1

Finding a Home

George Preston Marshall thought he was in on the ground floor of the next great sports craze of the Roaring Twenties when he purchased a professional franchise in a new sports league called the American Basketball League (ABL). He was right, in one sense: basketball would someday capture the attention of the American sports public. But Marshall was ahead of his time, and he didn't have much patience to wait decades, let alone years, to reap the rewards of his sports venture.

He was already a successful Washington businessman, inheriting the Palace Laundry from his father and building it into a profitable business. But Marshall liked action and being in the spotlight. He was a showman by nature, and he wanted to expand into something that gave him a greater rush than cleaning clothes. He hoped the ABL would do that, but in the era of Babe Ruth, Bobby Jones, and Jack Dempsey, there was no such icon for roundball.

Marshall's basketball venture was not in vain, however. He made some important contacts with men of that era who had similar dreams. One man in particular who had a clearer vision of the future of American sports was George "Papa Bear" Halas. And Halas had a standard bearer to compete with the likes of a Ruth, Jones, and Dempsey: Red Grange, who would help launch the National Football League in the 1920s.

Halas, a former standout end and baseball player (he played with the New York Yankees in 1919), was hired in 1920 by the Staley Starch Company of Decatur, Illinois, to organize a company football team. That team, the Decatur Staleys, with Halas as player-coach, joined the new American Professional Football Association (APFA) that year. They moved to Chicago in 1921. The Staley company didn't renew the franchise in 1922, but Halas kept the team in operation and emerged as one of the leaders in the league. In January 1922, Halas suggested that the APFA should also be given a new name, the National Football League (NFL), and so it was named.

Four years later, Halas helped establish the league by signing one of the legends of college football–Red Grange, the three-time All-American from Illinois known as the "Galloping Ghost"–to play for the Bears. His presence broke league records, drawing 65,000 fans in New York and soon after 75,000 in Los Angeles. While baseball was still the national pastime, and would remain so for many years to come, the NFL was now on the sports landscape in America.

Halas and Joe Carr, the NFL president, were looking for owners to expand the league, and Halas looked to some of his cohorts in another of his sports enterprises, the ABL, where he operated the Chicago Bruins, for new partners. In 1932, Halas recruited Marshall, who owned the Washington Palace Five basketball team, to buy the bankrupt Duluth Eskimos franchise for $100. But the NFL was not interested in Washington, which was considered a southern city at the time. The midwestern and northeastern parts of the country were seen as fertile territory for professional football, where blue-collar, ethnic communities could be found, and Boston was available. That city was a hotbed for sports, with two baseball teams (the Red Sox and the Braves), professional hockey and soccer franchises, big-time college football, an active semipro football scene, and many fight and wrestling fans.

So Marshall, with three other investors–Jay O'Brien, a New York investment banker; Vincent Bendix, an auto supplier from South Bend, Indiana, and Larry Doyle, a New York stockbroker–bought the Eskimos and opened up shop in Boston for the 1932 season. They would play their home games at Braves Field, the home of the Boston Braves, a National League baseball team. The ballpark, built in 1915, was located about three miles west of downtown Boston and one mile west of the rival Red Sox field, Fenway Park. Trying to gain local

recognition right away by connecting to the Braves, Marshall came up with a name for his new football team–the Boston Braves.

There was no fanfare with the arrival of the new NFL franchise in Boston. When the team was about to hold its first practice in nearby Lynn, the only mention of it in the September 7, 1932, edition of the *Boston Globe* was a short item at the bottom of one of the sports pages. And that amount of space was devoted to the problems the team was facing with its roster and finalizing a place to play:

> Members of the Braves professional football team arrived in Boston yesterday, and, with Head Coach Lud Wray in command, will have their first practice session today at Lynn Stadium. More than forty men will take the field to condition themselves and perfect team play. Though Ernest Pinkett, who was claimed by the New York Giants, did not report yesterday, his case has been definitely disposed of by the president of the league, who awarded him to Boston. Therefore he will play with Boston or be absent from organized professional football. President George Marshall of the Braves has been in Boston the past several days to prepare for the coming of the team.

Marshall hired Wray, a former player with Buffalo in the APFA and a coach at the University of Pennsylvania, as his first coach, and the *Globe* reported that on the first day of practice, "Routine training regulations have been established, and in addition to pep talks, Coach Wray has outlined the what's and what not's of their behavior program."

The following are the players who were at that first practice in Lynn–the first Redskins, or Braves, as was the case in that first season. Two of them, Turk Edwards and Cliff Battles, would go on to become Hall of Fame players:

Backs Reggie Rust, Oregon State; Henry Hughes, Honolulu; Jim Musick, Southern California; Jack Roberts and Marion Dickens, University of Georgia; Cliff Battles, West Virginia Wesleyan; Ken Goff, Rhode Island State; Meyers Clark, Ohio State; Oran Pape, University of Iowa; Fait "Chief" Elkins, ex-Chicago Cardinal and Frankford Yellow Jacket; Larry Dullaire, Salem High; and L. T. "Cowboy" Woodruff, University of Mississippi.

Ends Paul Collins and Jim MacMurdo, Pittsburgh; George Kenneally, St. Bonaventure; Dale "Muddy" Waters, University of Florida; Dick Murphy, New York University; Jim Sofish, Keisterville, Pennsylvania; Fred Belber, University of North Dakota; Kermit Schmidt, Olympic Club of San Francisco; and Basil Wilkerson, Oklahoma University.

Tackles Russell Peterson, University of Montana; Milton Rehnquist, Providence Steam Rollers; Hugh Rhead, University of Nebraska; Al Pierotti, Washington and Lee; C. W. Artman, Stanford; and Albert Glen "Turk" Edwards, Washington State.

Centers Ken "Buck" Hammes, Oregon State; Lavon Zakarian, University of Maine; Andrews Anderson, Cambridge; Henry "Babe" Frank, Syracuse University; Tony Siano, Fordham University; and "Bank" Barber, Dartmouth.

Guards Hilary Lee, University of Missouri; Jack Cox, Oregon State; Jim Wigmore, University of Maryland; and George Hurley, Washington State.

Utility men C. C. Belden, Chicago, and W. A. Boyd, Louisiana.

