

# Duty, Honor, Country

Throughout his illustrious life, General Douglas MacArthur modeled the priorities of a true patriot.

by Robert W. Lee

Many U.S. military leaders have been so fundamentally sound in character and upstanding in their personal lives that they serve as positive role models for adults and youth alike. George Washington, Robert E. Lee, and John J. Pershing come readily to mind. And so does Douglas A. MacArthur, one of the most brilliant military strategists and astute statesmen that our country has produced.

MacArthur was born in Little Rock, Arkansas on January 26, 1880. He was homeschooled during his early years, so was steeped in fascinating stories of military history and patriotism told by his father, Arthur MacArthur, who had enlisted in the Union Army at 17 to fight in the Civil War. The elder MacArthur's experiences during the war, and subsequent Indian fighting in the West, were related to his three sons not to induce a lust for battle, but to instill such character traits as love of country, honor, duty, morality, and fairness. Douglas MacArthur would exemplify those attributes throughout his own adult life. Even in war, MacArthur's credo was not simply that there is no substitute for victory, but that victory should be achieved as quickly and humanely as possible, with as few casualties on all sides as possible. William Manchester, in his less than favorable biography of the general entitled *American Caesar* (1978), notes that in both World War II and Korea, MacArthur's 89 amphibious assaults resulted in the lowest casualties suffered by any of the American field commanders.

Douglas MacArthur graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at the top of his class in 1903, recording the highest marks at West Point in a quarter century. Indeed, by the end of his third year he was named First Captain, West Point's highest military award. He was one of only a handful in the history of the Academy to garner both honors.

His first assignment after graduating was to help map the Philippines. He also served for two







years as an aide to President Theodore Roosevelt, and by the time the U.S. entered World War I had advanced to the rank of colonel. During the war, he became chief of staff of the famous 42nd Division, and later commanded the 84th Infantry Brigade.

Germany's use of poison gas was a serious threat to Allied forces. MacArthur, however, roamed the battlefields without a gas mask as a gesture of defiance to the enemy and to instill courage in his men. Twice during fighting in France he was caught in poison gas attacks, but refused to be hospitalized. To pause for such medical attention would have meant leaving his men, and he firmly believed that an officer's place was with his troops. Even though one of the gassings left him violently ill, he did not allow it to interfere with his duties.

MacArthur was officially lauded for bravery in action (General Pershing described him as "the greatest leader of troops we have") and was promoted to Brigadier General in 1918. The next year he was appointed superintendent of West Point, where he successfully undertook the chore of upgrading the institution's already lofty military and academic standards. He returned to the Philippines in 1922 for three years as commander of the Philippine Division, and in 1930 was named a full general and appointed Army

chief of staff, the youngest in U.S. history.

General MacArthur was by then increasingly concerned about the growing menace of Communism, both at home and abroad. During an address to the graduating class of the University of Pittsburgh in 1932 he warned: "Pacifism and its bedfellow Communism are all about us. In the theaters, newspapers and magazines, pulpits and lecture halls, schools and colleges, it hangs like a mist before the face of America, organizing the

forces of unrest and undermining the morals of the working man."

In the summer of that year, the "forces of unrest" were mobilized by the Communist Party in an attempt to provoke a violent confrontation between the Army and some veterans groups that were seeking cash bonuses from Congress. Soldiers under MacArthur's command squelched a Red-instigated riot of 5,000 marchers without fatalities, or serious injuries, or so much as a shot being fired. Some of his left-wing critics still attempt to portray him as the villain in the incident, but one of the Communists who organized the march would later testify that "General MacArthur put down a Moscow-directed revolution without bloodshed, and that's why the Communists hate him."

**M**acArthur formally retired from the Army in 1937 and spent the next four years as military adviser for the Philippines to help that island nation prepare for a possible Japanese attack. He was recalled to active duty by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1941 to command U.S. forces in the Far East. When the Japanese attacked the Philippines on December 8, 1941, MacArthur's forces were isolated, but fought bravely before being forced to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula due to a lack

*"War's very object is victory*

*— not prolonged indecision.*

*In war, indeed, there can be  
no substitute for victory."*

*— Douglas MacArthur*

of reinforcements and supplies that were instead being sent to Europe to help England and our "ally," Soviet Russia.

