

The 16-part "Dreams of a Barefoot Boy" originally appeared in the 2017 Kansas Newspapers in Education. Have fun reading stories, answering questions, and completing activities while learning about Dwight Eisenhower's childhood.



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# "Dreams of a Barefoot Boy"

## Chapter 14: A HIGH SCHOOL PREDICTION



*"Because no man is really a man who has lost out of himself all of the boy, I want to speak first of the dreams of a barefoot boy...Because today that dream of mine of 45 years or more ago has been realized beyond the wildest stretches of my own imagination, I come here, first, to thank you, to say the proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene."*

Dwight D. Eisenhower June 22, 1945

The Abilene High School yearbook from 1909, "The Heliantus" listed Dwight Eisenhower as the "best historian and mathematician" in that year's graduating class. In addition, one student wrote predictions about each of the graduates. Dwight was predicted to be a professor of history at Yale by 1944. His brother Edgar, who also graduated in 1909, was predicted to be considering a run for a third term as United States President.

Given Dwight's love of history and his excellence in math throughout his school years, the prediction was not unreasonable. After graduation, Dwight planned to go to college, but was not considering attending the U.S. Military Academy or a career in any branch of the armed forces. When that became his chosen career, his knowledge of military history and math would serve him well.

After World War II, he began to think of retirement, and considered becoming president of a small college where he could interact with students and share his extensive knowledge and experience. As it turned out, he was offered the presidency of Columbia University in New York City. Initially he refused, suggesting his brother Milton as a more appropriate candidate since he was then president of Kansas State University

(he would go on to be president of Pennsylvania State University and Johns Hopkins University). The Columbia University Board of Directors wanted Dwight, however, and they finally convinced him to accept the position.

It took some time for Eisenhower to adjust to university life. As General, he worked seven days a week, often putting in twelve to fourteen hour days. Once when he tried to go to his office at Columbia on a Saturday, he was stopped by a campus policeman who didn't recognize him and insisted that the president's office was closed.

Shortly after assuming the presidency of Columbia in the fall of 1948, President Truman asked Eisenhower to advise the Secretary of Defense. Ike travelled between New York City and Washington, D.C. weekly for the next year, then an illness forced him to give up the government position. In December 1950, President Truman called Dwight again. This time, it was a full time position that would take him back to Europe—command of the newly formed North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. Eisenhower took a leave of absence from Columbia, but eventually resigned when pressure was put on him to return to the United States. At least part of

those 1909 predictions were coming true—but not the way his classmates originally thought. Dwight wasn't called to be professor or even president of a university. Instead, citizens actively encouraged and supported his nomination and election as president of the United States.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Latin word Helianthus mean? Why do you think Abilene High School chose that name for their yearbook?
2. What was the high school prediction for Dwight Eisenhower?
3. Who was predicted to be president of the United States in the 1909 yearbook?
4. What subjects did Dwight excel in during high school?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Research what Dwight Eisenhower was doing in 1944 that was different from the prediction in the yearbook.
2. Add the information to your timeline of Dwight Eisenhower's life.