Signing Edwards was a coup for Marshall and showed that he recognized the value of star power. Edwards came out of Washington State as an All-American tackle and the star of the Cougars' 1931 Rose Bowl team. He was highly sought after by other clubs in the league, but Marshall won out with the highest bid, paying Edwards $1,500 for that first season in Boston.

Edwards was one of Marshall's selling points to a new audience in Boston, and he would need every selling point he could find. These were not good times to make a buck in Boston. As the country grew during the post–Civil War era, new waterfronts and factories sprang up in other cities. The textile industries in the city were closing up shop, and the Great Depression was taking a severe toll.

In tough times, people turned to entertainment venues for relief from their woes, and sports offered that sort of relief. The problem in Boston, though, was the competition for the limited entertainment dollars that were being spent. It was a baseball town, with two major league franchises, and a big college football town. And football was hardly a pageant. Uniforms were not very colorful. These were still the times of the leather helmet–when a player did wear a

helmet; it not did become a piece of required equipment in the league until 1943.

Marshall hoped to capture the early attention of football fans there by lining up exhibition games against local semipro clubs that were well established in the region. More than 3,000 fans came out to see the team's first exhibition contest against the Quincy Trojans; they won 25–0, behind 2 touchdowns by running back Jim Musick. But press reports indicated that Wray was not pleased with the effort on the field, and he put his team through a five-hour workout in their first practice following the game. One newspaper report stated, "After the workout, Coach Wray and his men were confident the Braves would be far better next Sunday against the Providence Steam Rollers."

The Steam Rollers, though, were a step up from semipro competition. The club had been in the NFL before dropping out after the 1931 season, and the Braves' confidence took a beating, as did the players, in a 9–6 loss to the Steam Rollers. Fortunately, not much of the Boston sporting public would hear about the embarrassing defeat. The arrival of the NFL remained a small novelty for the Boston media, and the loss was written up as a brief report. Ironically, the game was overshadowed by a preview of the first game of the season by Boston's pro soccer team. In New England in the 1930s, pro soccer received more attention and interest than did pro football.

The Braves had one more exhibition game before opening their first season. In front of about 1,500 fans, they beat the semipro team from Beverly 31–0 in Lynn Stadium. It was time for the NFL to make its official debut in Boston, on October 2 at Braves Field. Marshall took out newspaper advertisements proclaiming "Big League Football," with the game to be played "rain or shine." Ticket prices were $1.50 for box seats, $1.25 for reserved grandstand, $1 for grandstand, and $0.50 for bleacher seats, "plus 10 percent government tax." Marshall advertised that he would announce updates to the crowd of the World Series game between the New York Yankees and the Chicago Cubs. He also held a dinner for local sportswriters and dignitaries to promote the first game. All that work was for naught, though, as a disappointing crowd of about 6,000 showed up to watch the Braves lose to the Brooklyn Dodgers and quarterback Benny Friedman, 14–0. Things did not get much better after that. The Braves won their next game, 14–6, over the New York Giants, before a slightly larger crowd of 8,000. The team continued an up-and-down

performance, however, posting a 4-4-2 record in the inaugural 1932 season, with low attendance at the box office. The franchise wound up losing about $46,000, and Marshall's three partners dropped out.

Pro football was trying to find its place, not just in Boston, but on the sports landscape in America, period, and it attracted a variety of fans. The crowd that showed up for pro football games was a mixture of hard-nosed gamblers, blue-collar workers, and socialites who wanted to be seen at the city's latest attraction. The socialites in Boston were drawn in particular by Marshall, who was a fashion plate, dressed to the hilt in expensive suits and overcoats. But neither the owner nor his team was enough of an attraction to be profitable. Still, the Washington showman believed that someday pro football would be successful in Boston, if he found the right formula. He was half-right; his franchise would be successful, but not in Boston.

The NFL would also undergo significant changes after the 1932 season that would eventually help Marshall's franchise be successful. The league was going through some tough times. Even with the addition of the Braves, it had fallen to just eight teams, the lowest in league history: the Braves, the Chicago Bears, the Portsmouth Spartans, the Green Bay Packers, the New York Giants, the Chicago Cardinals, the Staten Island Stapletons, and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

But one game would take place to generate interest in the league: the precursor to the Super Bowl. Back then, the league champion was determined by which team won the most games during the season. A team, though, could play anywhere between ten and twenty games over a season, and then the argument would be over who had the greater winning percentage.

In 1932, the Portsmouth Spartans tied the Chicago Bears for first place in the league, so their owners decided to hold a game for the NFL championship. The game was supposed to be held at the Bears' home, Wrigley Field. But blizzards and severe cold forced officials to move the December 11 game indoors to Chicago Stadium, thereby making this the first arena league football game as well.

Chicago Stadium was the home for the National Hockey League (NHL) Chicago Blackhawks. It was also used for boxing matches and other events. During the week before the football game, the circus had been there. The concrete floor was covered with several inches of dirt. Truckloads of dirt, wood shavings, and bark were piled on top of that base to provide more cushioning.

Because of the size of Chicago Stadium, some of the rules were changed. The field was only 80 yards long and 130 feet wide compared to the standard 100-yard-long, 160-foot-wide field. The sidelines were butted up against the stands. The goalposts were moved from the end lines to the goal lines. The ball was automatically moved back to the 20-yard line every time one team crossed midfield. And for the first time, all plays would start with the ball on or between the hash marks.

The league had been playing under collegiate rules—a forward pass from behind the line of scrimmage was not allowed—and it opted for new pro rules. The title game, which drew about 10,000 fans, had been decided on a dispute over this rule. With a scoreless tie going into the fourth quarter, Chicago's Carl Brumbaugh handed the ball off to Bronko Nagurski, who then threw it to Red Grange in the end zone for the score. The Spartans argued that Nagurski did not drop back the required 5 yards before passing to Grange, but the touchdown stood, and the Bears later added a safety for the 9–0 win. The game generated enough interest to convince team owners to hold a title contest every year.

The game also sparked league rule changes. The college football rules were abandoned, and the forward pass became legal anywhere from behind the line of scrimmage. Also, all plays would start with the ball on or between the hash marks.

Furthermore, the shape of the ball changed in 1933. Before that, the ball was rounder than the modern ball, making it difficult to throw a tight spiral to keep it on target over any distance. Passes were often thrown high into the air, more like a shot put.

