

INTERVIEW WITH
Dr. Milton Eisenhower

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg
Oral Historian

on

October 15, 1971

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



EISENHOWER, MILTON #13

Gift of Personal Statement

Dr. Milton S. Eisenhower

to the

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This is an interview being done with Dr. Milton Eisenhower. The interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg. The interview is taking place on October 15, 1971, 5:00 o'clock in the evening, outside and in the Eisenhower family home.

DR. BURG: Now are we entering the house in the way you would have entered it--

DR. EISENHOWER: Yes.

DR. BURG:--as a young lad?



DR. EISENHOWER: Yes, ordinarily I came in this west door all the time.

DR. BURG: And right after school it'd be this door that you'd come through.

DR. EISENHOWER: Well, not only after school. Any time. We used the front door only when company was coming.

DR. BURG: I see.

DR. EISENHOWER: Originally this room we have entered was the kitchen. The stove sat right there. The pantry was out the north door of this room. And normally, when we had no company, we ate in the kitchen. But if mother was doing something extra

special we ate in the adjoining room--the dining room, which later became a second living room when this one was changed from a kitchen into a dining room.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: I was the one--and let me see if I can remember when it was--I was the one who moved the kitchen--did a good deal of the work on the gas and other lines to move the kitchen to the much smaller room out here. I remember when we moved the kitchen I didn't--I couldn't--handle the water pipes, so I didn't move the sink. Sometime later someone came in and moved the sink.

BURG: This room back here.

EISENHOWER: That room, yes.

BURG: Let's step back in there, sir--

EISENHOWER: Yes.

BURG: --if we can.



EISENHOWER: When this room was a pantry, the bathroom was in the small room here to the east. When we made this room into a kitchen, the bathroom was moved to where it is now---next to what was our parents' bedroom. Grandfather Eisenhower had lived until his death in the bedroom which was changed into a bathroom.

BURG: I see. Now how old were you when you were doing the moving?

EISENHOWER: Well, I must have been about 16 years old. Let's go back a bit. I remember when they dug the trenches that brought the city water and the city sewage lines to this house, so obviously I had to be old enough to remember it now. I can still remember the trenches. When I was quite young, my father wired the house for electricity.

BURG: I see.



EISENHOWER: Not an outside electrician; of course, he was something of an engineer.

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: I think I remember when the furnace was put in. It was a hot-air furnace. Pipes, large ones, carried the hot air only to rooms on the first floor. So the bedrooms upstairs were mighty cold in the winter. Father put an open metal register in the ceiling of one of the two living rooms, so some warmth thereafter drifted upstairs. Often when I got up in the morning I would stand on that register as I donned my clothes.

Now, as we stand here in the dining room, we see the porch outside this east door. The refrigerator and other equipment were out there. Mother gave a dinner in 1927--just before I was married--for Secretary [William M.] Jardine, Secretary of Agriculture. And I remember very well that the refrigerator was out there because Mr. Jardine liked a cocktail before dinner, so I went up town, and Charles Harger gave me a bottle of mixed martinis. I put it in the refrigerator; when it was time for the cocktails, I went out to pour drinks for Mr. Jardine and myself. And mother came out and said, "What does that taste like?" I must tell you she had one of her church members doing the cooking and serving the dinner that night so--

BURG: Oh, I see.

EISENHOWER:--she could be hostess without doing the work.

BURG: I see.



EISENHOWER: And I said, "Well, mother, I'll pour a little in a glass." And she said, "Just give me a teaspoonful." So I said, "Here's a teaspoon." She tasted the martini. And then her eyes sparkled as she looked at me. She said, "Don't tell Sister Toliver."

BURG: But your mother didn't mind you having those martinis in the house.

EISENHOWER: Oh, not at all, not at all. No, that's very funny. There was kind of a growing or progressive liberalization in the family as time went on. When I was a youngster, cards weren't played in the house.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: Well, after a while we boys played cards. We all played cards if we wanted to. In that cupboard there on the north wall was always a bottle of whiskey. It was maintained it was said--it had never been opened--for medicinal purposes.

BURG: And it had never been opened.

EISENHOWER: No, never been opened. But, nonetheless, it was there, and mother didn't object to its being there.

BURG: Now when you ate here, you would have had, I presume, a wood burning stove?

EISENHOWER: The stove--the wood burning stove for cooking was right here. There was a stove for heating in one of the two living rooms.

BURG: And so six of you, plus your mother and your dad--all ate at a table here--

EISENHOWER: Yes, that's right.



BURG:--in this room--

EISENHOWER: That's correct.

BURG:--most of the time.

EISENHOWER: Except as I say, when there was company. I wish I could remember for sure, but it obviously had to be when I was fifteen or sixteen because once I went away to college I wasn't doing this sort of thing. And, therefore, it must have been around 1915 or '16 that the kitchen was moved and this room became the dining room. Incidentally, I understand that Earl J. Earl Endacott, first curator of the Eisenhower Museum Endacott has done a lot of research and has many of these facts. He says that he knows a lot about it that I don't, and I suspect that's true.

