

Lesson Forty-Two

Douglas MacArthur

LESSON IDEA

To familiarize young Americans with the exploits and ideals of General Douglas MacArthur, one of the greatest military leaders of our century.

PREPARATION

Read "During The Week" and prepare the materials needed for the suggested project.

DOUGLAS MacARTHUR was an "Army brat" who grew up on military posts on frontiers of Apache country. Born on January 26, 1880, his earliest memories were of bugles and stockades, marching infantrymen and bearded scouts, weary troopers and sweaty cavalry horses. His father, Arthur MacArthur, enlisted in the Army in 1862, when his boyish voice was still as high-pitched as the tension between North and South. The stories he would later tell to his three sons about the Civil War, and later battles with Indians in the West, made it seem as if they were fighting at his side during the momentous events. But he did not seek to imbue them with a thirst for war, but rather to inspire a love of country, flag, and honor. He constantly emphasized such values, such as duty, morality, and fairness.

As the years rolled by, bringing Arthur MacArthur new assignments and honors, he remained steadfast in the desire to see his youngest son receive an appointment to West Point. [Be sure that family members understand that West Point, New York, is site of the U.S. Military Academy, where young cadets are prepared for careers as army officers.] Douglas shared his father's enthusiasm for the military. As a teenager he had begun to feel the compelling sense of duty, honor, and patriotism that had directed his father's life. He eventually earned his West Point appointment by scoring higher on the required entrance exams than any other candidates from his home state of Wisconsin. He averaged 93.3, compared to 77.9 for his nearest competitor.

His years at the Academy added to the renown of the MacArthur name. By the end of his third

year he rose to First Captain (West Point's highest military rank) and the next year graduated at the top of his class academically (posting the highest grades of any cadet in more than a quarter century). He remains one of only a handful of Academy graduates to garner both honors. It was the formal beginning of a lengthy military career that would be filled with illustrious achievements.

The young officer's opinions were always clearly stated and persuasively reasoned. If he disagreed with majors, colonels, or generals, he did not hesitate to say so firmly, yet respectfully, despite the likelihood that the "smart thing" for his personal advancement would have been to merely agree with his superiors. MacArthur had been taught to do the right thing, not the "smart" thing. What other great American leader have we recently studied who displayed that same character trait? [Remind family members of John Adams' penchant for deciding issues in terms of what was right for his country's, rather than his personal, interests whenever the two were in conflict.]

THE YOUNG SOLDIER advanced swiftly in rank, to the envy of some older officers, and earned a reputation as not only a straight talker, but also a courageous fighter and brilliant strategist. For instance, during World War 1, when Germany's poison gas warfare was the terror of every fighting man, MacArthur (then a colonel) roamed the battlefields without a gas mask. It was a defiant gesture aimed at the enemy that instilled both courage and confidence in his men.

Twice during the fighting in France he was caught in poison gas attacks, yet he refused to be hospitalized. It was, for him, a matter of principle. To pause for medical attention would have meant leaving his men, and he believed that an officer's place was with his troops. Even though one of the gas attacks made him violently ill, he did not allow it to interfere with his duties.

One event early in the war etched deeply in his



U.S. Army photo

Douglas MacArthur (I) wades ashore in the Philippines

mind the importance of on-the-spot leadership and first-hand information of enemy movements. MacArthur was ordered to pursue enemy troops, who were reportedly retreating, but found himself and his men caught in a death trap due to faulty intelligence and a lack of adequate artillery preparation and support. The supposedly retreating Germans had dug in for a final battle. Their machine-gunners slaughtered the Americans for five days and nights in a nightmare of terror and death. MacArthur was powerless. He had orders that he dared not change, but vowed that when he became a commander he would never order a frontal attack, or any attack for that matter, without reliable information and adequate bombing and artillery preparation.

