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Article Summary: Homer Gruenther was Eisenhower's "man Friday." His letters to his brother Alfred describe the 1952 Republican national convention that nominated Eisenhower and the campaign's whistle stop train trips.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Homer Gruenther, Alfred Gruenther, Dwight D Eisenhower, Mamie Eisenhower, Mrs John S (Elivera) Doud, Senator Frederick A Seaton, Richard Nixon, Sherman Adams, Arthur H Vandenberg Jr, Robert A Taft, James Byers Black, William F Knowland, Harry Butcher, Kevin McCann, Bob Cutler, Adlai Stevenson

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Photographs / Images: Gruenther assisting Ike with a whistlestop speech, Nebraska Senator Fred Seaton, advertisement for Eisenhower/Nixon campaign, Gruenther standing in for Ike on a rapidly moving train platform, Governor Val Peterson with the Eisenhowers in Omaha, Mrs John Doud with her son Ike and daughter-in-law Mamie in Omaha

THE EISENHOWER CAMPAIGN OF 1952: THE LETTERS OF HOMER GRUENTHER

Edited by Richard L. Gruenther and Robert H. Ferrell

INTRODUCTION

With the Eisenhower-Stevenson campaign in 1952, it now is evident, a special era in American presidential politics came to an end. The supporters of General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Adlai E. Stevenson, as had countless

campaigners before them, sent their candidates across the country aboard railroad trains composed of a long string of Pullman and parlor cars and, at the rear, an observation car with a gated platform from which the candidates made speeches. Not long afterward, with the increasing ease of commercial air travel and the introduction of jet aircraft, candidates abandoned trains, surely with considerable relief. The trains were often hot, and the candidates not only had to make

speeches along the way but they were besieged by reporters, by politicians who traveled from one stop to another to confer with the candidates, and by people who, in a never-ending line stretching through the train itself, simply wanted to shake hands.

Television too would profoundly alter the way future political campaigns were conducted. Although the 1952 party conventions were the first to be televised and some speeches were broadcast, extensive use of television

Richard L. Gruenther is a nephew of Homer Gruenther. Robert H. Ferrell is with the history department at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point.

Homer Gruenther (left) assists Ike with a whistlestop speech. Courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.



Eisenhower Campaign of 1952

by presidential candidates would not occur until later. Like the jet airplane, television enabled candidates to deliver their message to the public in a far easier way than speaking from the rear of a train, and politicians were quick to take advantage of this new medium.

Running a presidential campaign involved a great deal of work and required able assistants to attend to myriad details. One such assistant in the 1952 Eisenhower campaign was native Nebraskan Homer Gruenther. This tall, robust, intelligent man had grown up after the turn of the century in the little town of Platte Center, where his father Christian edited the local newspaper, the *Signal*, participated in Democratic politics, and on one occasion managed the Nebraska presidential campaign of William Jennings Bryan. As a youth during World War I, Homer Gruenther had left high school to enlist in the U.S. Navy. Afterward he was sports editor for the *Omaha Daily News* and later manager of the Omaha bureau of the International News Service. In 1933 he moved to Washington as secretary to Congressman Edward R. Burke, later a senator. In 1947 he became secretary to Nebraska Senator Kenneth S. Wherry.

The letters that follow are from Homer Gruenther to his brother Alfred and wife, who in 1952 were living in France where Alfred was chief of staff to General Matthew B. Ridgway, supreme commander of the Allied powers in Europe (the NATO command).¹ General Gruenther would succeed Ridgway as commander the next year. Homer's brother Alfred was probably Eisenhower's closest friend and his inveterate bridge partner. A career army officer, he had known Eisenhower when the latter was a brigadier general, just before Pearl Harbor. Indeed on that dark day the then lieutenant colonel, as Ike's principal assistant living at Fort Sam Houston in Texas in a house a few dozen yards from that of the general, ran down the street to give Eisenhower the news, having heard it



Nebraska Senator Fred Seaton cared for many personnel and scheduling details aboard the Eisenhower train.

over the radio. He had tried to call first but the general's phone was busy — Eisenhower too had been listening to the radio and was trying to call Gruenther.

