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In his farewell address to the American people, Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered what
many observers at the time and in the decades since have considered his most elo-
quent speech as president. Speaking from the Oval Office of the White House on
January 17, 1961, Eisenhower refrained from enumerating his accomplishments
in office other than to point to his administration’s productive cooperation with
Congress, both houses of which had been under the control of the opposition party—
the Democrats—since 1955. Instead, Eisenhower peered into “society’s future” from
the vantage point of a cold war that “commands our whole attention” and “absorbs
our very beings.” Because of the enormous demands of protecting US security against
an attack that could occur with only a few minutes’ warning, there had emerged “an
immense military establishment and a large arms industry” that were “new in the
American experience.” The outgoing president then issued a warning that quickly
became his most famous presidential legacy. “In the councils of government,”
Eisenhower declared, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influ-
ence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.” The presi-
dent added that a “technological revolution” had changed research, making it “more
formalized, complex, and costly,” enlarging the role of the federal government in
directing and subsidizing the work in university laboratories, and creating the danger
that the lure of a government contract could eclipse the importance of intellectual
curiosity. Finally, Eisenhower cautioned his fellow citizens against policies that plun-
dered “for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow….We
want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent
phantom of tomorrow” (Eisenhower, 1961).

Eisenhower’s farewell address received praise, but some of the plaudits were little
more than backhanded compliments. The Washington Post, for example, concluded
that the president’s valedictory speech would increase the public “affection” that
Eisenhower already enjoyed, even if it included “little that was new” (“Ike’s Farewell,”
The Nation was more caustic in its appraisal, editorializing that “nothing became Mr. Eisenhower’s career in office like the leaving of it....For eight years, Mr. Eisenhower has depressed his fellow Americans by a seeming inability to grasp the major problems of his era; but now in the closing days of his Administration he spoke like the statesman and democratic leader we had so long hungered for him to become” (Pach and Richardson, 1991: 230). European commentators also offered tepid assessments. For example, the French newspaper Le Monde declared that Eisenhower’s farewell address was “without originality” (“European Press Decries Ike Record,” 1961).

With the passage of time, however, Eisenhower looked less like a befuddled or belated statesman and more like a prophet who foresaw vital and enduring issues of contemporary US public policy. Writing 50 years after the president’s speech, historian Andrew J. Bacevich praised Eisenhower for “transcend[ing] circumstance and bear[ing] witness to some lasting truth.” Long and difficult wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan had persuaded Bacevich that the military-industrial complex was “stubbornly resistant to change,” the expenses of war had swollen federal deficits while contributing to “acute economic distress,” and American democracy had suffered (Bacevich, 2011). Other analysts writing a half-century after the farewell address emphasized that Eisenhower was right about the temptation of paying for today’s expenses with tomorrow’s resources. Journalist Rupert Cornwell, for example, maintained that the “credit card” wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, whose costs will burden American taxpayers for years to come,” showed that “the old general knew whereof he spoke” (Cornwell, 2011).

The shifting reaction to Eisenhower’s farewell address mirrors the changing assessments of his presidency over more than six decades. Eisenhower was popular with the American people throughout his eight years in office from 1953 to 1961. His approval rating in the Gallup Poll never dipped below 52 percent and averaged a robust 65 percent. Many political commentators and early historians of his presidency, however, were less impressed. Marquis Childs, a respected correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, published Eisenhower: Captive Hero in 1958, in which he dismissed the president as a weak and often ineffective leader. An enthused electorate in 1952 invested their hopes in the heroic general of World War II, while ignoring, according to Childs, that Eisenhower’s stature “had little or nothing to do with politics and government.” The result of having “so little preparation for what is surely the most difficult and demanding position in the world today” was that Eisenhower provided fumbling or indifferent leadership in meeting Cold War challenges like the Soviet launching of the world’s first artificial satellite, Sputnik, or in resolving critical domestic issues, such as the desegregation of public schools in the aftermath of the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in the case of Brown v. Board of Education (Childs, 1958: 292).