BURG: He's put it together in the form of a book so that we may have it, and there's some talk of perhaps publishing this eventually because he's run down everything he possibly can. He's spent much time and research on it.

If we could take you back to the time when you're--let's say--junior high school age, you would hit here I suppose around 3:30, 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Would it be earlier than that or later than that?

EISENHOWER: Well, keep in mind that--yes--of course, we didn't have junior high schools then. We had eight elementary grades and four years of high school.

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: Now once I entered high school, I worked and earned about \$4.00 a week. I would work after school--first in a grocery store, then in a drug store.

BURG: I see.



EISENHOWER: I worked after school and on Saturdays. When I got home, I still had to do my chores. When all six were home--though keep in mind that Arthur was born 14 years before I was, so I don't really have much recollection of six of us being at home--mother was very skillful at getting the work done by the boys; in order to keep them from being bored to death she rotated the chores. We had a large orchard; we had an enormous vegetable garden; we had an extensive alfalfa field, chickens, cow, and horse. And these chores outdoors were assigned to five of the boys, and there were six of us at home then. One had to work in the house, and that [chore] was the one each of us hated.

BURG: The one in the house?

EISENHOWER: Oh, sure. He had to help with the washing and all the rest.

BURG: And as I understand it you drew about a week's duty?

EISENHOWER: That's right, it was one week--

BURG: On a task.



EISENHOWER:--one week. You asked about the hour of my coming home. It was only when I was in the elementary grades, including the eighth grade, which then was at the north side school, that I would come home at about 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon.

BURG: But after that you were a working--

EISENHOWER: I worked, I worked--

BURG: --man.

EISENHOWER: I've forgotten the name of the grocery store. Then I worked in a drug store until I was seventeen. I graduated from high school at 17. All my buddies were a year older than I--I don't know why that was so--at least they were old enough to go

in the army at eighteen and I wasn't. I was going to lie about my age in order to go in with them.

BURG: Would this be 1917 or--

EISENHOWER: This would be 1917. But my English teacher was Lois Harger, the daughter of the famous Charles Moreau Harger, co-owner and editor of the newspaper. So she talked to me and sent me to see Mr. Harger; he talked me out of lying about my age. He said, "There'll be plenty of time for you to go in the army when you're eighteen." And [he] gave me a job as a reporter on the newspaper. That's how I got started in journalism. When I did become eighteen, I went to Kansas State into--all young people were encouraged to do this at that time--what was called The Student Army Training Corps.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: I got a little education and a whale of a lot of military training.

BURG: Right, right.

EISENHOWER: When the armistice was signed on December 11, 1918, they were very quick in getting us out of the Student Army Training Corps, because we were no good at that stage to the military establishment; and they wanted to save money.

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: Well, that was in a way a wasted year for me, so I came home, went back on the newspaper, and in fact edited the newspaper for a time.

BURG: Still living here at home, Dr. Eisenhower?



EISENHOWER: Yes. Yes, I didn't get completely away from home until after I finished college. At Kansas State I lived in a fraternity house. But let me go back a bit. This is an interesting part of my life,--I must say. When I was in high school I developed a strong ambition either to go into the federal government--and that seems rather strange because at that time the whole federal government wasn't as big as many state governments are today--or into education. The latter I think I can figure out better than

I can the former. Most of my brothers were good students but also good athletes. I was a good student from the very beginning, but I was a terrible athlete. I was butterfingered; I was on the third baseball team and waterboy in football. I think I made up my mind to excell intellectually.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: I mean at a fairly early age. Anyway, I do know that in high school I developed the ambition to do one or the other and my studies in college were so designed. In my last year in college I was carrying half graduate work and half undergraduate, and upon getting my degree I was at once appointed to the faculty.

BURG: At Kansas State?

EISENHOWER: At Kansas State, as a young instructor, with the privilege of going ahead with graduate work toward a master's degree and perhaps a Ph.D. I had been in the new job just about two weeks when I got a telegram from Charles Evans Hughes, the Secretary of State, offering me a post in the consulate in Edinburgh, Scotland.



BURG: May I ask you this, sir: how did that come about?

EISENHOWER: A young man from the Republican National Committee came through Manhattan--I think in the early part of my senior year--and persuaded me to take the lead in organizing a Republican Committee of college students, which I did. Four came to the organization meeting. One was elected secretary, another treasurer, a third vice-president, and I became president. Well, an older student, a Democrat and student reporter for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, saw us in the meeting. He planned to write a humorous story about the fact that only four students could be induced to join a Republican Club. Well, that evening I telephoned friends in various fraternities and the next morning--I was editor of the student newspaper--I was able to carry a list of one hundred members of the Republican Club. This same young man from Washington asked me why I didn't apply for the foreign service. I did so and took an examination and then, frankly, forgot about it.

BURG: Right.



