

A
Reader's Digest

REPRINT

MY FIRST impression of General of the Army George C. Marshall was one shared by many who served under him: that the man's imperturbability under pressure was awesome. As a member of the War Department staff in 1942, I was struck by his nonsense approach to the crushing demands of running the global war in which, as Army Chief of Staff, he commanded more than eight million soldiers and airmen. Staff members were instructed to walk into his office without saluting and to take a seat in front of his desk. At his signal, they would begin their briefing.

The Chief of Staff listened intently and then probed for the basic problems, usually asking, "What is *your* recommendation?" He listened to you with absolute, aggressive blue-eyed concentration, sitting zero degrees straight with his arms folded.



Unforgettable George C. Marshall

BY MARSHALL S. CARTER
Lt. Gen., USA (Ret.)

The formidable soldier-statesman wielded power that changed the destiny of millions. Yet behind that austere façade was a warm and quietly humorous human being whom few were privileged to know

Many officers vividly recall this formal side of General Marshall, and many others throughout the world remember the Secretary of State who outlined the Marshall Plan, that extraordinarily generous concept that revived Europe after World War II. But, recalling the austere presence, the icy manner, the frightening, cold-blue eyes, they miss the human being.

Inside that ramrod exterior was a not very good fisherman who loved to fish, a so-so farmer who loved to garden, a driver who would pick up soldier hitchhikers when he was in civilian clothes (and never introduce himself) and a man who loved a joke. I have seen the General at the peak of his authority, alone on a beach in borrowed shorts, collecting sea shells to take home to Mrs. Marshall. I have seen him offering his heartfelt condolences to war widows, and quietly persuading Presidents to his way of thinking. For all of those who worked with him, there was no question that all his actions traced straight back to his total, selfless commitment to a life of public service. For the plain fact is that George Catlett Marshall lived for a single idea: America.

Through the Ranks. His military career began on September 11, 1897,

LT. GEN. Marshall S. Carter, USA (Ret.), served a considerable part of his Army career on General Marshall's staff. He is now president of the George C. Marshall Research Foundation in Lexington, Va., which is dedicated to perpetuating the ideals and principles of the famous soldier-statesman.

when coal merchant G. C. Marshall, Sr., of Uniontown, Pa., dispatched a note to the superintendent of Virginia Military Institute: "I send you my youngest son. He is bright, full of life, and I believe he will get along well." Academically, young Marshall did badly at first. But in each of his four years he stood at the head of his class in leadership, and he finished as V.M.I.'s First Captain.

Early in 1902, he was sent to the Philippines, where, as a second lieutenant, he learned to command in the field. A few years later, he received orders to the Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. There, with ambition nudging him along, he finished at the head of his class. Promotions were slow, but even then, in four years as student and instructor and in a second tour in the Philippines, he was building an Army-wide reputation for meticulous performance. One general wrote in 1916 that Captain Marshall should be made a general and that he would be glad to serve under him.

Such acclaim brought him an assignment to the first American units sent to France in World War I. As training officer, then chief of operations of a division that was organized on the high seas in 1917, Marshall labored late and long in France to prepare a group of half-trained regulars and bewildered civilians for battle as America's soon-to-be famous 1st Division.

He had fierce pride in his men and strong convictions on what was

just. When, after one particularly disastrous military exercise, Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the U.S. forces, "chewed out" Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert, the division commander, in front of his officers, Captain Marshall was outraged. "There are some things to be said here, and I think that I should say them," he told Pershing. As division officers listened in frozen dismay and Pershing stood amazed, Marshall—in the sort of indignant outbreak he later used to Presidents, Prime Ministers and associates when he felt criticism was unjust—explained the problems involved in training troops. When he was done, Pershing replied mildly, "You must appreciate the troubles we have."

"He didn't hold it against me," Marshall recalled. Indeed, in 1919, Pershing appointed Marshall, now a colonel, his principal aide—a position he held for five years.