Cruder contemporary critiques reduced Eisenhower to a caricature—a general who delegated essential tasks to his staff while devoting much of his time to golfing vacations or bridge games with a circle of rich friends known as “the gang.” According to this view, Eisenhower was in charge but not in control of his own administration. His heroic reputation and genial smile inspired popular respect and admiration, even if his baffling answers to questions at news conferences suggested a tenuous grasp of important issues. Eisenhower even joked about his tendency to talk in circles that sometimes made reporters scratch their heads. When Press Secretary James C. Hagerty cautioned him about a sensitive issue prior to a news conference, Eisenhower replied, “Don’t worry, Jim, if that question comes up, I’ll just confuse them” (Ambrose,
When the president suffered serious illnesses—a heart attack in 1955, a stroke in 1957—humorists joked about Eisenhower’s supposed dependence on his subordinates to run his administration. It would be awful, they asserted, if Eisenhower died and Vice President Richard M. Nixon succeeded him. But it would be even worse if White House Chief of Staff Sherman Adams died and Eisenhower became president (Thomas, 2012: 400). In short, the American people may have “liked Ike,” but mainly because of who he was rather than what he did while in the White House. Most scholars considered Eisenhower at best an average chief executive soon after he left office, but his reputation began to improve in the following decade. A poll of 75 US historians in 1962 ranked Eisenhower as mediocre in his White House achievements, just above Andrew Johnson, who barely survived impeachment, and behind such lackluster presidents as Benjamin Harrison and Chester A. Arthur (“Our Presidents: A Rating by 75 Historians,” 1962). By the end of the decade, however, what historian Mary McAuliffe describes as the “revelation against the turmoil of the 1960s and the Vietnam War, reinforced by nostalgia for an apparently simpler and happier era” produced reevaluations of Eisenhower’s presidency (McAuliffe, 1981: 626). The strong economic growth of the Eisenhower years and the absence of US involvement in a major shooting war after the armistice in Korea in 1953 no longer seemed like happy coincidences, but the result, in large measure, of Eisenhower’s calculating and resolute leadership. In an important 1967 article, commentator Murray Kempton complained about the “underestimation” of Eisenhower as a weak president. “He was the great tortoise upon whose back the world sat for eight years,” Kempton asserted. “We laughed at him…and all the while we never knew the cunning beneath the shell” (Kempton, 1967: 156). By the early 1970s, biographers such as Herbert Parmet had documents from the Eisenhower Library to sustain a revisionist interpretation of the thirty-fourth president as a leader with “a remarkable political instinct” who achieved substantial success in both domestic and international affairs (Parmet, 1972: 577). Eisenhower revisionism reached high tide at the beginning of the 1980s. Extremely influential was Fred I. Greenstein’s *The Hidden-Hand Presidency*, which sought to explain Eisenhower’s “unique record in winning and holding public support” at a time when increasing executive powers and rising popular expectations carried with them risks of “making enemies and disappointing followers.” Central to Greenstein’s interpretation was Eisenhower’s canny ability to hide his role in day-to-day policymaking in order to preserve freedom of maneuver and divert criticism of controversial policies away from the Oval Office. This hidden-hand leadership enabled Eisenhower to appear to be above politics and thus preserve his remarkable popularity during his eight years in office. Simultaneously, however, hidden-hand leadership prevented contemporaries from appreciating that Eisenhower was an activist president (Greenstein, 1982: 4). Stephen E. Ambrose, too, found success in Eisenhower’s presidency that a previous generation of scholars had failed to discern. At the end of his magisterial two-volume biography, Ambrose declared, “Eisenhower gave the nation eight years of peace and prosperity. No other President in the twentieth century could make that claim. No wonder that millions of Americans felt that the country was damned lucky to have him” (Ambrose, 1984: 627). By the early 1980s, many scholars of the presidency shared Greenstein’s and Ambrose’s conclusions. A poll of 49 experts on the presidency in the *Chicago Tribune* in January 1982 ranked Eisenhower as the ninth most successful chief executive (“Our Best and Worst Presidents,” 1982).
By the early 1990s, new scholarship had begun to challenge some of the fundamental ideas of Eisenhower revisionism. Eisenhower postrevisionism, as I have called this emerging school of thought, accepted the revisionist view that Eisenhower was an activist and thoughtful leader determined to advance prosperity at home and protect US interests abroad. Postrevisionists, however, maintained that revisionists had dwelled too much on the processes of policymaking—especially the president’s newly discovered activist role—while neglecting the results of the Eisenhower administration’s decisions or actions. As I wrote, revisionists often “mistook Eisenhower’s cognizance of policies for brilliance and his avoidance of war for the promotion of peace” (Pach and Richardson, 1991: xiii).

