. Marshall then took stock of himself. He desperately wanted respect, but he knew he wasn't as well-prepared as other students. Succeeding in the classroom would be hard. Why not aim to succeed by being a great military cadet instead?

The first year at VMI, Marshall set his goal and kept focused on it. He learned the military rules at VMI and disciplined himself to follow orders. He polished his shoes and learned how to march. He struggled to become the best cadet he could be. It worked. By the end of that first year, Marshall had become the top military student in his class. By his fourth year, Marshall was First Captain, the highest ranking cadet on campus.

Top rank at VMI brought Marshall the respect he deserved, but it also brought him something more: Marshall learned how to be a good leader. As a boy, Marshall was always thinking up schemes and getting his friends to help him carry them out, but VMI took his abilities one step further. Since Marshall was the leader of his classmates, he had to learn how to lead them when they liked him and when they didn't. It was one thing to give an order, Marshall learned, and quite another to make sure others carried it out. Being a good leader required not only a decisive mind, but also strength of character. To gain respect,



Marshall as a VMI cadet in 1900.

Marshall had to show respect. To demand hard work, Marshall had to work hard. To expect honesty, Marshall had to be honest. Basically, if Marshall wanted others to hold to a high standard of conduct, then he had to set the example. True leaders, Marshall discovered, had to act the way they wanted others to act. They had to become strong persons of integrity. At VMI, Marshall began the life-long process of building that kind of strength.

Life in the Service

Marshall graduated from VMI the same year the United States entered the twentieth century. What would he do now? VMI cadets don't automatically become soldiers in the military. Marshall, however, knew his leadership and problem-solving abilities made him well suited for a military career. He decided to join the military even though his family at first thought he should do something more "respectable" with his skills.

Marshall knew serving the needs of his country would not always be easy. For example, during his very first assignment in 1902, he was sent thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean to the Philippine Islands. Marshall's job was to help oversee American troops occupying the islands after the recently ended Spanish-American War. As a young officer, Marshall had to learn how to lead men who were older than he was and he had to figure out how to keep up their morale in dreary jungle conditions.

Answering the call of his country also meant Marshall had to learn how to live without his new bride, Lily Coles, who stayed behind in Lexington, Virginia. He had courted Lily his last year at VMI (she lived nearby) and had married her just ten days before leaving for the Philippines. Lily was devoted to Marshall, but life-long frail health often prevented her from



Marshall married Lily Coles in Lexington, Virginia before he left for duty in the Philippines.

accompanying Marshall on his assignments. Her poor health also kept her from having children. Marshall returned from the Philippines in 1903, but the two continued to endure periods of separation until Marshall enrolled at an officers' training school at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas in 1906.

Attending school was not one of Marshall's favorite activities. He was eager for military promotion though, and knew more schooling would help his career. The problem was that Marshall once again found himself last in line. At age twenty-five, Marshall was the youngest student at the school; he also held the lowest rank. Worse still, he faced his old enemy: the classroom. At Leavenworth, only the top half of the first-year class would be invited back for the second and final year. When Marshall overheard fellow students speculating who among them might be coming back for the second year, he became alarmed not to even hear his name mentioned.

Once again, Marshall faced a challenge: how could he make it? Just as he had done at VMI, Marshall observed the situation and made a plan. Unlike VMI there was only one route to success at Leavenworth and that was good grades. Marshall knew he had to work hard. While other students went out nights, he stayed in his quarters and studied. Marshall's plan worked. By the end of the first year, Marshall was ranked number one in his class. At the end of the second year, he was still at the top. He was so good that when he graduated, the school hired him as one of its instructors!

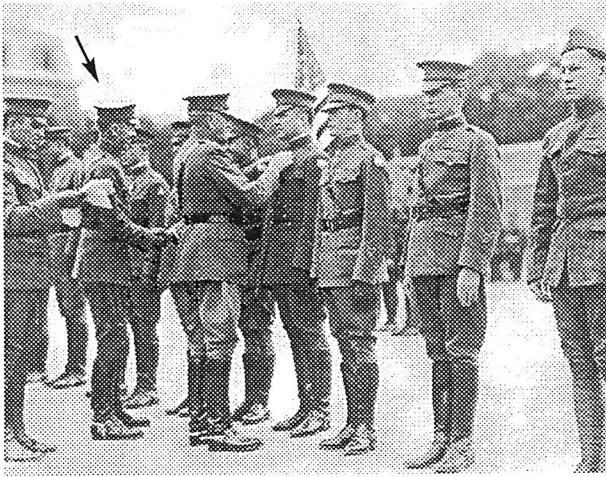
Marshall had again proved how able he was to solve problems with a good plan. This skill was not only useful in his personal life but also in his military life. A few years later, in 1913, Marshall was sent back to the Philippines; there he oversaw a very large training exercise with U.S. troops. Marshall was put in charge of 5,000 soldiers who were to pretend they were invading the island from the sea. The invasion was just a practice activity, but Marshall's planning was real. Marshall was only 34, and only a lieutenant, but he led like a general. Everyone saw that Marshall was a brilliant problem-solver and a man who received the highest respect from his troops. What would the future hold for such a promising young officer?

