

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER HIS LEADERSHIP AND LEGACY

Presented by: Don J. Schmidt on October 11, 2019

David Dwight Eisenhower. Was born in 1890 into a world that none of us can truly imagine. He grew-up literally on the wrong side of the tracks of the Kansas Pacific Railroad in Abilene, Kansas, a former wild west cattle town of 4,000. By the time Ike was born it had become much less notorious and was a typical mid-western farming community. Typical in the early 1900's meant no pavement, just dirt streets, plank sidewalks, no running water, and coal oil lamps for light, with heating and cooking on a wood fired stove. Consequently, Ike learned early the value of hard work and making do, as he shared hand-me-down clothing from his older brothers, an even becoming adroit at cooking. He was in charge of cooking the Sunday evening meal, with apple pie being his specialty. Shortly after his birth, his mother, Ida, decided that as he grew he would be nick-named Davey, which she could not abide, so they switched the names so he became Dwight David. However her worst fears were realized when in

school the children could not say easily Eisenhower, plus it was too long, so Eisen became Ike. Eisenhower, when in school was not known as an outstanding student, although he was an avid reader of ancient history, being particularly enamored with Hannibal and his exploits. What he did excel at was sports; baseball and football. All in all his upbringing seemed very similar to what those of us who grew up in Indiana in the 1950's experienced, except with running water and paved streets.

After high school he worked in Abilene at various menial jobs, the best paying being a boiler room fireman. He had ambitions for college but no money. So he and his brother Ed devised a unique plan. Ike would work for a year giving his paychecks to Ed so he could pay for his first year at the Univ. of Michigan. Ed would then drop out for a year, earn money to pay for Ike's first year. That plan failed as Ike could not bring himself to force his brother to drop out of Michigan. About that time a friend of Ike's was trying to gain entrance in the Naval Academy and convinced

Eisenhower to try and do the same, as the free tuition was the motivating hook. Ike took the exam for both West Point and the Naval Academy. There was one congressional district opening for each academy. He scored number one on the Naval Academy test and number two for West Point. However, he was rejected for the Naval Academy because he was several months too old, but luckily the West Point number one selection dropped out at the last minute and Eisenhower was selected. That's how close fate came to possibly having the whole course of history changed dramatically. Dwight's parents, while not stopping him from accepting the appointment, were quite upset, seeing that they came from a religious sect that was pacifist.

So off to West Point with a class of 265 cadet candidates, a class which would become the the most celebrated ever graduated from there. It included not only Eisenhower, but Omar Bradley, James Van Fleet, and a grand total of 59 generals. Ike took to West Point and became involved immediately, particularly with the football team where he made the varsity in his second year.

He was good. So good the New York Times described him as “one of the most promising backs” in Eastern football. Alas, it did not come to be as he injured a knee in successive games, one against the Carlise Indians with the legendary Jim Thorpe and the next week against Rutgers. Interestingly he then became a member of the cheerleading team.

Ike graduated as number 61 in class of 140. During the four years 125 entering freshman had dropped out, a 47% attrition. Ike was very well liked as a cadet, possibly because of a very fun-loving attitude which was always getting him into minor scrapes with the administration. Actually he was kind of a rebel during his entire four years. An example of his cavalier attitude to discipline was his sneaking off the campus and going 15 miles upriver on a boat to have coffee and sandwiches in the nearest town. This infraction, if caught, would have expelled him immediately from the corps. Another example was when he and a fellow cadet were to be disciplined for a minor infraction and

were commanded to report to the the Division Officer in full-dress coats (which meant full dress uniform. However the two boys decided to take the officer literally and showed up buck naked except for the coats. The discipline became harsher but he was endeared and famous among his fellow cadets for his getting back at the Administration. In fact upon graduation his list of demerits and discipline filled ten pages. Demerits were given out in one's two's and five's; Ike graduated with 307!

Even though girls were secondary to Ike's love of sports and the military life, in his last year at West Point he fell madly in love with a girl named Gladys Harding, the prettiest girl in Abilene, and from one of the most well to do families as well. Volumes of love letters were kept by Gladys that attested to this romance that most in Abilene expected to end in matrimony. Gladys was a concert pianist that traveled with a New York company so the separation eventually, along with her father's disapproval because of the lowly esteem with which the public then regarded

military personnel, doomed the romance. The two, however, never forgot one another. In 1953 when Ike visited Abilene as President the most exciting incident of the visit occurred when a woman with blond hair darted out into the street and bore down on the motorcade. The President's Secret Service escorts began reacting to this apparent threat, but even after thirty-eight years Dwight Eisenhower recognized his old flame. He ordered the driver to stop, and to the delight of the crowd the two embraced; then Eisenhower gave her a hearty kiss. His obvious affection there for all to witness.