During the past generation there has been a vigorous debate about the results of the Eisenhower administration’s actions—or, in some case, inaction—in shaping public policy, and this volume reflects the vigor and diversity of that scholarship. The authors of the essays that follow interpret Eisenhower from different and, often, conflicting perspectives, and they seek to understand his impact, as appropriate, in broader domestic and international contexts. The emphasis in this volume is on the presidency. It would be impossible, however, to evaluate Eisenhower’s White House years without analyzing his career in the US Army. Accordingly, this volume is divided into three sections. The first, “General of the Army,” examines Eisenhower’s most important personal, professional, and intellectual experiences beginning with his childhood in Abilene, Kansas, and continuing through his education at the US Military Academy at West Point, his command of Allied forces in Europe during World War II, his service as Chief of Staff of the US Army, and his role as the first Supreme Allied Commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) armed forces. The next section, on Eisenhower as “president,” probes the many dimensions of Eisenhower’s White House policies as well as the culture and society of “Ike’s America” in the 1950s. These essays address fundamental issues, such as the Eisenhower administration’s involvement in civil rights, managing the economy, and protecting the environment. The Cold War was Eisenhower’s central concern, and the essays in this volume discuss Eisenhower’s shaping of national strategy, his use of covert action and public diplomacy, and his reliance on nuclear weapons as instruments of deterrence and diplomacy. In addition, individual essays probe US relations during the Eisenhower presidency with Western Europe, Great Britain, Latin America, China, Vietnam, the Middle East, and the Third World. A final section, on Eisenhower as “Citizen,” assesses the former president’s influence on public policy during the 1960s and his legacies for the Republican Party.

“My place in history,” Eisenhower declared during his last year in the White House, “will be decided by historians....And I don’t think I will be around to differ with them” (Pach and Richardson, 1991: 237). Eisenhower surely would have disputed the conclusions of historians who lament his reluctance to provide stronger moral leadership on civil rights or who deplore his excessive and unwise reliance on covert action to overthrow unfriendly or hostile foreign governments. He also would have applauded those scholars who believe that he shaped a national strategy that led to US success in the Cold War or that he played an important role in expanding and strengthening vital social welfare programs, such as Social Security. On many issues, international and domestic, of the Eisenhower presidency, however, there is no consensus. Historians continue to debate, while decisions remain contested. The essays in this
volume analyze the rich historiography of the Eisenhower years, provide thoughtful
and sometimes provocative assessments, and encourage readers to think about the
connections between past and present. As his farewell address indicates, Eisenhower
was concerned about the vitality of democracy in his own lifetime and in future gen-
erations. We can all learn from the challenges he faced, the successes he achieved, and
the dilemmas he encountered about how to deal with similar issues in our own lives
and in America today.

