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On the dawn of the American Revolution the colonies were in constant opposition. They were struggling with an up and down economy, differences in ideology between the different colonies, and of course with problems of representation with the Mother Country. A few names were known amongst all colonists as people of importance in America; but just one stood above all others, that name was George Washington. George Washington to many of his fellow citizens was the clear choice for leading the young revolutionaries into battle. Leading historians have used the name god or genius to expand upon the importance of this man in history. However, none of these historians are able to tell the story of George Washington's role in the American Revolution, especially its early stages, quite like David McCullough in his Pulitzer Prize winning book 1776. David McCullough through quotes from leading officers, commanders, and young privates is able to explain and bring to life what kind of presence George Washington possessed as he lead troops into battle. It is through his book that the understanding of Washington's leadership, command, and all around aura allow others to expel the simple discussions of the cherry tree story to the image of a god walking on earth.

The importance of Washington in history has truly never been in doubt as many teachers mention him on a weekly basis as there are many ideas that stem from this man in history. His two term limit set an example for further presidents to follow and his farewell address is used to show the early intensions of America as a sovereign nation. However, there are many other things about this man that tend to be overlooked. "Washington was obsessed with fame and wanted to earn it." (Bernstein TAH 20 July) Quotes like this during the TAH institute created a new shift about how Washington should be looked at in history. Instead of looking at just what he accomplished maybe people should examine first how the man was able to accomplish his goals and by using the book 1776 a picture is painted of George Washington as being a person

that every man wanted to be around and his presence alone was able to increase the morale of an army.

Within the Continental Army there were many problems stemming from a lack of consistent soldiers, to a lack of food, and a lack of experience against the strongest army in the world in 1776. However, there were a few positives for the colonists as well. They were fighting on their home turf, they had a strong spirit for independence, and they had the greatest leader. “The Continental Army not the Hudson River or the possession of New York or Philadelphia was the key to victory. And it was Washington who held the army together and gave it “spirit” through the most desperate times.” (McCullough pg. 293) His spirit and consistent effort and focus allowed for the army to win the war. It was not the tactical ideas or mistakes by the British; it was George Washington and his leadership skills through the best and worst of times that kept his army’s morale way up. “His Excellency General Washington is present animating and encouraging the soldiers and they in return manifest their joy and express a warm desire for the approach of the enemy.” (McCullough pg. 95) In the early stages of the war when the battle was still waging in Boston many troops were in shock in awe with the loss of their brethren but the site of Washington was able to instill encouragement in his soldiers and in this case created a joy for fighting. Creating a joy by site and the calling of Mr. Washington His Excellency only help to compound his image.

His leadership skills were unmatched by anyone of the era. He was able to instill happiness in his troops after a loss, during retreats, and during some downtime. New troops during this time were very hard to come by but Washington’s leadership and organization of new troops was another talent and another instance of morale boost. After a tough loss in New York Washington still organized movement and when twelve hundred men came to join the army

Washington put a show for his devastated troops. The marching changed the faces that were saddened from the day before and now assumed a gleam of animation. (McCullough pg. 183)

Another instance and true focus of his god like leadership came at the end of 1776 during the reenlistment period. During a speech given by Washington to his troops after a full year of service by many a soldier remembered being called into formation by His Excellence on a big horse and his presence and the words of his speech encouraged many. “Again drums sounded and this time men began stepping forward.” (McCullough pg. 285-86) Nathaniel Greene remembered the display and he was shocked that many were able to turn it around based upon the speech by Washington. Washington’s presence for many was godly as he was always riding on a big horse and his word choices and calm demeanor created a sense of pride within his troops. Just on Washington’s words, men reenlisted even if they had a wife, kid, or a farm at home because of His Excellency.

David McCullough’s description of General Washington’s leadership skills are constantly on display throughout 1776, but what is an even larger part of his book is the way his soldiers and even leading commanders described him. When the decision was made to go to war there was only one person that could have been responsible for leading the troops and that was Washington. “The appointment will have a great effect in cementing and securing the union of these colonies.” (McCullough pg. 43) John Adams, a man of great historical importance according to leading historians such as R.B Bernstein, was so positive that Washington was the correct choice for leadership and he considered him to be one of the most prominent members in the world during this time. John’s wife Abigail later in this description stated that after meeting the commander herself she told John that he had not said enough about this man. Adams and his

cabinet members were correct with their choice because they were not the only people that felt the same way about the commander.