EISENHOWER: Well, here I was just appointed to the faculty. And now came an offer to accept a post in the federal government. So my two ambitions were right before me. Dr. William Jardine was president of the university and a great friend of mine. I knew him, his wife, son, and two daughters. So I went into see him, and I told him of my dilemma. He looked me right in the eye, and said, "Milton Eisenhower, you're fired." He added, "There's no place for you at this institution for the next two years; if you want to come back then, we'll see what we can do." He then said, "Now go away and make up your own mind."

BURG: Marvelous.



EISENHOWER: So obviously I went out and sent a telegram to the Secretary of State saying, "I accept." That was the way I got started on a long government career which has never ended. Even, you see, when I left the full-time service of the government after nineteen years which included two presidential appointments--my last two posts were presidential appointments--and became president of Kansas State, I never ceased doing work for the president.

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: Ah, matter of fact, I was hardly in office in Kansas State when--well, as soon as the war was over--a couple years later--I was asked to return to Washington to put the Department of Agriculture back together. The president had divided it during the war into a small Department of Agriculture and a large War Food Administration. And I said, "Well, I will come but not as an employee of the government. I'll come as president of Kansas State; you may pay my travel expenses and that's all." I added one other condition. I said to Secretary [Clinton Presba] Anderson, now a senator from New Mexico, that "I must have lunch with you every day." He said, "Well, I'll be glad to have lunch, but why?" I said, "Because I have done enough organizational work in the federal government to realize that you can develop a beautiful plan only to have somebody put it on the shelf and nothing happens." I said, "I'm going to have lunch with you every day; and you're going to know what I'm doing; you're going to approve each step each day; otherwise, I won't do it." He said, "I agree." So that was my re-entry into the federal service. But actually, you see, even though I'm in my twenty-fifth year now as university president I've never been free of governmental work for eight different presidents--beginning with Calvin Coolidge.

BURG: Yes, yes. Does it ever strike you--I suppose it must--that such an enormous amount of talent came from this very small house?

EISENHOWER: Well, I've thought about this a lot and wondered why. I think I know some of the reasons. We in Abilene were a rural society, very different from the urbanized society with 73 per cent of the people living in great urban centers. I feel very sorry for parents and young people in the large cities because something we learned here at home at an early age is difficult to teach children in an urban location. Responsibility to us was as much a part--natural part--of life as eating and sleeping and going to school. I think that this early acceptance, in a perfectly natural way, of responsibility gave us an appropriate attitude toward education, toward our duties as citizens, toward our opportunities, and our obligations in whatever work we undertook. Then may I say that--here I'll have to speak for myself rather than for my brothers--the rule was that two things had to be done before I could play: one, I had to do my chores; second, I had to have every school lesson for the next day letter perfect.

BURG: These were really self-imposed rules, or was only the latter self-imposed. Was it your mother who put the first--

EISENHOWER: Mother was the one who established the rules, but soon the regime of work, study, play was just as natural as anything else. I never went to bed with an unsolved problem for the next day's lessons.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: I was expected to know. I remember one time my Latin teacher said, "Milton Eisenhower, I want you to stay after class." And I did. And she said, "You're using a 'pony.'" Do you know what a pony is?

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER: I said, "No, I don't have a pony." She said, "Your translations are too perfect, and I don't believe you can do that." I said, "Well, for the time being another teacher, Miss Annie Hopkins is living at our house and she supervises my studies." While Miss Hopkins' subject was not Latin--but mathematics and other subjects--she was a Latin student. She

would check my translations with me, so by the time I went to school the next day I was thoroughly prepared. Indeed, often I would translate passages from Virgil or Cicero that other students fumbled over.

BURG: Now, if I understand, the other brothers having gone and you the last one here, there was some space; and so you had a teacher living in the house.

EISENHOWER: Yes. Keep in mind that Earl and I went through school together; there was only a year and nine months difference in our ages and, as I recall, Earl had been out of school one year because of a bad eye.

BURG: Right.



EISENHOWER: He had been blinded in one eye due to an accident with a knife. And he and I therefore went all through--

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: So, essentially, everything I did, he did too. Only he was a good athlete, and I wasn't--so that our play-time and study activities were somewhat different.

BURG: Had your scarlet fever bout set you back--

EISENHOWER: I don't have--

BURG:--or anything in that regard?

EISENHOWER:--any doubt that it did. You know I was unconscious for two weeks.

BURG: It sounded like a dreadful siege you had.

EISENHOWER: I remember that the doors to the two living rooms were sealed off. Earl and mother were in there. Earl had been exposed, and of course mother served as full-time nurse. The rest of the family lived in the other part of the house. The food would be handed quickly through the door.

BURG: In this, in these two rooms?



EISENHOWER: In those two rooms in there--that's where three of us lived for--I think it was six weeks.

BURG: Six weeks?