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Part I

General of the Army
Chapter One

YEARS OF PREPARATION, 1890–1941

Jonathan Reed Winkler

Introduction

For many people, Dwight David Eisenhower represents the American Dream in action: the idea that a poor boy from a hardscrabble family living in a small town in the middle of America could rise to become one of the most important military commanders in United States if not modern history, and then follow that with two terms in office as president of the United States at the height of its economic and political influence in the world. For scholars attempting to make sense of Eisenhower’s accomplishments, part of the exploration requires understanding the formative experiences that helped to shape his outlook, capabilities, and motivations. If, as Henry Kissinger has pointed out, officials in positions of great responsibility have no time once in office to develop an interpretive framework with which to understand what they are observing but must instead rely upon the ones they created earlier in life, what was Eisenhower’s and how did he construct it (Kissinger, 1979: 54)? How, as scholars, can we decide which events shaped the future leader? How do we know what made the formative years or events formative? Relying upon Eisenhower’s own recollections and reflections, historians have traced much of this story, but not entirely, particularly as more comes to light about the things that Eisenhower may not have wished to remember or did not want others to ponder much about his legacy. Moreover, scholars seeking to understand the man must contextualize what Eisenhower experienced, to be able to make sense of certain events or times even if Eisenhower himself did not fully understand at the time.

Eisenhower has been the object of lengthy biographical works since the end of World War II and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future. The more prominent earlier biographies include Kenneth S. Davis, Soldier of Democracy (1945); Steve Neal, The Eisenhowers: Reluctant Dynasty (1978), and Stephen E. Ambrose’s two-volume work (1983–1984). Ambrose’s biography, while a standard in the field, must also be
qualified by the later revelations that Eisenhower had not, in fact, approached Ambrose to write the work and that Ambrose did not conduct the extensive interviews with Ike that he later claimed to have done (Rayner, 2010; Rives, 2010). The most recent full-life treatments include Carlo D’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life* (2002); Michael Korda, *Ike: An American Hero* (2007); and Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower in War and Peace* (2012). Each of these recent works draws upon the earlier standard biographies, Eisenhower’s own published reminiscences, particularly (for this period) *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (1967), and the plethora of archival material available at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and elsewhere.

**Childhood, 1890–1911**

Dwight D. Eisenhower was born on October 14, 1890, in Denison, Texas, where his father David was working for a railroad. Shortly afterwards, the family moved back to Abilene, Kansas, where David and Ida Eisenhower had been married in 1885 and with which the Eisenhower name would be forever associated. David Eisenhower’s family had been farmers and businessmen, members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, or River Brethren, who moved to Kansas from Pennsylvania in the 1870s in a great migration organized by his grandfather Jacob. Dwight D. Eisenhower’s mother Ida, though born in Virginia, followed her brothers on the migration in 1883 (Neal, 1978).

Once back in Abilene, Dwight and his five brothers enjoyed a modest upbringing in a lower-class house on the south (and poorer) side of town. His father worked at the creamery, while his mother raised the boys. Historians, channeling Eisenhower’s own reminiscences and those of his brothers, note the great influence of both parents in shaping the boys’ determination, discipline, ruggedness, and responsibility. Physically and emotionally warm, Ida in particular was selfless, hardworking, and very religious. Observers in the 1940s and historians since have also presented Abilene of this era as the quintessential American small town, one where the boys could have grown up safe and happy, exposed to both the country and the street, and where success in life could be measured on a much smaller scale than it might be a century later, while opportunities abounded for anyone who sought to strike out for greater things (Kornitzer, 1955; Jameson, 1961). Biographical treatments detailing the boyhood adventures and formative experiences in Abilene include the most recent by D’Este (2002), Korda (2007), and Smith (2012), and all frequently draw upon Eisenhower’s own recollections in *At Ease* (Eisenhower, 1967).

One area of particular interest more recently for scholars plumbing Eisenhower’s wartime and presidential thinking, particularly on the dangers of nuclear warfare, has been his religious influences. Here, however, much less is known, perhaps because Eisenhower himself left little information about his religious views and was not especially active in his practice, and because of the particular circumstances of his upbringing. Through his extended family, Eisenhower was brought up within the cultural milieu of the River Brethren sect. Religious guidance appears to have come mostly from his mother Ida, who later turned toward what would later become known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, while the boys were young. By the 1950s, when Eisenhower was in the public eye, and then in the 1960s, when he was shaping his legacy, this
religious denomination remained on the periphery of Christianity in America. Several scholars have suggested that Eisenhower and his brothers deliberately downplayed discussion of Ida’s influence lest there be negative consequences of association with what was seen by mainstream Christians as a fringe millennial sect (this at a time when it was still controversial that a Catholic would run for, let alone win, the office of president) (Bergman, 1998, 1999; Smith 2006).