As the following letters reveal, Homer Gruenther was something of a character. His relatives remember his fascination with Redskin football games in the D.C. (later the RFK) stadium. Many times he took his nephew Dick to games, where in effect he crashed the gate, using his ancient news reporter's camera and pass, with his impressionable nephew in hand. Uncle Homer usually sat on a bench on the sidelines, and on more than one occasion this powerfully built man threatened fisticuffs with spectators who, perhaps playfully if nonetheless dangerously, had ventured to throw snowballs at him — he was difficult to miss — during the game. Homer never wore a hat or overcoat to a Redskin game. Ripley's "Believe It or Not" featured him for this extraordinary feat.

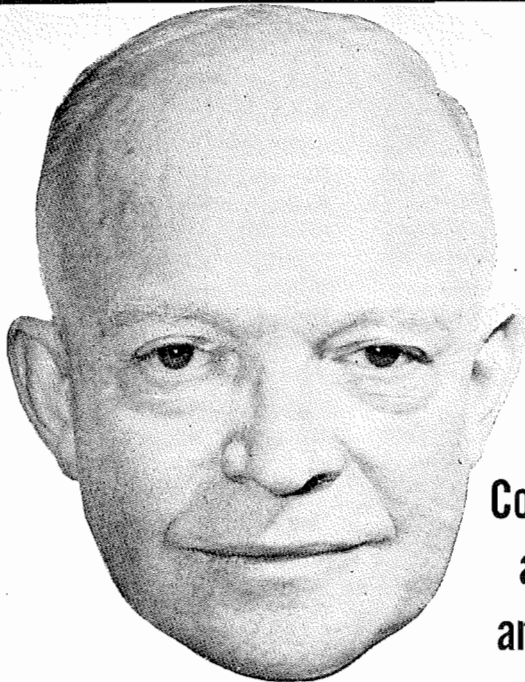
In later years Dick Gruenther's six

children, and the eight children of his brother Don, also came to admire the uncle who was never too busy to take the kids to the fair (even a ride in the car with Homer was exciting) or to treat them all to some unusual culinary experience. And it was not just the meal that was different — Uncle Homer's method of payment was unique. He possessed a small money machine. He would roll a plain bill-sized piece of white paper into his machine, turn a knob as he discussed the process, and out came a five-dollar bill. The waitress could hardly tell it from the real thing. When Homer insisted that she call the manager, the latter always approved the payment, for D.C. storekeepers easily recognized this fun-loving joker.

Homer Gruenther served in the White House as special assistant to Presidents Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Under Eisenhower he helped with relations with Congress. In succeeding Democratic administrations he was relegated to managing White House tours. Whatever the task, the playfulness was there. One of his nephews, "Skip" Davidson, a successful New York broker, arranged for his fiancée to report to the White House gate for a VIP tour by Homer himself. She had never met him. Using the pass that Homer provided, she walked through the gate and approached a tall man on the White House steps. "I'm looking for Homer Gruenther," she said. The man replied that he was in private conference with the president and could not be disturbed. The young lady, crestfallen, withdrew and walked back to the gate guard, who had been observing the conversation. "Oh," she said, "I was to meet with my friend, Homer Gruenther, but he is busy with the president." To which the guard, who knew Homer's nature, suggested that she meet Homer Gruenther, with whom she had been speaking.²

Homer Gruenther's letters include his sprightly observations about events surrounding Eisenhower's nomination

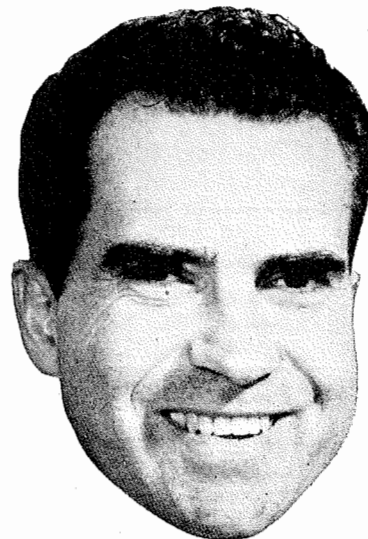
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER FOR PRESIDENT



Teamed With

RICHARD NIXON
for VICE PRESIDENT

To
Fight
Communism
at Home
and Abroad



A GREAT LEADER OF MEN, probably no other American in our times has been as widely acclaimed for his administrative ability as has Dwight Eisenhower. His whole life has been one of devotion to duty and to the protection of the liberties of the American people.

