



Washington at Valley Forge, painting by F.C. John; *Three Lions*

# The 250th Anniversary Of The Birth OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

*Robert W. Lee is a graduate of the University of Utah and a former corporation president. He is a Contributing Editor for The Review Of The News, where his "From The Hopper" and "A Capital Report" columns appear regularly.*

■ FEBRUARY 22, 1982, marks the 250th anniversary of the birth of George Washington, the most remarkable of our nation's Founding Fathers, whose exceptional character and leadership helped guide the new American nation through the most critical twenty-five years of its early history. It was during these years that independence was achieved with Wash-

ington as Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Army; the Constitution was adopted under his guidance as President of the Constitutional Convention; and, the roots of our country's political and economic stability were firmly established during his two terms as President of the United States. As the *World Book Encyclopedia* correctly notes, "In the

**The character training prescribed by August and Mary Washington stressed the importance of high moral standards and responsible conduct. These principles, strictly enforced, developed in their son George the thoroughness and sound judgment later evidenced during his years as military commander and President.**

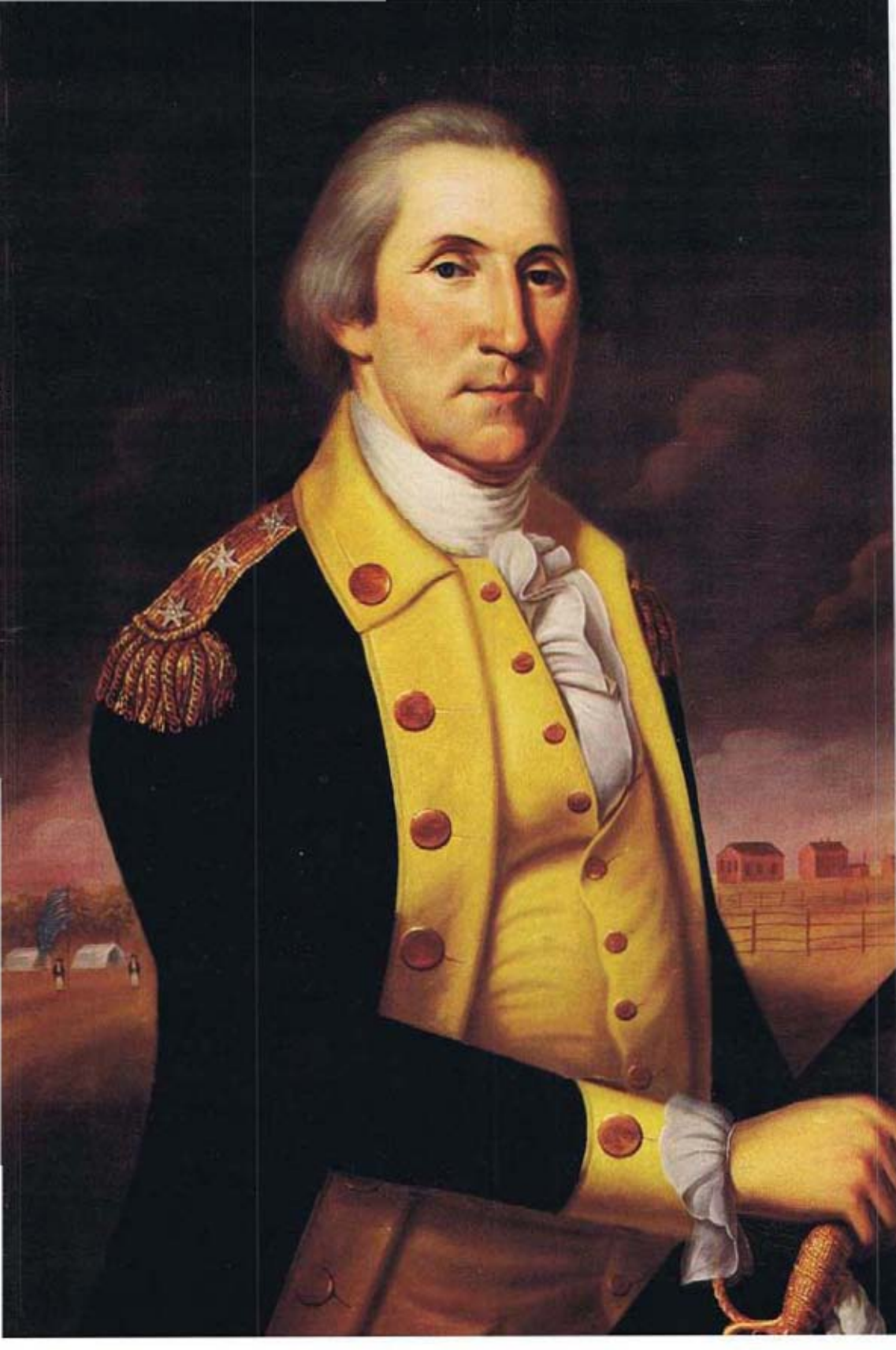
history of the world, no man has done more to help any country than Washington did to help the United States."

