

Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.



"The proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene."

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER HOMECOMING SPEECH, 1945

Sculptor Sergey Eylanbekov's statue of Eisenhower as a young man.



Long after Dwight David Eisenhower was famous, he referred to himself as a "simple country boy." Nicknamed "Ike," an abbreviation of his last name, Eisenhower was born on October 14, 1890 in Denison, Texas. He was the third of seven boys. The family moved to the small town of Abilene, Kansas when Ike was two years old. In Abilene, the Eisenhower's world revolved around work at a dairy farm and Bible study. Eisenhower's parents, David and Ida, were from a Mennonite background and strong believers in God and pacifism.

Young Ike loved hunting, fishing, baseball, and reading history. His work ethic, competitiveness, and ambition would not keep him in Abilene for long.

Lacking money for college, Ike's way out of Abilene was delayed for two years. He worked while his older brother Edgar attended college. Learning that the military academies charged no tuition, Ike took and passed entrance exams for the US Naval Academy and the US Military Academy at West Point. He was too old for the Navy. In 1911, he earned an appointment to West Point.

Despite Eisenhower's eventual world travels and positions of power, he would return to Abilene where his dreams of seeing the wider world began and where his family and friends still resided.

How did your hometown and the people you grew up with shape your life?

"The eyes of the world are upon you."

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER D-DAY STATEMENT, 1944

At West Point, Eisenhower was a good student and a better athlete. As a passionate baseball player, he tried out for the team but didn't make it. Eisenhower later said, "Not making the baseball team at West Point was one of the greatest disappointments of my life, maybe my greatest." He turned his attention to football and cheerleading, always leading the team. In 1915, Ike graduated in the top third of his class.

The Army valued Eisenhower for his organizational and team building skills. Rather than sending him to fight in World War I, he was stationed stateside. His first assignment was Fort Sam Houston where he met his future wife, Mamie Geneva Doud. Later, he trained aspiring officers and commanded a tank school. Ike continued to advance his army career: learning, coaching football, and commanding army posts throughout the world. On December 7, 1941, Eisenhower's skills were called upon to serve in World War II.

Seen as a natural leader by Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, Eisenhower was selected for a war plans assignment. He was then sent to Europe where his coaching skills were desperately needed. Eisenhower forged soldiers, sailors, and airmen from the US and other countries into an effective team. Ike's diplomacy, humility, and patience earned him the trust of military and political leaders which allowed his forces to liberate North Africa, Sicily, and Southern Italy.

The culmination of Dwight D. Eisenhower's World War II service was the D-Day attack on Nazi-occupied France. On, June 5, 1944, paratroopers jumped from planes while ships and planes bombed the Germans. The next morning, British, Canadian, and American troops stormed ashore from landing craft. US Army Rangers climbed the hundred foot tall cliffs at Pointe du Hoc and destroyed German cannon.



