

## 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.

**D**OUGLAS 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.]

**T**HE 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 I, 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-

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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.

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

