



# Douglas MacArthur | History, WWII, Korean War & Death

## Douglas MacArthur Summary

Douglas MacArthur was the flamboyant, controversial symbol of America's dogged resolve during [World War 2](#). He is among the most well-known war heroes with his trademark corn cobb pipe and his love of self-publicity. Though he often disregarded authority, Douglas MacArthur praised him for his bold, imaginative military strategy.

## Douglas MacArthur Facts



**American Military leader**



|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Born:</b>            | 26 January 1880 (Little Rock, Arkansas U.S)        |
| <b>Death:</b>           | 5 April 1964 (84 Age), Washington D.C, U.S         |
| <b>Cause of Death:</b>  | kidney and liver failure                           |
| <b>Parents:Wives:</b>   | Arthur MacArthur Jr., Mary Pinkney Hardy MacArthur |
| <b>Wives:</b>           | Louise Cromwell Brooks, Jean Faircloth             |
| <b>Children:</b>        | Arthur   |
| <b>Place of burial:</b> | MacArthur Memorial                                 |

## Douglas MacArthur Early life

[Douglas MacArthur](#) was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on January 26, 1880. He was the last of three sons born to Arthur and Mary MacArthur.

His father was a civil war veteran who had fought with distinction in such [battles](#) as Chickamauga and Murfreesboro, along with Sherman's final push on Atlanta. He won the medal of honor for his bravery, setting a very high bar for his boys. Despite his father having been the state governor of Wisconsin, Arthur fell for a southern belle.



Tensions were so high between the states that Mary's brothers refused to attend the wedding. His father's military career heavily influenced young Douglas.

He once commented that his first memory was the sound of bugles, and he loved the pomp and ceremony of the army. Arthur had been stationed at a series of remote western military posts when Douglas came along. When their youngest son was nine, the family relocated to Washington, D.C.

## **Washington D.C**

For the next four years, Douglas attended the Force Public School.

### **Force Public School**

In 1893, Arthur was posted to San Antonio, Texas.

### **San Antonio, Texas**

There Douglas was enrolled at the West Texas Military academy.

### **West Texas Military Academy**

He excelled academically and on the sports field, being named class valedictorian during his final year. Douglas MacArthur now set his sights on West Point Military Academy.



## West Point Military Academy



His father tried to use his influence to secure a Presidential appointment for his son to the academy, but this was rejected by two Presidents, Cleveland and McKinley.

This meant he would have to gain entry the old-fashioned way – by passing the entrance exam. Arthur hired a tutor to help Douglas MacArthur prepare for the exam.

His diligence paid off, and he attained a 93.3 out of hundred. MacArthur later commented on his preparation for the exam. It was a lesson I never forgot. Preparedness is the key to success and victory.





Douglas MacArthur's mother instilled in him a firm belief that he was destined for greatness. By the time he entered West Point, Douglas had developed enough qualities to reinforce her belief.

He was strong, both mentally and physically. From his earliest days in military outposts in the west, he had become adept at horse riding and rifle shooting. In remembering that time in his life, he said. I learned to read and shoot even before I could read or write – almost before walking and talking.

The teenage Douglas MacArthur was tall and handsome, and he projected an air of self-confidence that turned heads when he walked into a room. West Point Douglas' first year at West Point was a challenging time for him. As the son of a senior officer and with a mother who stayed close by in a hotel to keep an eye on her beloved boy, he was subjected to more than the usual hazing that all first years have to endure. Still, he endured it with a stoic resolve that impressed senior students.

While other first-year students were broken by the less intense hazing they experienced, Douglas maintained an air of composure, even cheerfulness, throughout the ordeal.

Douglas proved to be an excellent student in all respects. He stood first in his class in 1903 with an overall score of 98 percent. It seemed as if he was on the right track in anticipation of his mother's greatness. As a top graduate from West Point, Douglas was now allowed to choose which branch of the armed services he entered.

## **Engineering Corps**

He decided on the Engineering Corps, entering the service with the rank of Second Lieutenant.

### **Philippines**

His first posting was to the Philippines, which had been an American colony for five years.



His father, Arthur, had served there three years earlier, and he had warned his son and whoever else would listen that an insurrection was on the horizon on the island.