Offenses also struggled because of poor field conditions in Boston and other northeastern and midwestern cities. Those places usually experienced lots of rain in October and November, and the soggy fields would get chewed up as a result. Complicating matters further, one ball was typically used for an entire game, and often that ball would be soaked because of the wet conditions. As a result, there were few games with high scores. When the Bears won the 1932 championship, they averaged just 11 points a game.

Marshall changed fields after 1932, moving from Braves Field to Fenway Park, home of the Red Sox. He also changed the franchise name to the Redskins. When Wray quit after one season to coach and become part owner of the Eagles, a new Philadelphia franchise, Marshall hired, of all people, William "Lone Star" Dietz, a full-blooded

American Indian, who had played with Jim Thorpe at Carlisle, to coach in 1933. The changes did not result in success, either on the field or at the gate, where the largest crowd the team drew was 26,000 in a 21–0 loss to the Bears in 1934. (They never drew more than 20,000 fans for any of their remaining home games during their tenure in Boston.) The Redskins continued to draw small crowds, received little attention in the local media, and under Dietz turned two more seasons of mediocrity: 5-5-2 in 1933 and 6-6 in 1934. Marshall tried another coaching change in 1935 by hiring Ernie Casey, a well-known local figure as the former head coach at Harvard, but the team only got worse, posting a 2-8-1 record and drawing just 5,000 fans for their final home game of the 1935 season. Marshall made another change, which was one of several he made during the following two seasons that brought success to his franchise.

The Redskins owner hired Ray Flaherty, the former All-Pro tight end for the New York Giants, to lead his team in the 1936 season, and Flaherty would prove to be one of the most successful coaches of his time, posting a 54-21-3 record and winning two world championships. Flaherty made an immediate impact by convincing Marshall to acquire two key All-Americans that year: end Wayne Milner from Notre Dame and tailback Riley Smith from Alabama, both of whom would liven up the Redskins offense, although not right away.

The Redskins lost the opener in Pittsburgh to the Steelers 10–0 but bounced back with two road wins over Philadelphia (26–3) and Brooklyn (14–3). When they came home to play the New York Giants, it was before another disappointing crowd of 14,133. Marshall had already started plans to move the franchise if there were not some signs of a box office turnaround in 1936, and now he had seen enough to realize it was just not going to work in Boston, a rabid sports town that did not make room for pro football. Major league pro football would not return to the city until the upstart American Football League came to Boston in 1960, and it was hardly considered major pro football at the time of its inception.

By the time the final game of the season was to take place against the Giants in New York—a game the Redskins needed to win to get to the NFL title game against the Green Bay Packers—the team's Boston offices had closed and the portable football stands at Fenway Park were taken down. Flaherty's team defeated the Giants 14–0 to post the franchise's best record to date—a 7-4 mark and a chance to win the

NFL championship. Ironically, the Redskins had the home-field advantage, which meant the game was supposed to be played in Boston. But Marshall and the league decided that their best chance to make money in the game was to play it on a neutral field—in New York, rather than Boston, at the Polo Grounds. "We'll make much more in New York than in Boston," Marshall told reporters. "We certainly don't owe Boston much after the shabby treatment we've received. Imagine losing $20,000 [the Redskins' 1936 losses] with a championship team."

Joe Carr, the NFL president, made the following statement about moving the title game to New York: "The decision to play the game in New York was reached following a canvas of the club owners involved and of the players of the two teams. Since the playoff game is largely one in which the players are rewarded for winning the division titles and their sole remuneration is from the players' pool made up from gate receipts of the playoff, it was decided that New York was the place in which the players would benefit to the greatest degree possible under existing conditions."

Carr was right—the game drew nearly 30,000 fans, who watched the Packers, led by Don Hutson, defeat the Redskins 21–6 to win the NFL championship. The reported gate receipts were $33,471, with $250 going to each Packer player and $180 to each Redskin player. The Boston press—the ones that noticed the Redskins were leaving town—did not criticize Marshall for his decision. "It's hard to feel resentment against a guy who has stayed in there trying for five years and spent $100,000 in vain pursuit of a championship," wrote Paul Craigue of the *Boston Globe*. "Marshall would have been satisfied with an even break financially, and he went through a long siege without cracking."

The siege had ended, and Marshall was going home to Washington, where his Palace Laundry was based. The Maryland Pro Football corporation was formed, and Marshall signed a lease with Clark Griffith, the owner of the Washington Senators, to play his team's games in Griffith Stadium. Marshall officially left Boston after a brief announcement on December 17, 1936. It was buried at the bottom of a page inside the *Globe* sports section. On February 13, 1937, the NFL officially approved the move to Washington, where the Redskins, and Marshall, would find the fame and fortune they had sought in Boston.

Marshall was determined to own a successful sports franchise, blending his showmanship with his competitiveness. He was very

many other things that made people either love or hate him. He was charismatic, stubborn, visionary, blinded, and, as would be written about many times during the years of the franchise, hardly colorblind. The Redskins were often the target of newspaper attacks for refusing to integrate until finally, in 1961, in order for the team to play on federal land in the new D.C. Stadium, Marshall was forced by the U. S. Department of the Interior to bring in a black player.

To say the least, George Preston Marshall was a complicated man. He was born in Grafton, West Virginia, on October 13, 1897. He went to school at Randolph Macon College and inherited his father's laundry business in 1918. He used the money he made in the laundry to launch his venture into professional sports, first in basketball and then in pro football, where he was one of the pioneers of the league and, despite his critics, helped shape the success of the NFL until, due to ill health, he stepped down as the Redskins owner in 1963.

Bernie Nordlinger was Marshall's longtime attorney and was there at the start of the Washington Redskins. Perhaps more than anyone, he knew what this important and controversial figure in the history of the NFL was like.

Attorney Bernie Nordlinger "I helped organize the Washington Redskins. I drew up the papers for Maryland Pro Football, Inc. Marshall left Boston, saying he wasn't going to play football in a place that gave more publicity to a girl's hockey team than to football. Back then, the league was all so new. It was amazing how little they paid the players, and the team had to hold out a third of what they paid the players, because if they gave it all to them, they were afraid the players wouldn't show up for the next game. Cliff Battles got $157.27 for one game, with $52.52 held back. Vic Carroll got $75, and they held back $25. Wayne Milner got $93.75, and they held back $31.25. Riley Smith got $150, and they held back $50, but they also gave him a $100 bonus. Coach Ray Flaherty got $416.78.