After being commissioned an officer, Eisenhower was assigned to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. It was while there that he met Mamie Doud his future wife. According to reports it was love at first sight, at least for him. She was an extremely popular 18 year old, came from a well to do family and had many suitors. She dated practically every night, and on many occasions Ike would sit on the front porch conversing with her

father after waiting for her to come home from a date. I guess you could call that real perseverance. Well it worked, for they became engaged with his West Point class ring. The Doud family gave their blessing and all seemed well. At about the same time Ike put in for a transfer to the Army Air Corp, which he received, with included a substantial boost in pay which he sorely needed if he were to be married. When Mr. Doud was told the good news he said he would withdraw his blessing and not allow his daughter to marry, because flying was way too dangerous and he did not want his daughter to become a premature widow. Well, love won out and Ike turned down the sought after transfer.

Mamie Doud and Dwight Eisenhower were described by family as a classic mismatch, with nothing in common but love. One was born into a family of high social status and wanted for nothing, but was utterly unsophisticated about the world outside her immediate social circle; the other was the product of an impoverished childhood. Mamie had never cooked a meal,

happily endorsing her mother's dictum that: "If you don't learn to cook, no one will ask you to do it". Never having even been obliged to even make her own bed, the overindulged Mamie regarded housekeeping as a duty to be performed by servants. In a reversal of roles, Eisenhower was an expert at cooking and was no stranger to every conceivable household chore. Fortunately her husband's love of cooking saved the newlyweds from either starvation or eating every meal out in the officers mess.

Finances had always been a struggle for the newly weds, if not for a promotion that came through on his wedding day with an increase in pay of \$20 per month, times would have been tough, as Mamie's father had already announced he would not subsidize their income. He did present them with a four year-old Pullman automobile and a small cash gift which was spent on furniture for their apartment. Mamie's father never fully carried out his vow not to support his daughter and son-in-law, and after the birth of

their first child in 1917, he sent Mamie \$100 monthly. If not for this infusion of money Eisenhower seriously considered resigning for a better paying civilian job.

Military life is difficult on marital relations, but a high point came in 1917 when their son, nicknamed Icky, was born. Mamie was often persuaded to dress Icky in a full tank officer's uniform provided by soldier friends. During this time Eisenhower was promoted again and finally had enough financial resources to be able to hire household assistance for this wife. That turned out to be an unfortunate decision as the girl hired had scarlet fever which was soon transmitted to Icky who eventually died from it at four years of age. For the rest of Ike's life he presented Mamie with a bouquet on the departed Icky's birthday.

The timing of Eisenhower's graduation from West Point placed him squarely at the beginning of World War I, although he never got to serve in combat as he was thought too valuable as an

instructor of new recruits. About that time he was given the opportunity to accompany an Army truck convoy from coast to coast to test the reliability of the different Army vehicles, to show the public a little about Army equipment, and create a little bit of a publicity stunt. Although the highways down the Eastern seaboard were adequate, those West of the Mississippi were another story. Most were unpaved, and the trip would dramatize the country's lack of main highways. Ike never forgot that trip and when he became President, that trip was the catalyst for what became one of his greatest presidential achievements, the Interstate Highway System.

In route to his next post Ike had time to stop in Abilene for a family reunion. There, an unforgettable photograph was taken of the six Eisenhower boys. All raised in spartan circumstances of what could only be described today as poverty. Ray was a pharmacist; Arthur a banker; Earl an engineer; Edgar a lawyer,

Milton, consular in the Dept. of Agriculture; and Dwight, a Major in the U.S. Army.

Ike was next assigned to a duty post in the Panama Canal Zone. Unfortunately this was a disaster for his wife Mamie. The steamy tropical heat, the endless downpour of rain, the ever-present smell of mildew, an armies of crawling and flying things, were beyond anything she had ever experienced. The floors bowed and sagged when walked upon and the sheet-iron roof let in as much rain as it kept out. In order to thwart the bedbugs pans of kerosene were set under the legs of the bed, but keeping bats out was impossible. After a short stay, Mamie left for Denver to be with her parents. But for Eisenhower, Panama was a wonderful opportunity, as he learned the basis of his military philosophy from his commanding officer, General Fox Conner. One important thing he told Ike was one day try and be assigned to Colonel George C. Marshall, “he is nothing short of a genius”.