As leader of the forces of the free world in their fight against Communism, Eisenhower commands the respect of the people of Europe, Asia, as well as the Western Hemisphere.

His knowledge of foreign affairs should make him a great statesman and leader. As one of our outstanding military men he should and will be able to guide our all important defense program with ability and understanding.

As an administrator, Eisenhower will gather around him men of unquestionable ability and integrity. His record is one of energetic resistance to graft, corruption and inefficiency.

Eisenhower gets things done. His life has been given to planning and to the execution of those plans for the welfare of the nation. Knowing so well the horrors of war, Eisenhower will become the architect of a permanent and lasting peace abroad and domestic tranquility at home.

Young, vigorous, SENATOR RICHARD NIXON of California has demonstrated his tenacity and courage in ridding the Administration of Communists and Communists sympathizers. His persistent efforts, in the case of Alger Hiss, led to the exposure of the scandals in the State Department under the present Democratic Administration.

★ **AMERICA NEEDS A CHANGE!** ★

at the Republican national convention in Chicago in July 1952 and the subsequent "whistlestop" rail trips during which he accompanied the Eisenhower party. Soon after joining the campaign, Gruenther traveled on the Eisenhower train from Denver to Chicago for the convention. En route, the train made stops in McCook, Hastings and Lincoln. After the convention the nominee established his headquarters in Denver. On September 14 Eisenhower began the first of several whistlestop campaign swings across the country.

The first part of the trip took Eisenhower's "Look Ahead Neighbor" special through the Midwest. On September 18 he spoke to a crowd of 18,000 people at the Ak-Sar-Ben coliseum in Omaha. The next day the candidate made brief appearances from the train platform in Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, Auburn, and Falls City en route to Kansas City.

The letters begin before the Republican national convention when Homer Gruenther, looking for a job (Senator Wherry had died in November 1951), approached his brother, the general, for advice.

THE LETTERS

United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations
Saturday [no date]

Dear Alfred:

I have just mailed the original of the attached letter to General Eisenhower.

If you can say anything to the aide who handles the General's correspondence it might help.

Incidentally if you can also say anything to the General without getting yourself out on a limb, please do so. All I want right now is a chance to be with him until "Chicago."³ If I cannot do a selling job by then it will be my fault.

I don't want pay or transportation from the General or his organization. Senator Seaton will take care of my expenses, if I get the call . . .

I don't want to be his adviser, his press secretary or his legislative man.

What I want is the job of his man Friday." Like Matt Connelly is to President Truman, like Steve Early was to President Roosevelt and like Les Biffle is to the Senate, just a good smart man to have around, who knows how to keep his mouth shut, and be diplomatic, accurate and expendable . . .⁴

Best and hastily,
Homer

*At first things seemed to move slowly, and it was necessary to go through Colonel Paul T. (Pete) Carroll.*⁵ - The Editors

703B: the Westchester
4000 Cathedral N.W.
Washington, D.C.
June 4, 1952

Dear Alfred:

. . . On Sunday I saw Colonel Carroll. He was very considerate and cooperative. He was familiar with your talk with General Eisenhower, and also Senator Seaton's. We agreed however that it would be best to wait until after "Kansas" to see the General.⁶ We also agreed, though, that he would tell the General I called on the colonel, and while I would be available, any time of the day or night, to see the General, I did not want to impose while he was so busy, so perhaps he would sooner see me in N.Y.

Tuesday morning at 7:30 Colonel Carroll called saying the General would see me at 8:30 that morning. I still argued that it seemed as if I was taking undue and unfair liberty. The colonel agreed to make another check, but in about ten minutes he called back to say the General would be clear at 8:30 so I had better come down.