"Marshall and George Halas and Wellington Mara and Art Rooney, they were the men that made the NFL. Marshall made the Redskins enormously popular. He was the first owner to have a band and cheerleaders, and the first one to have a team song. He was responsible for changing the rules that required quarterbacks to be 5 or 10 yards behind the line of scrimmage when they passed. Marshall

got the rule changed so that you could pass anytime up to the line of scrimmage. The entire movement of the game was different when they had to pass the ball 5 or 10 yards back. That was very important to the development of the game and the growth of the NFL.

"He saw the possibilities of the use of television in football. When it came along, Marshall learned more about television than anyone else in the game. He grasped the power of it very early. He was responsible for developing the idea of having an amendment to the federal antitrust laws to permit the league to sell television as a group, rather than individually. The league had a rule early on where each team sold its television rights individually–like baseball, so the New York Giants got more television money than, say, a smaller market like the Green Bay Packers. The big teams were getting richer and the little teams couldn't compete. So, at Marshall's urging, they adopted a rule that no team could telecast into another team's area while the game was going on. The government was seeking to get an injunction on the issue of limitation of territory, that it was a violation on its face. The court overruled that, and we won. That was important for the league. That created the revenue sharing that made the league so strong for years to come.

"Marshall made a lot of money from the Palace Laundry, but he lived high. All the big money he had came from football. In later years, the laundry became second fiddle for him. He got so much of his living from pro football. He was an extremely sagacious man in terms of money management.

"Marshall was a loud, dynamic, forceful, and arrogant man who many people thought was unpleasant. I would say he was an intensely loyal man, which kept people close to him. And very few people who stayed around Marshall left him, because he was so darned interesting. He was a volatile, wild man, in that sense. There were so many times I wanted to quit because he made me so angry. But there were so many other times when he made up for that."

Marshall did everything big, right or wrong, and he recognized the value of star power–a big name as an attraction. So while the move to Washington was pivotal to the future success of the Redskins, it was the personnel decision the owner made on the field in 1937 that would put the franchise on the right path. Marshall made Sammy Baugh the team's first-round draft choice for the inaugural season in Washington.

Hailing from Texas Christian University (TCU), Baugh had been the biggest name in college football as the best passer and punter in the game. Marshall built and promoted the team around Baugh, milking the image of the tall Texas cowboy coming to the nation's capital to lead the football team to glory. He convinced Baugh to wear a ten-gallon hat and cowboy boots when he arrived by plane in Washington to meet reporters.

Baugh was born on March 17, 1914, on a farm near Temple, Texas. When he was sixteen, his family moved to Sweetwater, Texas. According to legend, as a youth, Baugh hung an old automobile tire from a tree limb in his backyard. He would swing it in a long arc and back off 10, 15, or 20 yards, trying to throw a football through the tire as it swung back and forth. He did this for hours, sometimes while on the run. He became a high school quarterback star, and went on to TCU. As a junior, he led TCU to a 10-0 record before losing to Southern Methodist University by 20–14, and then he helped take the team to the Sugar Bowl and beat Louisiana State University 3–2 in a rain-soaked game. During his senior year, Baugh led his team to the first Cotton Bowl and a 16–6 win over Marquette. He had changed the face of college football, throwing the ball as many as forty times a game, and now he was about to do the same for pro football, although there were doubters because he was not particularly big. Sportswriter Grantland Rice warned Marshall, "Take my advice: if you sign him, insure his right arm for a million dollars. Those big pros will tear it off."

Baugh wasn't particularly convinced the NFL was right for him, either. He was a great all-around athlete and considered to be a baseball prospect, so much so that he was also negotiating to play for the St. Louis Cardinals. He balked at Marshall's initial offer and went to play baseball for the summer.

Quarterback Sammy Baugh "We talked contract, and I agreed that $5,000 sounded like a pretty reasonable figure, but I also had major league baseball scouts after me. I was a right fair third baseman and shortstop at TCU, and I really wanted to give professional baseball a try."

End Joe Tereshinski "He was a heck of a baseball player and almost didn't sign with the Redskins because of baseball, not from playing it, but because of an accident. Sam Breeden was the owner of the St.

Louis Cardinals, and he and his friend Tonto Coleman, who was the coach at Georgia Tech, went to see Sammy in Texas. Breeden was pulling this trailer, and the story goes that Sammy Baugh was in the trailer. Tonto and Breeden were driving down a hill, talking about what a good baseball player Sammy was, and they had to come to a sudden stop. The trailer came off the car and passed right by them, with Sammy Baugh in it. It was a good thing he wasn't killed."

Marshall was determined to make a big impact in his hometown with his new team and not to lose Baugh to baseball. With the help of Texas businessman Amon Carter, a friend of Marshall's and a TCU patron, he was able to reach a deal with Baugh, paying him $8,000, plus a $500 signing bonus, more than twice what the average NFL salary was at the time. "When I found out what the rest of the players were making, I felt badly about asking for so much money," Baugh told reporters.

He was worth it. "Sammy Baugh was a dynamic personality on the football field," Nordlinger said. "He was a great leader and an exciting ballplayer." Marshall instructed his staff to make sure Baugh looked like a cowboy when he was presented to reporters. "Get him a pair of cowboy boots and a ten-gallon hat, and make him look like he is from the wild, wild West," he said. But when Baugh was introduced to reporters upon his arrival to Washington and asked how he felt, he pointed to the boots Marshall had made him put on and said, "My feet hurt. We hardly ever wear things like this in Sweetwater."

On his first day of practice in Washington, the story that has been repeated over the years is that the quarterback put on quite a show. Coach Ray Flaherty was not pleased that his new player was not in camp earlier, and he made that clear when Baugh arrived in Washington. "Well, it's about time that fellow arrived," Flaherty said. "If he's going to play football for us, he'd better show up in a hurry or there won't be any place for him." When Baugh took the field, Flaherty asked sarcastically, "Do you want to participate?" To which Baugh replied, "Sure do. I'm in shape for most anything. I got two [college] All-Star Games under my belt already, which is more than you fellas. I'm ready to work. You don't have to worry about me."