Eisenhower did not refer to religious influence much in his writings, and the archival materials do not support any sense that he and his wife Mamie had an active religious life. (Smith 2006; Holmes, 2012) His recognized familiarity with the Bible stemmed from deep exposure in childhood, through his mother. D’Este notes that by the time Ike went to West Point, he had read the Bible twice through (D’Este, 2002: 33). Ida apparently directed Ike toward religious, ethical, and moral instruction to temper his growing fascination with the ancient wars of the Greeks and Romans. Reading The Pilgrim’s Progress was, according to Gary Smith, particularly influential (Wirt, 1965; Smith 2006). While as an adult he did not formally join a church (but maintained, through Mamie, an alignment with the Presbyterian Church), his relationship with God appears to have been deep and personal, if not expressed publicly or through his papers.

**West Point, 1911–1915**

Graduating from high school in 1909, Eisenhower was not admitted to West Point until 1911. He spent the two years working to pay for his brother Edgar to attend the University of Michigan, in an arrangement that was to have seen Edgar make Ike’s attendance possible. Chance led to Eisenhower applying for Annapolis and West Point, and securing the appointment to the military academy in January. His four years there were both formative and transformative. Attracted initially more by the opportunity to play sports and obtain a college degree than by the idea of a military career, Eisenhower changed under West Point’s emphasis on teamwork and the suppression of individuality in favor of the corporate. Biographers have explored how Eisenhower developed his abilities as a leader and guide here. Not an academic standout, he impressed his peers well enough that they granted him influence over them. The traits he acquired at West Point, particularly in organizational ability, competitive energy, and motivation, would be key to his continued success, a point highlighted by David Jablonsky among others (Holland, 2001; Jablonsky, 2010). The West Point that Eisenhower saw has been well described by historians (Ambrose, 1966; Fleming, 1969; Ellis and Moore, 1974).

Active participation in athletics, and particularly football, was a key motivator for Eisenhower at this point (indeed, it was part of the reason he went there) (D’Este, 2002: 67). Eisenhower was involved in football at the exact time when the modern rules, particularly involving passing and downs, were developed. The 1912 Army–Carlisle Indian School game saw Eisenhower struggle against the great Jim Thorpe, and he watched from the sidelines the famous 1913 Army–Notre Dame game (where Notre Dame’s successful repeated use of the forward pass brought this existing play to common notice). This, Ambrose and others note, tweaked his attention and his enthusiasm, and he was urged to coach the junior varsity team, which he did very well.
Though he would never play again (he wrenched his knee, with permanent damage, after the 1912 Carlisle game) he would continue to coach, and acquired a strong reputation for his coaching. While Eisenhower’s involvement was significant more in retrospect, historians such as Lars Anderson have focused on the 1912 game as a key one in the sport’s history (Anderson, 2008). On the history of football, development of its rules, and its significance in this period in understanding the context of Eisenhower’s experiences, see also the works by David Nelson (1994) and John Watterson (2002). But the emphasis on athletics as part of military preparation was not unique to Eisenhower by any means, and provided part of his bonding with his fellow officers in the years to come (Holland, 2001).