MacArthur's forces continued to resist courageously, and it was his defense of Bataan that earned MacArthur a Medal of Honor, our nation's highest military award for bravery. The accompanying citation stated:

For conspicuous leadership in preparing the Philippine Islands to resist conquest, for gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action against invading Japanese forces, and for the heroic conduct of defensive and offensive operations on the Bataan Peninsula. He mobilized, trained, and led an army which has received world acclaim for its gallant defense against a tremendous superiority of enemy forces in men and arms. His utter disregard of personal danger under heavy fire and aerial bombardment, his calm judgment in each crisis, inspired his troops, galvanized the spirit of resistance of the Filipino people, and confirmed the faith of the American people in their Armed Forces.

In March 1942, President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to Australia to command Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific. After arriving at his new post, MacArthur lamented leaving his men in the Philippines and made his famous promise, "I shall return."

The return trip began in late 1942 when MacArthur opened a three-year offensive that by early 1944 had freed most



of New Guinea, New Britain, the Solomons, and the Admiralty Islands. His promise was fulfilled on October 20, 1944, when he led the invasion of Leyte Island. Within six months, virtually all of the Philippine Islands were free.

At one point during the remaining weeks of the war, MacArthur relates in his 1964 memoirs *Reminiscences*, he "received a shocking order from Washington to release seventy of my transport ships at once. They were to return to San Francisco and be used to carry supplies and munitions to the Soviet forces at Vladivostok." He registered a vigorous protest, since the "abrupt removal of these transports endangered the entire Philippine campaign and threatened the loss of thousands of our men fighting in north Luzon." Washington ignored his pleas, and years later the move would return to haunt MacArthur in Korea. As he revealed in *Reminiscences*, instead of go-

ing to the Soviets, "all of the supplies carried to Vladivostok, by those ships, and hundreds of thousands of other tons, were eventually used in Korea by the Communist governments of North Korea and China against our own forces."

**I**n December 1944, MacArthur became the Army's first five-star general. The following April, he assumed command of all U.S. Army forces in the Pacific. On August 14, 1945, President Truman announced that the Japanese had accepted Allied surrender terms, and named MacArthur supreme commander for the Allied Powers to receive the surrender and to rule post-war Japan. MacArthur accepted the Japanese surrender aboard the battleship *Missouri* on September 2, 1945.

After the war, MacArthur was subjected to intense pressure by some elements of the Washington establishment that

were anxious to humiliate the Japanese and reduce their country to servitude by destroying its industrial potential. MacArthur quickly made it clear, however, that he was not bent on revenge, but rather hoped to return Japan to the community of respectable nations as soon as possible. To accomplish that objective, he concluded that it would be necessary to work through the existing Japanese government, since he was convinced that the Japanese would not take orders from a foreigner for long.

His policy was firm, but fair. He issued orders through the military government to disarm and demobilize Japan's military forces, destroy the power of the war lords, substitute civics for military training in the schools, allow women to vote, give the nation a constitutional government similar to our own, and stymie the influence of Communist agitators who worked from the beginning to undermine



**Determined return:** MacArthur wades ashore at Leyte Island in the Philippines on October 20, 1944. Two years earlier, following a desperate but ill-fated defense of the Philippines for which he won a Medal of Honor, the General had departed the fortress of Corregidor with the immortal words, "I shall return." Within six months of his landing on Leyte's east coast the entire Philippine Islands were free.





Gen. MacArthur signs acceptance of Japan's surrender, aboard USS *Missouri*, September 2, 1945.

his efforts and further increase animosity between the U.S. and Japan. As a result, the Japanese, who had feared fierce retribution, came to revere MacArthur as a wise and compassionate administrator. His death on April 5, 1964 was mourned by many nations, but none more so than Japan. Former Premier Shigeru Yoshida expressed his country's sentiment when he stated, "I cannot forget the great achievement of the general in rebuilding our nation out of the ashes of defeat." Douglas MacArthur's administration of post-war Japan had demonstrated that he was not merely a great military leader, but a skilled and humane statesman and diplomat as well.

**O**n June 25, 1950, six divisions of Communist North Korean troops invaded South Korea. On July 9th, the 70-year-old "retired" general was once again called to active duty, this time to serve as Supreme Commander for United Nations forces in the Far East.

MacArthur apparently did not realize the ominous significance of this initial step in placing the U.S. military at the behest of the UN, but he would eventually experience personally some of the sinister and essentially treasonous implications of the move.

Initially, MacArthur's greatly outnumbered forces had their backs to the wall to the point that the combined U.S. and South Korean troops faced possible annihilation. But with one of the great military maneuvers of all time — the famous amphibious landing assault at Inchon — MacArthur completely reversed the course of the war.