I had twenty minutes with him. He was very friendly and agreed that he would like very much to have me in his organization. He volunteered that he felt I had an experience and training which would be very helpful. But he wound up saying that up to this very minute he had not made a single suggestion about the organization, and he feared that if he broke this rule now

there would be no end to the trouble it would involve. I naturally agreed with him (although I did not). I do honestly believe however he was sincere in his warmth with me. He was exceptionally interested in my comments and when I got up to go after ten minutes he requested that I sit down as he wanted to talk a little more with me. He felt me out on the Texas picture, on South Dakota, on speaking engagements etc.

I frankly think he is too much the product of the machine or the organization. He is making no decisions, doing nothing on his own. On the other hand of course I do realize he is in a new league. It may not be any faster than the one he has been playing in, but it is considerably different . . .⁷

Our best to you both,
Homer

Homer soon joined the campaign organization and at once found himself plunged into a frenzy of activity as the Eisenhower forces prepared to fight out the issues and battle Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio for the presidential nomination at the Chicago convention. After Eisenhower's victory on July 7, it was back to Denver for a rest before beginning serious campaigning in September.

During this interlude, Gruenther became acquainted with Mrs. John S. Doud, the nominee's mother-in-law. Eliviera Doud, known within the Eisenhower family as "Min," found Homer Gruenther irresistible. As Mamie Eisenhower wrote Alfred Gruenther later, "Your little brother, Homer, has really been a great comfort and a ray of sunshine on these trips. He and Mama have a terrific affinity for each other. While Ike and I work he and Mama step out to the best restaurants and whatever else they can find to do."⁸ - The Editors

Office of Dwight D. Eisenhower
August 3, 1952 [Denver]

Dear Alfred and Grace:

I have a great companion in Mrs.



Homer (train platform right) confided in an October 4, 1952, letter to Alfred Gruenther: "I am a stand-in for Ike, when we go fast . . . I wave with Mamie [train platform left] to the crowds, and they are thrilled to have 'seen Ike.'" Courtesy of Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

Doud. She and I have become very friendly (thanks to you, Grace). Since the Chicago convention I have taken her to the dog races twice. She wanted to go with us, even during the convention, but Mamie said no. Then Mrs. Doud had her revenge, because Mamie was all set to go with us to the dog races last Thursday only to have the publicity side put its foot down. They feared bad publicity. I had the unwelcome task of telling Mamie. She caught on quickly when I said, "Wouldn't you sooner go to Central City tonight?" Central City is forty miles from Denver, and Helen Hayes is playing there. "Why?" asked Mamie. "Well," I said, "The people here are afraid someone might have a camera and take a picture of you at the dog races. You know," I said, "dog races are just a little more refined than shooting craps, but not much." She took it very gracefully, but I felt sorry for her, because she was looking forward to her first evening out in a long time.

She has been feeling miserably, and it has only been the last five or six days that she seemed to be herself again. Mrs. Doud however goes like a real

trooper. At the dog races the other night we wanted to leave two races early to avoid the crowds, but she would have none of it. She not only wanted to remain for the last race, and bet on it, but she wanted to be right in the crowd. It served her right; she picked losers the last two races . . .

I do not know whether this is true or not but Jim says that when he went in to see the General one time at Chicago, Senator Nixon was there, and — says Jim — Ike called him over and said, "Senator, this is Jim Black. He is the first man to mention your name to me, as the best vice-presidential candidate to run with me. He told me that while in Paris last year." Whether this is true or not, I don't know, but Jim quotes the General, so it might be true.⁹

Coming out on the plane from Chicago (only ten came out from Chicago) the General sat with me for a while, and we talked about the convention. I asked him (in a very diplomatic way) about the vice-president. I was really trying to find out how he landed on Nixon. He dodged the question, but did say that he picked Nixon and

Knowland as his No. 1 choices, and then if either were not available, he favored Congressman Halleck. Next he favored Senator Millikin. I mentioned I thought he got the best of the group, and I also commented that I thought he would have been disappointed if he had to get as far down as Millikin . . .¹⁰

One of our callers the other day (Thursday) was Captain Harry Butcher and wife. Harry saw the General and asked if the General could use him in the campaign. The General had about 15 minutes with Harry. He was very friendly with me. I later met his wife. I later told Mamie, and she asked if Mrs. B. was with Harry when he saw the General. I told her no. I do not think she is particularly friendly with either . . .¹¹

Bye-bye and good luck,
Homer

Office of Dwight D. Eisenhower
September 1, 1952 [Denver]
Dear Alfred:

. . . We had a man in Denver who could really duplicate the General's signature. Actually the General sees

very little mail. Perhaps ten letters a day, but something like fifty to a hundred go out over his signature. The remaining mail goes out mostly over Vandenberg's signature.¹² He regrets the General is unable to personally answer, etc.