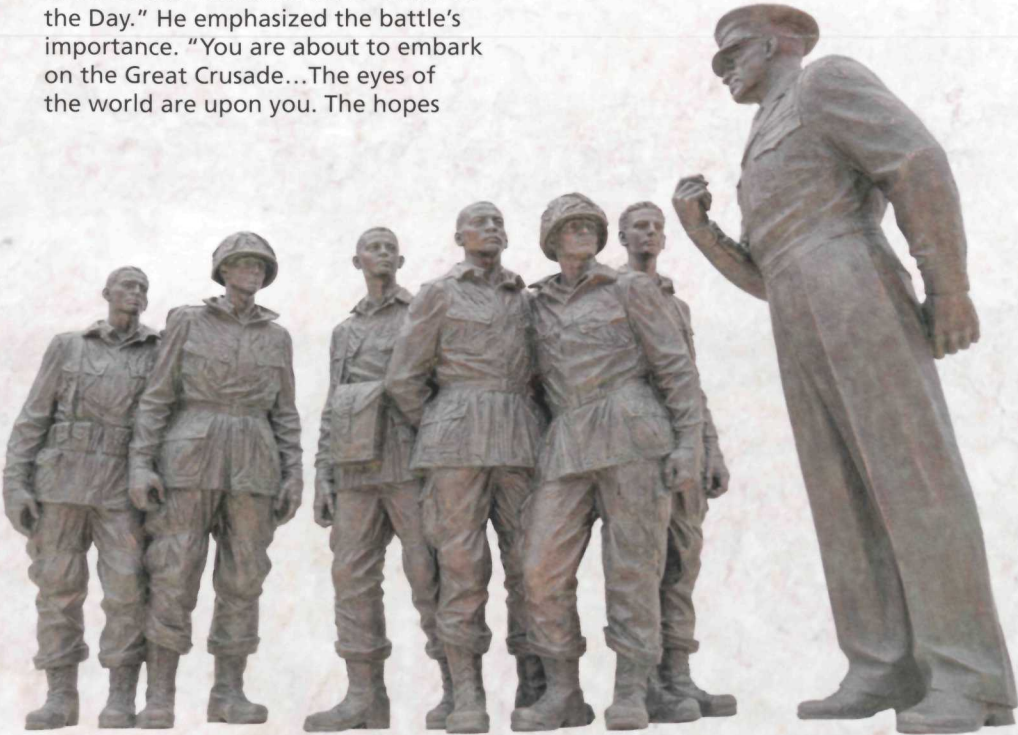
During World War II Eisenhower became a five-star general, the highest rank in the US military.

Before carrying out the D-Day attack, all servicemen received Ike's "Order of the Day." He emphasized the battle's importance. "You are about to embark on the Great Crusade...The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes

and prayers of liberty loving peoples everywhere march with you....We will accept nothing less than full Victory!"

Victorious in invading France, Eisenhower's forces moved across Western Europe into Germany. Together with the Soviet Union, they defeated Nazi Germany. For the rest of his life, Ike remembered the price that his troops paid to preserve democracy. At a D-Day anniversary he visited a Normandy cemetery and said, "These people gave us a chance, and they bought time for us, so that we can do better than we have before."

When have you been motivated by a great leader? What did that person do?



This statue group **to the right** depicts Eisenhower's visit with paratroopers from the 101st Airborne the evening before D-Day.

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"We must be ready to dare all for our country."

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER INAUGURAL ADDRESS, 1953

After the war, Columbia University hired Eisenhower as their president. In 1952, the wildly popular Eisenhower won the presidency of the US using the slogan, "I Like Ike." Upon taking office, Eisenhower prayed for, "All the people regardless of station, race, or calling." He raised the minimum wage and grew Social Security. He created the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Intent on making the US as productive as possible, Ike created the Interstate Highway System.

In his 1953 inaugural address, Eisenhower said, "We reject any insinuation that one race or another... is in any sense inferior or expendable." He put this idea into practice by enforcing the integration of the military. He signed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. Later, he sent 1,200 soldiers to Little Rock, Arkansas to make sure nine African American students could attend high school.

Eisenhower's first principle for achieving world peace was "Abhorring war as a chosen way to balk the purposes of those who threaten us."

The statue group **to the right** shows President Eisenhower standing between civilian and military advisors.

He sought to end international conflicts, helping to establish an armistice in Korea. When Britain threatened war on Egypt, his team negotiated a peaceful resolution.

Eisenhower also took aggressive, covert action. His CIA overthrew democratically elected leaders in Iran, Guatemala, and Congo, fearing Communist influence. The US still feels the impact of these actions today. Eisenhower also sent high altitude U-2 spy planes over the Soviet Union. When one was shot down, Ike claimed it was a stray weather aircraft. After the USSR produced the plane's wreckage and pilot, Eisenhower's lie was exposed, ending seven years of diplomacy.

The Soviet Union sent the *Sputnik* satellite into Earth's orbit in 1957. Meeting this threat, Ike created what became NASA. The space race had begun. From this foundation, the US landed men on the moon 12 years later.