The learning came to an eventual end as Ike was next assigned to be, believe it or not, the football coach at Fort Meade.

At the age of 45 Eisenhower had not had a promotion in 10 years and was making \$3000 per year. All of his brothers were highly successful, and Ike was feeling frustrated. Because of his past academic success in writing, he was offered by William Randolph Hearst \$20,000 per year to be his paper's military editor. He was sorely tempted, but eventually declined. At this time, in 1933, Ike was added to the staff of General Douglas MacArthur, an assignment that lasted 10 years. MacArthur, an eloquent orator with sparkles of brilliance, had one area of mediocrity; communicating through the written word. MacArthur requested Ike sorely to bolster that weak area. Eisenhower by this time was being recognized through the Army higher ranks as someone who was actually masterful with the written word. His clear thinking and the ability to put that thinking to paper in a way that was readily understandable was sorely needed in a bureaucracy

not known for anything close to readable and understandable plain English. But now we have, two extremely strong personalities, the proverbial oil and water trying to mix, but somehow it worked. Eisenhower and MacArthur were sent to the Philippines for the next four years. Because of the need to travel through out the islands, to save time Ike decided to take flying lessons, taking pilot training early each morning. Breakfasting with him, after the flying lessons every morning was President Quezon of the Philippines as they worked on military defense, education, foreign trade and personal philosophy. Eventually Quezon asked Ike to draft the Philippine constitution, of which a substantial portion is attributed to him. When it was time to leave the Philippines because of the outbreak of hostilities in Europe preceding World War II, President Quezon, who wanted desperately for Ike to stay, prepared a contract, and asked him to write in the salary and any benefits that would induce him to stay. Such was the respect that he had for his friend .

Back in the United States the mood of the country was anti-war and pacifist. And strongly so. Eisenhower preached to all underlings under his next several commands that the U.S. entering the war in Europe was inevitable. To the media, politicians and the chattering class, this was lunacy. But Ike was not alone in this thinking as General George Patton was also a strong believer as was George C. Marshall. America at this time was a third-rate power, with an Army that ranked seventeenth in the world. To correct this the draft was instituted by then President Roosevelt with the Army going from 130,000 to 620,000 with the call-up of the National Guard and reservists and to 1,460,000 after the draft in June of 1941. Eisenhower now received a twist he didn't expect. He was assigned to London with General Hap Arnold to observe the use and effectiveness of the German airpower. Actually the greater problem was the ability of the German U-boats under the command of Adm. Karl Donitz who sunk 2,361 Allied ships between September 1939 and December 1941. But that was all a ruse. He was there to be

observed by the British and how they might react in the event he would be named the commander of the American troops fighting alongside the British if America enter the war. The British asked Eisenhower a number of pertinent questions, One of them was “would you be willing to serve under a British supreme commander?” Eisenhower answered: “In view of your experience, it would be wise to have the top man come from one of your forces,” answered Eisenhower. They then asked if he knew anything about Lord Louis Mountbatten and would he be willing to serve under him. Ike replied: “Certainly”.

When the meeting was over, and Eisenhower had left, the British Prime Minister turned to the group and said: “That fellow Eisenhower is a born gentleman. He is a man sent to us by God in this great hour of trial and need.” Eisenhower was was made the commanding general of American forces in the European Theater. He was now a general!

Ike now had the combat command that he had longed for his entire military life, he was going to lead the invasion of North Africa and the capture of the seaport of Tunis. His command post was in the caves and tunnels of the Rock of Gibraltar, a musty, dank and dark place that was miserable. His job was overwhelming, overseeing 400 warships, one thousand airplanes and hundreds of thousands of men.

The big question for the Allies was whether the French would resist a landing on their African soil, as the majority remained loyal to the Vichy French government which meant they basically sided with the Germans as was the terms off the 1940 Armistice between France and Germany. In order to secure French cooperation military deals had to be made with Adm. Darlin who was second in command of the French forces in the Vichy government. By most in the British and the American press Darlin was considered a Nazi stooge. Regardless of the negative connotations, Ike, with President Roosevelt's behind the

scenes blessing, used Darlin and the troops he commanded. In fact for Ike the political problems were many times more daunting than the military. He was sickened by the lack of integration and cooperation among separate branches of the service. Aircraft supported ground advances reluctantly, or not at all. Limited cooperation of American and British forces appalled him. Before he could defeat the Axis, he had to win over internal politics and Allied problems. Throughout the early days of the war, this was the constant theme; egos of officers, politicians, and even other allies were more of an obstacle than the enemy. During the war years this was little reported or known.