Master Tactician. In 1927, after the death of his first wife, Marshall was transferred to a demanding assignment as assistant commandant of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., in charge of instruction. There he had free rein to exercise and develop that brilliance in planning, training and strategy that was to serve his country so well. "Plan for the first six months of the next war!" he drilled into his instructors and students—some 150 future generals, including Omar Bradley, Joseph W. "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, J. Lawton Collins, Matthew B. Ridgway and Walter Bedell Smith.

They would spread Marshall's doctrines throughout the world.

One night, at a dinner party in Columbus, Ga., Colonel Marshall met Katherine Tupper Brown, a widow with three children. At the end of the evening, he proposed to drive her home. After he had driven for nearly an hour without finding her house, she observed that he must not know Columbus very well. He replied that, on the contrary, only by his special knowledge had he been able to avoid reaching her street. (General Pershing was best man at their subsequent wedding in Baltimore on October 15, 1930.)

I have often been asked how, in April 1939, Marshall, only a brigadier general, could have been nominated as Chief of Staff. The answer is simple. His brilliant work as Chief of War Plans and Deputy Chief of Staff in 1938 and 1939 persuaded President Franklin D. Roosevelt that he was the forward-looking leader who could best meet the mighty military challenge of the Axis powers.

One of the most impressive gifts the General brought to his new job was his ability to store seemingly endless information in his mind and call it forth at will. His first appearances before Congressional committees, outlining America's staggering military needs, were therefore electrifying. But there was something even more impressive about him. "He never dissembled," recalled House Speaker Sam Rayburn. "He would tell the truth even if it hurt the Army's case."

Marshall's passionate portrayal of America's defense needs in the spring of 1940 prompted Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau to take him to see President Roosevelt. Not yet ready to pressure Congress, the President evaded dealing with the matter. Seeing that they were to be ushered out without discussing what they had come for, Marshall stepped over to F.D.R.'s chair and, looking down with quiet intensity, asked, "Mr. President, may I have three minutes?" Granted his request, he poured out his list of the United States' critical requirements, concluding, "If you don't do something right away, I don't know what is going to happen to this country."

It was a turning point. Shortly thereafter, the impressed President asked Congress for a defense budget of a billion dollars.

Common Touch. In the early months of World War II, when the sky was falling in on us over three continents, the Chief of Staff seldom missed his fortnightly visits with his old boss, ailing General Pershing. Loyal as he was to old friends, however, he was ruthless in removing former colleagues who failed to meet the standards necessary to build a premier fighting force. "They accused me of getting rid of the brains of the Army," he said later. "I thought I was eliminating a lot of arteriosclerosis."

The worst thing an officer seeking promotion could do under Marshall was to generate outside pressure in his favor. One day a member of the

Marshall staff noticed the chief's large ears turning red as he took a telephone call. "Senator," Marshall said into the phone, "if you are interested in that officer's advancement, the best thing you can do is never to mention his name to me again. Good-by."

Marshall put his commanders on notice: "Morale is a function of command." His greatest concern, even as he struggled over involved matters of global strategy, was always for his ground soldiers—getting them better training, equipment, weapons. In a typical week he would inspect up to 15 units, drawing up long lists of matters to be corrected: a shortage of shoes at Monterey, needed hospital accessories at Fort Sill, delayed laundry machines at Camp Beauregard. Once he discovered that an issue of blankets to Fort Benning had bogged down in paperwork. He called in the officer responsible. "Get those blankets and stoves and every other damn thing that's needed out tonight," he ordered. "Not tomorrow—tonight! *We are going to take care of the troops first, last and all the time.*"

The General's gift of the common touch was reflected in the uniform he wore as Chief of Staff—always plain and simple, with no fancy braid or gadgets. He stayed apart from the Washington social scene, and avoided personal publicity of any sort. Yet he was a master of the press conference. There is a famous story about such a conference in Algiers after the Allied landings in North

Africa late in 1942. To save time, Marshall offered to answer one question from each of the 60 correspondents present. Then, without a word, he listened to each man in turn, all the way around the room. When he had heard the last query, he looked off into space for about 30 seconds. Then he talked for nearly 40 minutes—an integrated monologue that covered every topic he had been asked about. And what astonished the reporters almost beyond belief was that as he dealt with each query, he looked directly at the man who had asked it.