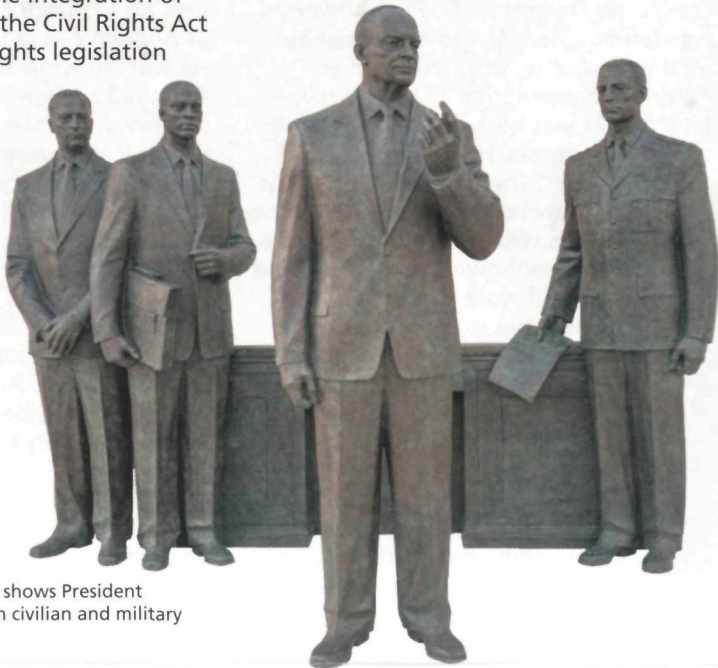
Eisenhower was the 34th President of the United States, serving from 1953 to 1961.

President Eisenhower finished his two terms of office with a hope for peace and a warning. "We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence... by the military-industrial complex. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals..."

If you could warn the country about something that you deeply care about, what would it be?

Eisenhower left the White House in 1961. He spent the last eight years of his life at his Gettysburg, Pennsylvania farmhouse. His retirement home and farm are preserved by the National Park Service as Eisenhower National Historic Site.

Dwight David Eisenhower died on March 28, 1969 from congestive heart failure. He and his wife Mamie are buried in Eisenhower's hometown of Abilene, Kansas at his presidential library.



"An appropriate permanent memorial... to perpetuate his memory"

LAW ESTABLISHING THE EISENHOWER MEMORIAL, 2000

Making the Memorial

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission was established by Congress in 2000. The memorial was designed by architect Frank Gehry. It features bronze sculptures, stone bas-reliefs by Sergey Eylanbekov, and a one-of-a-kind stainless steel tapestry.

Artist and architect Tomas Osinski created the stainless steel tapestry which depicts the Pointe du Hoc promontory of France's Normandy coastline during peacetime. It serves as a symbol of the peace Eisenhower won during World War II and maintained as president. The headquarters of the Department of Education, an agency Eisenhower helped to create, can be seen behind the tapestry. The look of the tapestry changes dramatically with the amount of natural and architectural lighting.



Custom machines welded tapestry panels using software made by the artist's daughter, Thea Osinski.

Tapestry Totals

Size: 447 feet wide and 60 feet tall
Size of panels: 3 feet by 15 feet
Number of panels: 600
Number of Welds: About 82 million

Visiting the Memorial

The memorial is located on Independence Avenue, SW between 4th and 6th Streets, SW. An information area and bookstore are located at the southeast entrance. Staff are available daily except December 25. A free audio tour is available for download. The memorial is wheelchair accessible.

The memorial is the fifth presidential memorial at National Mall and Memorial Parks and is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.

More Information

National Mall and Memorial Parks
900 Ohio Drive, SW
Washington, DC 20024
www.nps.gov/ddem



Frank Gehry's drawing **above** is an interpretation of the Point du Hoc skyline on the coast of Normandy, France **below**. The drawing is reproduced in the stainless steel tapestry.