Washington was born February 22, 1732,\* on an estate about thirty miles southeast of Fredericksburg, Virginia. The character training prescribed by his parents during his early years contributed greatly to his later successes and accomplishments. August and Mary Washington constantly stressed the importance of high standards of morality and conduct and insisted that they be practiced in the home. In addition to the Ten Commandments (which George memorized at an early age), there were such supplementary aides as *Hawkins' Rules* (for conduct in relatively minor affairs) with which George's father had become acquainted while attending school in England in his own early years. Formally titled *Youth's Behavior Or Decency In Conversation Amongst Men*, by Francis Hawkins, the *Rules* were paraphrased by young George in his famous school copybook captioned *Rules Of Civility & Decent Behavior In Company And Conversation*. The copybook dealt with such matters as

character development ("Associate yourself with persons of good character. It is better to be alone than in bad company"), consideration for others ("Do not reprove or correct another in anger"), modesty ("Be modest in your apparel; do not play the peacock"), compassion ("When a man does the best he can, yet succeeds not, do not blame him"), conduct ("Show a good example, particularly before the less experienced"), and similar worthwhile attributes involving more than one hundred maxims.

The biblically based philosophy of the day taught that prompt physical punishment should be imposed on children who misbehaved. Even very young children were expected to acquire a sense of responsibility. On one occasion, when he was only four years old, George picked some flowers from the family garden and presented them to his mother as a well-intentioned gift. Instead of thanks, however, he received a scolding, a paddling, and a stern lecture from his father regarding the importance of considering all potential consequences of a proposed act. As described by historian William Hale Wilbur: "The father told the saddened boy that he should have asked himself who owned the peonies; asked himself if the peonies were his

\*The date was actually February eleventh by the calendar in use at the time. The Gregorian calendar, which Virginia adopted in 1752, mandated the change to February twenty-second.



**A keen sense of duty and patriotism led Washington to make tremendous sacrifices for his country. As President, George Washington ensured the survival of a stable American government embracing the principles of freedom, justice, and independence which he prayed would always remain our national heritage.**

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to do with as he pleased; considered whether his mother might not prefer to have the beautiful blossoms stay on the bush.

"With his usual thoroughness Father August then broadened the lesson to include situations of a different nature. The boy was told that he must always determine beforehand whether some proposed action might harm one of the children, or injure some one else.

"The lesson ended with the caution that George should not do anything which might destroy something; that he should begin right now, young as he was, to think before acting, considering all the consequences first, no matter how attractive the project might seem to he." (*The Making Of George Washington*, 1970.)

It was early training of this sort (harsh by today's lenient — and disastrous — standards) which developed in Washington the thoroughness and sound judgment later evidenced during his years as military commander and President.

Young George had a terrible temper which was eventually brought under control in the wake of firm parental guidance and discipline. Consider, for instance, the famed "cherry tree" incident. As initially reported by Parson Mason Locke

Weems in his well-meaning but highly inaccurate early biography of Washington,\* young George chopped down the tree, confessed because he could not tell a lie, and was forgiven for the destructive act. This account is so contrary to what is known about standards of conduct within the Washington household that it can safely be discounted as apocryphal. And yet, there apparently was a cherry tree incident. As described by William Willbur: "One Saturday morning in the year that George Washington was seven, his father announced at breakfast that he was going to ride into town after spending a half an hour with the field workers. George promptly resolved to get his chores done and then ask to go with his father . . . .