World War I and Fort Meade after the War, 1915–1922

In his first years after West Point, Eisenhower established the key professional friendships that lasted through his career, grasped the measure of the responsibilities that his chosen career entailed, and met the love of his life. Without these firm connections, it might well have been the case that the subsequent disappointments with his experiences in World War I and the years immediately after would have destroyed his career. With his knee injury ruling out cavalry service, and having considered going to Argentina to seek his fortune, Eisenhower opted for the infantry and had requested service in the Philippines when he graduated in June 1915. He was instead assigned to the 19th Infantry Regiment at Fort Sam Houston near San Antonio, Texas, and arrived there in late 1915. Historians have tended to focus on his coaching football for two different institutions (Peacock Military Academy and St. Louis College), learning the rudiments of being a junior officer, gaining a lifelong friend in Leonard T. “Gee” Gerow, and meeting Mamie Doud, whom he would marry in July 1916. Mamie’s perspective on their courtship is covered in the work by her granddaughter Susan Eisenhower (Eisenhower, 1996). Eisenhower would also be caught up in the aftermath of the Pancho Villa raid on New Mexico and the mobilization of the National Guard to the frontier. He requested service with Pershing’s Punitive Expedition, which was rejected; instead he was assigned to training a newly mobilized National Guard regiment—the 7th Illinois—stationed at Fort Sam Houston. Eisenhower ran most of its training, and D’Este in particular sees this as a significant moment in Eisenhower’s career development and his acceptance of an army career (D’Este, 2002; Coffman, 2004).

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, the officers and enlisted men of the existing army formed the cadre around which to build the massive wartime army. In May, Eisenhower was assigned to the new 57th Regiment. As supply officer, Eisenhower had the responsibility of acquiring the necessary essentials to make the unit come together. Under great pressure and competition for scarce resources, Eisenhower learned the importance of logistics, planning, anticipation, and foresight. Effective at the task, he came to hope that he would go overseas with the unit. (Interestingly, it was never sent abroad.) Instead, the army saw fit in September to use his skills at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, at one of the eight Officer Training Schools with which the army would obtain—after only 90 days—the essential lieutenants to command the drafted soldiers in the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), a process
detailed by J. Garry Clifford and decried most recently by Richard Faulkner (Clifford, 1972; Faulkner, 2012). Several weeks later the army realigned officer training under the divisions, and Eisenhower transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to oversee training of new officers there. Despite his repeated requests for combat duty, Eisenhower’s skills at training and organizing kept him right where he was. While this was going on, Mamie had given birth to their first son, Doud David (known as “Icky”), and was raising him while she remained in Texas. (It is worth noting that the correct spelling is Icky, but some biographers have persisted with the spelling “Ikky.”)

Eisenhower’s career shifted in February 1918. Assigned to Camp Meade, Maryland, and the 65th Engineers, he found himself involved in the creation of the first tank units for the US Army. Ambrose suggests, Smith echoes, and Matthew Holland cites materials from the Eisenhower Library to clarify that Eisenhower had taken a course on tanks at Fort Leavenworth, but the other major biographies do not note this as determinative in why Eisenhower went to Fort Meade (Ambrose, 1983; Holland, 2001; Smith, 2012). The true reason may well be that the first director of the Tank Corps being assembled there was Lt. Col. Ira C. Welborn. According to Holland, Welborn had been Eisenhower’s superior at Fort Oglethorpe and specifically requested Eisenhower when he moved to Meade. Preparing the 301st Tank Battalion to go overseas, Eisenhower threw himself into the task, but learned that his success was his undoing: Welborn needed him to continue training others.

Rather than going to France, Eisenhower went instead to Camp Colt, Pennsylvania (adjacent to Gettysburg), to oversee the army’s new tank-training facility. Deeply disappointed at the evaporation of his chance to go to war, Eisenhower had been given, nonetheless, a very significant responsibility. Arriving in March 1918, he had by July more than 10,600 officers and men under his command at a sprawling facility, and by October he had been promoted temporarily to lieutenant colonel at the age of 28. By war’s end, some 20 tank battalions had been created and undergone initial training under Eisenhower’s purview. Most accounts of Eisenhower dwell on the stories recorded of his experiences there rather than on the work done to create the idea of a tank corps, but we should recognize that the real mark on Eisenhower was the positive feedback of running what was a substantial organization, engaging problems of leadership and morale (including the ravages of the Spanish flu coming through the camp), and doing it well. At last in November he received orders to sail for France to take command of a tank unit there. The armistice of November 1918 stopped that. Eisenhower instead oversaw the reduction of Camp Colt in December, and withdrawal of materials to the Tank Corps to Fort Benning, Georgia. After a short time at Fort Benning, Eisenhower went to Camp Meade in March 1919. The Tank Corps would be based permanently at Camp Meade. The tank units that had been overseas now returned, and with George S. Patton in Washington, DC with the Tank Board, Eisenhower was assigned temporary command of the 304th Tank Brigade. Eisenhower remained embarrassed by his having missed the war, but Ambrose suggests that, in a way, it meant that he would not be burdened with the later fears and memories that haunted others, such as Marshall, who did see combat and its effects (Ambrose 1983; Wilson, 1989).

