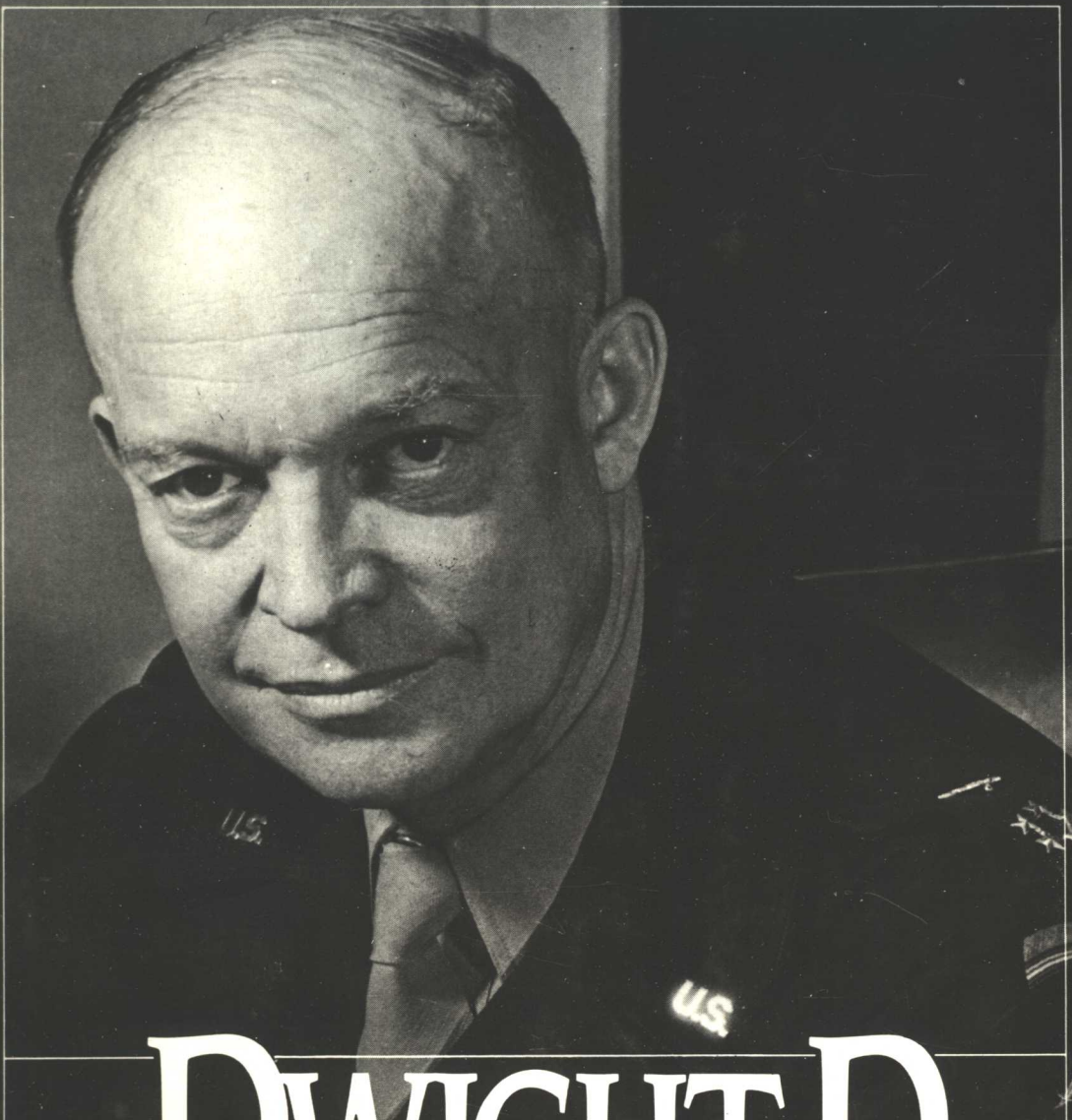


TWAYNE'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY SERIES



DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

HERO AND POLITICIAN

ROBERT F. BURK

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Hero and Politician

Robert F. Burk

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FOREWORD

Dwight David Eisenhower identified himself with George Washington. As Robert Burk shows in this incisive biography, Eisenhower strove to be for twentieth-century America what Washington had been almost two centuries before—"Father of his Country"—and in many ways he succeeded. Other generals besides Eisenhower and Washington have become president, but only these two have made equally great marks in military and civilian life. Both men led armies to triumph in the field and became overwhelmingly popular heads of state, but it was more than their successful leadership that gave them an enduring hold on people's imaginations and affections. Eisenhower, like Washington, became a paragon of patriotic devotion and a symbol of imposing dignity.