The press men are generally critical of the General's speeches, and also the way he delivers them. For instance I think forty of the forty-five press men attached to our headquarters thought the General did a bad job at the American Legion convention. They didn't like what he said, and they thought his delivery was worse. Besides we got a lot of calls here in the office, apparently from "friends" who said the General did a horrible job at the convention.

Frankly, I didn't get that thought until the complaints came in. I heard it on television with Kevin McCann.¹³ McCann had an important hand in preparing it, and practically died half a dozen times, because the General missed his punch lines. Trouble was he was using a televiewer, or some such device, which helps a speaker keep his place, while reading a speech. The thing didn't work, and this bothered the General . . .

Best to you and Grace (sorry I do not have time for more because there are some very interesting stories to report).

Homer

Wednesday [September 17, 1952]
Dear Alfred and Grace:

This is being written someplace in Minnesota. We are on the train heading back to Rock Island for an evening mission. General E left our train in St. Paul after a series of big meetings on Tuesday. As you will now commence to suspect, I am on the train. There are 164 people on the special . . . The train is the maximum 18 cars long, and they say it is about two cars too long for rapid traveling.

I did not have the time to write last Saturday or even on Sunday before we left New York, and since I have had to

run like hell all day long. I have discovered one just cannot write with pen or pencil as we travel, so I have swiped Bert Andrews's typewriter for this particular occasion.¹⁴

Monday the General had his toughest day since he entered politics. He made sixteen talks, five of them very important. He stopped two and three times an hour, and before each stop he had to work on his notes, see a few local political managers who get on the train at each stop, and then he works on his major talks. He has three major talks "on the fire" all the time. For instance, up to now his major talks getting his study and time were those for St. Paul, the AFL and Omaha. As these are passed, other dates take their place.

I am sending you a Monday's schedule. It was a man-killer. Actually it was too much for the General. He almost died when he saw the program for Monday and by nighttime he was pretty close to being a corpse. I was in the back lounge when he finished off Monday's program, which was wound up with a four-hour motor caravan through several Illinois cities. He said very angrily to Mamie that another day like today and they would have a dead candidate on their hands.

Tuesday was much easier on him. Then in the afternoon he flew on to New York for his talk to the AF of L today. He rejoins us this evening.

I'm as happy as anyone on the train. I am not writing the speeches or figuring in policy or doing anything which could not be done by a million other people. Actually I'm a sort of handyman to Senator Seaton, who is manager of the tours. He has charge of personnel and the arranging of the schedule and the briefing of the General on what stops he is making each day and where he does his talking and how much. Fred is a sort of a Chief of Staff. Vandenberg is back in New York coordinating the speechwriters' production.

I am also an assistant to Senator Carlson, who is a sort of an official greeter for the General, and then I work

with Len Hall who is the manager of the train. He is the Congressman from New York.

One of my eighty-one duties is to always be with the General at least three minutes before each stop and the same amount of time after each stop, to see that the PA system is cut in and working properly. This really throws me in with the General more than almost any man on the train with the exception of Governor Adams, Seaton, and two of his main speechwriters and of course General Snyder. The Dr. is almost always with the General.¹⁵

But being with the General before and after each stop means you are with him a hell of a lot of time, when you look at his schedule. I telephone back to the operators, when to play the band music as we go into a town, when to cut it off and [when to] turn the mikes on for the General. I report any rings in the PA system, etc. This particular job is something like being a disc jockey, if you want to be truthful. I could have remained in New York in charge of the office but I would a lot sooner be the disc jockey on this train than have the job of running either the New York office or the Denver office. Because who in hell knows who is running either office, including the General, but they certainly know I'm on this train.

Being back with the General, when he wants the train to go ahead (out of schedule) or stop (out of schedule) I must hurry and tell the train manager. In between points we write thank you letters to those who either gave the G[eneral] presents or were factors in arranging the successful meetings. Truthfully there is not a dull moment.