Douglas was placed in charge of strengthening the military infrastructure on the island. Yet he had barely been there a month when he was attacked by a pair of bandits while traveling alone in the countryside.

He beat off both attackers and then shot them dead. It was an early example of the fierce courage which would be his trademark.

## **Malaria**

This first assignment was cut short after less than a year when Douglas MacArthur contracted malaria. Once he had recovered, his father pulled some strings to have Douglas accompany him as a military aide on a tour of Asia.

The two years he spent in [China](#), [Japan](#), and India developed MacArthur's ideas about Asia that went against the grain of mainstream political thought. He considered Asian people to be equal to Americans.

MacArthur, in itself, undercut the subtle racism underpinning U.S. policy toward the region. Furthermore, he was of the firm opinion that America's future lay with the Far East and not, as the majority contended, with [Europe](#).

This set him at odds with the European-centric views of his superiors, which would persist throughout his lifetime. After his return from Asia, Douglas spent some years building up his experience and qualifications in the engineering corps.

He attended engineering school in Washington, after which he was posted to Milwaukee and Kansas. By then, he had been promoted to captain.

In January 1912, McArthur was posted to Panama. It would be a short excursion. He returned the following month to attend the funeral of his father. He was concerned about his mother's mental health and requested a repositing to Washington, D.C., to be close to her.



## War Department



### Veracruz In 1914 with gun

Veracruz In 1914, Douglas MacArthur was assigned to the War Department to serve on the Veracruz Expedition in Mexico. Relations between the U.S. and Mexico had been deteriorating for some time.

### Tampico Affair

An incident known as the Tampico Affair brought matters to a head. Nine American sailors were taken into custody by the Mexican government for entering off-limits areas of the city of Tampico in the state of Tamaulipas.

Tampico released the sailors, but the Mexicans refused to provide the 21-gun salute demanded by the American government.



## Woodrow Wilson



### Rare Colour image of Woodrow Wilson

An outraged President, Woodrow Wilson, ordered the invasion of the port of Veracruz by the U.S. Navy. Douglas MacArthur was sent to Veracruz as a military advisor. However, he soon went beyond his job description when he recruited some local railroad engineers and headed out to hijack several trains that Veracruz believed to be sitting several miles down the line. To get there, he and his small group used a handcar.





The group was able to command a total of five engines. On the way back to headquarters, they came under attack from rebels on horseback.

Douglas MacArthur shot at least three of the attackers. When he returned, he noticed that there were three bullet holes in his clothing, yet he remained unscathed.

MacArthur's commanding officer was greatly impressed by his daring ingenuity. He recommended Douglas MacArthur for a Medal of Honor. However, the honors board questioned the Advisability of this enterprise, having been undertaken without the knowledge of the commanding general on the ground.

By 1915, Douglas MacArthur was back in Washington, D.C., where he immersed himself in his work at the War Department. In 1915 he was promoted to major.

## **Bureau of Information**

A short time later, he was made the army's first chief of the Bureau of Information, which was essentially a military press office. His experience taught him valuable lessons about the power of the press and the need to cultivate a solid public persona.

The Great War The [United States](#) entered [World War I](#) in April 1917. Douglas MacArthur wanted the National Guard to be sent to Europe to play its part in the war effort. He came up with the idea of a 'rainbow' national guard force made up of guardsmen from every state. This avoided any inter-state rivalry.

## **42nd Rainbow division**

As a result, he became the Chief of Staff of the 42nd Rainbow Division. It left for [France](#) in October 1917. The 42nd Rainbow division was posted behind the front lines to complete their training. MacArthur's duties were primarily administrative, which was a source of frustration for him.



He longed to get in on the action, going so far as to volunteer for trench raids with a neighboring French division. Douglas MacArthur found himself under gas attack on one such raid, yet he still managed to make it to safety.

The French were highly impressed with his actions, awarding him the Croix de Guerre. As well as volunteering to help on [French](#) raids, he eventually led some American ones. Every time he was the first man over the top. His bravery didn't go unnoticed.

### **June 1917**

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and promoted to Brigadier General in June 1917. He won two more Distinguished Service Crosses, leading his men in a defensive mission during the Kaiser's Offensive in the Summer of 1918.