Yet how different this humbly born man from the nation's heartland was from the Virginia aristocrat on whom he modeled himself. Son of an unsuccessful small Kansas businessman, the young Eisenhower rose in the world initially through his athletic prowess. He chose a military

career in order to acquire a free college education. Throughout his early years in the army he remained inwardly detached from its institutional traditions and taboos, and he later likened himself to Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn in uniform. Yet, as Robert Burk demonstrates, this seemingly unassuming officer, who had long since acquired his folksy nickname, "Ike," was consummately ambitious, and he manipulated connections and assignments to bring off his phenomenal ascent through the ranks when World War II began. The stage was set for the emergence of the greatest single American reputation from that global conflict, the plainspoken, supremely competent, yet unwarriorlike supreme commander of Allied forces in Europe—Ike.

Eisenhower's military career alone would have earned him a major place in American history, although hardly an uncontroversial one. His brief experience as field commander raised many questions about his generalship, and as this biography also shows, his managerial and diplomatic methods had their sour as well as sweet sides. One of the advantages of this book's approach to Eisenhower is that it considers his military and political careers as part of a whole life. The young officer who became the general-diplomat laid down the patterns for the civilian statesman who became president from 1953 to 1961.

Eisenhower's presidency has remained curiously paradoxical. This enormously popular, venerated public figure, with his winning grin, came to be regarded by some critics as a bumbler and temporizer, whereas others have lauded him as a model of restraint and circumspection. Robert Burk penetrates this paradox with sympathy and sense. Ike's shortcomings and virtues receive thorough, evenhanded exposition, and they are placed in the context of the man's whole life and character. Given the significance of his careers and of the events through which he moved as a military and civilian leader, perhaps no American of the twentieth century needs to be understood more clearly than Eisenhower. Robert Burk's biography brings this understanding by bringing Ike to life again.

John Milton Cooper, Jr.

PREFACE

Dwight D. Eisenhower remains perhaps the greatest American hero of the twentieth century. His fame as a national soldier-statesman is exceeded only by that of his personal role model, George Washington. But Eisenhower was a distinctly twentieth-century version of the martial national hero. He grew up in the late nineteenth century when images of flamboyant individual valor still prevailed, although those images were bearing a steadily decreasing resemblance to reality. Born in the year labeled by Frederick Jackson Turner as the end of the frontier in American life, he would live until the year in which Americans traveled the new frontier of space to land on the moon. His life and career paralleled the rise of national and international bureaucratic institutions in business, labor, the military, and politics. By its end America had become a global colossus, but with its power to impose its will on world events proven limited in Southeast Asia and its future haunted by the risk of nuclear war.

As a major figure in both the military and politics during this ex-

tended period of national transformation, Eisenhower, like others of his generation, would attempt to preserve the opportunities for, and the values of, individual initiative within the changed institutional setting of the twentieth century. In so doing he would become a symbol both of traditional individualist values and of the newly acquired global power of the United States. His career would be that of the adaptive hero, not seeking to dramatically alter the direction and goals of modern America, but instead attempting to preserve individual avenues of success within powerful national bureaucracies for himself and others.