“Turn Over That Bucket.” Marshall rode horseback or walked every day, and he demanded physical fitness in those around him, knowing it made for more effective planning. However, he was humanly inconsistent. He would ask his staff to have a study ready by the next morning—a chore that would keep them up most of the night. Next morning, he would look at their red-eyed faces and innocently admonish, “You men have got to get more rest.”

Always a stickler for the correct time and place to do business, he violated this rule in one very personal way—since he had to fight for time to do his beloved gardening when it needed doing. One day, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, Marshall’s key liaison officer with the British, returned from England to make a report to him and found him out picking corn in the rain. As Smith’s starched khaki wilted, the famous Smith

temper stiffened. “General, do I have to stand out here to make my report?” he demanded. “No, Smith,” said Marshall. “Turn over that bucket there and sit down.”

This was the kind of quiet, take-down humor we came to know more and more after the war. It was a necessary gift in his postwar jobs as Secretary of State (1947-49) and Secretary of Defense (1950-51). Before the second session of the United Nations in New York City, he asked me to reserve a hotel suite there. “Nothing flashy, Carter,” he said. Our choice: the Pennsylvania Hotel, a famous old establishment, but one that had seen plenty of hard service.

These quarters for the U.S. Secretary of State created much amazement among the other professional internationalists. One afternoon I commented to the General, “Almost everybody is staying at the Waldorf.”

“Yes, I know.”

“The staff is wondering why you wanted to stay here.”

“Well, I like to see the look on an ambassador’s face when he comes over here from the Waldorf to ask us for 500 million dollars.”

His tour of duty as Secretary of State fell in that critical period after World War II when Europe was a bankrupt shambles, trying to rebuild itself without food, shelter or tools. Becoming convinced that the Soviets were waiting for the whole continent to fall into their hands, he presented—in a speech during commencement activities at Harvard University on June 5, 1947—a pro-

posal to help Europe save itself by pouring in massive amounts of U.S. money and matériel. The result was the startling and sweepingly successful Marshall Plan. It directly changed the destiny of 200 million Europeans and millions of people yet unborn. Because of it, in December 1953, Marshall became the only military man in history to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

A Citizen's Legacy. Possibly the most astounding personal quality in this man who held three of the most powerful jobs in the world was his humility. When, during his last years, people would recognize him and burst into spontaneous applause, he would invariably turn around to see who was being applauded. And this modesty had a core of steel. It is said that, after the war, magazines offered him upward of a million dollars for his memoirs. They were especially eager for his accounts of the great international conferences at Yalta, Teheran, Cairo and the Kremlin. He declined, indicating that his experiences were the property of the American people.

After his death in 1959, General Marshall's friends and admirers helped implement a 1953 proposal made by President Truman (later endorsed by Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon) that a privately financed and operated

research center be built to make available the General's papers and a growing collection of other documents and taped interviews for the use of scholars. Dedicated in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson and Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, and set in motion under the leadership of Gen. Omar Bradley and former Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett, this living memorial in Lexington, Va., is today visited by citizens from all walks and stations. They look at the exhibits, stand before the floor-to-ceiling electric map which retells the story of World War II, walk through the special room which shows how the Marshall Plan regenerated Europe—and study the measure of Marshall the man. As they leave, they see written large on the wall of the main lobby these words of eloquent tribute from Winston Churchill:

"In war he was as wise and understanding in counsel as he was resolute in action. In peace he was the architect who planned the restoration of our battered European economy and, at the same time, laboured tirelessly to establish a system of Western defense. He has always fought victoriously against defeatism, discouragement and disillusion. Succeeding generations must not be allowed to forget his achievements and his example."