Desk Warrior

Unfortunately, the future brought war. When Marshall returned to the United States in 1916, his country was at peace, but Europe was not. Countries within Europe were fighting with one another in a conflict which later would be known as World War I. Would the United States be able to stay out of the Great War between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) and the Allied nations (Great Britain, France, and Russia)? It didn't seem likely. The United States did not want Germany to rule over other European countries. Plus, the Germans were interfering with American travel and trade across the Atlantic, even though the U.S. had declared itself a neutral country. The sinking of American ships became unacceptable. In April 1917, the United States gave up its neutrality and declared war against Germany.

Most Americans supported President Wilson's decision to send troops to Europe, but didn't realize how few trained troops were actually ready to fight. George Marshall's job was to help pull a fighting division together. He sailed across the Atlantic with the first ship of U.S. soldiers and landed in France in late June. In the next year and a half, more than two million American men would also cross the ocean before the Allies could force Germany to surrender. By the time all the fighting ended, the Great War would shock the world by the ferocity of its battles and the immensity of its death toll. In total, over eight million people died in World War I (128,000 of them American), victims both of disease and of horrific new weaponry such as tanks, poisonous gas, and machine guns. But in 1917, Marshall wouldn't know this yet. Marshall was focused on the task at hand, which was preparing American men to fight in this Great War and win, whatever the cost.

Marshall's challenge was very real this time and very difficult. The first American troops to arrive in France were eager to fight, but totally



*Marshall stands to the left of his mentor:
General John Pershing.*

unprepared. Most had just been drafted; few knew how to handle their weapons, and none had experience working as a team. Marshall often felt overwhelmed and frustrated by the problems of training these new troops in France. This frustration almost cost him his career. During this time in his life, Marshall had quite a temper. One day, the top U.S. General, John Pershing, came to inspect the troops Marshall and other officers were training. Pershing was not pleased by the performance of these men in maneuvers and blamed Marshall's superior officer. Marshall felt the general had not fully understood the difficulties the officers faced daily in carrying out an almost impossible task and thus Pershing was unfairly harsh in his judgments. Marshall boldly strode up to the General and spoke his mind. Others witnessing Marshall's outburst were certain they were watching the end of his promising career. How surprised they must have been when Marshall's frankness was actually rewarded by assignments with even more responsibility.

These wartime duties, however, were not always those he wanted. Like many officers, Marshall wanted combat experience. Leading troops on the battlefield offered action and rapid promotion. Marshall had neither. When other officers marched off to the front lines,

Marshall was kept back. Why? In the eyes of his commanders, Marshall's talent for organizing and supporting troops was even more valuable than leading them into battle. Those planning skills were so impressive that the Army soon ordered Marshall from the battlefield altogether and sent him to its headquarters southeast of Paris, France.

As a loyal soldier, Marshall dutifully obeyed his orders. Though he was disappointed with the move, he still gave his new assignment his best efforts. In the long run, the new posting did have some rewards. First, it gave Marshall a chance to use his problem-solving skills to plan a very important Allied attack. What was Marshall's challenge? Move 220,000 soldiers out of the western line in northern France. Replace them with 600,000 new soldiers (that's about the size of the entire population of Washington, D.C.). Use only horse-drawn wagons, 900 small trucks, three roads, and three rail lines. Accomplish the entire task within two weeks, in secret, at night. Incredibly, Marshall's daring plans succeeded. By November 1918, the Allied attacks forced Germany to the peace table at Versailles, ending the horrible war.

Marshall's work at headquarters also helped repair his relationship with General Pershing. Eventually, the General became both mentor and friend to Marshall. After the end of the war, Marshall accompanied the famous general everywhere. First he accompanied the General on a victory tour of Europe and met many world leaders along the way. Then Marshall's job took him to Washington, D.C., where Pershing was appointed head of the entire Army in 1921. Marshall learned a lot during his years with General Pershing. He was only thirty-eight years old, yet suddenly he was meeting kings and queens and presidents. Little did he know how important these few years would be to his own future—and the world's.

Best of Times, Worst of Times

The next fifteen years proved to be both the best of times and the worst of times for Marshall and his nation. First came the good years. After being apart from his wife during World War I, Marshall had several assignments that allowed him to be together again with his beloved Lily. Washington, D.C. was a fine place to be, but the next assignment, in China, was even better. At that time, American businesses were expanding to places all over the world, including China. Americans living in northern China were protected by U.S. troops. Marshall's job was to oversee these troops, but the assignment was not difficult. Together he and Lily enjoyed a comfortable life in the city of Tientsin and Marshall, ever curious, learned how to speak Chinese.