The press men think the General is getting very good crowds but most of them do not feel he is "wowing" the voters with earthshaking speeches. Personally I thought both his talks and his delivery left a lot [of room] for improvement on Monday. The trouble was that they had too big a schedule and he resented it. He also unconsciously permitted this resentment to impair the effectiveness of his

delivery and then the content wasn't too inspiring either. He was against sin, high taxes, corruption in government, and for a change, but who isn't? . . .

Ike is quite irritable. The pressure on him is terrific. I keep my mouth shut, but I report to Governor Adams and Seaton on any observations I make on crowd reaction, changes in his comments, etc. A good example (and there are many similar ones) was an observation I made to Adams, with the thought he may wish to pass it on to the General, . . . that in many places an awful lot of young people turned out (the reason was in every town where we stop they dismiss schools for miles around, the idea being they get the youngsters government-conscious). I passed on the thought that perhaps Adams might want to suggest to Ike some comment about the young people who are turning out to hear him. Adams took the suggestion and passed it on to Ike. But either Adams or Ike missed the point. For the next three stops Ike commented about the youngsters, but he said it in a way to lose the value of the idea. The gist of his comments was that they ought to be thankful to him, because he got them a free day at school. It wasn't quite that blunt, but he gave the impression that his stop at least resulted in a holiday for the kids.

So I revamped the idea and gave it back to Adams, who suggested the General praise the youngsters for making the effort to come out and hear him . . .

The General and Mamie are very friendly. Monday they asked me to eat dinner with them, but I had already eaten. Tuesday noon they again asked, but I had already eaten. Tuesday evening Mamie asked me after the General went on to New York. This time I fooled them. I had not eaten . . .

Thursday Mrs. Doud joins us in Omaha. Bess [Homer's wife] and I took her to several dog races while in Denver. She is batty about the dogs, and we got that way too. The rabbit, which is the bait to make the dogs run, is called

Rusty. At the start of each dog race, the lights are turned out and the rabbit (Rusty) is started. Then the announcer says, "Here comes Rusty." That starts the dogs.

I call Mrs. Doud about every third or fourth day. In New York I did this because we had a direct wire. On the train we also have direct wires. I always tell the maid merely to tell Mrs. Doud that "a dog named Rusty from New York is calling." She knows . . .

Bye-bye and best of luck to you both,
Homer

September 30, 1952

Dear Alfred and Grace:

Today we are on our way on the second leg of our train tour. We are heading for Michigan and have just passed West Point. The General is on his way to South Carolina for his meeting with Jimmy Byrnes.¹⁶ About twenty of us have this entire eighteen-car train to ourselves, so we are really, for the first time, living a life of luxury. This will last until tomorrow morning, when Ike will have joined us . . .

Mamie has turned out to be a real trooper, but she certainly frets and stewes when they tell her she should get out early in the morning and say hello to the coal miners. "To hell with the coal miners," I think she thinks, but she gets out and does her act, and does a wonderful job, too. She really pleases the crowd. Everyone calls her "Mamie," and she seems to love it. At almost every stop she gets at least one corsage, and sometimes she gets as many as eight in a day. They also give her candy, hats, gloves, brooms, and food of every kind. One of her favorites is Mexican food, so we have a nice supply on hand for her and Ike . . .

Ike has had a hell of a time. He is pressed too much, but these whistle-stop campaigns demand stops in almost every city. We stop about every thirty-five minutes, and he talks from five to fifteen minutes. It is generally five. But he no more gets off the platform and seated, than it is time to get up and give another talk. He hates pres-

sure, and I know by the time he goes through his third campaign he will have changed a lot in planning a campaign.

As it is now, he has very little to say about this. The trip is planned by others, and Ike is told to do this and do that. He is pulled here and pulled there until the poor man is nearly crazy. One evening after a very heavy day he said to Mamie as he came on the train, "Dear, if I had known it was going to be like this I would have jumped off the ship." At another time, in fact our first day out two weeks ago, he said, "Another day like today and they will be looking for a new candidate." This was just after a five-hour motorcade which brought him back to his train at 9:30 without a bite of food. That day like nearly all days was a very hectic one. It was really Ike's first day of real campaigning, as it was the first of the whistlestop days, and what a day it was.