That was clear after Baugh put on a nearly perfect exhibition of pass completions in front of about 3,000 fans that day. As the story goes, after practice Baugh went into Coach Flaherty's office to go over

some plays. Flaherty drew an X on the blackboard and pointed to it as he told Baugh, "When the receiver reaches here, you hit him in the eye with the ball."

Baugh asked, "Which eye?"

Baugh would go on to become an NFL legend and a symbol of the rugged old Texas cowboy, so much so that Robert Duvall, after visiting Baugh at his ranch in Texas, used some of the old quarterback's style and personality to develop his legendary character Augustus McCrae for the miniseries *Lonesome Dove*.

Baugh was down home, but his story was Hollywood, and that was right up Marshall's alley. Marshall was a showman, and Baugh was a show, someone he could appreciate. Marshall traveled in show business circles, in large part because of his marriage to singer Corrine Griffith, who, in her own way, had her share of influence on the Redskins. She is credited with writing the lyrics for the famous Redskins' fight song "Hail to the Redskins" and setting the stage for the Redskins Marching Band. In her book *My Life with the Redskins*, Griffith said she got a call during the summer of 1937 from Barnee Breskin, the leader of the Shoreham Hotel orchestra. Breskin said that since the Redskins were going to be in Washington, he thought they should have a song. He had written one he called "Hail to the Redskins" and played the music for her. Impressed, she decided to write the lyrics.

Washington sports fans were ready to hail their team. The Redskins drew nearly 25,000 fans at Griffith Stadium for their first game, which was against the New York Giants. Baugh marched the team down the field the first time they had the ball, completing passes to Ernie Pinkett and Charley Malone and running the ball to set up a Riley Smith field goal, which put the Redskins on top 3–0. The Giants tied the game in the third quarter, but Smith gave Washington a 6–3 lead with another field goal. Then the Riley Smith show closed when he intercepted a Giants pass at the Washington 40-yard line and went 60 yards to score the clinching touchdown and a 13–3 victory. The game got a solid review from sportswriter Bill Dismer Jr. in the *Washington Evening Star*: "As for the near 25,000 crowd, methinks the patrons were more than satisfied with professional football's debut and believe that the pros, like the talkies, are here to stay."

Turk Edwards, who played in front of the apathy in Boston, welcomed all the attention they received in Washington. "We just can't get

over it," Edwards told reporters. "The fans in Washington have been wonderful to us, and we'd like to let them know that every one of us appreciates their treatment from the bottom of his heart."

The Redskins compiled a 7-3 record and captured the hearts of Washington fans as they went into the final game of the season against the division-leading Giants in New York. It was a particularly important homecoming for Coach Flaherty, who played for the Giants in 1928 and again from 1931 to 1935, during which he became a standout receiver. It was an emotional game for both sides, particularly when Giants coach Steve Owen, after being asked by reporters to name an all-NFL team, did not select one Redskin.

A win over the Giants would put Washington in the NFL championship game for the second straight year. Nearly 12,000 fans boarded trains on that December 5 Sunday morning to travel to New York, and Marshall brought his band with him–about 150 members. They, along with Marshall, led the fans in an impromptu parade as they got off the trains in New York. "At the head of a 150-piece band and twelve thousand fans, George Marshall slipped unobtrusively into town," one newspaper report said of the Redskins' arrival that day.

They left triumphant. Washington opened up the game with a 14–0 lead in the first quarter on two scoring runs by Cliff Battles and made it 21–0 before the first half was over on a run by Max Krause. The Giants began to mount a third-quarter comeback on an interception return by Ward Cuff and another score by Tuffy Leemans, cutting the Redskins' lead to 21–14. But Baugh found Ed Justice on a 48-yard touchdown pass to open up the lead to 28–14, and then Washington added 21 unanswered points in the fourth quarter for a 49–14 win. Battles had rushed for 170 yards, and Baugh completed 11 of 15 passes for 1 touchdown pass. The delirious Redskins fans and the players rode the victory trains back to Washington, where more than 5,000 fans were waiting at Union Station to greet them. Marshall wanted to lead a parade with his band up Pennsylvania Avenue after getting off the train, but Washington police wouldn't allow him to do so without a permit. The Redskins owner still tried to muster an impromptu parade, but the police showed up again and arrested the band's drum major. Marshall went to the police station to bail him out.

Fan celebrations became part of the Redskins' legacy, but they became more of a pregame tradition than a postgame ritual. Tailgating takes place in every NFL city in America, but it really took

hold in Washington, the most southern city in the league at the time. Football tailgating began as a southern tradition at college games.

More than 3,000 Washington fans celebrated not from the back of their cars, but on the Chicago-bound train to watch their team play in the NFL title game against the Bears and the man who brought Marshall into the NFL: George "Papa Bear" Halas.

Led by the legendary runner Bronco Nagurski, the Bears were more physically imposing than the Redskins. Nagurski was one of the most feared players in the league, averaging 4.4 yards per carry over his NFL career and spending his off seasons as a professional wrestler. The wily Bears coach did not fall into the same trap that Owen did in New York. When writers asked Halas which Redskins would be on his All-Pro team, the Bears coach named a Redskin to every position and said, "Please see that these selections get into the paper before Sunday."

A frigid day in Chicago kept the crowd down to about 15,000, but maybe 20 percent of them were hardy Redskins fans who made the trip from Washington. It was a hard day to move the ball offensively, given the Bears defense and the weather conditions (both teams wore sneakers because of the footing on the frozen Wrigley Field, an irony that would become apparent eight years later for Redskins fans). After the score was tied at 7–7 in the first quarter, Baugh was intercepted, and the Bears capitalized on the miscue to take a 14–7 lead on a 39-yard touchdown pass from Chicago quarterback Bernie Masterson to end Jack Manders. Things got even worse when Baugh twisted his knee and sat out much of the second quarter, as neither team scored, with the Bears carrying their 14–7 lead into the locker room at halftime.