In 1927, Marshall completed his three-year tour of duty and was re-assigned to Washington, D.C. as an instructor at the Army War College. The happy days should have continued, but Lily fell ill. Recovering from surgery, she collapsed unexpectedly and died while writing a letter to her mother; the last word she ever wrote was, "George."

As a soldier, Marshall was used to difficulty, but the loss of his wife went straight to his heart. Life in the military had sent Marshall all over the world, but at age forty-six, he had no real home and no children. The only steady thing in Marshall's life had been his love for Lily. Now Lily was gone.

Recognizing his grief, friends in the Army arranged for Marshall to begin a new assignment elsewhere. Marshall became head instructor at the Army's largest training school at Fort Benning, Georgia. Fort Benning provided Marshall with many new challenges, lots of hunting and horseback riding, and new friends. It also allowed Marshall to become acquainted with promising young officers, many

of whom he'd later call to leadership in World War II. During his time at Fort Benning, Marshall met Katherine Brown, a former actress and recent widow who had three teenage children. The couple married in 1930, the year Marshall turned fifty.

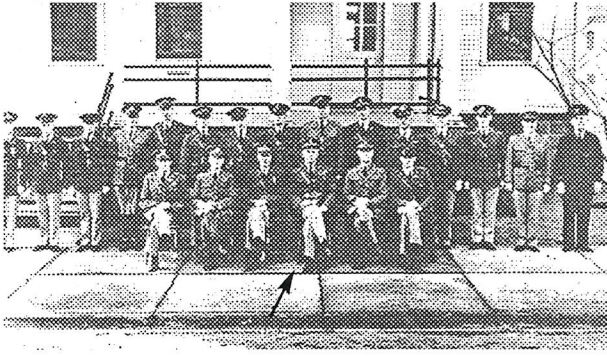
Marshall's personal struggles in the 1920's coincidentally mirrored broader changes in his nation's life too. Whereas the United States began the 1920s happy to be done with



*Marshall visits with young airmen
at Fort Benning, Georgia.*

war and eager to turn attention to matters at home, the country also faced a calamity, the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The era of booming economic prosperity was over. Suddenly, the nation found itself sliding into the Great Depression.

By taking a pay cut, Marshall held onto his job, but he saw the effects of the Great Depression on the people he worked with. Posted to South Carolina in 1933, he observed how difficult it was for enlisted soldiers to



Marshall was supervisor of a Civilian Conservation Corps district.

support their families on their reduced salaries, so Marshall taught them how to grow their own food. Later, in Washington State, he also supervised thousands of young men employed in a public works project called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The project was part of President Roosevelt's New Deal for economic recovery and gave people jobs that benefited the nation, such as planting trees and maintaining parks. During the Depression, the CCC operated workcamps throughout the nation where young men lived and worked, sending money home to their families.

Congress had directed the Army to oversee the CCC operation, and Marshall set up nineteen camps in the South. In the Pacific Northwest, he supervised thirty-five more. Some Army officers disliked working with this civilian program because it didn't help their military careers. Marshall wanted promotions too, but he gave this assignment his very best attention anyway. Why? Marshall took the long view and thought beyond himself to the needs of his country. He believed the program helped young men become not only good workers, but good citizens. Yes, the men were planting trees, but they were also rooting themselves in the values Americans held dear: hard work, team work, service to country. As seedlings grow to mighty trees, so would these young people become mighty oaks for their nation. They would keep the democracy of America strong and healthy. In Marshall's

mind, the long-term health of his country was more important than his personal career—it was worth the sacrifice!

War Everywhere

By 1938, Marshall was seven years away from military retirement. He had served his country honorably and well, but had risen slowly in the ranks. Only recently had he become a general. Was it too late to achieve his life-long dream of becoming head of the entire U.S. Army? Marshall hoped not, but it looked like a long shot. First, rules required that the head of the Army be no older than sixty years old when appointed, and Marshall was already 58. Second, thirty other generals were also competing for the job, many of whom had higher rank than Marshall. Despite the obstacles, Marshall had one thing in his favor, his new assignment in Washington, D.C. at Army headquarters. Marshall knew this new posting gave him a fair chance at becoming head of the Army, especially since his work often took him to speak with the person who would make that decision: President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At that time, World War II had not yet broken out in Europe, but the situation looked tense, and Roosevelt often consulted with his generals on what best to do.

Marshall had many opportunities to talk with the President, but during one of these meetings, he took a risk that many felt had ruined his chances of ever becoming Chief-of-Staff. Roosevelt and his generals were discussing the issue of airplanes. The President wanted the U.S. to build 10,000 airplanes as a means of self-defense in case war broke out. He also thought the planes could also be lent to France or Great Britain if needed. He asked a roomful of generals what they thought of the plan. All of the generals agreed with him, except Marshall. As a man of integrity, Marshall lived by the truth. He boldly told the President that his plan was

flawed. The President had not set aside money for all the related war equipment and supplies he'd also need, including pilots! Marshall was right, but the other generals were sure his honesty in front of the President would ruin him. At the door, they said good-bye to Marshall — surely he would be leaving Washington soon! They were wrong. Five months later, Roosevelt picked Marshall to be the new Army Chief-of-Staff. Overnight, the one-star general became a four-star general.