After the war, now Brigadier General MacArthur received new honors in the wake of his well-earned reputation for bravery and leadership. He was appointed superintendent of West Point and charged with modernizing the famous Academy. At age 44 he was elevated to the rank of major general, an honor rarely bestowed on a man so young. He was named commander of the Department of the Philippines. And, in 1930, he was appointed to a four-year term as Army Chief of Staff, the most coveted of all military positions.

But with that with the appointment came one of the toughest fights of his distinguished career. MacArthur was acutely aware of Soviet Russia's lust for power. He had also been alerted to the German military buildup and the warlike rum-

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

The full story of the life of this famous American general is magnificently told by Frazier Hunt in *The Untold Story of Douglas MacArthur*. We enthusiastically recommend that you read it. Copies are available from ??????????

blings of Japan. But his countrymen turned a deaf ear when he warned of the danger. The nation was reeling from the effects of the Great Depression, and many confused Americans were listening to propaganda spread by communists and pacifists. MacArthur's most difficult battle was with a radical Congress intent on reducing the Army to a skeleton force and using the military budget for socialistic welfare schemes. Fortunately, his command of words was as skillful as his command of men. Time and again he articulately argued the case for military preparedness.

In an address at the University of Pittsburgh in 1932, for example, he warned the Graduating class:

Pacifism and its bedfellow communism are all about us. In the theatre, 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 morale of the working man.

Day by day this canker eats deeper into the body politic.

For the sentimentalism and emotionalism which have infested our country, we should substitute hard, common sense. Pacifist habits do not insure peace or immunity...

That conviction, though unpopular in some influential quarters, was right. And in time, his persistence, eloquence, and personal magnetism saved the Army from the peacetime burial its critics — and our country's enemies — desired. Within ten years, our nation — still shamefully unprepared — was again at war again.

WITH A SURPRISE ATTACK on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the Japanese declared war on the United States. Within hours, their bombers had also gutted

Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. So by noon of the first day of World War II, most of the U.S. Pacific Fleet lay at the bottom of Pearl Harbor and roughly half of the American air force was a charred ruin. Systematic enemy bombings continued daily until there was virtually no American air or sea force left to oppose the Japanese landing forces in the Philippines.

MacArthur, now commander of the Army in the Pacific, fought desperately to hold the strategic islands until reinforcements and supplies arrived. But only a trickle of help ever came. What was needed so critically in the Philippines was going to Europe to help England and our alleged ally, Soviet Russia. The "Europe-first" policy made little sense. Britain was not in immediate danger. Germany and Russia were locked in a death struggle. In 1941, only in the Philippines were Americans fighting with their backs to the wall. But the pleas from Churchill and the pressures from Stalin carried far more weight in Washington than those from MacArthur. Our policymakers were determined to defeat Hitler first, even if it was necessary to abandon all hope of victory in the Pacific.

This policy remained in force throughout the war. While over eleven billion dollars in Lend Lease were being lavished on the Soviets, MacArthur fought in the Pacific with only a bare minimum of food, clothing, equipment, and supplies. Yet he routed the Japanese and brought them to surrender terms as quickly as the well-equipped European commanders defeated Germany and Italy.

The strategy he used was based on his conviction that frontal assaults were brutal and pointless. Time and time again he leapfrogged over his enemy to gain a position that cut off Japanese supplies and reinforcements and forced the enemy to retreat.

His incredible string of victories, stretching across the Pacific, made him a hero to the American public. But not to the pro-Stalin policy makers — nor to President Roosevelt, who feared MacArthur would use his public acclaim as a springboard to the Presidency in the next election.

Those who opposed the socialism of the Roosevelt Administration and the pro-Communist influences that invaded the executive branch of government during the war years were indeed

urging MacArthur to enter politics. But he would have none of it! He felt it would be betraying a trust, capitalizing on the emotion of a victory that had cost thousands of young Americans their lives. The thought was repulsive to him.