"George busied himself industriously and was just finishing when his younger brother Sammy came to him and announced, 'Mother says you are to help me weed my garden. You are to tell me which are the weeds and which are the carrots, the radishes and the corn.'

"While this was not a tremendous task, it surely meant that George would miss going with his father. Like a flash his temper blazed . . . .

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\**The Life And Memorable Actions Of George Washington*, 1800.

"With flushed face George gripped the hatchet that was in his hand [one of his chores had been to cut wood]. With the abandon that goes with a violent temper, George struck at the nearest available target, a cherry tree that his father had recently planted a few feet from the kitchen door.

"Hardly conscious of what he was doing he pulled back and gave the little tree a second vicious slash."

Then the reaction set in as a remorseful George realized the import (and likely outcome) of what he had done. He hid until his father left for town, helped Sammy weed the garden, and awaited the inevitable. When his father returned and noted the damaged tree, he called for George, who tearfully admitted that he was the culprit. Wilbur continues: "I cannot understand what could lead you to destroy this tree." Father's words came slowly. "You must have lost your reason somehow."

"After a pause he went on, 'I have told you several times to control your temper. If you do not master it, it will destroy you. Come with me.'

"August turned toward the woodshed where a supply of birch rods about a half inch in diameter was kept for such occasions. The licking which was administered may well have been the worst one George ever received . . . Finally his father stopped and said: 'I hope you will never forget this incident. I shall try to forget it, but you should not.'"

Apparently, he never did.

In sum, Washington's early character development consisted of (1) a number of reasonable and easily understood "do's" and "don't's"; (2) a calm and consistent insistence that they be complied with; and, (3) prompt correction (often accompanied by mild punishment) whenever he failed to comply. The results,

as one might expect, were sound habits, self control, and a keen sense of responsibility.

George became interested in surveying at an early age and soon earned a reputation as a conscientious and accurate surveyor. In July 1749, at the remarkably young age of seventeen, he entered his first public office as Surveyor of Culpepper County, Virginia.

It is perhaps worth noting that, contrary to the trend of the day among his peers, young Washington decided at about this time to forego the habit of smoking. He never smoked tobacco or other substances at any time during his life. Yet, in 1971, a bizarre charge was widely circulated to the effect that he and six other Presidents had been marijuana smokers. Indeed, the Nixon Administration's top medical officer, Surgeon General Jesse Steinfield, told the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse that "Dr. Burke, president of the American Historical Reference Society and consultant to the Smithsonian [Institution] reports no less than seven U.S. Presidents smoked marijuana, including Washington . . ."

Despite the serious implications of such a charge, it went unchallenged by members of the Commission, and it was only later learned that the story was a total fabrication. There was no such person as "Dr. Burke." The Smithsonian Institution knew nothing of the so-called American Historical Reference Society. And the hoax was eventually traced to an underground New Left newspaper, the *Chicago Seed*, which had copied the fabrication from another underground paper, which had apparently made it up. The incident stands as merely one example of scores which could be cited to illus-

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## WASHINGTON

trate the tactics used to besmirch Washington's character.\*

The void created by the death of Washington's father on April 12, 1743, was largely filled by a much-beloved half-brother, Lawrence, who continued to provide a fine atmosphere for George's development. Lawrence suffered poor health and decided to spend the winter of 1751-1752 on the island of Barbados. It was essential that he have some sort of companionship, and since his wife had a newborn baby and could not make the journey, George gladly offered to accompany his brother. Although an absence of two or three months would be financially costly, "No hint of any balancing of loss against duty appears in anything George is known to have said then or afterward. Family obligation came first; Lawrence needed his company. That was enough. Everything else could wait." (*Washington*, Douglas Southall Freeman, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968.)