Marshall's rise in rank was sudden and dramatic, but so were events in the world. Across the Atlantic, a once-defeated nation had once again become a military giant and was asserting its strength across Europe. That angry giant was Germany, whose leader, Adolf Hitler, had enlisted the help of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to upset the organization of Europe that had come about after World War I. At the same time, across the Pacific, a booming economic powerhouse was also expanding. Isolated no longer, Japan was pushing itself into China and other areas of East Asia where the United States also had interests. What would happen next? The uneasy peace since World War I was about to shatter—leaving Marshall, and the United States, right in the middle of it all.

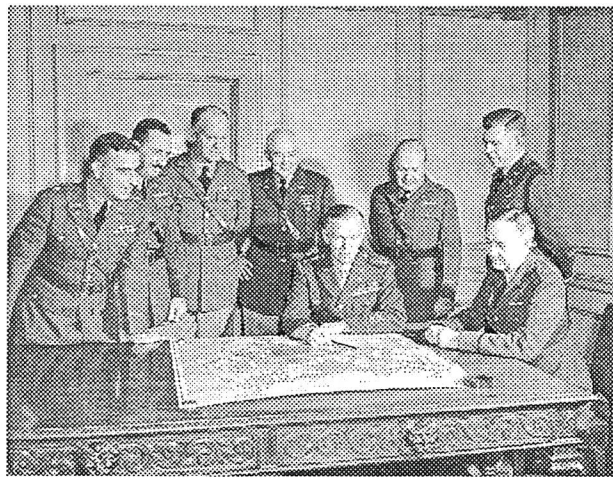
On September 1, 1939, George C. Marshall realized his life-long dream and was sworn in as Army Chief-of-Staff. That same day, Hitler's troops invaded neighboring Poland, triggering a six-year nightmare known as World War II. Once again, the British and French fought against Germany and its related powers. Once again, the Americans watched from the sidelines, wondering if the conflict would draw them in too.

Nobody wanted war; the U.S. was just crawling out of the Great Depression and memories from World War I were painfully fresh in everyone's mind: must there be more

suffering still? Like Woodrow Wilson before him, President Franklin Roosevelt recognized that the American public supported neutrality. The nation was indeed in an "isolationist" mood, but Roosevelt encouraged Americans to support military preparedness as the best way to preserve that neutrality.

Marshall too recognized the country was not in a fighting mood, but he also believed there to be more at stake than preserving American neutrality. From his desk as Chief-of-Staff, he studied the problem. Western European countries had quickly fallen to Germany, even France! Only Great Britain remained, and if that friendly government fell, what might happen to the United States? Imagining that future, Marshall concluded Roosevelt did not fully understand the danger of the situation. An American show of strength was not enough. Whether Americans liked it or not, the United States needed to be ready to fight a war, and win.

As with the situation with the 10,000 airplanes, Marshall knew he had to speak the truth, even if it hurt. He stepped forward and took his unpopular message first to the President and then to Congress. At the time,

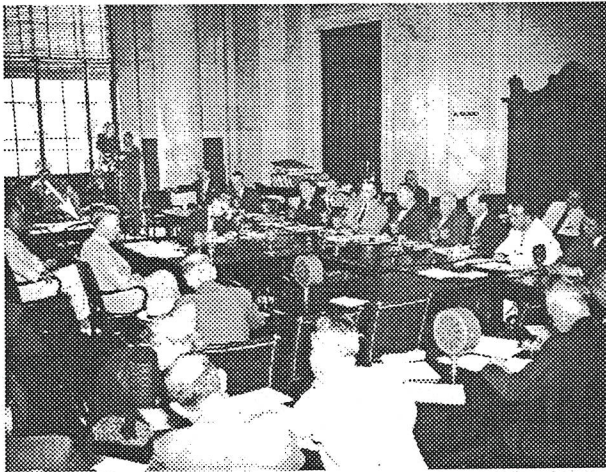


Marshall as Chief of Staff at his desk.

the U.S. had only 180,000 troops, which ranked it sixteenth militarily in the world. After

hearing from Marshall, though, Congress agreed to enact a peacetime draft, which within a year expanded the Army and its Air Corps to over a million men. (By 1945, over 12 million Americans would make up the total U.S. fighting forces).