In his own case, Eisenhower would prove strikingly successful, rising from relatively humble origins to become supreme Allied commander in Europe in World War II, army chief of staff, Columbia University president, supreme commander of NATO, and president of the United States. In order to achieve such success in the bureaucratic world of the twentieth century, to become an American hero, Eisenhower would learn, sometimes painfully, the necessity of being the politician. Personal advance depended no longer upon theatrical individual valor but upon the success of the institutional "team," combined with the public relations skills to translate it into the traditional imagery of individual heroism. Heroic lives were not forged so much as careers were managed. And perhaps more successfully than any other man of his generation, Eisenhower adapted himself to the managerial techniques of the modern state. He managed his own personality and temperament, restraining his more intemperate impulses. He managed men and resources effectively as a military commander and politician. Most skillfully of all, he managed his image and standing with the American public through nearly thirty years as a prominent national figure. In short, Dwight D. Eisenhower became the manager of the modern American national security state. This is his story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dwight D. Eisenhower has been a regular companion of mine for over a half-dozen years now—alternately a source of frustration, curiosity, and joy. Fortunately, in my attempts to wrestle with the man and the legend that is Ike, I have been aided by many fine individuals and institutions. Special thanks go to the staff of the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas, the source of most of the manuscript material and photographs used for this study. Other photographic sources include the Republican National Committee and the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts. My appreciation also is extended to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the University of Cincinnati Library, and the Muskingum College Library for their help in unearthing secondary source materials.

One of the rewards of working on a manuscript is the opportunity to share ideas with and benefit from the criticism of able colleagues in the historical community. My thanks to Dr. Lorle Porter for reviewing the complete manuscript, and to Dr. David Sturtevant for helping me

avoid errors of fact and interpretation regarding Eisenhower's war record. Most of all, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Professor John M. Cooper, Jr., of the University of Wisconsin, who has on this occasion and before demonstrated his wisdom and consideration as an editor and friend. My appreciation also goes to managing editors Caroline Birdsall and John LaBine of Twayne Publishers for their faith in me and in the manuscript.

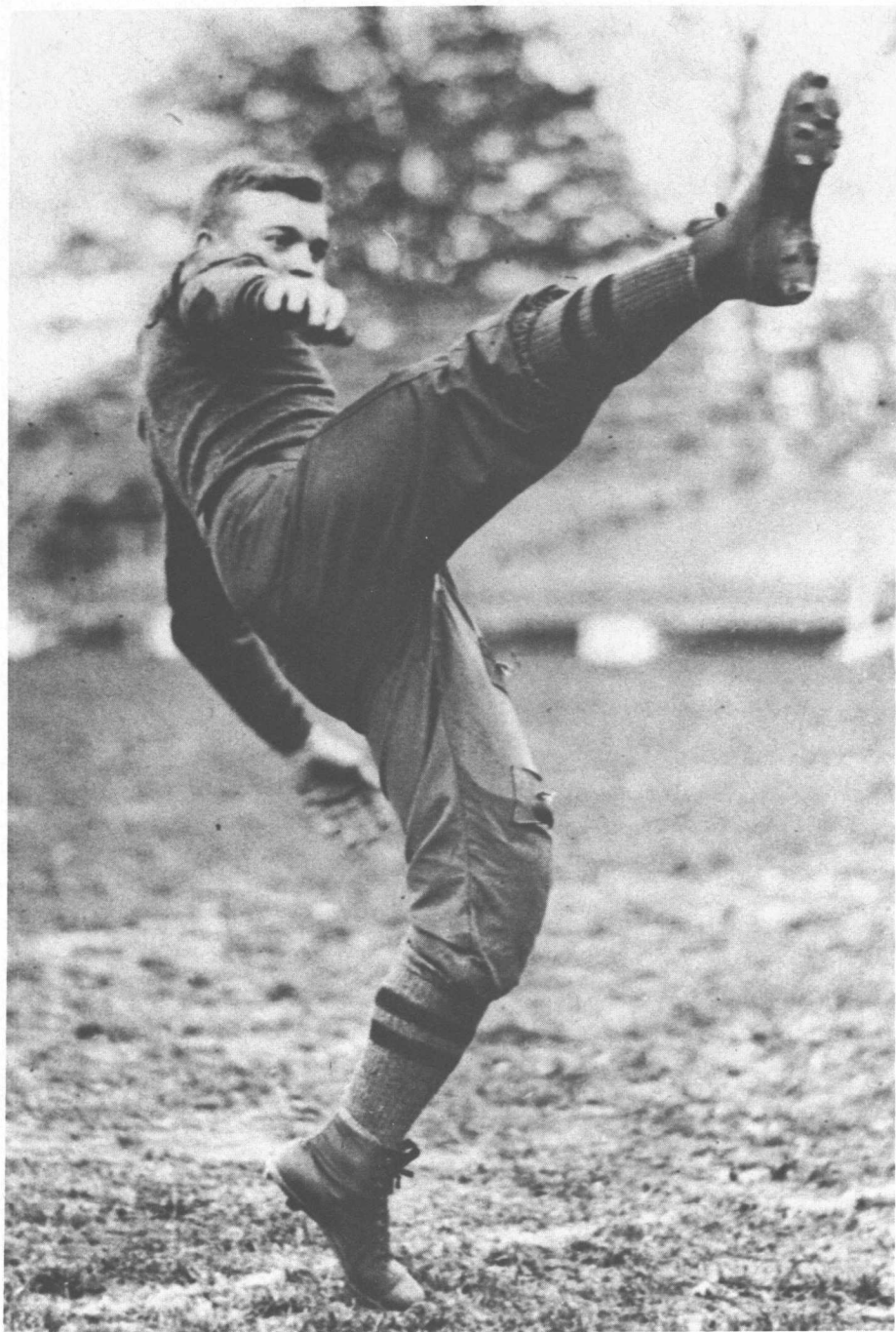
Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the debts I owe to my family for years of support and encouragement. To my parents, deep appreciation for showing me the value of a small-town Kansas boyhood. To Mrs. Helen Rutter, thanks for her understanding of my hermitlike isolation at the typewriter during a Philadelphia visit in the summer of 1984. To Tristan and Bruce, gratitude for constantly reminding me that work is not the only item of value in life. And to Patricia, my partner in work and at home and my sincerest critic, the hopes that I may someday repay, at least in part, my obligation for her sacrifices.