It was during that voyage (his only trip abroad) that George Washington contracted the case of smallpox which scarred his face for life. Yet, even that was a blessing of sorts. "The worst feature of the stay on the island proved to be the best: That

\*For another, consider the claim of muckraking journalist Drew Pearson in 1965 that Washington had been guilty of a serious conflict of interest because, while serving as President, he had owned a Virginia quarry that sold an inferior sandstone to the government for use in construction of the U.S. Capitol Building. Television's David Brinkley passed the smear along to his nationwide audience and it also surfaced in a news bulletin of the National Geographic Society and in many newspapers. Subsequently, documents were discovered in the National Archives which proved that the quarry had been owned by someone else, and Washington had no financial interest in it.

pain, that burning fever, that ugly eruption of smallpox had left George immune. He could go now to frontier, camp, or barrack without fear. The ancient foe could not strike him down." (*Washington*.) For instance, at Valley Forge years later, a smallpox epidemic would fell hundreds of his soldiers, yet leave General Washington unscathed and in full command during that cruel winter.

Lawrence died on July 26, 1752, and young Washington was on his own. By that time his reputation as a surveyor was established, his income was comfortable, and he was a large landowner. The soft life of a landed proprietor was his for the taking. But he didn't take it.

In 1753, after French forces moved into (and took control of) British territory in the Ohio Valley, Virginia Governor Dinwiddie needed someone to carry formal notice to the French commander that the French must withdraw. Washington, then twenty-one, volunteered. His journey was widely publicized and this publicity, accompanied by universal approval for the manner in which he handled the assignment, gave him an admirable reputation.

In 1755, young Washington became Commander-in-Chief of the Frontier Forces of Virginia, was made an aide to British General Edward Braddock, and for the next three years fought the French and Indians so astutely that the losses among Virginia settlers were only half of those suffered by other frontier colonies.

In 1758, Washington left the army and returned to private life. The next year, he married Martha Dandridge Custis, a wealthy widow with two children, and in the early summer moved his family to Mount Vernon where he planned to settle down to the farming he loved and to the man-

agement of his huge estate. In the 1700s, however, the British government began imposing harsh tax policies on the colonies. Eventually such pressures became, in Washington's view, unreasonable and belligerent, and although he had at first accepted the taxes as fair (they were intended to pay the Colonists' share of the French and Indian War), he gradually moved toward a position of resistance. When he became further convinced that Great Britain was betraying the principles of free and representative government, and was encroaching on liberties to which British subjects everywhere were entitled, he was ready to fight.

Following the famous Boston Tea Party, the British placed Boston under military control, and Washington informed an illegal meeting of the Virginia Assembly in August, 1774, that he would "gladly enlist at my own expense one thousand men and march to the relief of Boston." In September, the First Continental Convention gathered in Philadelphia with Washington as a representative from Virginia. He came away still hoping — and believing — that the British government would heed the Colonists and reform its policies. But during the next six months Britain made it clear that its taxing program would be imposed regardless of resistance.

The Battle of Lexington in April, 1775, formally launched the Revolutionary War. In May, the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia and elected Washington Commander-in-Chief of the American army. Historian John Spencer Bassett relates: "The army was in confusion, supplies were lacking, enthusiasm was cooling, and many of the men were going home at the expiration of their terms of service. . . . Washington's presence worked a

change. He was a man to be respected; order reappeared, recruits came in, and the army recovered spirits." (*A Short History Of The United States: 1492-1929*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1937.)

Additional assistance gradually arrived until, by early 1776, Washington was able to fortify the heights overlooking Boston, surprise the British, and free Boston from British control. Freeman writes: "Washington had fulfilled the highest expectations of his admirers and exceeded by far anything that would have been anticipated by those who realized how vastly out of scale with his experience as a Colonel were his responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief. He had not gained this esteem by genius, in the sense of specialized ability incomparably greater than that of the average man. He had won this place by the balance of his parts. In nothing transcendent, he was credited with possessing in ample measure every quality of character that administration of the Army demanded. Already he had become a moral rallying-post, the embodiment of the purpose, patience and determination necessary for triumph of the revolutionary cause." (*Washington*.)

General Washington soon moved to defend New York, but the effort failed, and only by skillful retreats was he able to keep his regiments from being wiped out by the British.