Another formative, if under-examined, event for Eisenhower was his participation in the army’s famous Transcontinental Motor Convoy in July–September 1919. Eisenhower volunteered to be a Tank Corps observer, together with Maj. Sereno
Brett, and joined nearly 300 other participants. Patton held Brett in high esteem as an aggressive tank officer who had commanded one of the two tank battalions in France. Like Patton and Eisenhower, Brett had chosen to remain on after the war, but unlike his two more famous peers his life and his influence have largely escaped historical notice (he did not, for example, have a Wikipedia page until 2012). Eisenhower and Brett thus accompanied the convoy shortly after its departure from Washington, DC (joining at Frederick, Maryland) and accompanied it all the way to San Francisco. Along the way they came to understand much about the endurance capabilities of the vehicles available at the time and the poor condition of the national road network in the United States. Most historical observers do little more than cite this as a formative event that influenced Eisenhower’s later efforts to establish the Interstate Highway System, though Carlo D’Este provides among the best accounts yet. He also notes that Eisenhower himself remembered the event in his *At Ease*, mostly for the shenanigans that he and Brett got up to on the trip (Wickman, 1990; D’Este, 2002: 140–143; Davies, 2003). Considering the intensity of the previous two and a half years, it may well be that this simply was for Eisenhower his first well-deserved rest since the summer of 1916.

Following the transcontinental trip, Eisenhower returned to Camp Meade, where he, George Patton, and other tank enthusiasts considered the implications of the new devices for the future of warfare amid the unwinding of the massive wartime army. Historians have rightly pointed out the significance of this period both in Eisenhower’s life and in the development of the US military. Eisenhower and George Patton, living and working closely together, developed a lifelong personal and professional relationship, as D’Este in particular has exhaustively detailed (D’Este, 1995, 2002). At Camp Meade through 1919 and 1920 Patton, Eisenhower, and others (though who these others were is little detailed in the standard biographies) worked on armor and ideas for using tanks in future combat. Eisenhower also took over the coaching of the Fort Meade football team, though he felt that he was past this duty.

Eisenhower’s personal life also swayed greatly. Mamie joined Ike at Camp Meade in 1919 only to return to her parents in Denver after several weeks of dismal living conditions. Rejoining Ike in 1920, she and son Icky fashioned comfortable married quarters next door to the Pattons, and most biographers identify this as a pleasant year for them, though perhaps best seen as calm before the storm of professional chaos and, in January 1921, the death of Icky from scarlet fever. Most biographers, drawing on Eisenhower’s own remembrance, note that the death was significant and long felt for both parents, and a turning point in the marriage (Eisenhower, 1967). Interestingly, no biographer notes that it led to any special turn toward religion, as a similar death of a child had motivated Ike’s mother Ida.

Professional turmoil as well occurred. Eisenhower, Patton, and others, at the urging of Brig. Gen. Samuel Rockenbach, the new head of the Tank Corps, formulated their thinking about armor into articles that would be circulated to the army through its professional journals (Eisenhower, 1920; Wilson, 1989). Though Secretary of War Newton Baker and Army Chief of Staff Peyton C. Marsh wanted tanks to become an independent branch, AEF commander and General of the Armies John J. Pershing did not. Congress deferred to his wishes. With the 1920 National Defense Act, the Tank Corps merged into the Infantry. Eisenhower, for his outspokenness, would face rebuke from the Chief of Infantry, while Patton opted to transfer to the cavalry instead