Dwight Eisenhower with fifth grade class, Lincoln School. Dwight second from left, front row.



Milton, David, Dwight,
Ida, and Earl outside
Eisenhower home in 1907.



Ike as a West Point football star, 1912.



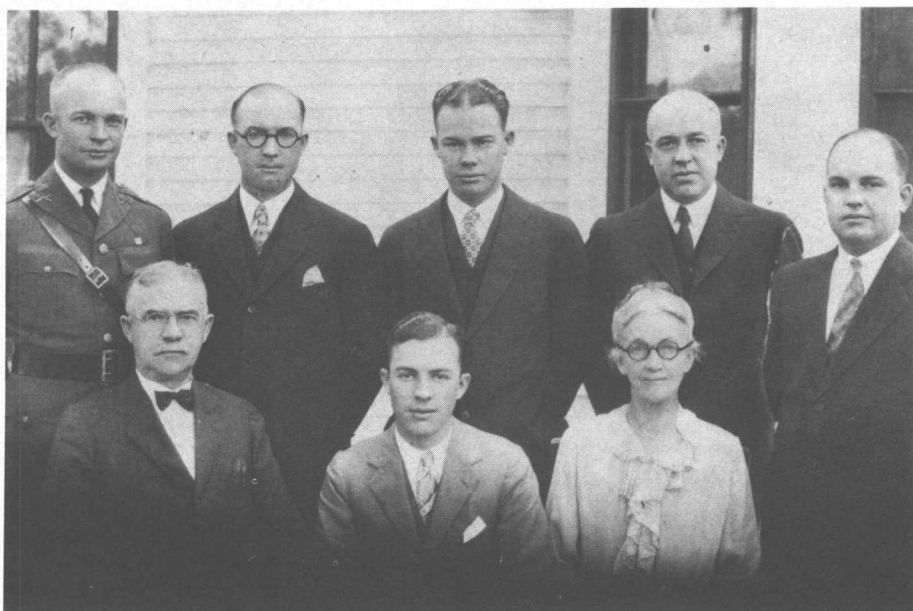
Eisenhower as instructor at Camp Meade, Maryland, for the Tank Corps, 1919.



Mamie, Doud Dwight ("Icky"), and Dwight Eisenhower, ca. 1919.



General Fox Conner.