On Christmas night of 1776, however, he made his famous crossing of the Delaware which resulted in a stunning victory against Hessian troops at Trenton. A few days later, he crushed the rear guard of the British army near Princeton. "It scarcely was possible to exaggerate the effect of the operations at Trenton and Princeton on the self-confidence of the Army, the spirit of New

Jersey, the policy of Congress and the faith of all the States in the attainment of independence. A dying cause was revived; timid men who had been afraid to participate in what the British termed 'rebellion' now came cheerfully to camp." (*Washington.*) Indeed, "Frederick the Great said that Washington's success from December 25, 1776, to January 4, 1777, was 'the most brilliant' in military history." (*A Short History Of The United States.*)

Following setbacks at Germantown and Philadelphia, Washington moved his troops into Valley Forge (November 28, 1777) in order to keep watch over the British who were comfortably settled in Philadelphia. The subsequent few months were perhaps the darkest period in our war for independence. "Previously, at every twist of the revolutionary struggle, some essential of successful war had not been available; at Valley Forge everything was lacking. The Army might freeze before it starved; and if it found shelter and food, the shortage of clothing and footgear would keep it from taking the field. The fault was not with the place but with equipment and supplies." (*Washington.*)

More than three thousand soldiers died, others were weakened by the cold weather, and still others were immobilized by a smallpox epidemic. Matters were made worse by the inflation of the Continental currency which had lost nearly all of its purchasing power, and by the price controls imposed by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth on commodities needed for the army. It was believed that such controls would reduce the expense of supplying the troops and thereby lessen the burden of the war on the civilian population. The actual result is described by authors Robert L. Schuettinger and Eamon F. But-

ler: "The prices of uncontrolled goods, mostly imported, rose to record heights. Most farmers kept back their produce, refusing to sell at what they regarded as an unfair price. Some who had large families to take care of even secretly sold their food to the British who paid in gold." (*Forty Centuries Of Wage And Price Controls*, Washington, D.C., The Heritage Foundation, 1979.)

The disastrous controls, which contributed significantly to the near-starvation of Washington's army, were eventually terminated and, on June 4, 1778, Congress adopted the following Resolution: "Whereas . . . it hath been found by experience that limitations upon the price of commodities are not only ineffectual for the purposes proposed, but likewise productive of very evil consequences to the great detriment of the public service and grievous oppression of individuals . . . resolved, that it be recommended to the several states to repeal or suspend all laws or resolutions within the said states respectively limiting, regulating or restraining the Price of any Article, Manufacture or Commodity." (*Journal Of The Continental Congress*, New York, 1908, Volume 21, Page 569.)

Once controls were removed, the artificially suppressed inflation quickly shot prices to eighty times their pre-war level for a brief period, then settled down for a decade to a level only slightly higher than the pre-war average. By the fall of 1778, the army was adequately supplied and winter provisions, which had been non-existent the year before, were available in relative abundance.

A positive result of the Valley Forge winter was the greatly improved discipline and training of Washington's troops (due, in large part, to the drill-training expertise of



a former Prussian officer, Baron von Steuben). For the first time, Washington found himself in command of a hardened, capable, and militarily adequate force.

A stunning American victory over the British in the north (at Saratoga in October 1777) "is listed by historians as one of the decisive battles of the world. It was the turning point of the War for Independence. This victory encouraged enlistments at home and brought help from abroad. Convinced that the Americans could win with aid, the King of France agreed to send supplies, men, and ships to the former colonists of Great Britain." (*Quest Of A Hemisphere*, Donzella Cross Boyle, Boston, Western Islands, 1970.)

On February 6, 1778, France signed an agreement formally recognizing U.S. independence, and its assistance to the Colonists commenced shortly thereafter.

At Yorktown in 1781, a combined force of nine thousand American and seventy-eight hundred French troops under Washington's command (bolstered by a French Naval Fleet which sailed into Chesapeake Bay to interdict British supplies and preclude a British retreat by sea) forced the surrender on October nineteenth of the seventy-five hundred British troops commanded by Lord Cornwallis. For all intents and purposes, our war for independence had been won, and the complete defeat of the enemy was merely a matter of time.

According to historian Richard B. Morris, "Yorktown in many respects was the vindication of the generalship of George Washington because it represented the fruition of a master plan of both movement and deception. The coordination of troops of allied powers and the use of naval forces, a combined land and amphibious operation. It was extraordinarily

effectively done." (*U.S. News & World Report*, October 19, 1981.)