The horrors he witnessed during that offensive prompted him to make the quip. Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword never encountered automatic weapons. Yet, Douglas MacArthur excelled in the thick of battle.

### **July 1918**

By July 1918, he had earned 4 Silver Stars, two Croix de Guerre, and the French Legion of Honor. Still, he wasn't done.

### **October 1918**

During the tremendous [American](#) offensive of October 1918, he won two more silver stars and, despite being gassed, refused to stay out of the thick of the action.

## **George Patton**

He came into contact with Future General George Patton, who called MacArthur 'the bravest man I have ever met. The climax of MacArthur's World War One experience was the taking of the French city of Chatillon. After spotting a weakness in the German defenses, he led an attack that overran the town.



The capture of Chatillon was a crucial victory in the war's final weeks. It won him yet another Distinguished Service Medal. Between the Wars Returning to the United States as a celebrated

## **Camp Meade, Maryland**

War hero Douglas MacArthur was assigned to Camp Meade, Maryland, for a time before returning to Washington, D.C. He was involved in preparing a manual on the best use of the new weapon of warfare, the tank. After studying the subject, he became convinced that tanks should be used for more than just infantry support; they should constitute a separate fighting force of their own.

## **Louise Brooks Cromwell**

In 1922, Douglas MacArthur married Louise Brooks Cromwell, described by the New York Times as 'one of Washington's most beautiful and attractive young women.' She was also one of the richest, coming from a wealthy dynasty. Louise, who brought two young children to the marriage, had previously courted Douglas MacArthur's superior, General Pershing.

The older man was unhappy with the situation, threatening to send Douglas MacArthur to the Philippines if he went ahead with the marriage. In less than a year, MacArthur was sent to the Philippines as a brigade commander in the Philippine Division.

During this posting, he established close ties to the Philippine ruling powers. He also witnessed the poor treatment of the indigenous people, becoming a champion.

## **IV Corps in Georgia**

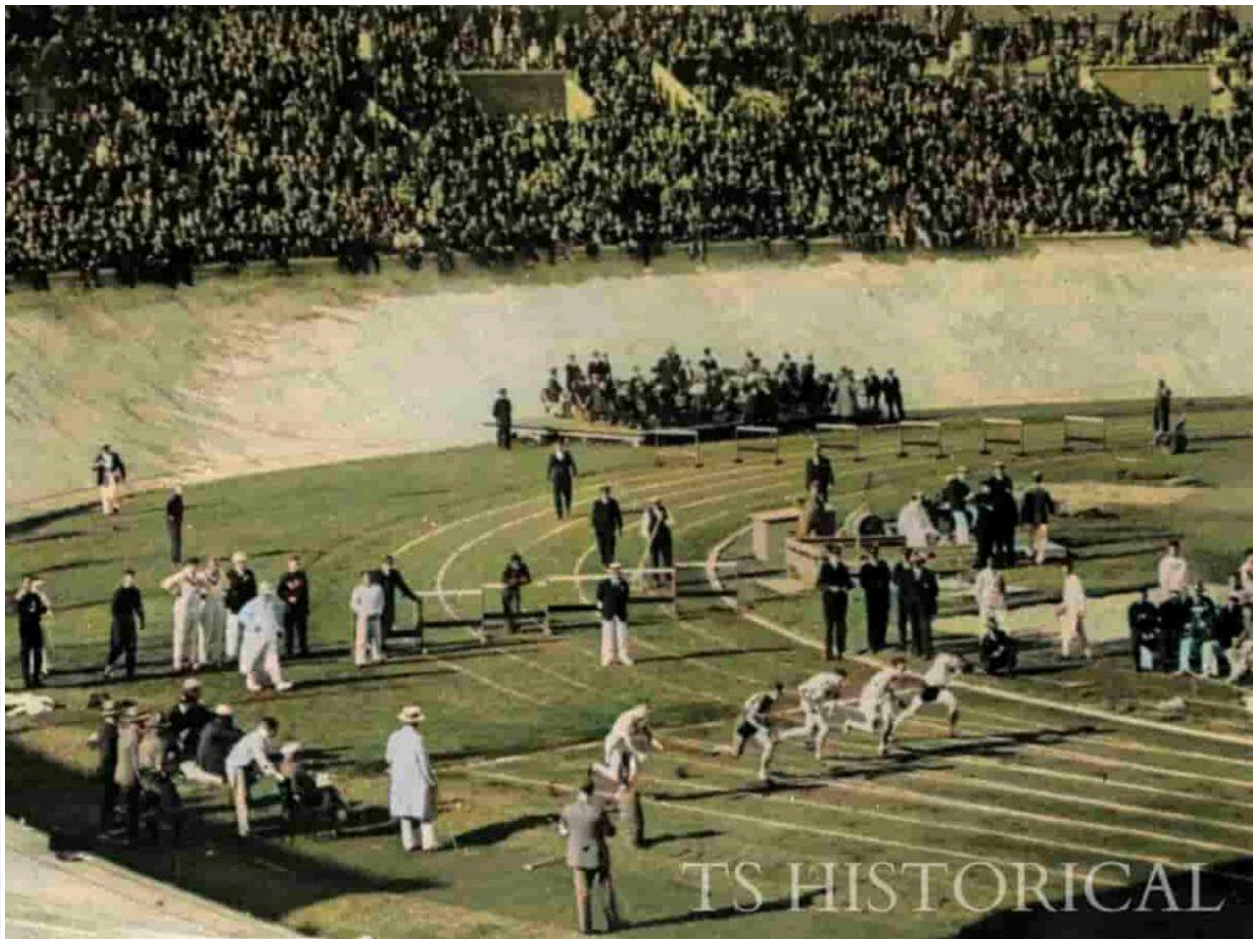
In 1925, Douglas MacArthur was promoted to Major General and returned to the United States as commander of the IV Corps in Georgia. Lingering Civil War tensions made his command untenable, and he was transferred to the III Corps in Maryland.