Eisenhower held General George Patton in high regard, a military genius. However a public relations debacle occurred which involved General Patton and sorely tested Ike. After winning the North Africa campaign, Patton and Montgomery's armies were sent to Italy and Sicily to attempt to rout the Italians and end their involvement in the European campaign. They were both highly

successful and on September 8, 1943 Italy surrendered. It should have been a time of celebration for Ike but he had another public relations problem to handle. His greatest trial during the Italian campaign was Patton's flagrant misconduct, which took some luster from his dazzling victory. While visiting an American hospital, Patton slapped two enlisted men whom he suspected of fake injuries. The first was given a blow to the side of his head after which Patton pulled a pearl handled pistol shouting, "I should shoot you on the spot". A doctor and nurse seized Patton's hand, and suddenly aware of what he had done, Patton burst into tears. Later, Patton slapped a second soldier who had continued fighting even after the medical doctor told him to get hospitalized with a temperature of 102 degrees. He continued fighting until his commanding officer ordered him hospitalized. Ike was shocked by Patton's acts and assembled the press for an announcement.

“I am sorry to tell you about two slapping incidents in which General George S. Patton was involved. He will be severely reprimanded and punished in a way which will be most humiliating for him. The day will come when the Allies will punch a hole through the west wall built by Germany along the English Channel . When that happens we will need the greatest General in history to make it happen.. George Patton is that man. If he is commanding armor in Europe, he will save thousands of American and Allied lives and shorten the war by many months.

You all know that there is something more important in this war than a single story. If you want to write about these incidents, you may do so, and there will be no censorship. I leave each of you to use your conscience and what you feel is best.”

Not one of the more than sixty correspondents filed a single word! Several days later a congressional committee visited the North African theater, and the Patton story leaked out. Some

unknown congressman confided the story to radio commentator Drew Pearson. He put it on the ABC coast to coast network that evening. Congressman screamed to bring Patton back to Washington for a full-dress investigation. Eisenhower was face to face with a decision. If Congress got a hold of George Patton, they would reduce him to a colonel in some teaching command. Often Eisenhower had been a witness before Congress, and he knew what would happen. They were not out for justice but out to make headlines for them selves. Ike was not going to let that happen. General Ike sent a memo to General Marshall and President Roosevelt. He described the disciplinary action taken and said if they insisted on bringing Patton back to the U.S., they could accept his resignation. Ike prevailed and Patton went on to glory with his Third Army during the invasion.

After the North Africa campaign Eisenhower's abilities were so recognized that he was made the Supreme Allied Commander of European Forces. This meant he would be leading the invasion

of the European continent or as we know it, D-Day. The enormity of the job was staggering. The invasion armada was gigantic nothing like this had ever been imagined much less assembled. Nine hundred warships, 229 LST's and 3,372 landing craft. Carrying out their rendezvous in the English Channel's nightmare water would be an almost incomprehensible feat. There would be also 11,000 aircraft coming from 163 different airfields. And most importantly of all, 1.5 million American troops; one million British and Canadians; and thousands of French, Norwegians, Poles, Belgians , and Danes.

One of the logistics that needed to be overcome was how to obtain the millions of gallons of high-test fuel for tanks and other military vehicles. Ike left that problem up to Lord Louis Mountbatten of the British military. His plan, which was carried out, was to lay a 4 inch flexible pipe under the English Channel. Eventually the system grew up to twenty lines, pumping a million gallons of gasoline a day to French cities hundreds of miles away.

The success of D-Day, while obviously depending on the fighting ability of the Allies, actually the most important decision was to determine when to launch the invasion. The weather was far and away most crucial to whether the operation would be a success. All the generals knew if the launch occurred and the weather turned against them all would be lost. But waiting and waiting was dangerous for the fear of the Germans finding out about such a massive incursion. Eventually Eisenhower decided to cancel the invasion order for June 5 on the day before it was to begin. It was rescheduled for the next day with most of the generals in favor, but Ike was reluctant because of continuing bad weather reports. Allied leaders, including Churchill and President Roosevelt had given Eisenhower the final authority to make the “when to go” decision. Finally he gave in with the simple words, “O.K. - we’ll go”.

