

Eisenhower Was My Boss—

Stateside Visit Leaves Distaste

Kay Resents Slander Aimed At Girls Overseas

INSTALLMENT 28
By Kay Summersby

MONDAY, JUNE 12, was a big day for Gen. Eisenhower. Leaving our CP before 6 o'clock in the morning, he took the V-I-P party to Normandy.

Gen. Ike came back about 8:30 p. m., feeling chipper that he had got ashore at long last, invigorated by actually visiting the troops, and happy that everyone's spirits seemed so high.

In addition, there was another unofficial reason for his happiness—a reunion with his son. Graduated from West Point on D-Day, 2d Lt. John S. D. Eisenhower was en route to England to spend leave with his famous father. Gen. Ike had dispatched Tex Lee to Prestwick to meet John.

On June 29, I lost all interest in war. Gen. Ike had several of us out to Telegraph Cottage for dinner. John, he said, was fretting because the West Point graduation leave was almost over; he was due back to Ft. Benning.

"I'm sending John home in my 'B-17' the General explained. 'Tex is going along. So are Mattie Pinette and Sergeant Farr.' He looked at me. 'There's a spare place and I know you're anxious to meet Dick's mother. How would you like to go along?'

OUR SEND-OFF from the Germans was a buzz-bomb. It landed several hundred yards away and rattled the car windows as we drove out to the airport.

All of us breathed a sigh of relief when London and the airport were far behind.

Two women rushed up to welcome us to Washington. One was Mrs. George Allen; the other, Mrs. Mamie Eisenhower. I found the General's wife an attractive, petite woman, her hands the hint to a vivacious, friendly personality. We all chatted excitedly. Then Mrs. Eisenhower and Mrs. Allen went off to town, with John in tow, promising to call.

NEXT AFTERNOON, I went up to the fashionable Wardman Park to visit Mrs. Eisenhower who greeted me at the door with a welcome, tinkling, orange-filled Old Fashioned. Her cordiality helped me to meet the wives of various friends around headquarters, men I had known in North Africa and in England.

In the beginning, I felt strange and foreign, much too British and much too militarized for this forgotten social side of femininity. But their natural friendliness soon thawed my embarrassment. Moreover, we had mutual interests, mutual friends: their husbands.

I enjoyed meeting the wives of overseas friends, putting flesh on the name-skeletons rattled so continuously by lonely husbands abroad; they enjoyed meeting someone who knew their husbands, who could tell them how their husbands looked, how they felt, what they ate where they lived, et cetera. It was a lovely afternoon and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

AMIDST ALL THIS excitement I tried to get in touch with Dick's mother at her home in New York State. Innumerable telephone calls (which impressed me with the speed and courtesy of long distance operators in America) disclosed Mrs. Arnold to be en route to Florida. No one knew exactly how she was going, where she would stay down there.

Two days before our party was due to head back to London, she called from Florida, distraught at driving right through Washington, unaware I was there on a visit.

I had a wonderful day and a night with Mrs. Arnold, collecting a bad case of sunburn in Miami . . . and, more important, a new, close friend.

And I didn't have to ride back in that bucket-seat C-47. Our old B-17 showed up in Miami. Capt. Larry Hansen, Gen. Eisenhower's pilot, had a double reason for coming down: First, we were due to leave for England the very next day; secondly, his wife lived in nearby Coral Gables. We took off for Washington that afternoon.

SOME OF THE Army wives I met this time left a bad taste in my memory. A few seemed so calculating, so cold. They gauged each other purely by rank, more so than the most rank-conscious West Pointer, all social and per-

sonal attention centered on those whose husbands carried more brass. And, I'm afraid, a shocking amount of that attention was focused on the ranking leaders with but one of two ideas in mind, sometimes both: A promotion for the husband, and/or a transfer to better duty, preferably in the United States.

I was hurt, then angered at the slander of WAC's overseas. The girls in London and Algiers had told me about it, but I still didn't believe such selfish venom existed until I ran right into it in Washington. Some of the most social Army wives made it quite clear—crystal-clear—they regarded any uniformed female overseas as a mere "camp follower."

I LOOKED at these Washington wives in their smart frocks nibbling luxurious foods, making cocktail talk, safe in one of the world's few un bombed cities. Then I thought of the WAC's working long and thankless hours overseas, often living in tents or bumpy barracks, anxious about loved ones in battle, still carrying on.

I thought of Red Cross girls who got up before dawn to drive their Clubmobiles into isolated fields, distributing coffee, doughnuts, and good American cheer to airmen taking off for possible death over Europe.