Considering the incredible problems of training, discipline, and lack of adequate supplies and manpower Washington faced, and the success which he nevertheless achieved in leading the Colonists to victory, it was appropriate that Congress, in our bicentennial year of 1976, overwhelmingly approved legislation elevating Washington to the rank of General of the Armies of the United States, a rank superior to all others.

Washington resigned his commission as Commander-in-Chief on December 23, 1783, and submitted to Congress a careful accounting of his wartime expenses (he had refused a salary). Incredibly, those expenses were used as the basis for a book,\* widely promoted a dozen years ago, which charged that Washington had extravagantly "padded" his expense account for personal benefit. Specifically, it was claimed that his expenses totalled an astronomical \$449,261.51 — nearly ten times the \$48,000 which he would have drawn in salary as an alternative compensation for his services.

The figure, however, is specious. Writing in the Winter 1972 issue of *The SAR Magazine* (published by the Sons of the American Revolution), William H. Wilbur (himself a Brigadier General and Congressional Medal of Honor winner) explained that Washington's actual total expenditures amounted to 16,311 Pennsylvania pounds — or \$54,370. Of that amount, only \$15,000 could properly be charged as personal, which means the government benefitted by \$33,000 in covering Washington's per-

\**George Washington's Expense Account*, Marvin Kitman, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1970.

sonal expenses rather than paying him a salary. Indeed, historian Wilbur summarizes the enormous financial sacrifice which Washington personally made to the patriotic cause, including:

"1. The \$33,000 already mentioned as the profit which accrued to the government as a result of his generous conduct in serving without pay.

"2. A very considerable sum which Washington spent to purchase U.S. Loan Office Certificates (the Liberty Loan Bonds of the day) during 1778, '79, '80, perhaps the darkest days of the war. The value of these certificates depreciated tremendously. This depreciation was so great that Washington suffered a loss of well over \$50,000.

"3. During the war, Washington's farms operated in the red, year after year. A conservative estimate of the loss in this category would be \$40,000."

In short, George Washington personally lost at least \$123,000 during the war and, Wilbur contends, "never padded his expense account — not one single penny!"

Indeed not. And claims to the contrary reflect shameful attempts by his inferiors to tarnish the reputation of America's greatest hero.

In 1787, Washington was chosen as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention which convened on May fourteenth in Philadelphia. He was unanimously elected President of the Convention and thereafter masterfully and even-handedly guided it through sundry controversies toward its eventual result — a Constitution which a great Prime Minister of England, William E. Gladstone, later characterized as "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man." (*North American Review*, September, 1878.)

Washington's enormous prestige, and the respect in which he was held throughout the nation, was a crucial factor in gaining state ratifications of the new Constitution. In Virginia, for example, his support was decisive. And a letter to the Massachusetts legislature, at a time when the outcome in that state was in serious doubt, tipped the scales in favor of ratification.

The Constitution became effective on June 21, 1788. Three weeks later, on July twelfth, James Monroe wrote to Thomas Jefferson: "Be assured General Washington's influence carried this government." Indeed it had!

Once the state legislatures had approved the new Constitution, Washington hoped he could again retire to private life. Instead, both his supporters and those who opposed his views insisted that he was by far the best qualified to lead the new Republic as President during its formative years. The people had faith in him, he was trusted in all of the states, and he had the respect of foreign governments. He was overwhelmingly elected. In his Inaugural Address on April 30, 1789, George Washington expressed gratitude to "that Almighty Being who rules over the universe" and declared it to be his desire that "the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality, and the preeminence of free government be exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens and command the respect of the world."

Among the many problems which confronted the new Administration was that of keeping the peace. The year that Washington became President, after all, also marked the outbreak of the French Revolution.

Most Americans were initially sympathetic with republican objectives. But the French King, Louis XVI, was considered a friend and ally of our country (his decision had brought France into the war on our side) and, Professor Richard Morris notes, "the execution of the King and the Reign of Terror that followed provoked a sense of disillusionment in America . . . ."

