

# Honoring the Marshall Legacy<sup>1</sup>

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**J**une 2008 marks the 100th anniversary of George C. Marshall’s graduation from the U.S. Army’s Command and General Staff College. As a young lieutenant, Marshall attended the Infantry-Cavalry school, formerly named the “School of the Line,” at Fort Leavenworth in 1907. Upon his graduation with honors, he stayed for a second year to attend the prestigious Command and General Staff College. To top his already fine academic and tactical performance of 1907, Marshall proved himself as an intelligent and extremely capable officer by graduating first in his class in 1908. With this success, the Army promoted him to First Lieutenant.

**B**eyond his attendance at the Infantry-Cavalry School and the Command and General Staff College, Marshall also spent two additional years teaching in the Department of Military Engineering at Fort Leavenworth between 1909 and 1911. Marshall’s years at Fort Leavenworth made an indelible impression upon the young officer. In the future, he would eventually go on to serve as the Chief of Staff of the Army (September 1939-November 1945), Secretary of State (January 1947-January 1949), a brief tenure as Secretary of Defense (September 1950- September 1951), and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1953. For many Americans, General George C. Marshall epitomizes the “Solider-Statesman.”

**H**is span of service to the nation covered the diverse period between 1902 and 1952, in which time the United States fought two world wars, a major regional conflict in Korea, ushered in the start of the Cold War, and this is glossing over the significant and monumental social, political, and technological changes that have come to characterize the span of the twentieth century. Simply put Marshall lived in interesting, yet very different times. However, despite the distance from this historical period, George C. Marshall continues to serve as an inspiration for many both in and out of uniform.

**A**ccording to his official biographer Forest Pogue, George Catlett Marshall was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania on December 31, 1880 to solid middle class parents. By all accounts, Marshall grew up in a very idealistic and bucolic environment that helped to shape the traditional core values of honor, respect, and duty of the future general.

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**I**n 1897 Marshall set off to attend college at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). Later in life, Marshall recounted his years at VMI (September 1897- June 1901) as ones of hard work and determination. Moreover, he believed that while at VMI he learned “self-control, discipline, and how to manage men,” all traits that would serve him well in his military profession.

**A**fter being commissioned an Infantry officer in February 1902, Marshall served in various posts throughout the United States and Philippines in diverse jobs ranging from engineering officer, ordinance officer, post quartermaster, and post commissary officer at Fort Reno to Aide-De-Camp to Major General Franklin J. Bell. In each assignment, Marshall continually proved himself as a dedicated and intelligent officer who could be counted on to accomplish his assignment.

**W**hile a student, and later as an instructor at Fort Leavenworth, Marshall recounted that the school was “hard, competitive and required concentration.” In his personal papers, he noted that “hardships and lack of sympathy were part of the game” at CGSC and these experiences shaped him as an officer. Throughout his life, he would consistently be asked about adjustments to the curriculum at CGSC to which Marshall would simply respond that the course needed to retain its rigor, but still balance the real demands facing a military officer in the field. Specifically, Marshall stated in a letter to Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Stanley Embick in 1937, “we must be experts in meeting the confusion and chaotic conditions of war, when discipline is poor, officers green, and information on the enemy lacking.” For Marshall, the value of studying and also teaching at CGSC provided him with a first rate opportunity to not just merely learn techniques and tactics, but think about when to best apply the principles under the strenuous demands of combat. He believed that his time at Fort Leavenworth honed his ability to think critically. For Marshall, this was the real value of studying and teaching at Fort Leavenworth.

**T**he Command Leadership and faculty at CGSC in the 21st century recognize and reinforce the same intellectual value of CGSC as identified by Marshall, first as a student and then as a rising staff officer in the Army in the 1930s. While the College has evolved beyond map exercises and field training, the objective of CGSC is to provide the nation’s future staff officers with an outstanding ability to think critically about “when to make the hard decisions.” In this sense the Command and General Staff College has remained steadfast in its development of staff officers over the last century.

**T**he legacy of George C. Marshall is still palpable at the Command and General Staff College. Beyond the twenty-first century grand lecture hall that bears his name in the technologically sophisticated Lewis and Clark Center, the top student in each graduating class earns the George C. Marshall award. The outstanding officers that have won this award have gone on to lead the United States Army in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. For them, George C. Marshall has continued to serve as an inspiration. In this spirit, the CGSC Foundation honors the 100th anniversary of George C. Marshall's graduation from the Command and General Staff College with the expectation that he will continue to inspire the future of leaders of the United States Army.