Marshall had learned from the mistakes of World War I. This time, the United States would be ready if war broke out. Sadly, that was soon the case. On December 7, 1941, nearly two hundred Japanese airplanes



Marshall testifies before the senate in 1941 to expand the peacetime draft to include 18-year olds.

swarmed over Hawaii's Pearl Harbor in a deadly surprise attack on the U.S. fleet. Many ships were sunk and many lives lost. Shocked, the United States declared war against Japan. Since Japan had already signed a mutual defense treaty with Germany and Italy, that meant the U.S. was suddenly fighting a world-wide war.

The problems of the new war crashed onto the Chief-of-Staff's desk like an avalanche. First there was the problem of fighting and winning a global war which had two fronts: one in Europe, the other in the Pacific. Then there was the problem of getting the American and British governments to agree on a united plan of action. That meant working with two very strong politicians, President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. It

also meant getting the military branches to put rivalries aside and work together—not only amongst themselves, but with other nations. Could such a feat be done? It had to be done. The Allies agreed to defeat the German military threat first. But this agreement opened up even more discussion about how to re-take Europe.

While these debates raged, Marshall also faced the problem of making sure the Allied plans would be successful. That meant making sure the militaries had the supplies they



Marshall with President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during a secret meeting aboard the H.M.S. Prince of Wales.

needed, both in terms of material and manpower. To do that, material had to be manufactured and people had to be trained, and both took time. Not only that, all those supplies—tanks, food, fuel, ships, and soldiers—had to be distributed all over the world to the right places at the right times. Day after day. Month after month. Year after year. Could that be done too?

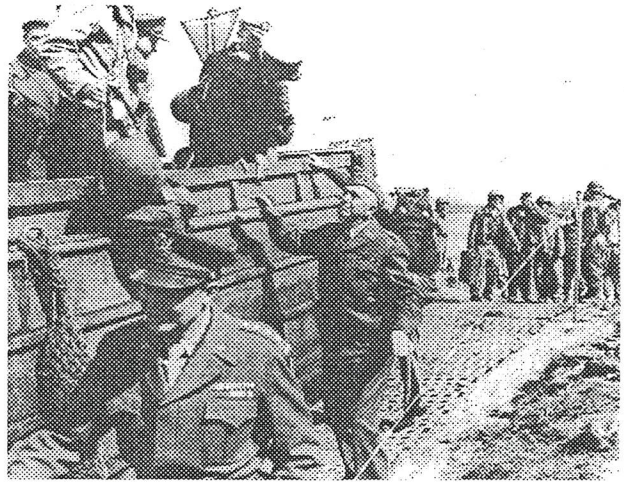
As if that weren't enough to worry about, Marshall had an even bigger problem: money. Getting funding for the war was especially challenging because he lived in a democratic society. In the totalitarian governments of Germany and Italy, the nations' leaders simply dictated what to do and the people obeyed,

regardless of the cost. In the United States, however, the government could only do what the American people told it to do through their representatives in Congress. That meant Marshall had to try to win the war while also asking the people's permission for every penny the military needed.

Were Representatives in Congress military thinkers? No. Most were civilians unfamiliar with the ways of war. How did Marshall get what he wanted? Not through charts, graphs, and maps (though these had their place), but by who he was. Throughout his life, Marshall had established a reputation for honesty. People knew that and respected him for it; they trusted him. They trusted their sons (and daughters) to him. They trusted their country to him. When Marshall testified before committees, Americans listened. They didn't always like what Marshall had to say, but they knew it was the truth. In turn, Congress also did what needed to be done: it gave Marshall the funds he needed to fight that war.

Winning the war was a huge job, one Marshall commanded mostly from his desk in Washington, D.C. As in World War I, though, Marshall did not stay there. Often he went to the field to scout out the situation. Where was the battlefield? All over the world. Times had changed rapidly. A mere twenty-five years before, Marshall rode a horse or a truck to the frontlines. Now he boarded long-flying airplanes to check on troops stationed not only in Europe and the Pacific, but also in lands as faraway as arctic Alaska, Greenland, Egypt, and Papua New Guinea.

By 1943, Marshall recognized that the Allies' massive global coordination of troops and battles was finally beginning to go well. After several defeats, the Pacific fleet was on the offensive against Japan. In the Mediterranean, the Germans were being pushed out of North Africa, and Russian troops fighting with the



George Marshall disembarks from an amphibious vehicle to inspect American operations in France, June 1944.

Allies had scored victories against the Germans in the Soviet Union as well. Based on these reports and his own observations, Marshall knew it was time to push hard for a plan to defeat the Nazis once and for all.

Marshall's idea, supported by President Roosevelt, was to have Allied troops gather in Great Britain, cross the English Channel, and land on the beaches of France. From there the troops would push across Europe to victory. The British, on the other hand, preferred a different plan that involved invading Europe through Italy. In the fall of 1943, the Allies finally agreed to Marshall's plan, which they code-named Operation Overlord. This top-secret invasion of France was scheduled for the early summer of 1944, but who would lead it? Many people, including British leaders, expected it would be Marshall. After all, Overlord had been his idea. Besides, everyone knew Marshall preferred field work to desk work. He had done outstanding service as Chief of Staff. Wasn't it time to reward him?