Thomas Jefferson, who had spent the years 1785-1789 in France as our Ambassador, remained sympathetic to the French Revolution even after the heads began to roll in the Reign of Terror. As Washington's Secretary of State, he took sharp issue with the President's firm policy of neutrality, especially after France declared war on Britain on February 1, 1793. Jefferson encouraged the viewpoint that the U.S. should ally itself with France, but Washington was determined to keep us out of a war that might have been disastrous to an essentially unarmed nation which needed a period of calm to establish a sound economy. He therefore directed the Attorney General, Edmund Randolph, to issue a proclamation of neutrality (April 22, 1793).

Two weeks prior to the neutrality proclamation, "Citizen" Edmond Genêt had arrived in Charleston as Foreign Minister from the French Republic to the U.S., with plans to use the U.S. as a base from which to organize raids on British and Spanish commerce and colonies, equip ships for attacks against the British fleet, and enlist Americans aboard French ships. Indeed, Professor Alexander DeConde writes that secret instructions from the Revolutionaries in France directed Genêt to propagandize among Americans "so they would favor France in her struggle. . . . he had orders to tamper with American domestic politics for what-

ever advantage might accrue to France." (*Entangling Alliance*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1958.)

The Washington Administration moved quickly to prohibit the fitting out of French privateers and the recruitment of American crews. But Genêt continued in the attempt to make the U.S. a French satellite. His progress was in part "marked by founding Jacobin clubs corresponding roughly to the Communist cells of our time." (*The Oxford History Of The American People*, Samuel Eliot Morison, New York, Oxford University Press, 1965.) He even "appealed to the people over the head of their government to support him. This was next to encouraging revolution." (*A Diplomatic History Of The United States*, Samuel Flagg Bemis, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.)

Genêt's arrogant actions led Washington to demand his recall by the French Government. The request was granted, but Genêt remained.

Commenting on the network of Communist-style "Jacobin clubs" which Genêt had cultivated, William P. Hoar writes: "Despite America's neutrality policy, these revolutionary anti-Federalist societies were pro-French and anti-British, and their incendiary propaganda was soon pandemic. They appeared, in Genêt's words, 'as if by magic from one end of the continent to the other.'

"These revolutionary cells were organized to make serious trouble, and their influence was subversive to say the least. At a gathering in Philadelphia, for example, guests toasted Citizen Genêt but refused to extend the same courtesy to President Washington. Here was an association, said Noah Webster, 'which must be crushed in its infancy or it would certainly crush the government.' In the words of John Quincy Adams,

these so-called Democratic Clubs 'are so perfectly affiliated to the Parisian Jacobins that their origin from a common parent cannot possibly be mistaken.'" (AMERICAN OPINION, February, 1978, Page 21.)

President Washington was convinced that the so-called Whiskey Rebellion was instigated by these revolutionary Democratic Clubs. In 1794, Congress had exercised its new taxing authority to impose a twenty-five percent excise tax on the manufacture of whiskey, but exempted small "stills." Farmers in Virginia and North Carolina were satisfied with the arrangement. A similar tax on sugar and snuff did not result in insurrection. Yet, in July 1794, a number of farmers in western Pennsylvania took up arms against the tax and several persons were killed or wounded in bitter fighting which included the burning of buildings, the capture of Pittsburgh by the insurgents, and the complete collapse of all law and order in the area. It was an early test of the power to enforce federal law in individual states. President Washington issued a proclamation ordering the insurgents to disperse and giving them a few days to comply. When the order was ignored, the President sent an army of fifteen thousand men to stop the rebellion. Albert Beveridge writes that "when the troops sent out to put down the insurrection reached Harrisburg, they found the French flag flying over the courthouse." He quotes President Washington as saying: "I consider this insurrection as the first formidable fruit of the Democratic Societies . . . I see, under a display of popular and fascinating guises, the most diabolical attempts to destroy . . . the government." And the President further declared, according to Beveridge, that if "the daring and factious spirit" is not crushed,

"adieu to all government in this country, except mob and club government." (*The Life of John Marshall*, Volume II, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1916.)

As Washington's second term drew to its conclusion, every effort was again made to persuade him to remain in office. He could easily have been re-elected, but this time he stood firm. As explained by William Hale Wilbur, "Four years before he had bowed before insistent pressure and had reluctantly accepted a second term. He had done so because the task of founding a government was not sufficiently advanced, because there was no one else who was qualified for the position, because the people and the economy had not yet responded to stable government, and because relations with foreign powers still needed his calm, wise, firm guidance.