By 1927, MacArthur's marriage was in trouble. He and Louise were just too different, and though he was devoted to her two children, they separated at the end of that year and were officially divorced two years later, in 1929. Douglas MacArthur then threw himself into a new role.

## America's Olympic Committee



Rare Colour Image of America's Olympic Committee for the 1928 Games in Amsterdam





He was given the role of President of America's Olympic Committee for the 1928 Games in Amsterdam. In one famous incident during the Games when the U.S. boxing coach threatened to withdraw the team due to perceived bias on the judging panel, Douglas MacArthur pulled him aside and told him . . . Americans don't quit.

Following the Olympics, McArthur was sent back to the Philippines. Then, in 1930, he was appointed U.S. Army chief of staff, the youngest man at the time to hold the position.

He made critical administrative changes during the difficult Depression years. Yet the most noteworthy episode during his tenure as Chief of staff came in 1932 when he oversaw the army's response to a protest by war veterans in [Washington](#). During the confrontation, soldiers fired on the veterans, with several of them being killed.

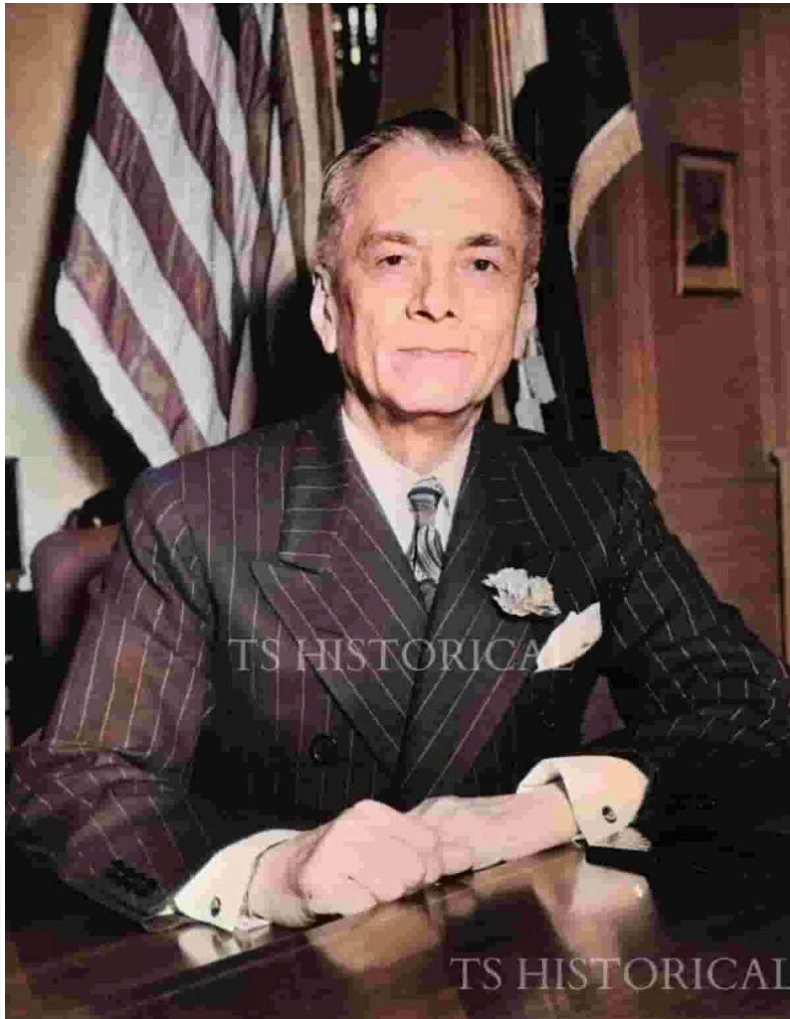
The backlash fell squarely on Douglas MacArthur's shoulders, and his reputation suffered a setback. With the election of Franklin Roosevelt to the presidency, tensions between the Commander in Chief and his Chief of staff reached an all-time high.