Perhaps that's why President Roosevelt called in Marshall that day in December 1943 and asked him whether or not he wanted the job. Marshall was almost sixty-three years old. In two years he would be forced to retire. This was his last chance for greatness. Rescuing

Europe from the Nazis would be the capstone of his whole career. This victory would place him in the history books forever.

What did Marshall reply? Certainly Marshall wanted the job, but he told the President that it was up to him. Roosevelt should make his decision based on what was good for the country, he added, not what was good for Marshall. And so Roosevelt did. He chose someone else to lead the invasion and sent his loyal soldier back to his desk. Were Marshall's planning skills that important? Yes. As Roosevelt later explained it, he just could not sleep well at night if Marshall were out of the country.

Six months later, 175,000 troops under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower surged onto the beaches of Normandy, France on a single day. The D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944 was indeed the turning point of the war. Despite incurring heavy casualties, the Allied forces pressed on. In the next nine months, they pushed the Nazi forces all the way back to Germany. By the spring of 1945, the Germans had surrendered and Europe was liberated. That victory carried General Dwight D. Eisenhower to glory and fame, not only in Europe, but beyond. Seven years after the war, the American people would elect Eisenhower as President of the United States.

That fame could have been Marshall's. When the moment of a lifetime came, however, the man who hated desks, stayed at his desk. He stayed at his desk, the center of all the U.S. war effort, until the end of that war. He was there in Washington, D.C., shifting troops from Europe over to the Pacific. He was there working out the supplies for Allied forces as they fiercely battled one Japanese-occupied island after another. He was there when new President Harry S. Truman ordered the dropping of the first atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

He was still there five days later when the Japanese finally surrendered on August 14, 1945, and the whole terrible war was over.

The President Calls (Again and Again)

Like many soldiers in World War II, George C. Marshall had done his duty. He had remained at his post in Washington until the end of the war, but then it was time to think about retiring. Marshall was nearing 65, the age at which he was required to step down from active military life. He was ready to do so. After more than forty years of service to his country, Marshall was ready to follow no one's orders but his own. He was ready to spend time with his family, to do some hunting and fishing and gardening. He was ready to have the time to sit back and read a good book. Yes, Marshall was certainly ready for a quiet, peaceful retirement, but it didn't happen. Marshall's retirement, in fact, lasted only a few hours. As the story goes, Marshall and his wife had just driven up to their Virginia home from his farewell ceremony, when their hallway telephone rang. It was President Truman. He wanted to send Marshall to China on a special mission: would he go?

China, at that time, was in crisis. With World War II over and Japan just defeated, a struggle for power had erupted among the Chinese. Truman was worried such confusion might encourage China's big neighbor, the Soviet Union, to increase its influence there. Although the Americans and the Soviets had just fought together against Hitler (their common enemy), relations between the two countries had not been good for some time. Each was concerned about the expanding world power of the other, especially since the two nations did not share the same opinions on how to govern people and organize their economies. In Truman's view, Soviet expansion needed to be prevented, and keeping China a friend of the

U.S. was the way to do it. He needed Marshall to convince the Chinese to end their civil war and build a government friendly to the U.S. That's what he wanted to know on the telephone: would Marshall go?

Marshall was now officially retired. He did not have to follow an order. Plus, the situation in China was a hopeless mess, and Marshall knew it. He did not have to go. But what did he do? Marshall answered the call of his President and flew to China.

Marshall worked for months on the China problem, but as he had predicted, it could not be solved. Within a year, the negotiations failed and in 1949 China adopted a communist



George Marshall in China with General and Madame Chiang Kai-shek, and General Dwight Eisenhower.

form of government similar to the Soviet Union's. The "loss" of China alarmed many Americans. It also increased their worry about growing Soviet power in other areas of the world, especially post-war Europe. Had Europe been liberated from Germany only to fall under the shadow of its huge neighbor to the east, the Soviet Union? A very concerned President Truman turned to Marshall again. This time, he asked Marshall to serve as Secretary of State, the member of the President's cabinet who represents the United States in dealings with all other nations. Marshall had won the

war; could he now help keep the United States from losing the peace?

Marshall once again said yes to the President and became Secretary of State in January of 1947. When he toured Europe that spring, Marshall saw before him another big problem needing urgent attention. Everywhere he went he saw a continent crushed by economic and spiritual despair. The war had killed more than forty million Europeans—fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. Whole nations were in grief. Beautiful cities and bustling towns had been destroyed. Food was in short supply. Jobs were scarce. After the coldest winter in twenty years, families were suffering, especially children.