"Now, however, after more than seven years of his direction, the situation was different. Foreign relations were much improved; the entire country was enjoying a material prosperity greater than it had ever before experienced. In addition, Washington had strong personal reasons; he was bone-tired; he had given his all to his country; he was getting old."

So, in September of 1796, the President announced his irreversible decision not to run again and published his "Farewell Address" to the American people which ranks close behind the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution in political importance. Washington expressed the hope "that the free constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained" and "that its Administration in every

\*Actually, it was not an "address," but rather a written message dated September 17, 1796, and published in Philadelphia's *American Daily Advertiser*.

department may be stamped with wisdom and Virtue . . . ." And he noted the obligation which each citizen has to abide the terms of the Constitution: "The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, 'till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the People to establish Government presupposes the duty of every Individual to obey the established Government."

He also stressed that those in office must also abide the Constitution and "confine themselves within their respective Constitutional spheres; avoiding the exercise of the Powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of government, a real despotism."

The remedy for any discontent with our Constitution, he asserted, was amendment, not usurpation: "If in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the Constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed."

With the French Revolution clearly in mind, he condemned the concept of a secular state and the idea that there could be stability in the wake of a separation of religion from either political order or morality, declaring: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to polit-

ical prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labour to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

" 'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free Government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundations of the fabric? "

And, as regards foreign policy, he wisely counseled that "permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular Nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded; and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated." And again: "The Great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign Nations is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled, with perfect good

faith. Here let us stop." And further: "Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent Alliances, with any portion of the foreign world."

And our commercial policy was also to be conducted with "an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences . . ."

After tendering such sound advice, Washington returned to his estate for two happy years, but when a new threat of war arose in 1798 (this time with France) he was once again commissioned to be Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

It was during this same year that Congress passed (with the approval of both President John Adams and General Washington) the Alien and Sedition Acts which "were designed to protect the United States from the extensive French Jacobin conspiracy, paid agents of which were even in high places in the government." (*This Independent Republic*, Routas J. Rushdoony, Fairfax, Virginia, Thorburn Press, 1978.) Responding to suggestions that the Acts were unconstitutional, Washington argued that "protecting Laws" seemed necessary to defend the nation against persons desirous of "poisoning the minds of our people" and "endeavoring to dissolve the Union." And, in a letter dated October 24, 1798, he reaffirmed his warning that "the doctrines of the Illuminati, and the principles of Jacobinism" had been "spread in the United States." He described the tenets of the former as "diabolical" and the principles of the latter as "pernicious," and asserted that it was "too evident to be questioned" that "the founder, or instruments employed to found the democratic societies in the United States may have had this object [i.e., *propagation of the tenets and principles of Illuminism and Jacobinism*],

and actually had a separation of the people from their government in view . . . ." (*Washington: The Man And The Mason*, Charles N. Callahan, Alexandria, Virginia, Alexandria-Washington Lodge 22, A.F.&A. Masons, Sixth Edition, 1913.)

The threat of war subsided during 1799, and on December twelfth of that year Washington was conducting his military business at Mount Vernon when he undertook his customary morning horseback ride around the plantation. A sudden change in the weather brought snow, sleet, then a steady rain before his ride was ended. He contracted a cold which worsened the next day, and he failed to respond to medical treatment. On December fourteenth, between ten and eleven p.m., George Washington died.

The memory of no other American has been preserved so extensively — and deservedly. Despite his many differences with Washington, Thomas Jefferson was moved to write in 1814: "Perhaps the strongest feature in his character was prudence, never acting until every circumstance, every consideration was maturely weighed . . . His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known, no motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred, being able to bias his decision. He was, indeed, in every sense of the words, a wise, a good, and a great man." (*Thomas Jefferson On Democracy*, Saul K. Padover (Editor), New York, Mentor Books, 1946.)

During remarks at Washington's funeral, Richard Henry Lee described his longtime friend as "First in war — first in peace — and first in the hearts of his countrymen." On the 250th anniversary of his birth, our first President remains the greatest of all Americans. ■ ■