EISENHOWER: Yes. For two weeks as I remember--I think my mother told me--I was unconscious. I have no doubt that the scarlet fever left a weakness. To this day my throat where those great swellings came--I guess they eventually burst--is tender. But the only physical problem I've ever had of any serious nature is bad eyes, I was born with those. As a matter of fact, this eye condition of nystagmus is congenital. It could be that scarlet fever made it worse. Incidentally, this is one of my favorite pictures over here. This is--see here--that's Earl, and here I am. We're feeding the chickens. That's the only picture I know of taken at that particular time. Those clothes tickle me to death--knickers, you see--

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER:--long black socks.

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: And, of course, I wore all the hand-me-downs. Having six older brothers is devastating so far as the clothes you have to wear.

BURG: Yes, yes indeed. There again, we may add another reason for the kind of character that the entire group of you've shown throughout: that you simply took things in stride--this kind of thing. I've read books, of course, that discuss the family and discuss the fact that you had to fight in your own ways. You had to fight for the things that you got--work for them hard.

EISENHOWER: Certainly we had to work, but you know I'm absolutely certain that we didn't feel that we were being imposed upon. I mean life was the way it was; it was natural. Of course most of the rest of Abilene people had to work too. Edgar is the only one who ever sensed some difference between the north and south sections of Abilene. You know this is supposed to be the wrong side of the tracks; Edgar was conscious of that. In a book he wrote he made a point of this.



BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: I want to say that Earl and I were utterly unconscious of any such thing. And I often talked to Ike about it; and he said, "It's just, I think, a figment of Ed's imagination."

But you know we grew so many vegetables and originally fruit that--the fruit orchard was eventually destroyed by a storm-- we had things to sell--more than we could consume.

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: And Ed used to say, "When I took vegetables up north of the tracks and up on Buckeye, the people would sniff at them as if they wondered where they came from." I never experienced any such thing.

BURG: It didn't bother you at all though?

EISENHOWER: No, I wasn't even conscious of it--

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER: --wasn't even conscious of it.

BURG: Well, I--

EISENHOWER: No, you see, this is--I think this is worth thinking about: how do you give a child in a city real responsibility

that's honest? Children are terribly quick to sense the artificial. I mean if you make a child move the sandpile and then tell him to move it back, he knows it's phony.

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: Here, since it was perfectly obvious that the work had to be done and we took it for granted that the lessons for school had to be mastered and all the rest, these things were, as I say, just as natural as sleeping and eating; and no one felt--



BURG: That horse was out there every day--

EISENHOWER: Oh sure--

BURG: --and had to be fed.

EISENHOWER: That horse was my dearest friend, one of my dearest friends. Silver was her name. I was raised on her. And--no fooling--one of the older brothers--I think it was Ed--had teased her by blowing in her face through a pipe. She took a

dislike to him and kicked him in the face one time. But Silver was my friend. I could crawl between her feet, and she wouldn't move. I could ride her bareback; I could stand up on her back. That horse knew me, and she was mine.

BURG: Well, you and Roy then could pretty well share her--

EISENHOWER: Earl.

BURG: --Earl, rather--

EISENHOWER: Earl.

BURG: --in the last--

EISENHOWER: Yes.

BURG: --years.

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, sure.

BURG: Could you say--perhaps you were too young to notice--but in any way did life change for you and your brother as the older ones left? Was life in this house different? Did the pace alter,



or do you recollect it as being pretty much the same? The same duties to be done and--

EISENHOWER: With the destruction of the orchard by a wind storm we expanded the alfalfa field, and that altered one of the chores outdoors. Also as electricity, central heating, and refrigeration came into the house one didn't have to get up at 4:30 in the morning to build fires in the stoves. Chores in the house diminished. But I don't think that life changed much. Arthur left when I was quite small--

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER: --then Edgar went to the University of Michigan. I suppose he was about eighteen when he left. I remember most vividly when Ike left for West Point. You see, mother and dad were strict pacifists, but they also had a firm conviction that parents should not determine the destiny of their children. The only thing that dad ever said was that he hoped Edgar would be a doctor. And the nearest he ever came to trying to influence a son--he said to Edgar that if he wanted to go to the University

of Kansas and be a doctor he, dad, thought he could afford to help him--partly--if he'd also work. But he never complained when Edgar went to the University of Michigan to study law. Well, anyway, when Ike decided to go to West Point--which was completely contrary to dad and mother's philosophy--they never said a word. Dad was at work when Ike left. I went out on the west porch with mother as Ike started uptown, carrying his suitcase, to take the train. Mother stood there like a stone statue, and I stood right by her until Ike was out of sight. Then she came in and went to her room and bawled like a baby. I was the only person home. Oh, of course, I cried too.

BURG: You were about twelve, I think, then.



EISENHOWER: Gee, I'd have to figure. He went in 1911, wasn't it?

BURG: Yes, I think it was.