If MacArthur had been a man driven by personal ambition, do you think he would have reasoned differently? After all, the only honor which could top those he had already attained was the Presidency. [Ask for opinions. Contrast MacArthur's ideas with those of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied commander in Europe. Eisenhower calculatingly told MacArthur in 1946 that "he had not decided whether to run for the Presidency in 1948 or 1952; that he was sure that if he decided to run, he would have an easy victory because he could count on the support of the millions of veterans, and had also been promised the support of the labor vote, and that with those two groups as foundation, he would be unbeatable." This is a direct quote from *The Untold Story Of Douglas MacArthur* by Frazier Hunt.]

When World War II ended, MacArthur was ordered to Japan to command the occupation. Forces in Washington were demanding that he reduce the enemy nation to servitude, destroy its industrial potential, and leave it broken and helpless; but the American commander was not seeking revenge. He hoped, instead, to return Japan to the community of respectable nations. To do this, he decided he would have to work through the existing Japanese government. The conquered Orientals would not take orders from a foreigner for long; their kill-and-destroy thinking, nurtured for so many years by the war lords, would never be changed by Western force.

MacArthur's policy was one of fairness, but firmness. He issued orders through the established government to disarm and demobilize the military forces, to destroy the power of the war lords, to open schools and substitute civics for military training, to allow women to vote, to give the Asian nation a constitutional government similar to our own, and to stymie the power of Communist agitators.

No sooner was this accomplished in Japan than Communist forces violated the security of South Korea, and MacArthur was again called to battle. The six North Korean divisions that swept into the free South hit with lightning speed, well

equipped for combat. MacArthur had no comparable force with which to oppose them. Yet he managed to use what troops he did have to stall their advance while he launched a counter-maneuver. His plan was to land troops at Inchon, miles behind the enemy's front line, and cut off supplies and reinforcements to the fighting front. It was the same tactic MacArthur had used so successfully against the Japanese during World War II, but at Inchon the difficulties were immense. At low tide, the beach was surrounded by mud flats; at high tide, the crest was twenty-nine feet! To be successful, the maneuver had to be perfectly timed and executed.

MacArthur personally supervised every detail. The strategic surprise was so complete that the enemy was in no position to do anything but retreat. Within months, the Communists were on the defensive and fighting for their lives. One final stroke could have insured victory and ended the war. But MacArthur was denied the use of air power to cover his advance and to destroy the enemy's northern supply bases; he was denied the right to pursue Communist troops across the 38th parallel which divided North from South Korea. Instead, he was forced to watch his enemy prepare to attack from privileged sanctuaries in the north and launch massive suicidal waves against his men. When Americans demanded an explanation for the stalemate and high casualty lists, MacArthur freely gave it. His forthrightness was the "right" thing to do — but certainly not the "smart" thing to do, because it exposed the stupidity — or treason — of American policymakers to public view. When he could not be muzzled, MacArthur was relieved of his command. To put it bluntly, he was fired. He was defeated for the first time, not by enemy troops but by an angry President, Harry S. Truman, who was outraged by MacArthur's plainspoken truths.

Concluding Thought

Perhaps President Hoover most accurately assessed MacArthur's contribution to our country when he said:

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. It was his military genius which won the war with Japan. It was his statesmanship which turned away the natural enmity of the Japanese people 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.

Looking Ahead

Next week we'll return, in our study, to the days when our nation fought to win. The year was 1812, and the conflict has been called the Second War for Independence.

DURING THE WEEK

If you have not already done so, start a scrapbook of great American heroes. Collect pictures of MacArthur and excerpts from some of his speeches.

The following excerpt from his historic address before a joint meeting of the Congress following his dismissal in Korea contains one of his most famous quotations. Can you find it?

In war there is no substitute for victory. There are some who, for varying reasons, would appease Red China. They are blind to history's clear lesson, for history teaches with unmistakable emphasis that appeasement but begets new and bloodier war. It points to no single instance where this end has justified the means, where appeasement has led to more than a sham peace. Like blackmail, it lays the basis for new and successively greater demands until, as in blackmail, violence becomes the only other alternative.

Why, my soldiers asked of me, surrender military advantages to an enemy in the field? I could not answer.