The tough Texan quarterback, though, came out warmed up in the second half, and on one leg turned in the sort of performance that had made him one of the biggest stars in his new Washington home and an NFL legend. On the first play he ran from scrimmage in the third quarter, Baugh tied the game with a 55-yard touchdown pass to Wayne Milner. Chicago came back with another scoring pass from Masterson to Manders to take the lead again, 21–14, but Baugh was destined to play the hero role on this cold December day and quickly connected a 78-yard touchdown pass to Milner to tie the game at 21–21. And before the third quarter ended, Baugh gave the Redskins the lead by hooking up with Ed Justice on a 35-yard touchdown pass. As the fourth quarter began, the Redskins led 28–21 and were on the

verge of winning the NFL championship in their first season in the nation's capital. Now it was up to the Redskins defense, and they came through by holding the Bears scoreless in those final fifteen minutes and, with a minute remaining, stopping the Bears from tying the game when Riley Smith stepped in front of a wide-open Ed Manske to intercept Masterson's pass and seal the win and the championship—as well as the legend of Sammy Baugh, who, on one leg, threw 3 touchdown passes and completed 17 of 34 passes for 352 yards, 4 more yards than the entire Bears offense managed.

There was a raucous scene on the field before the end of the game, though, when some Bears players slid on the field into the Redskins' bench. A brawl broke out, and, according to the account in Griffith's book, Marshall jumped out of the stands and into the fray. He got into a shouting match with Halas on the field, in the middle of a melee between Bears and Redskins players. But when the final gun sounded to end the game and anoint the Redskins as the new NFL champions, Marshall had very little to be upset about.

The year before, there was so little interest in George Marshall's professional football team in their Boston home that they had to go out of town to play in the NFL title game, which they lost. This year, after winning the NFL championship, they were the biggest thing in one of the most important cities in the world. Marshall didn't bask in the glory of victory too long to abandon his thrifty ways, however. Even though his team drew a total of 120,000 fans in Washington for the season, compared to 57,000 the year before in Boston, Marshall did not pay for his players to return to Washington for a victory celebration. Instead, the players went to their various homes.

Still, Coach Flaherty, while talking to reporters, went out of his way to praise the support of Washington fans they had received throughout the season. "It's not merely the contrast between Washington and Boston fans," he said. "It's the fact that the sentiment in Washington is a thing apart, something which couldn't have been imagined. Believe you me, this has been the happiest football season of my life. Even if we had lost yesterday, the memory of those Washington fans would have been sufficient to cheer me through the next nine months until we return."

The Redskins did not return to the championship game until 1940. They were expected to be the NFL champs in 1938, but they lost Cliff Battles, the league rushing leader in 1937, and finished the

year with a 6-3-2 record. The club did, however, add two premium talents in the draft that year: running back Andy Farkas, from the University of Detroit, and quarterback Frank Filchock, from Indiana.

They came close in 1939, finishing with an 8-2-1 record, and for the third straight season, the road to the NFL championship for the Redskins went through New York and the Giants. More than 12,000 Washington fans made the trip to the Polo Grounds for a game that would live in Redskins lore. The Giants managed 3 field goals to lead 9–0 going into the fourth quarter when Washington climbed back into the game with a touchdown pass to Bob Masterson to close the gap to 9–7. With time running out, the Redskins moved the ball down to the Giants' 15-yard line—a seemingly easy field goal for Bo Russell and a Redskins win. It appeared that way to the Redskins and many others in the stadium when Russell kicked the ball. But referee Bill Halloran called the kick wide right, which sparked such an outcry from the Redskins that Marshall told reporters after the game that Halloran would never work an NFL game again—and he never did. A crowd of more than 8,000 Redskins fans greeted the team at Union Station after the loss to show both their support and anger, chanting, "We was robbed."

Still, Redskins fans had been treated to championship-level play ever since the team arrived in town in 1937, and despite falling short three straight years following that 1937 NFL title, interest in the team was higher than ever going into the 1940 season. The Redskins did nothing to dispel those hopes from opening day, when they defeated Brooklyn 24–17 at Griffith Stadium before a crowd of nearly 33,000. They reeled off seven straight wins before losing a close one, 16–14, to Brooklyn at Ebbets Field. They came back to beat their hated rivals, the Bears, at home by a score of 7–3, thanks to a goal-line stand by the Redskins defense at the end of a bitterly fought game that carried over into the newspapers the next day, as Marshall, full of himself after his win over Halas, gloated to reporters about the win. "The Bears are a team that folds under pressure against a good team," he said. "They are a team that must win by a big score. Don't ask me why they lose the close games, except that they do. If I were to guess why, it would probably be that there is not too much harmony on that team. Too many stars, and stars are inclined to beef at one another when the going gets tough."

The going was about to get tough for the Redskins, with Marshall sharing the blame for his postgame comments. In the next game, Washington lost to the Giants in New York, 21–7, but they clinched

the Eastern Division title the following week with a 13–6 win at home over Philadelphia. This win set up a rematch of the game between the Bears and the Redskins, as Washington, with its record of 9-2, was given home-field advantage. By the time the game was over, the Redskins would have certainly preferred that this spectacle had taken place well out of the view of their fans. Chicago scored in the first minute of the game on a 68-yard run by Bill Osmanski, and it appeared that it would be a tightly played game when Washington nearly scored on the following possession. Max Krause ran back the Chicago kickoff 56 yards to the Bears' 40-yard line, and several plays later Baugh nearly connected with a touchdown pass to Charlie Malone, but the ball bounced off Malone's chest. It turns out that it was perhaps the most irrelevant drop of a touchdown pass in NFL history.

In 1940, the he Bears introduced a new wrinkle in the NFL: the T-formation, where the quarterback lines up directly behind the center, and the running backs are 4 or 5 yards behind the quarterback. Before the T-formation, offenses were generally limited to the single wing, invented by Glenn "Pop" Warner at Carlisle in 1912. The tailback took most of the snaps from the center and was a triple threat to run, pass, or kick. This formation was based on power because of the unbalanced line. There were double-team blocks and pulling blockers. The quarterback, also known as the blocking back, could line up behind either guard, or between them, or sometimes between the strong-side guard and the tackle. There was very little passing under the single wing.