Marshall put his problem-solving skills to work. He observed the situation and remembered the past. He remembered how deeply the German people had suffered after World War I. The harsh peace terms to end that war had punished Germany severely, crippling that nation's ability to care for itself. He remembered how those same Germans desperate for a better life had supported Hitler's rise to power in the 1930's. He saw how easy it had been for desperate people to place their hope in a dictator more interested in control than freedom. Would history repeat itself again? Would this generation of Europeans surrender their newly-won freedom in exchange for bread? When Marshall envisioned the future, it looked bleak.

The cycle looked tragically familiar. There was only one thing to do: break the cycle and change the future. As Marshall saw it, the victims of war needed to be helped now so they wouldn't need to rely on powerful dictators later. This was a new idea, but Marshall went further still. He thought help needed to be given to all victims of war, both losers and winners. As Marshall saw it, only in the roots

of shared prosperity might the tree of peace grow strong.

In June 1947, Marshall made a speech outlining his ideas for the European Recovery Plan. He proposed that the United States give money and supplies to Europeans so that they could rebuild their countries. To get the aid, the European nations had to agree to work with each other—even Germany, the nation that had started World War II in the first place! They also had to come up with their own projects and ideas that the U.S. money could fund. The Marshall Plan—as everybody but Marshall called it—was instantly popular with all the European nations, including Germany. The Soviet Union, however, and its Eastern bloc countries declined to participate.

The real difficulty with getting the Plan approved was not abroad, but at home. Marshall knew it would be a challenge to convince the American people to spend billions of dollars for a European Recovery Plan, especially after a long and costly war. For many months he worked hard to help Americans understand the importance of the project. As he had done during W.W. II, Marshall made numerous appearances before Congress, speaking with the directness and honesty he was known for. Marshall felt so strongly about the need for this project that he even went one step further: instead of just letting Congress do the work, he took his idea to the people themselves and travelled all over the nation making speeches on behalf of this project. As always, Marshall encouraged his listeners to think as he did, to consider the future when making plans for the present. Just as investing in soldiers had been good for the war, so would investing in people now be good for peace. Marshall knew that what was good for peace was good for all of us, no matter where we lived. Peace was worth Marshall's personal sacrifice in time and energy. It was worth his best hours. It was worth fighting for.

In the end, Marshall's hard work paid off as Congress approved funding for the European Recovery Plan in 1948. The cost to the U.S. was \$13 billion over a three-year period. This amount was the same as 1.2 percent of the nation's yearly income, or gross national product (GNP). It was a small amount of money compared to the wealth of the United States but it made a huge difference in lives of people in Europe. Working together, the European governments repaired railroads, bridges, and roads. They re-invested in farming, mining, and manufacturing. They rebuilt factories, apartments, and schools. From the rubble of war, they rescued hope. There was work, there was food, there was shelter. Best of all, there was peace.

The Marshall Plan officially ended in 1951, but its benefits continued to grow. Today western Europeans enjoy a high quality of life in healthy, democratic nations. Now more than ever those nations work and trade with one another and the world in cooperation; they are also the United States' best allies. Marshall's



Secretary of State Marshall reviews a plan devised by these Cub Scouts to help send money to Europe.

new vision for the future was right. As the old saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." By improving the lives of ordinary Europeans, Marshall sowed the seeds for lasting peace. For his unyielding efforts to create a better world, Marshall received many

awards, but none more respected than the Nobel Prize for Peace. This world-wide award honors one remarkable peacemaker (or a group of peacemakers) each year. Never before had a soldier won such an award, until Marshall, who was honored in 1953.

By the time he traveled to Norway to receive his award in 1953, Marshall had completed two more tasks for his President. In 1949, Marshall agreed to head the American Red Cross, and criss-crossed the nation countless times in support of this organization and its thousands of volunteers. Marshall's work was soon



George Marshall receives the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1953. He is the only soldier to ever have received the award.

interrupted, however, by a new threat to peace. Just a year after appointing him to the Red Cross position, Truman asked Marshall to become Secretary of Defense. The President wanted Marshall to help navigate the nation through yet another post-World War II conflict. Where was the conflict this time? It was in Korea, a small country with two very big neighbors: China and the Soviet Union. Before World War II, Korea had been ruled by Japan. After the war, the nation was governed by the Soviet Union in the North and the United States in the South. Unfortunately, the Soviet-backed North soon invaded the southern part of the country, trying to take control. American, South Korean, and United Nations troops

fought back. As the conflict escalated, Truman turned to Marshall for help.

Nearing seventy, Marshall deserved an easy assignment; this was not it. The trouble in Korea risked escalating into a dangerous conflict between the world's three superpowers, China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Marshall helped keep a lid on the conflict, but not without personal and political cost. During this time, he supported Truman's controversial



As president of the Red Cross, Marshall extensively toured Red Cross chapters across the United States.

decision to fire the general of all U.S. troops in Korea: the highly popular, and dangerously uncooperative, Douglas MacArthur. Marshall's stand was unpopular with some Americans, especially those caught up in the infamous "Red Scare" of the early 1950's. These critics accused Marshall of being a communist sympathizer. After all, hadn't he been the one responsible for "losing" China in the first place? Marshall's goal to limit conflict in Korea may have prevented this regional war from blowing up into a third world war, but his efforts went unappreciated, especially with Senator Joseph McCarthy. In the summer of 1951, McCarthy stunned the nation by reading a vicious 169-page attack against Marshall from the Senate floor.