I thought of the mutilated men I'd seen in hospitals, of the American nurses who worked day after day with those wounded, drawing upon a personal courage almost holy in its selflessness. I thought of the nurses I'd seen in the waters around our torpedoed Strathallens, the nurses staggering through the mud in Tunisia at the time of Kasserine Pass.

How, I wondered, how could these Washington gossips have the colossal conceit and self-deception not to see their own shameful images? How could they lump all overseas service women into one dirty group and then jab it with woman's cruelest weapon against woman: Moral slander?

BEING HUMAN, I was even more upset at learning my own reputation was lost. In addition to being a woman overseas, I was abroad; I was a foreign woman—and I traveled with the High Brass. Therefore, I was a Bad Woman. This was fact, gleefully acknowledged and established fact.

These women didn't—and don't—leave any loophole for doubt; they didn't—and don't—give any opportunity for defense. Nothing I could say or do would change this attitude. I was classified as a Bad Woman and filed.

This all-out assault upon my character hurt; it hurt terribly. After the hurt came resentment; after the resentment, anger. I thought bitterly of my torpedoes in the Mediterranean, of my driver's life in North Africa. I thought bitterly of Dick.

My wounds soon festered into scar tissue destined to stay inflamed the rest of my life. Practically every woman who served abroad in uniform bears this wound. It's the one thing we'll never forgive, never forget. It's the most painful wound of all, for a woman—and it didn't come from the enemy.

(Nor has it stopped with the return of peace. A small, wicked voice inside me cries out: "Next war, my girl, you may as well do all these things of which you're accused; they'll say you did, anyhow!")

Tarnished but slightly by this one experience, the Washington visit drew to a close.

That old war-born sense of urgency surged through all of us as the B-17 took off, circled the city of Washington for a final salute, and then headed "home" . . . back to war.

Tomorrow: Ike Best by a Thousand Worries.

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Howe High's String Quartet



A string quartet of Howe High School students who may be among entrants in next year's projected chamber music festival are (seated) Judy Wear and (standing, left to right) Marian Crabb, Jane Reed and Ed Hasse.

Plan Spring Music Festival, Contest for Local Pupils

Indianapolis grade-school and high school pupils who can play instruments will have a chance to compete in a chamber-music festival to be held next May.

Announcement of the projected festival was made today by Leonard A. Strauss, program chairman of the Ensemble Music Society of Indianapolis, sponsor of the forthcoming musical event.

The festival, to be held in Music Week next year, the first full week in May, will provide opportunity for instrumental combinations from duets up to octets. Mr. Strauss said. Competition will be by groups, not by schools.

"The fact that small ensembles already are practicing in public, parochial and private schools here indicates increasing interest in chamber music," Mr. Strauss said.

The Ensemble Music Society wishes to encourage that interest as much as possible. Besides Mr. Strauss, representatives at a preliminary planning meeting included: Miss Roberta Music Society.

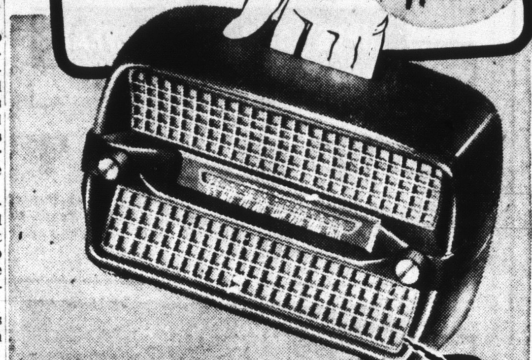
Trent, Manual High School; Walter Whitworth, Indianapolis News; Mrs. George H. Batt, PTA president, School 84; David E. Hughes, Jordan Conservatory; Edward B. Taggart, president of the Ensemble Music Society; Ralph W. Wright, director of music, Indianapolis public schools; Miss Alberta Denk, Washington High School; Mrs. Nell V. Tyler, School 41; John Shepard, Howe High School; Beidon Leonard, Jordan Conservatory; and Mrs. Robert W. Clark and Miss Helen Hobbingsworth, both representing the Ensemble Music Society.

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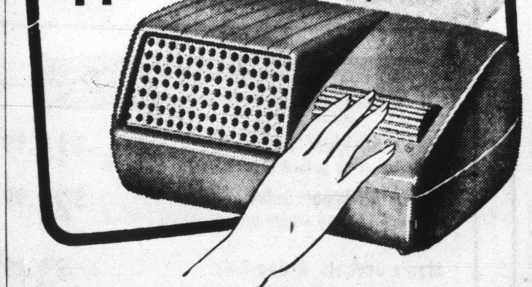
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