Clark Shaughnessy, considered one of the offensive geniuses of college football, began working as a consultant for the Chicago Bears in 1939 and made some revolutionary changes to the T-formation, which was new to the NFL at the time. He introduced the hand-to-hand snap from center to quarterback. Previously, the quarterback stood a half-yard to a yard behind the center, and the snap was a short toss of the ball. The hand-to-hand snap speeded up the action, because the quarterback didn't have to wait to make sure he had control of the ball. Now he took the ball, came away from the center, and began running the offense more quickly. He also moved the offensive linemen away by a yard or so, which forced the defensive line to open up holes that the speeded-up offense could take advantage of with the running back hitting the hole at full speed.

This offense, fueled by Marshall's comments after the previous game with the Bears, went on a rampage. They scored 21 points in the

first thirteen minutes of the game and took a 28–0 lead into the locker room at halftime. After the defense ran back 2 Redskins passes for touchdowns in the third quarter, Chicago led 48–0 going into the fourth quarter and then made Washington pay for every word Marshall had said about the Bears, scoring 25 points in the fourth quarter–11 touchdowns in a 73–0 record defeat. It was such a bizarre game that the teams ran out of balls, which kept going into the stands for the extra points, so they had to use practice balls near the end of the game. This is one noteworthy fact from that game: the head referee was Irv Kupcinet, better known in later years as "Kup," the famous Chicago newspaper columnist. Marshall's criticisms may not have been the deciding factor in a 73–0 game, but they were certainly a motivating factor.

Sammy Baugh "There was a lot of stuff in the newspapers that Mr. Marshall had put in there about the Bears. I think any team would have beaten us that day. The team was mad at Mr. Marshall because he said some awful things about the Bears."

The next day the two NFL owners met, and there was tension in the room between Marshall and Halas. But Marshall reportedly walked up to Halas, put his arm around his old friend, and said jokingly, "George, you misunderstood me. I said the score would be 7–3, not 73." Regardless, the beating appeared to have left a hangover the following season, as the Redskins had their worst season under Flaherty, going 6-5. After losing the opener at home to the Giants before 35,000 by 17–10, the Redskins reeled off five straight victories. But injuries to backs Dick Todd and Wilbur Moore hurt the offense, and Washington lost its next four games before salvaging a winning season with a 20–14 season finale victory over Philadelphia at Griffith Stadium. The win, though, was overshadowed by events taking place at Pearl Harbor, when, on this day, December 7, 1941, during the Redskins game, military and government leaders began leaving the stadium after receiving word that the United States had been attacked by the Japanese.

It had been four years since the Redskins won an NFL championship, and while Washington fans had been treated to winning football since then, there was disappointment because of the perception that with the talent this team had during that time, they should have

had more to show for it—more of a legacy. In 1942, the Redskins would put the finishing touches on that legacy.

Washington opened at home with a 28–14 win over Pittsburgh before 25,000 fans, but lost the following week at Griffith Stadium to the Giants by 14–7. It would be the last time Redskins fans or anyone else would see this team lose the rest of the season. After just getting by Philadelphia 14–10, Washington beat the Cleveland Rams 33–14 and went on to run the table, scoring 227 points and holding their opponents to 102 points, with 2 shutouts and just 13 points allowed in the final four wins of the season against the Chicago Cardinals, the Giants, Brooklyn, and Detroit. The Redskins would be in the NFL title game for the third time in six years, and playing the same team for the third time: the Bears, the team that had humiliated Washington in the championship game two years before. And Chicago, favored to win, appeared to have just as powerful a team as in 1940, with a perfect 11–0 mark and an offense that had put 376 points on the board, led by their own star quarterback, Sid Luckman.

With more than 36,000 fans at Griffith Stadium and the game being broadcast to a record 178 radio stations, it looked as if the Redskins would be overwhelmed early on, when Dick Todd fumbled the ball and Bears tackle Lee Artoe scooped it up and ran 50 yards to put Chicago on top 6–0 early in the second quarter. It was an unusual play that turned things around for the Redskins. Baugh, deep in his own territory, took the Bears defense by surprise when he quick-kicked a ball that wound up going down to the Bears' 15-yard line. Not long after that, Wilbur Moore intercepted a Luckman pass, and Baugh converted it into a touchdown when he hit Moore with a 39-yard touchdown pass, and, with the extra point, the Redskins took a 7–6 lead into the locker room at halftime. The Redskins would score again in the third quarter on a 1-yard plunge across the goal line by Andy Farkas, but it was the Washington defense that carried the day, making that 14–6 lead stand up against the powerful Chicago offense and delivering the Redskins their second NFL championship. It was a stunning upset, and the revenge for the 73–0 defeat at the hands of the Bears in 1940 was not lost on sports columnists.

***New York Times* columnist Arthur Daley** "By way of supplying a final madhouse touch to a football season that was noted for its lunacies and upsets, the Redskins soundly trounced the supposedly

invincible Bears before an incredulous and deliriously happy gathering of 36,036 spectators in Griffith Stadium today to win the world professional championship. This was a team that was so much an underdog that the gamblers stopped giving 7–1 odds and handed out as much as 22 points. This also was largely the team that had been beaten 73–0 in the playoff two years ago. Yet it cracked into the mighty Bears with disregard of the Chicagoans' reputation and handled them as easily as if the Monsters were only P.S. 9."

It was a bittersweet win. Baugh recalled the quick-kick—where the offense lines up in a formation as if they are going to run an offensive play, but the player taking the snap surprises the defense by punting the ball—that turned the game for Washington, but he also remembered it was the last game he would play for Coach Flaherty, who left the team to join the U.S. Navy and serve in the war.

Sammy Baugh "That kick turned out to be a big play. When I quick-kicked, I had the wind to my back, and that's why I did it. If the quarter had run out and we had to punt, we would have had to do it against the wind. . . . Ray Flaherty was one of the better coaches I ever played for. Everybody respected him as a coach."

A local favorite would replace Flaherty in the 1943 season: Arthur "Dutch" Bergman, a former coach at Catholic University in Washington who had been a scout for the Redskins in 1942. He picked up where Flaherty left off, with a 27–0 debut win over Brooklyn before 35,450 at Griffith Stadium, and the team went unbeaten in its first seven games, with a tie against the Philadelphia-Pittsburgh team that was combined during 1943. The Redskins lost their final three games of the regular season, however, including two straight season finale defeats by the Giants.