EISENHOWER: Yes, I'd be twelve years old. But that scene--I've never had it out of my mind. I'll never forget it. But coming back to your question--no, with fewer sons in the house, there

was less work to be done. And with the coming of modern conveniences--electric lights, refrigeration, furnace, and all these things--there wasn't so much work to be done. And mother had some outside help in the house from time to time.

BURG: Oh, did she?

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

BURG: I wondered if it bothered her that one of the shaping forces in your life--in a way--was being withdrawn as the conveniences came in, as life was better--less harsh, let's say, in the sense that more things were being done easily.

EISENHOWER: Well, you know--



BURG: Wondered if it bothered her.

EISENHOWER:--No, by no means. As a matter of fact, mother liked the nice things as well as anyone I ever knew. So--no--she liked the conveniences and liked to dress well and liked jewelry and all the rest. Her religion didn't keep her

from pleasures--her philosophy was not that of the Amish. The Amish philosophy is that only the next world matters. And if one, therefore, goes in for worldly things in this world, it is because you don't have your mind and your heart set on the proper objective. That's true of the Moravians; it's true of many of the Dunkard sects from which the River Brethren came. And of course, at one time mother and dad were both in the so-called River Brethren or Brethren-in-Christ Church. All of us boys were raised in the River Brethren Sunday school. Coming back to your question, I would not say that mother was an unworldly person. She liked the same things that everybody else liked. Incidentally, do you know the story of the piano here in the living room?

BURG: Is this the one they speak of as the "ebony piano"--

EISENHOWER: Yes, that is the ebony piano.



BURG: --that was so important?

EISENHOWER: That's the one I learned to play on as did Arthur and Ike.

BURG: The Rugh's kept this for her--

EISENHOWER: That's the one she bought before she was married with an inheritance left her by her family--a small inheritance. And the Rugh's kept it when Mother, Dad, Arthur, and Ed moved to Texas--

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: --and then got it back when they came to Abilene.

BURG: Now, in an evening, for example, once dinner is over and you boys have taken care of the chores necessary and you've--

EISENHOWER: Got our lessons.

BURG: --and you got your lessons, where might we expect to find your father for example?

EISENHOWER: Well, now--

BURG: Where would he be, and what would he be doing?



EISENHOWER: Dad loved to read, and he loved to have people come see him. He was not the kind of social person who would go to other people unless he was invited; that was a curious thing about him. But he loved to have people come see him, and he liked to read. But at this stage I was learning to play the piano. Matter of fact, I was good enough on the piano that I would play a solo at the high school once in a while.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: And so normally after dinner mother and father would sit out here--

BURG: In the kitchen area.

EISENHOWER: --in what was then the kitchen. And I would go in and start playing the piano--practicing. I remember that it used to hurt my feelings a bit if--I understand, now--if dad would come up and close the door so they--

BURG: I see, I see.



EISENHOWER: --could hear what they were saying to one another.

BURG: Now let me ask you: was the music floating out of this room classical music or was there a little bit of jazz and ragtime coming out of here?

EISENHOWER: I only played--I don't think I ever played ragtime at home--not because mother and dad would have objected, but because I love classical music. I now play an organ and play only classical music. But in making enough money to go through college--I want you to know I had \$40.00 help to get through college--I organized a dance band, and so I had to turn to ragtime. One thing I had was a good thump, thump rhythm. Boy, I had the best rhythm in the world. So, you know, I couldn't play very difficult music. We had--I remember--we had a trumpet; we had a trombone; we had drums; we had a saxophone; and a singer with a very loud voice. He didn't need a microphone to be heard, and I played the piano. I had one solo that every time we had a dance I played, and that was "Kitten on the Keys." Keep in mind that I had a full-time job in the daytime. We played at night from Salina to Solomon to Chapman in the summertime. And I remember we got \$5.00 a piece for a night's work.



BURG: Good Lord.

EISENHOWER: Which, supplementing one's salary--look I started college with \$40.00 in my pocket and ended with \$1700.00 in the bank; so when I became a vice-consul and went to Scotland, I wasn't without some resources.

BURG: Marvelous.

EISENHOWER: And as a vice-consul I got \$150.00 a month to start, and I save \$50.00 of it. I lived beautifully in Scotland on \$100.00 a month. You see--

BURG: You were a single man at that time, weren't you?



EISENHOWER: I was single. I didn't get married till I came to Washington.

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: I must tell my favorite story of inflation. As a youngster here in Abilene we were all very aware of the most

marvelous hamburger stand you ever saw in your life. I don't suppose it was any bigger than from here to over there, but the owner specialized in hamburgers. You could get a hamburger that thick and that big around on a roasted bun with all the pickles, mustard or anything else you wanted to put on it-- all for a nickel. Last year I was at the St. Regis in New York; when I came downstairs to have lunch; there was a convention, so the dining room was full. The only place I could go was into a lounge off the bar. I ordered a hamburger and a bottle of Michelob. The hamburger was \$4.85.

BURG: Oh, dear Lord, really.