In McCarthy's eyes, Marshall was a traitor to his country. But Marshall knew his life told a different story. He shrugged his critics off as not worth debating and strode along with his usual integrity into final retirement. After a lifetime of service, surely there would finally be some time for fishing with his friends, and there was.



Marshall, as Secretary of Defense, reviews US troops during the Korean War.

Marshall's quiet retirement did not last long, though. Soon his health began to weaken, leading to his death at age seventy-eight at Walter Reed Army Hospital, in Washington, D.C. During his final illness, Truman, Eisenhower, and Churchill had all come to pay their respects. When the end came on October 16, 1959, condolences to Katherine Marshall poured in from all over the world. Marshall could have had a huge, elaborate funeral, but he did not. His family faithfully followed the general's last order. They buried his body in a simple ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, among fellow soldiers.

Remembering Marshall

Marshall had specifically requested no eulogy at his funeral, but there are certainly many things to remember him for. We could remember his skillful support of troops in

World War I and of civilians during the Depression. We could remember his brilliant planning in World War II and then his work in China on behalf of the United States. We could remember his visionary plan for building lasting peace in Europe. We could remember his willingness to serve again during the Korean War despite attacks against him. Last, but certainly not least, we could remember the final honor of that Nobel Peace Prize. The list is long. There are indeed many things we could—and do—remember Marshall for. But in the end, we really honor George C. Marshall for something else entirely.

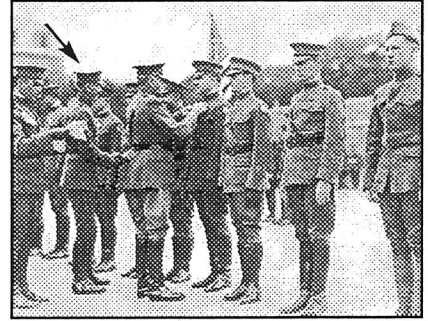
In the end, we best remember George C. Marshall for who he was. Marshall was a man of character. Early in life, Marshall started down the long hard road of personal integrity and he never stopped walking. He became a man known for his honesty, hard work, self-discipline, compassion, and service to others. Living by these values was its own reward. Living by these values also carried Marshall into history in ways he could never have imagined as a child. True, George C. Marshall became famous, but he wasn't interested in fame. He was interested in something greater than fame and greater than glory. What could be greater than that? Leading a life of integrity in the service of humanity. That's what Marshall did, and that's how we remember him best.



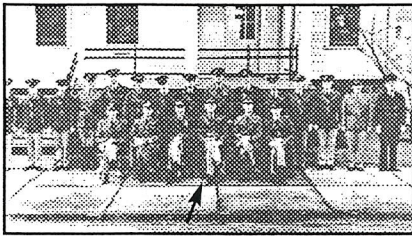
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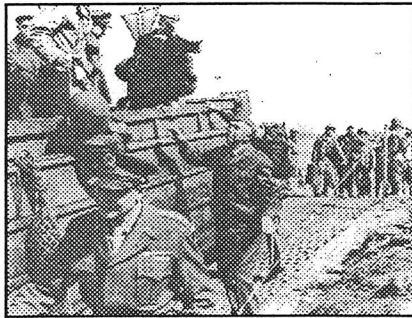
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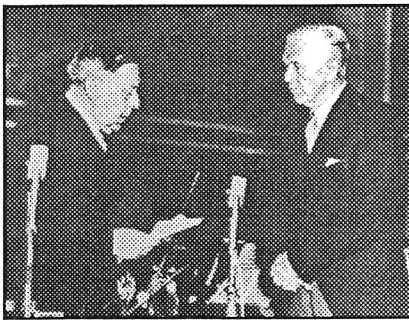
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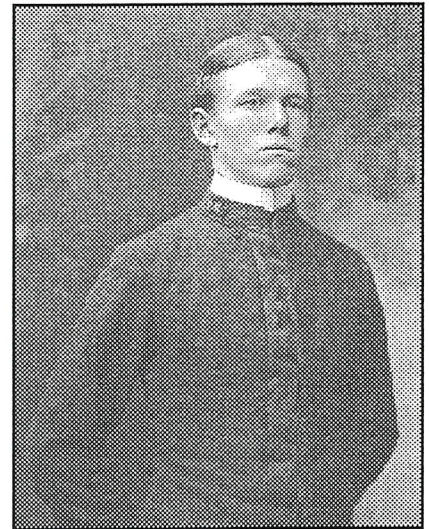
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