



The first 5-star General of the Army appointment in U.S. history went to George C. Marshall on December 16, 1944. The visionary Army Chief of Staff, Marshall was the ultimate team builder, organizing and directing the largest military expansion in U.S. history. Though he never fought on the WWII battlefields of Europe or the Pacific, his leadership inspired others and provided the resources to win the war.

Winston Churchill called George Marshall "the organizer of victory."



"People not only thought he was telling them the truth, he did tell them the truth. He always told me the truth when I was President of the United States."

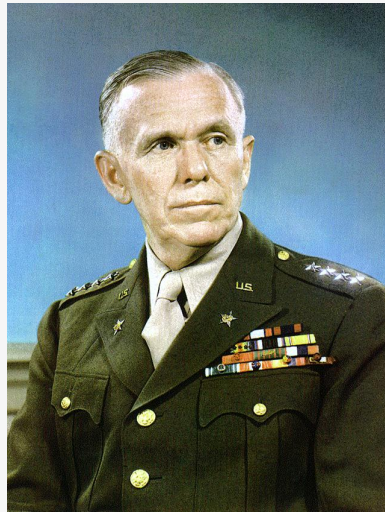
Harry S. Truman  
33rd President



## Honesty is Still the Best Policy

By J. Bolling Williamson

*This month's leadership lesson comes from J. Bolling Williamson, a retired banker, Marine officer, Vietnam veteran, and instructor at the Graduate School of Retail Bank Management. A graduate of VMI, like George Marshall, Mr. Williamson is developing a leadership course, using Marshall as the historic role model. Look for more Marshall lessons in coming issues.*



On 1 September 1939, George Catlett Marshall took command of the United States Army – a force of approximately 175,000 men equipped largely with weapons left over from World War I, and which ranked 19th in the world. Earlier that same morning, Germany invaded Poland in the opening drive to overrun Western Europe with 98 divisions of 1.5 million men supported by modern tanks and aircraft.

An isolationist mind-set gripped the United States. Congress and President Roosevelt were focused on the upcoming elections and debating the need for more social programs, and it fell to Marshall to convince them of the seriousness of the threat posed by Nazi Germany. He spent the next several months meeting with the President and testifying before congressional committees on the need to appropriate funds to build up the nation's armed forces.

He brought an unwelcomed message and he was candid in delivering it, telling the President in one meeting, "Mr. President, if you don't do something and do it right away, I don't know what is going to happen to this country."

The Speaker of the House observed that Marshall never flinched from laying out dismal facts, adding that he "would tell the truth even if it hurt his cause." On another occasion, the Speaker said that congressmen soon realized that when Marshall was testifying before them, they "were in the presence of a man who is telling us the truth, as he sees it." His veracity and mastery of the facts converted many of the doubters to supporters, to the extent that he ultimately obtained a significant portion of the resources he requested.