EISENHOWER: That's right. Well, let me tell you another story of inflation. My father bought this property early in 1899 for \$3,500.00. There was this house, a city block of good land with a full-grown orchard, vegetables, an enormous barn--my uncle from whom he bought it was a veterinarian--a completely equipped barn. Three thousand five hundred dollars. Well, when I became president of Johns Hopkins, I built a beautiful official house on the campus. A friend of mine--wanting to do me a favor-- gave me a metal cookout shaped very much like an old-fashioned stove--you know--



BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: --to make it work you had to build a small house around it.

BURG: Oh, really.

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, it had to be enclosed. So I built a very small house of stone and glass--it cost me \$5,000.00.

BURG: Oh, my goodness.

EISENHOWER: For one cookout.



BURG: Well, as your--

EISENHOWER: And this whole city block cost dad \$3,500.00.

BURG: Yes. Three acres of land I believe.

EISENHOWER: About two and a half.

BURG: Well, as your brother said, "The Pentagon office with greater floor space than the home in which he'd grown up."

EISENHOWER: Yes.

BURG: Now this--this, then, became later on the bathroom.

EISENHOWER: This originally was a bedroom--s small bedroom; that's where my grandfather Eisenhower lived in his later years. And it was not made into a bathroom until after he passed away.

BURG: But others did the plumbing of this. This is not--

EISENHOWER: I did not do that.

BURG: --one of your projects.

EISENHOWER: I don't remember who did--who put that in. Dad could handle that kind of work, and maybe Ed and others could help him. But I didn't do that.

BURG: Now you boys--homework done in your separate rooms or did--

EISENHOWER: No, I normally studied at the dining table right here in this room. And, coming back again to moving that kitchen, it obviously was--because I can remember studying in this as a



dining room when I was still in high school--so it obviously had to be--

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: --when I was around fifteen or thereabouts.

BURG: No such thing, then, as sort of a study table for those of you who were still here. You'd been pretty young I suppose when Dwight and the others would be working.

EISENHOWER: Yes, and I don't remember whether they worked as much after dinner on their studies as I did.

BURG: Yeah.



EISENHOWER: I just don't know.

BURG: Let's move up here to this--to the parlor. Now up here in an area of the house that other--you and your music in there. This part of the house is not used quite so much, I understand.

EISENHOWER: Right here?

BURG: Yeah, right in here.

EISENHOWER: Well, this was used a great deal not only because the folks loved to have company but also they often had church meetings here.

BURG: Oh, I didn't know that.

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

BURG: I didn't know that.

EISENHOWER: And then dad had quite a thing. Let's see, how old was I now? Say, I was twelve, and Earl was nearly fourteen. Dad made us read the Bible from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelations. We read it together and--

BURG: Outloud, sir?

EISENHOWER: Yes. I'm not sure that it was a good educational exercise. But the trick was this: he would start reading; any time that he made a mistake and we caught him, that gave me



the privilege of reading. And then if Earl or dad caught me in an error, that gave them the chance to read--and this is the way we went through the whole Bible. Well, I'm sure that that was very good in teaching how to read accurately, but I'm not sure it was--

BURG: Theologically, whether it did much.

EISENHOWER: Theologically, I don't think it amounted to much. No, no, actually these rooms were very busy places.

BURG: I see.



EISENHOWER: Oh, yes. In addition to religious and social meetings and Bible-reading lessons, other things went on in here. Let me mention one. This is not due to my memory; this is what Ike told me: When I was a baby, Ike would have to take his turn taking care of me usually in this room. And mother--

BURG: I hadn't known that.

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

BURG: That's part of the household duty then--

EISENHOWER: Yes, as far--

BURG: --you or whoever is young.

EISENHOWER: If the baby--and I was the youngest--were in a baby carriage--you know, the wheels are about so far apart--Ike would lay on his back reading a book--probably history because he was an avid history reader; and he would kick the one axle--; and then when it hit the front of his foot, he would pull it toward him and keep it going back and forth until the baby was asleep. Then he'd just lay there and read. And pretty soon if the baby started to cry, he'd do the--

BURG: He'd get her again. I would--

EISENHOWER: Oh, no--



BURG: --imagine that was pretty popular duty with him.

EISENHOWER: --Another thing: Mother used to play the piano and sing; she had a beautiful voice, you know. She liked to sing mostly religious songs.

BURG: In a pre-radio era, reading would probably be one of the things--the leisure things--although I'm not sure how just how

much leisure would be left to you once chores and the school work had been done. Did your mother and father put you in bed pretty early or--

EISENHOWER: I guess so. Yes, I think so. But you know, along with everybody else, I was reading Horatio Alger and the Motor Boys and--

BURG: Oh, yes.



EISENHOWER: Oh, I'll never forget a disillusioning thing. I was reading Motor Boys--I don't know how old I was--and Ike was still at home. I was reading that two cars were going side by side--the evil man and the good man. And they were approaching a bridge. Remember, they were going full speed ahead. The bridge was only wide enough for one. And finally, at the last moment, the good man speeded ahead and got across the bridge first. Well, Ike happened to look over my shoulder. He snorted and said, "Isn't that silly. Since both were going as fast as they could, how did the good man increase his speed?" Boy, was

I disillusioned. I doubt that I ever read a Motor Boys book again.