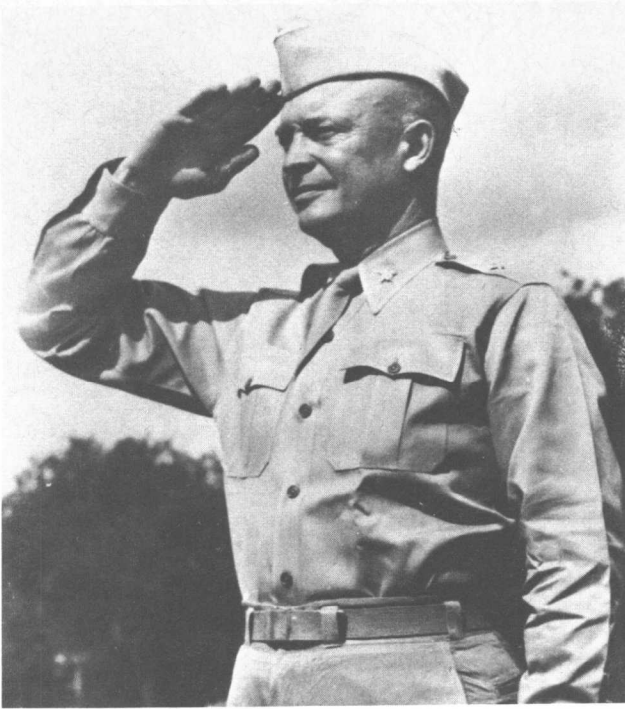
Eisenhower at family reunion, Abilene, 1926. Front row, left to right: David, Milton, Ida. Back row: Dwight, Edgar, Earl, Arthur, Roy.



Eisenhower (partly concealed) with General MacArthur, Bonus Army incident, 1932.



Capt. T. J. Davis, MacArthur, and Eisenhower, Manila, 1935.



Brigadier General Eisenhower
in photograph sent to his
parents,
14 November 1941.



Eisenhower and Marshall. Source: United States Army.



TOP: Eisenhower with President Roosevelt, Carthage, North Africa, 7 December 1943. Source: *United States Army*.

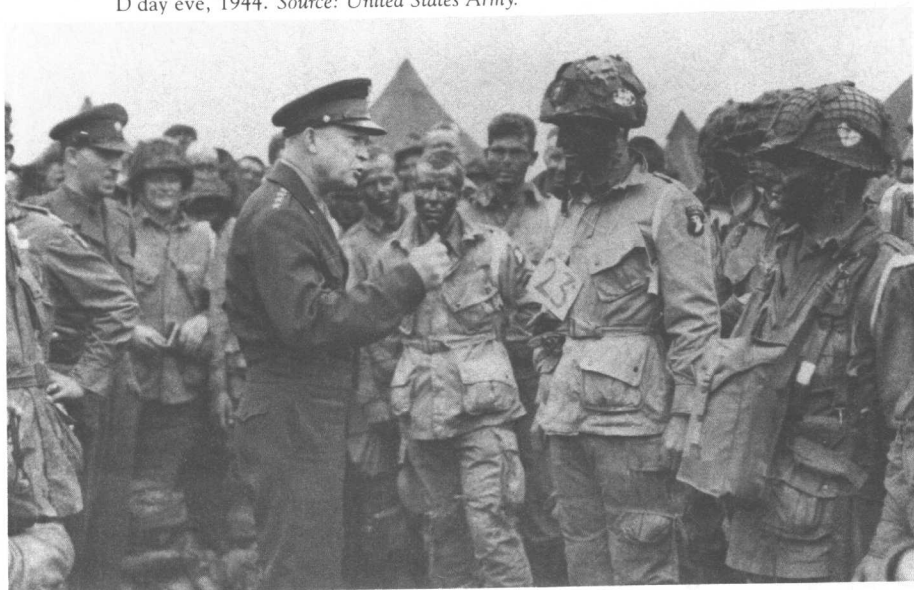
BOTTOM: Eisenhower and aide Kay Summersby, North Africa, ca. early 1943.





TOP: Eisenhower and Montgomery, North Africa, ca. spring 1943. Source: *United States Army*.

BOTTOM: Eisenhower chatting with paratroopers of 101st Airborne Division, D day eve, 1944. Source: *United States Army*.





Eisenhower interviewing prisoner at Ohrdruf Nord concentration camp, 13 April 1945.
 (Eisenhower commented with suspicion at the time that the man looked too well fed to be a prisoner. Within days the individual was killed as a collaborator by his fellow inmates.)
 Source: United States Army.



Columbia University president Eisenhower, ca. 1948. Source: Columbia University.