When Roosevelt refused to increase the military budget, Douglas MacArthur made the following caustic comment When we lose the next war, and an American boy lying in the mud with an enemy bayonet through his belly and an enemy foot on his dying throat spits out his last curse, I wanted the name not be MacArthur but Roosevelt.

Despite their differences, Roosevelt and MacArthur had mutual respect for one another. The President extended the four-year chief of staff post by a year. In 1935, Douglas MacArthur once more went to the Philippines.



## Manuel Quezon



### Rare Colour Image of Manuel Quezon

This time he came at the personal invitation of President Manuel Quezon to act as a military adviser to create a defense force on the island. He retired from active service in the U.S. Army to take up the role.



## July 1941

[World War Two](#) In July 1941, Roosevelt brought Douglas MacArthur back. He appointed him commander of the U.S. forces in the Far East. The immediate focus, naturally, was to build up U.S. forces in the Philippines.

## Pearl Harbor

Five months later, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war. It seemed clear to Douglas MacArthur that the Philippines would be the next Japanese target.

That attack came within two weeks. Douglas MacArthur had neither the workforce nor the time to prepare harbor, wiped out a proper defense and half of his air force.

## December 22, 1941

On December 22, 1941, the Japanese advanced on Manilla. Acting on his initiative, Douglas MacArthur pulled his forces back to the Bataan peninsula.

## Corregidor

He set up his headquarters on the island fortress of Corregidor. Her personal press corps with him allowed him to publicize his valiant defense against the Japanese. However, his forces and supplies were too few, and his situation was hopeless.

## Bataan

President Roosevelt gave the command for him to evacuate Bataan. At first, he refused, only complying when Roosevelt promised to give him his theatre of operations in the Pacific. Douglas MacArthur then escaped from Bataan, making a daring getaway by the sea. However, his forces stayed on the island.

## April 1942

The Japanese overtook them in April 1942, with many dying on the next Bataan death march. Douglas MacArthur now set up his base of operations in Australia.



From there, he made his famous promise I said to the people of the Philippines, whence I came, and I shall return. For two years, he worked indefatigably to make that promise a reality. Roosevelt appointed him as the Supreme Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area.

## **Charles Nimitz**

He worked closely with the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Navy, Admiral Charles Nimitz. Together they devised a plan to attack the Japanese through the central Pacific Islands, which was Nimitz's focus, and oust them from the Philippines, which Douglas MacArthur was committed to what they called Operation Cartwheel.

### **Solomon Islands**

Nimitz advanced his naval forces through the Solomon Islands while Douglas MacArthur advanced along.

### **New Guinea**

New Guinea coast of the northeast. He used an island-hopping strategy to bypass the main areas of Japanese strength. During this time, MacArthur's reputation among the American public had achieved hero status. By the end of 1944, he was poised to invade the Philippines.