BURG: That logical mind ruining--

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes.

BURG: --your story.

EISENHOWER: Oh, yes, that ruined the Motor Boys for me.

BURG: Much later, as a kid, I had a couple of the Motor Boy books that I used to read. They were in France, I believe, in the books that I read.

EISENHOWER: I loved Horatio Alger.



BURG: Yes, yes. This, then, was the parents' room.

EISENHOWER: Yes. Say, tell me, do they still accept donations in here? They used to.

BURG: I don't believe so.

EISENHOWER: I never cared for that.

BURG: No, the entire house is open and without admission fee, and I'm--

EISENHOWER: Yes.

BURG: --sure that no donations are taken.

EISENHOWER: Good.



BURG: No, they like to have them simply come through; and most people--as you would expect--are very much moved by this house and its contents.

EISENHOWER: Well, by modern-day standards this must be thought of as a very modest house. I now live in an eighteen-room house--four stories, with the basement; my bedroom is 32 feet long. But, do you know, I never felt cramped in this house. Ike, in making a speech here one time, said a very true thing. He says, "In retrospect I realize we might have been classed as being poor, but we didn't know it." No, it never occurred to me.

BURG: Well, it never occurred to me in the Depression that there was anything really wrong when I was growing up. It seemed all right to me, and I didn't feel deprived of anything. It's amazing how many people come in, and--I think it's almost universal--they look at this house--

EISENHOWER: We'd better go upstairs now. I'm going to have to go meet Mamie--

BURG: Right.



EISENHOWER: --pretty quickly. We're giving a party ourselves tonight. She's over at the Museum.

BURG: Everyone sees things in this house that existed in their grandparents' homes.

EISENHOWER: Most of these pictures on the wall here in the upper hall: That was my high school graduation picture. I know that one was Earl's. I think that was Ed's [Edgar's], and I believe that was Ike's. Here are Roy and Arthur. This framed document used to hang in the living room.

BURG: Yes, I've just been reading about that.

EISENHOWER: He [David J. Eisenhower] had two diplomas: one in mechanical or stationary engineering; and one in mathematics. I don't know where the other one is.

BURG: Unless it's been put into one of the rooms--might well be.

EISENHOWER: Could be. In this room there were two double beds-- had to be--so four slept in here. Edgar, originally, slept in there.

BURG: In the small room.



EISENHOWER: Yes. And again my mind goes to when I remember five at home. I think I remember when Arthur left home, but I was small, you know.

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: Fourteen years difference. I may have been four years old when he left home.

BURG: Yes, it's not unlikely that you would remember it, though--

EISENHOWER: No.

BURG: --at that age

EISENHOWER: Well, anyway, as time went on--of course, as there were fewer here--this room was changed, and one of the beds was taken out. At one time that small one was my room, but not originally.

BURG: Were you ever in this room?



EISENHOWER: No, this at some point, probably when Arthur left home, became the guest room--

BURG: I see. Is this where the teacher lived when--

EISENHOWER: I think so.

BURG: --she was staying here?

EISENHOWER: Yes, I think so. I think this is where Miss Hopkins stayed. And it was the guest room when Ike came home from West Point. He stayed in here. You know, he became a guest then.

BURG: Yes, yes. So your room for a time was the small room.

EISENHOWER: Yes.

BURG: And you were here?

EISENHOWER: Originally, Earl and I slept in a bed here, and two other boys slept over there. There were four of us in this room.

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER: Well, today you'd think you were set upon and abused to live in such a fashion. Now I have to have not only a big bedroom but a separate bath for every person in the house.

BURG: Yes, indeed, indeed. Well, I went back to the grad school in 1965, and we all crammed into a fairly small house. My kids had a taste of life in cramped quarters and found it was quite bearable.

EISENHOWER: You know, it's a funny thing. If the university did that in its official dormitories, the students would scream their heads off.

BURG: Yes, of course.

EISENHOWER: But I got into the fraternity houses and to some of the apartments that students rent, and you wouldn't believe how they--

BURG: Uh-huh--crammed in.



EISENHOWER: You know, this was a very satisfactory little room for one person to stay in. My worst memory of this room--this guy, Ed, was a devil. He would pick me up--I would say I was then four years old--and push my head through that trap door above us. It would be pitch black in the attic. And he would say, "The elephant's going to get you." I would scream my head off, and mother would come running to see what the problem was. In the old barn--the middle of the barn was two stories high with a big hay mow--and then there was what we called the "operating room," where my uncle did his veterinary work--

BURG: Yeah.

EISENHOWER: --well, that was only one story. So you could go from the floor of the hay mow through a small square opening about this high into the attic of the single story part--if you follow me?