In between those two losses to the Giants was a blow that could have been far more devastating than a defeat on the field. On December 8, 1943, the front page of the *Washington News-Herald* had the banner headline PROBE REPORTS OF PRO FOOTBALL GAMBLING. The story that followed reported that the league was investigating rumors that players were closely associated with known gamblers and that a number of Redskins were part of the investigation after the Redskins' 27–14 loss to the "Steagles," the Philadelphia-Pittsburgh team.

"Reports that a betting coup had been effected, headed by one of Washington's three biggest gamblers, spread through the ranks of the underworld in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and other major cities from coast to coast, following the second Washington-Phil-Pitt Steagle game," the newspaper report said. "All betting on National Professional League football games now has been curtailed and under no circumstances will bookmakers accept a bet. After the [November 21] game with the Bears and the second contest a week later with the Steagles, one Washington gambler [later revealed to be convicted bookmaker Pete Gianaris] is reported to have won over $150,000. The Times-Herald has learned that Owner Marshall's appeal to Major [Edward] Kelly [superintendent of Washington police] that he investigate was based not entirely upon suspicion of gambling, but that Marshall told Kelly he suspected some of his players of visiting night clubs and other places in the city where they should not be."

Accompanied by nearly the entire team, Marshall stormed the *News-Herald* offices and demanded that the editors provide proof of the allegations. Nothing ever emerged from the probe, and Washington, with its 6-3-1 record, turned its attention to a playoff for the Eastern Division title and a third straight game against the Giants. This time, playing at the Polo Grounds, Washington finally defeated the Giants and did so soundly by the score of 28–0, led by 3 touchdowns by Andy Farkas.

Again, they would face the Chicago Bears for the fourth time in the NFL title game, and Chicago evened it up with a 41–21 win over the Redskins in Chicago. Baugh missed most of the game when he was kicked in the head early on while trying to make a tackle. He had completed 8 passes in 12 attempts for 123 yards and 2 touchdowns during his limited time, and it might have been one heck of an offensive duel between Baugh and Luckman, who completed 15 of 26 passes for 286 yards and a record-setting 5 touchdown passes. After all, Baugh had enjoyed one of his best seasons that year, having thrown 23 touchdowns with 1,754 yards passing, plus leading the league on defense in interceptions, with 11, and leading the league in punting as well, with a 45.9-yard average.

Baugh and the Redskins had seemingly not missed a beat with the departure of Flaherty and the arrival of Dutch Bergman. But the Dutchman wanted out of coaching, so he took a job in broadcasting, leaving Marshall to find his third coach in three years. He selected Doug DeGroot, the head football coach at Rochester University.

DeGroot had his share of problems during the 1944 season as he tried to install the T-formation, with Baugh missing big chunks of playing time because he had to tend his cattle ranch, as the government was making heavy demands for beef during the war. Frank Filchock wound up with the majority of the playing time in 1944, posting a 6-3-1 record.

With the war ending, Baugh was able to devote his full attention to football in 1945, and he thrived under the T-formation once he mastered it, completing a record 70.3 percent of his passes and putting together an 8-2 record and the Redskins' fifth trip to the NFL title game. They traveled to Cleveland to play the Rams on December 16, 1945. It turned out to be more than a title game–it turned out to be the end of an era in Washington Redskins history.

The cold wind off Lake Erie blew into Municipal Stadium, making the conditions nearly impossible to play, with temperatures reportedly 8 degrees below zero. The field was frozen and slick, which made it difficult for the players to run. The Redskins were prepared for those conditions, having brought sneakers to use in case the footing was treacherous. The Rams, even though it was their home field, did not have any sneakers to use. So Rams coach Adam Walsh requested of DeGroot that Washington not use their sneakers, and to the surprise of everyone, including Walsh, DeGroot agreed. In return, DeGroot should have asked that Walsh take down the goalposts.

In the first quarter, the Redskins were down in their own end zone when Baugh, who had thrown 11 touchdown passes that season for 1,689 yards, went back to pass to Milner, but as he threw the ball, it bounced off one of the uprights. That was scored a safety for Cleveland, which now led 2–0. On a cold day like that one, every point would count. The weather only made things worse when Baugh hurt his ribs and had to leave the game later in the first quarter. His replacement, Frank Filchock, hit Steve Bagarus for a 38-yard touchdown pass in the second quarter, putting the Redskins ahead 7–2.

Cleveland came back near the end of the second quarter when Rams quarterback Bob Waterfield connected with Jim Benton on a 37-yard touchdown pass. And again, the goalposts came into play, when Waterfield's extra point kick hit the goalpost bar, and it could have gone either way. It barely made it over for the extra point for a 9–7 Rams lead. When the teams came out for the second half, the Rams hit again on another score to take a 15–7 lead on a 44-yard

touchdown pass from Waterfield to Jim Gillette. The Redskins had come out seemingly a beaten team when they emerged from the locker room for the second half, and, as it turned out, for good reason. The tale of the destruction of the franchise from that date is one of legend, starting with Marshall's halftime confrontation with DeGroot, because of his refusal to use the sneakers. The Redskins played the second half without a head coach, because Marshall fired DeGroot at halftime.

Center Al DeMao "The field was a sheet of ice because it was so cold and bitter that day in Cleveland. We came in at halftime, and Marshall came into the locker room and told Coach DeGroot, 'Okay, Doug, let's get out the sneakers.' Doug said very meekly, 'Mr. Marshall, we made a gentleman's agreement that we wouldn't use the sneakers.' He was, in essence, fired right then and there. Marshall said, 'This is no gentleman's game. That's the last decision you will ever make as coach of the Redskins.'"

After the Rams scored to take the 15–7 lead, Washington seemed energized again, moving the ball down the field near the end of the third quarter on a 70-yard scoring drive, when Filchock tossed an 8-yard touchdown pass to Bob Seymour on the fourth down to bring Washington to within one point, 15–14. That would be the final score, as the Redskins failed on two fourth-quarter field goal attempts by Joe Aquirre, and Washington lost its third NFL title game. Since the Redskins had been there so many times in their short history in Washington, Redskins fans figured there would be a next year. There wasn't—at least not for another thirty-seven years.