

EULOGY
DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

By President Richard M. Nixon

March 30, 1969



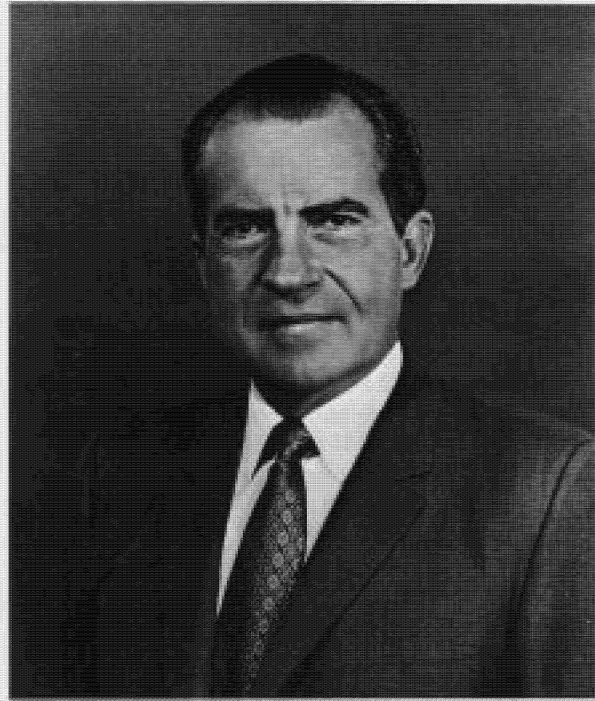
THE WHITE HOUSE

Eulogy delivered by the President
at the Capitol Rotunda during the
State Funeral of Former President
Dwight David Eisenhower

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DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER
1890-1969
34th President of the United States
General of the Army



Mrs. Eisenhower, Your Excellencies, friends of Dwight David Eisenhower in America and throughout the world:

We gather today in mourning, but also in gratitude.

We mourn Dwight Eisenhower's death, but we are grateful for his life.

We gather, also, conscious of the fact that in paying tribute to Dwight Eisenhower, we celebrate greatness. When we think of his place in history, we think, inevitably, of the other giants of those days of World War II and we think of the qualities of greatness and what his were that made his unique among all.

Once, perhaps without intending to do so, he, himself, put his finger on it. It was 1945, shortly after V-Day, at a ceremony in London's historic Guild Hall. The triumphant Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe was officially given the Freedom of the City of London.

In an eloquent address that day, Dwight Eisenhower said, "I come from the heart of America."

Perhaps no one sentence could better sum up what Dwight Eisenhower meant to a whole generation of Americans. He did come from the heart of America, not only from its geographical heart, but from its spiritual heart.

He exemplified what millions of parents hoped that their sons would be—strong, courageous, honest and compassionate.

And with his own great qualities of heart, he personified the best in America.

It is, I think, a special tribute to Dwight Eisenhower that despite all of his honors, despite all of his great deeds and his triumphs, we find ourselves today thinking, first, not of his deeds but of his character. It was the character of the man, not what he did, but what he was that so captured the trust and faith and affection of his own people and of the people of the world.

Dwight Eisenhower touched something fundamental in America which only a man of immense force of mind and spirit could have brought so vibrantly alive. He was a product of America's soil and of its ideals, driven by a compulsion to do right and to do well; a man of deep faith who believed in God and trusted in His will; a man who truly loved his country and for whom the words "freedom" and "democracy" were not cliches, but they were living truths.

I know Mrs. Eisenhower would permit me to share with you the last words he spoke to her on the day he died. He said, "I have always loved my wife. I have always loved my children. I have always loved my grandchildren. And I have always loved my country." That was Dwight Eisenhower.

He was a man who gave enormously of himself. His way of relaxing from the intense pressures of office or command was to do something else intensely, whether as a fierce competitor on the golf course or executing one of those hauntingly beautiful paintings that he did with such meticulous care. But even more than this, he gave enormously of himself to people. People loved Dwight Eisenhower. But the other side of this coin was that he loved people.

He had the great leader's capacity to bring out the best in people. He had the great humanist's capacity to inspire people, to cheer them, to give them lift.

I remember, for example, just a few months ago when I asked all of the members of the Cabinet to go out and call on him. Each of them returned with wonder and admiration and said, "You know, I went out there to cheer him up and instead I found he cheered me up."

His great love of people was rooted in his faith. He had a deep faith in the goodness of God and in the essential goodness of man as a creature of God.

This feeling toward people had another side. In the

political world, strong passions are the norm and all too often these turn toward personal vindictiveness. People often disagreed with Dwight Eisenhower, but almost nobody ever hated him.

And this, I think, was because he, himself, was a man who did not know how to hate.