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: With a sloping roof?

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: Believe me, it was pitch black in there. One time Ed put me--threw me--in there and then put bales of hay in front of the opening so I couldn't get out. Well, then, he said, "Now let the lion get you, boy." Can you imagine!

BURG: That grand man.



EISENHOWER: Do you know for years until I was almost through high school I was scared to death of the dark.

BURG: Yes, of course; of course you would be.

EISENHOWER: If I were up town at a play--participating in school affairs--and had to come home alone, as I got out of the lighted district I would run all the way home.

BURG: Now, as I understand it, your mother was more or less a believer that you, between you, took care of these matters. It would not be likely you would call upon her.

EISENHOWER: Oh, no, no, I did not. I would not run to mother and complain about Edgar on such a thing. As a matter of fact, I would more likely tell Ike, and they might settle it between themselves.

BURG: Good Lord.

EISENHOWER: No, once again you know this was learning the lesson of responsibility, of independence.

BURG: Yes, yes.



EISENHOWER: Now, by the way, going back to the beginning of our discussion about how six sons did fairly well in life, I wouldn't for the world think of detracting from the positive influences of mother and father. They were good people. They were not only intelligent and compassionate--with big hearts--but they were good in the best sense of that term. I never heard a cross word spoken between my parents, and I was home longer than anybody else. I was home till I was eighteen. And then even when I went to college, I came home quite often. As a matter of fact, I stayed out of school twice. It took me six years to get a bachelor's degree because of those two different years.

BURG: I see.

EISENHOWER: So--

BURG: It occurs to me to say something. Forgive me for saying it, but in a rather long, full lifetime you've observed many men and women. And your mother and father still stand high, do they not--

EISENHOWER: Yes, oh, indeed, indeed.



BURG: --even by comparison with the many that you have worked with?

EISENHOWER: In character, in philosophy, in intelligence, and in their personal relationships. You know, the children to look out for are the children who are being raised in homes where the atmosphere is not that way--where there is quarreling, too much drinking and, in drunkenness, doing ridiculous things which affect the children. No, if you look at your whole life from the time you are a youngster until the time you pass on, I suppose the first twelve years of your life are the most important. I think by then--and I say this now as an educator and having worked with many thousands of young people--

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: --I think your attitude toward life, your attitude toward yourself, your attitude toward your responsibility: what you deem to be right, what you deem to be wrong--I think these things are pretty well set. Now that doesn't mean that by hard study of many things, such as philosophy, that you can't refine or that you can't even change. I certainly wouldn't say that.

BURG: Yes.



EISENHOWER: In fact I've been supporting for years a school out in California that has a marvelous record of rehabilitating boys, they are boys who at about the age of 12 have been in trouble with the law. The record since 1902 up to now is that eighty percent never again have had trouble. But I still say that deep-seated aspects of your whole makeup--your character, your attitude towards others, your attitude toward yourself and your responsibilities--are pretty much fixed in childhood, up to twelve or fourteen years of age.

BURG: When you came back to this house, Dr. Eisenhower, did you find that these two people were still two people that you enjoyed knowing and being with as adults?

EISENHOWER: I think I enjoyed mother and father more as human beings when I was older than when I was young. I've often thought about this. I think that I--and I suspect my brothers too--rather took them for granted when we were young. The relationship was a close one; there were never any quarrels. We got punished if we did things wrong, and the worst punishment we'd get [was that] mother would say, "I'll tell your father about this when he gets home." Because now you had two punishments. Now you had to worry from the time she said this to you--

BURG: Right.



EISENHOWER: --and you knew the punishment was going to be more difficult when--

BURG: And she carried through when she told you that?

EISENHOWER: Always. We knew we were going to catch it. No. As I got older and came home--I was home a good deal when I was president of Kansas State University--it was easy to drive up here.

BURG: Right.

EISENHOWER: Of course, by that time, dad had passed on in forty-two, and I came to Kansas State in forty-three. I enjoyed mother then intellectually and as a person. She was no longer a mother, you know. We were--

BURG: Yes.

EISENHOWER: --we were on the same plane then, and she was lots of fun--oh, she was fun.

BURG: That's good to know, very good to hear.



EISENHOWER: Well, I think I had better run because Mamie--they said that I could spot the car.

BURG: Why don't we walk out and I'll--

EISENHOWER: Yes, and keep on talking if you want to.

HERB CHRISTIAN: Thank you, sir, Mr. Eisenhower.

EISENHOWER: Good to see you.

HERB CHRISTIAN: Dr. Eisenhower, thank you. Thank you.

BURG: We'll see you, Herb. Thank you so much.

HERB CHRISTIAN: Is that the car across the street?

EISENHOWER: It's a large black Fleetwood Cadillac.

BURG: If we walk to the--

EISENHOWER: Is that the car over there?

HERB CHRISTIAN: I think that's the car.

BURG: You think so?

EISENHOWER: Yes, I believe it is.