Two of the leading generals next to Washington in battle were General Greene and Knox. These two men throughout 1776 could be seen as awestruck by Washington's simple appearance, and these men were leading military commanders. McCullough at one point discussed these two as "in their admiration of and loyalty to Washington, they were of one heart." (McCullough pg. 130) Knox was a person that in many cases could not contain himself in his love for Washington in many of his letters. In his description of his first meeting with Washington; Knox stated "General Washington fills his place with vast ease and dignity and dispenses happiness around him." (McCullough pg. 59) These descriptions create an aura about Washington that created a sense of his appearance as almost unworldly. He created a sense of happiness and peace within Knox just as if a person had cast a spell upon this young man. James Warren from Massachusetts also thought highly of Washington as he claimed that "he is certainly the best man for the place he is in, important as it is, that ever lived." Washington was in his best possible spot to secure his fame and he was in the right place to earn that status among these men. Nathaniel Greene truly believed as the war progressed after 1776 that Washington was "the deliverer of his country." (McCullough picture 45) In true fashion of greatness he would earn this god like status and deliver the colonies to freedom and cement his place in history as one of the greatest men to ever live in America.

Generals and leading politicians of the time adored Washington, so one can only imagine how the young revolutionary troops felt about this man. One eighteen year old stated "I saw him at the head of a small band for he was always near the enemy, and his countenance and manner made an impression on me which I can never efface." (McCullough pg. 247) "I shall never

forget what I felt when I saw him brave all the dangers of the field with his important life hanging as it were by a single hair with a thousand deaths flying around him. Believe me, I thought not of myself.” (McCullough pg. 289) To the young soldiers in the army, Washington was a legend and when they first came in contact with him they could not think of anything else but his presence. Few men, according to McCullough, by a single sight could ever create an image like Washington did portray. He would show up and in many cases not even speak and the soldiers around him would be lost in his presence, almost as if his appearance had mystical powers.

All of these notions came in the first year of fighting the war for independence and George had many people under his “spell”. Continental Congress was already willing to give George the country as his own and rule as a dictator, which in many ways would have defeated the purpose of fighting, however, many felt this god to be fit for the task. After his key victory at Trenton and his speech to get men to reenlist, Congress felt they had found the right man. For a period of about six months Congress had made him a virtual dictator and a letter written by Congress stated that “that the general of their forces can be safely entrusted with the most unlimited power, neither personal security, liberty, nor property be in the least degree endangered thereby.” (McCullough pg. 286) Even while fighting off a king these men in Congress pretty much were set to make another man king of America, and judging by the way the troops thought of him in 1776, no one would have been happier than the Continental Army to crown Washington.

According to David McCullough George Washington was the most critical part of the early stages to winning the American Revolution. McCullough’s use of words and quotes, such as His Excellency, put George as almost a hero or god like status. Each chapter read as an in

depth look at a man who besides being obsessed with his home in Mount Vernon, was constantly working to earn his fame. He made mistakes and in some cases, but very few, lost the trust of his men but during all of that he was unflappable, graceful, and had an appearance compared to those of the Greek God's that one only reads about in myths. These ideas were also reflected within the TAH two week seminars as many teachers were intrigued by his writing style and motivational techniques. Even though George did not openly see himself as a god or genius many of the people who study this man see him as a genius of the time. "George Washington was one of two men that were known by everyone in America at the time of the American Revolution." (TAH July 22) Later in true fashion of a man with strong character he was able to give up his presidency after two terms, even though he could have been king of America.

George Washington was only a human being who had his faults and in many cases was very stubborn in his routine of life. He was obsessed with the order of the army and could not stand for a disorganized army and in many cases discussed this with his troops. But besides his faults he had an electric spirit and presence. One that would make even a leading general feel at peace or at ease. His slight appearance on horseback would be a moment that people would not forget, but it was not just his sight; it was his calming nature and assertive stride on his horse that could emulate the appearance of something special. This man constantly seemed to be doing the right thing and people never forgot that. He could have been king of America, but he chose to ride off into the sunset after his political career was over. He should not be remembered just for his fake teeth or the cherry tree story; he should be remembered for his grace on the battlefield and always making the right decision in the long run. "Had Washington been born in the days of idolatry he would be worshipped as a god." (*Pennsylvania Journal* 1776) "If there are spots on his character, they are like spots on the sun, only discernible by the magnifying powers of a

telescope.” (McCullough pg. 290) David McCullough’s 1776 truly nailed the image of Washington and from this day forward maybe he should have many titles; His Excellency, Mr. President, General Washington, and now “God” of America.