Inchon, located on Korea's West Coast some 24 miles southwest of Seoul, is the port for the South Korean capital. Troops of the U.S. 10th Corps landed on September 15, 1950. The assault was extraordinary because extreme tides in the area varied by more than 30 feet, which meant that the assault had to be timed literally to the minute to avoid having our

landing craft and other ships trapped on mud flats. Both the Joint Chiefs of Staff and MacArthur's own staff considered the operation too risky (one estimate placed the odds of success at roughly 5,000 to 1), but that only firmed up MacArthur's resolve to proceed, since it convinced him that the enemy would conclude the same, so be caught completely off guard. The landing cut between North Korean troops in the south and Communist forces farther north. With supply lines severed, the Communists were soon routed in the south and North Korean troops were driven out of control in the north. The war appeared to be won. General MacArthur had again displayed extraordinary military competence that had defeated an adversary with a minimal loss of life and limb on both sides.

But then, as one observer subsequently noted, "we snatched defeat from the jaws of victory." On November 26, 1950, four Red Chinese armies stormed across



the Yalu River into North Korea. MacArthur had a few weeks earlier ordered the destruction of bridges across the river, but his order had been countermanded by Washington. He was stunned. Writing in *Reminiscences*, he recalled: "I realized for the first time that I had actually been denied the use of my full military power to safeguard the lives of my soldiers and the safety of my army. To me, it clearly foreshadowed a tragic situation in Korea and left me with a sense of inexpressible shock."

MacArthur described how he became "worried by a series of directives from Washington which were greatly decreasing the potential of my air force. First I was forbidden 'hot' pursuit of enemy planes that attacked our own. Manchuria and Siberia were sanctuaries of inviolate protection for all enemy forces and for all enemy purposes, no matter what depredations or assaults might come from there. Then I was denied the right to bomb the hydroelectric plants along the Yalu. The order was broadened to include every plant in North Korea which was capable of furnishing electric power to Manchuria and Siberia. Most incomprehensible of all was the refusal to let me bomb the important supply center at Racine, which was not in Manchuria or Siberia, but many miles from the border, in northeast Korea. Racine was a depot to which the Soviet Union forwarded supplies from Vladivostok for the North Korean Army. I felt that step-by-step my weapons were being taken away from me."

An earlier policy decision by our government helped assure that the Red Chinese would have plenty of manpower available for the invasion. One of the most incredible incidents of the war occurred on June 27, 1950, when President Truman ordered our Seventh Fleet into the Formosa Strait, supposedly to protect Free China (Formosa) from military action by Red China, but in reality to protect the Red Chinese who would soon be attacking our forces in Korea. MacArthur recalled how the decision to move his troops into North Korea following the Inchon landing had confronted him with a

grave problem. "It immediately raised the shadow of Red Chinese intervention," since "the possibility of such an intervention had existed ever since the order from Washington, issued to the Seventh Fleet in June, to neutralize Formosa, which in effect protected the Red China mainland from attack by Chiang Kai-shek's force of half a million men. This released the two great Red Chinese armies assigned to the coastal defense of central China and made them available for transfer elsewhere." Not until February 2, 1953, after irreversible damage had been done, did President Eisenhower announce in his first State of the Union message that he was "issuing instructions that the Seventh Fleet would no longer be employed to shield Communist China" from attack by Chiang Kai-shek's forces because "we certainly have no obligation to protect a nation fighting us in Korea."

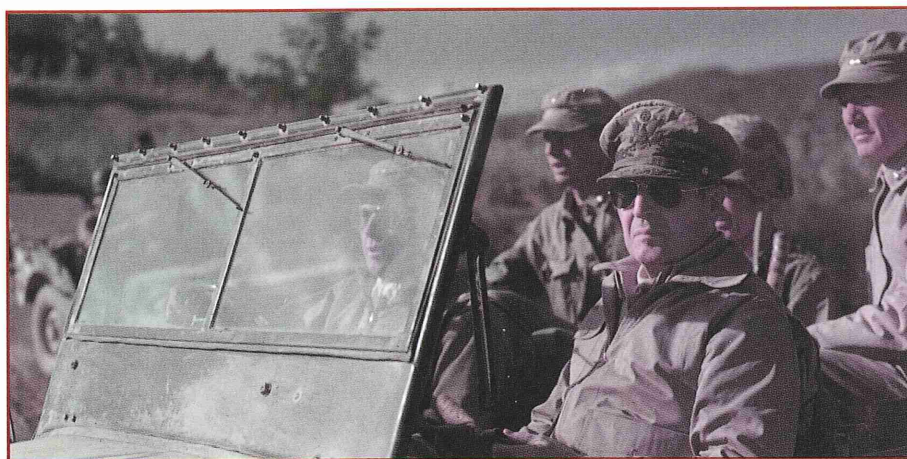
It was later learned that the Chinese had been assured in advance that MacArthur's hands would be tied. MacArthur wrote:

That there was some leak in intelligence was evident to everyone. [Brigadier General Walton] Walker continually complained to me that his operations were known to the enemy in advance through sources in Washington.... Information must have been relayed to them, assuring

that the Yalu bridges would continue to enjoy sanctuary and that their bases would be left intact. They knew they could swarm down across the Yalu River without having to worry about bombers hitting their Manchurian supply lines.

He then cited an "official leaflet" published by Red Chinese General Lin Piao, which bluntly acknowledged: "I would never have made the attack and risked my men and military reputation if I had not been assured that Washington would restrain General MacArthur from taking adequate retaliatory measures against my lines of supply and communication."

MacArthur did not disobey orders, but expressed his frustration and displeasure with this no-win, protect-the-enemy policy that he was convinced would prolong the war and cause the deaths of needless thousands of his troops. At the request of House Minority Leader Joseph Martin (R-MA), he catalogued some of his concerns in a private letter to the congressman. Representative Martin, without consulting MacArthur, subsequently made the letter public, which served as an excuse for President Truman to remove MacArthur from his command on April 11, 1951. Six months earlier, during a meeting with the President at Wake Island, Truman had pinned the General's fifth Distinguished Service Medal on his



**On the Korean front:** MacArthur completely reversed the course of the Korean War through his brilliant Inchon landing. But the incredible restrictions placed on MacArthur by Washington, and the removal of MacArthur from command, snatched defeat from the jaws of victory.



shirt, and said that MacArthur had “so inspired his command by his vision, his judgment, his indomitable will, and his unshakable faith, that it has set a shining example of gallantry and tenacity in defense and of audacity in attack matched by but few operations in military history.”

The war dragged on for two more years, resulting in stalemate with a truce agreement signed on June 27, 1953. Approximately three-fourths of the U.S. casualties suffered during the war occurred after MacArthur was fired.

With the war over, a parade of embittered generals (including James A. Van Fleet, Mark Clark, and George Stratemeyer) joined MacArthur in testifying before Congress about the incredible restrictions under which they were forced to operate. General Clark, who was UN Commander in Korea when the war ended, had been assigned the task of negotiating with the North Koreans as the war wound down. He signed the armistice agreement for the United States, but would later lament that he had “gained the unenviable distinction of being the first United States Army commander in history to sign an armistice without victory.”

**M**acArthur returned to the United States a hero. He defended his policies in an address before a joint session of Congress, during

which he stated: “I know war as few other men now living know it, and nothing to me is more revolting. I have long advocated its complete abolition as its very destructiveness on both friend and foe has rendered it useless as a means of settling international disputes.” He insisted, however, that “once war is forced upon us, there is no other alternative than to apply every available means to bring it to a swift end. War’s very object is victory — not prolonged indecision. In war, indeed, there can be no substitute for victory.” He recalled an old barrack ballad from his West Point days that says, “Old soldiers never die, they just fade away,” and concluded with the memorable words: “And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Good-bye.”

MacArthur returned to private life once again. But on May 12, 1962, he returned to West Point, where he was awarded the Sylvanus Thayer Medal, the Academy’s highest honor. In his impromptu response to the presentation, known to history as his Farewell Address, he focused on the three beacons which had guided his half-century of military service spanning three wars: “Duty-Honor-Country.” He told the cadets, “Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, and what you will be.

They are your rallying points; to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.” In closing, he reflected: “The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished tone and tint; they have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were.... But in the evening of my memory, always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes in my ears — Duty-Honor-Country. Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps — and the Corps — and the Corps. I bid you farewell.”

General MacArthur “crossed the river” on April 5, 1964. President Herbert Hoover, who also passed away in 1964, accurately assessed his contribution to our country when he stated on one occasion: “There is no way to measure the service General MacArthur has given the American people. He is the greatest general and one of the greatest statesmen of our nation’s history. He is the greatest combination of statesman and military leader that America has produced since George Washington.... General MacArthur may say, ‘Old soldiers never die, they just fade away.’ Physically they will. But the great deeds of men live forever after them.” ■