Oh, he could be aroused by a cause, but he could not hate a person. He could disagree strongly, even passionately, but never personally.

When people disagreed with him, he never thought of them as enemies. He simply thought, "Well, they don't agree with me."

I remember time after time, when critics of one sort or another were misrepresenting him or reviling him, he would sit back in his chair and with that wonderful half-smile and half-frown, he would say, "I am puzzled by those fellows." And he was genuinely puzzled by frenzy and by hate because he was incapable of it himself. He could never quite understand it in others.

The last time I saw him that was what he talked about. He was puzzled by the hatreds he had seen in our times. And he said the thing the world needs most today is understanding and an ability to see the other person's point of view and not to hate him because he disagrees.

That was Dwight Eisenhower.

And yet, of course, he was more than all of that. He had a side more evident to those of us who worked with him than to the rest of the world. He was a strong man. He was shrewd. He was decisive.

Time and again I have seen him make decisions that probably made the difference between war and peace for America and the world.

That was always when he was at his best. No matter how heated the arguments were, he was always then the coolest man in the room.

Dwight Eisenhower was that rarest of men—an authentic hero.

War brings the names of many men into the headlines and of those some few become national or even international heroes. But as the years then pass, their fame goes down.

But not so with Dwight Eisenhower. As the years passed, his stature grew: Commander of the mightiest expeditionary force ever assembled; receiver of the surrender of the German Armies in World War II; President of Columbia University; Supreme Commander of NATO; 34th President of the United States. The honors, the offices were there in abundance. Every trust that the American people had it in their power to bestow, he was given.

And, yet, he always retained a saving humility. His was the humility not of fear but of confidence. He walked with the great of the world, and he knew the greater human.

His was the humility of man before God and before the truth. His was the humility of a man too proud to be arrogant.

The pursuit of peace was uppermost in his mind when he ran for the Presidency. And it was uppermost in his conduct of that Office. And it is a tribute to his skill and determination that not since the 1930's has the Nation enjoyed so long a period of peace, both at home and abroad, as the one that began in 1953 and continued through his Presidency.

As Commander of the mightiest allied force ever assembled he was the right man at the right place at the right time.

And as President once again, he was the right man at the right place and at the right time.

He restored calm to a divided Nation. He gave Americans a new measure of self-respect. He invested his Office with dignity and respect and trust. He made Americans

proud of their President, proud of their country, proud of themselves.

And if we in America were proud of Dwight Eisenhower, it was partly because he made us proud of America.

He came from the heart of America. And he gave expression to the heart of America and he touched the hearts of the world.

Many leaders are known and respected outside their own countries. Very few are loved outside their own countries. Dwight Eisenhower was one of those few. He was probably loved by more people in more parts of the world than any President America has ever had.

He captured the deepest feelings of free men everywhere. The principles he believed in, the ideals he stood for, these were bigger than his own country.

Perhaps he himself put it best again in that Guild Hall speech in 1945. He said then, "Kinship among nations is not determined in such measurements as proximity, size and age. Rather, we should turn to those inner things, call them what you will, I mean those intangibles that are the real treasures that free men possess, to preserve his freedom of worship, his equality before the law, his liberty to speak and act as he sees fit, subject only to provisions that he not trespass upon similar rights of others.

"A Londoner will fight and so will a citizen of Abilene. When we consider these things, then the Valley of the Thames draws closer to the farms of Kansas and the plains of Texas."

Some men are considered great because they lead great armies or they lead powerful nations. For eight years now, Dwight Eisenhower has neither commanded an army nor led a nation. And, yet, he remained through his final days the world's most admired and respected man, truly the first citizen of the world.

As we marvel at this, it leads us once again to ponder

the mysteries of greatness. Dwight Eisenhower's greatness derived not from his office, but from his character, from a unique moral force that transcended national boundaries, even as his own deep concern for humanity transcended national boundaries.

His life reminds us that there is a moral force in this world more powerful than the might of arms or the wealth of nations. This man who led the most powerful armies that the world has ever seen, this man who led the most powerful Nation in the world, this essentially good and gentle and kind man, that moral force was his greatest.

For a quarter of a century, to the very end of his life, Dwight Eisenhower exercised a moral authority without parallel in America and in the world. And America and the world is better because of it.

And so today we render our final salute. It is a fond salute to a man we loved and cherished. It is a grateful salute to a man whose whole extraordinary life was consecrated to service. It is a profoundly respectful salute to a man larger than life who by any standard was one of the giants of our time.

Each of us here will have a special memory of Dwight Eisenhower.

I can see him now standing erect, straight, proud and tall, 16 years ago as he took the oath of office as the thirty-fourth President of the United States of America.

We salute Dwight David Eisenhower standing there in our memories, first in war, first in peace, and wherever freedom is cherished, first in the hearts of his fellow men.