However, the authority for the invasion was denied by both Admiral Nimitz and the President. With his well-tuned publicity machine, he managed to pressure a change of mind, and Nimitz gave the go-ahead for the invasion.

### **October 19, 1944**

On October 19, 1944, Douglas MacArthur landed at Leyte Gulf.

### **Leyte Gulf**





Over the next few months, he pushed on to fully liberate the Philippines.

## **Central Plain**

His men finally crossed the Central Plain to take control of the capital at Manila in March 1945. During the Post War Years, Douglas MacArthur received the Japanese surrender.

## **September 2, 1945**

At Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. Following the war, he was placed in command of the occupation of the Allied occupation of [Japan](#). He was charged with rebuilding the Japanese economy and demobilizing its military.

## **Korean War – H5**

In 1950, Douglas MacArthur served as the United Nations forces commander in the Korean War.

## **Harry S. Truman**

His tenure came to an abrupt end the following year when ongoing tensions with President Truman on the approach toward the Chinese led to his dismissal as U.N. Commander in Chief.

Truman was attempting to pursue a peaceful negotiation with the Chinese, while Truman was a vocal advocate for military intervention. The situation became untenable when he wrote a letter to a Republican senator calling for a military invasion of China.

Douglas MacArthur read the letter aloud in Congress. Henry gave Truman the excuse to get rid of the trouble-making general. Douglas MacArthur learned about his firing through a radio report.

Douglas MacArthur was still very popular with the public, and his firing by Truman created a backlash that led many to call for the President's impeachment. With his



typical caustic style, Truman addressed the situation with the following fired him because he wouldn't respect the authority of the President.

That's the answer to that. I didn't fire him because he was a dumb son of a bitch; although he was, that's not against the law for generals. If it were half to three-quarters of them would be in jail. Fading Away His firing by Truman had made Douglas MacArthur even more popular than ever.

Upon his return to the U.S., he was given a ticker tape parade through the streets of New York, the largest the city had ever seen. He was invited to give a farewell address to Congress, in which he delivered the famous line Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.

## **Waldorf Astoria**

He moved into the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York, where he remained for the rest of his days. Douglas Douglas MacArthur spent his retirement years in quiet seclusion. However, in 1961 he was contacted by President Kennedy and asked for advice on the Asian situation. MacArthur told him to stay out of Vietnam.

In 1961, Douglas MacArthur made his final trip to the Philippines, where he met with old friends. On his return to the States, he began working on his autobiography.

## **April 5, 1964**

The end came on April 5, 1964, due to liver disease. He was honored with a full state funeral. More than 150,000 people paid their respects to one of America's great war titans.



## Douglas MacArthur Death



### **Rare Colour Image of Douglas MacArthur's last salute**

On March 2, 1964, General Douglas MacArthur was admitted to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He had sought care for abdominal pain and had to have his gallbladder removed. But the gallstones had already caused inflammation in his liver.

A cascade of health issues followed. Following surgery for hemorrhaging in his esophagus, he had to have his spleen removed, and then his kidneys began to fail. He underwent a massive blood transfusion, but it wasn't enough.



Douglas MacArthur fell into a coma when his liver and kidneys failed later that month. He died at 84 years old on April 5, 1964. MacArthur was survived by his wife, Jean, and his son, Arthur. But his lasting legacy is a complex one. Some praise him as a hero who stood up to Communist expansion.

In contrast, others see him as an egotist who sacrificed his men and risked the future of America itself for personal political gain. They say history will be the judge. However, for Douglas MacArthur, the verdict is still out.

## People Also Ask?

### How did Douglas MacArthur die?

Douglas MacArthur fell into a coma when his liver and kidneys failed later that month. He died at 84 years old on April 5, 1964.

### What did Douglas MacArthur do in WW2?

World War Two In July 1941, Roosevelt brought Douglas MacArthur back. He appointed him commander of the U.S. forces in the Far East. The immediate focus, naturally, was to build up U.S. forces in the Philippines.

### When did Douglas MacArthur die?

In contrast, others see him as an egotist who sacrificed his men and risked the future of America itself for personal political gain. They say history will be the judge. However, for Douglas MacArthur, the verdict is still out.