Eisenhower had 28 news correspondents assigned to cover the invasion, splitting them up between infantry, navy, air force, and

headquarters. Correspondents that were assigned to Major General Clarence Huebner were welcomed with the following:

“ We are ready to help you in every possible way. The people at home won't know what is happening, unless you are given the information. You know how to take care of yourselves, but if, unluckily, a shell should get you, we'll do all we can. If wounded, we'll take care of you. If you're killed, we'll bury you, so you have nothing to worry about. Several newsmen grinned at the general's social-security program.

Field Marshall Montgomery was in charge of all the British forces, but was subordinate to Eisenhower as Supreme Commander. This created continued clashes between the two. Montgomery was a small man who like many of the same , Alexander the Great, Lord Nelson, Caesar, and Napoleon Bonaparte, tried to compensate for this in their commanding. At his tactful best, he was tactless. Whenever Ike and Monty met, instead of the subordinate going to the higher rank, Ike always went to

Montgomery. When asked about this seemingly breach in normal protocol, Ike replied". My assignment from the President and the Prime Minister is to win the war in the shortest possible time with the least cost of life. The British have seen fit to name Montgomery as their commander. If meeting him in his headquarters, or even a cow pasture would shorten that assignment by a single hour or save a single Allied life, I would gladly do so."

After the D-Day invasion the next battle of note for Ike became the Battle of the Bulge. One of his trusted generals Omar Bradley had an unfortunate incident. Many Germans were assigned to impersonate American soldiers, wearing the U.S uniform and driving captured American jeeps. A German group was suspected of trying to infiltrate the Allied headquarters in order to assassinate General Eisenhower. Orders went out to the military policemen to stop all vehicles and ask special questions to reveal whether the occupants were Americans or Germans:

“ Who is Mickey Mouse’s wife? Who is Betty Grable’s husband? Who won the last World Series. “ General Omar Bradley was stopped by an MP and asked, “What is the capital of Illinois?” “Springfield” answered Bradley, and the MP, who mistakenly thought it was Chicago, arrested him. Eventually he was released from the jail to which he had been taken.

As it became evident that the Allies were going to win the war, Eisenhower flew to Washington to meet with President Roosevelt. This was prior to the Yalta Conference. Ike spoke frankly to the President who was in bed with influenza at the time. Ike was appalled at how the President looked, he was gaunt, haggard, and his skin sallow. Ike pointed out that dividing Germany into national sectors would lead to serious problems. A system more likely to succeed would be to have the allied powers occupy all of Germany. The Russians make even the most simple relationships difficult. They will probably be evermore difficult at war’s end....from Stalin on down. Roosevelt

smiled, “Don’t worry about Joe Stalin, I can handle him. I can lead the Russian people in any way I desire”. Eisenhower had a sinking feeling realizing the President didn’t understand Stalin and his cohorts, and he was seriously ill. Eisenhower was correct and the President was wrong about the Russians.

Many of the Allied military, in particular General Patton thought we should fight the Soviet right then and there at the end of the war. Neither Eisenhower the general nor Eisenhower the future president could accept war against the Russians as anything but something to avoid. The feelings of Southern Civil War General Robert E. Lee on this subject were like his own. As Lee so eloquently stated “It is well that war should be so terrible; if it were not, we might become too fond of it.”

The last big decision of the war, as it came to its close, was should the Allies try and get to Berlin before the Russians. Roosevelt was against a race for Berlin, as he felt the Russians

who had sacrificed the most men in the war should have the honor of taking Berlin. Churchill wanted the Allies there first. Unfortunately neither Roosevelt nor the Secretary of State would accept responsibility and assert the required authority. Eisenhower was left with making the Berlin decision which was a distinctly political decision which Roosevelt should have made. Because of the estimated casualties that would be incurred in the Berlin push, up to 100,000, Eisenhower backed off and let the Russians arrive first. Historians have debated as to whether this was Eisenhower's worst decision. A decision he should never have been forced to make. Had the Americans reached Berlin first, the cold war would have been played out on much different terms. Ike, at the end of the war, was made military governor of Germany. It was not to his liking and he requested to come back to the United States. And thus ended the first half of Dwight David Eisenhower's life. But there is more to come, possibly with someone else's Quest paper on the second half.

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