Ike has a particularly tough time because he must be working on two major speeches all the time, the one he must give in the evening and the one he is planning for the next evening. Besides this, he must be figuring on something to say for the whistlestop, and he must be briefed so he can say something with a local flavor. Four years from now he will be an expert at all of this, but he is far from one now.

Then while he writes and studies his speeches, the local VIPs who get on at each stop must be seen for a few minutes. About twenty get on at each stop and get off at the following stop. So the true facts are the General simply does not have any time to himself.

Besides we work in very close quarters on the train, and all the local candidates for office, such as Governor, Senator, Congressman, and the Committee Chairman, all want to get on the platform, where only Ike and Mamie should be. When the platform gets crowded Ike throws [blows] an inward gasket.

Almost every day he throws off more steam than the train. But he does a pretty good job laughing outside while



Nebraska Governor Val Peterson welcomed the Eisenhowers to Omaha ... (Below) Mrs. John Doud (center) joined her daughter Mamie and Ike in Omaha after a flight from Denver. Courtesy of Omaha World-Herald.



he is steaming inside. I know very very well, when he is saying, "Senator it is great to have you with us," he is saying inside, "You son-of-a-bitch, what in the hell are you doing on this train?" Sometimes, though, he almost reverses these thoughts . . .

Almost every evening we stop for a major talk. Ike goes to the hotel and about five go with him, including myself. We take care of the callers, while others work with him on his speech. He often needs much more time for his speeches than is allotted to him, so the delivery is not too good, and most times the contents, I feel, are not too inspiring either. He is easily at his best when speaking off the cuff, and if I were running his show I would give the speechwriters a week's vacation just to see how he would get along without them.

Ike talks much too fast on TV but they cannot slow him down. He does a horrible job of reading and getting his punch lines over.

The Nixon affair really floored Ike. We had been on our tour, only since Sunday, when this affair broke on Wednesday. At first the story did not get much of a play. Even on Thursday evening when we were in Omaha, there was not a mention of it in the *World-Herald*. But by Friday all hell broke loose.¹⁷

Because of my assignment, I see Ike almost as much as any man on the train, with the exception of about four people. Bob Cutler, a former BG [brigadier general], who talks as if he knows you, is closest to Ike on speechwriting subjects. Cutler wrote speeches for Ike and [General George C.] Marshall during Bob's Army tour. He is a great friend of "Jerry" Persons. In my opinion Bob is only fair. He does an excellent job of putting words together, but he does not have the legislative experience to write about the important and controversial subjects like labor laws, social security, etc.¹⁸

Some of the news writers with us now were with Stevenson when the Nixon story broke. They were scared to death

Ike would go through with a plan to ditch Nixon, because Ike talked so much about Korea, Korruption and Kommunism.¹⁹ Here was one of his best arguments being taken right away from him. The newsmen say Stevenson felt if Ike ditched Nixon, Ike would have walked right into the White House.²⁰

I'll always have my own ideas on Ike's first impulse. But at the time Taft was on our train, and so were a number of professional politicians. They were, to a man, strongly in favor of Nixon. Ike finally got to figuring that Nixon did not get a penny of the money for his personal use, so actually he did nothing wrong. We got nearly 250,000 telegrams, nearly all favorable to Nixon. But there are nearly 80 million people able to send telegrams so the number is not too impressive. A number of newsmen are still asking Nixon where he got \$20,000 to pay down on a \$40,000 house, when he said that three years before he was broke. They are also asking him a few other questions.

Nixon did a whale of a job for twenty minutes, pleading his own case, but for the final ten minutes he launched an attack on Stevenson and Sparkman, who has his wife on his payroll.²¹ But to that point neither had said anything about Nixon. Now they are both attacking Nixon, and in fact they have bared their own incomes and have forced Ike to do the same, and will continue to force the issue with Nixon.

Nixon, true, made a powerful plea, and at the time of his appeal there was no other decision to make, but Ike had a time of it, believe me. Some day a lot more will be written on this . . .²²

This is a hell of a letter, but this train jumps all over the tracks. . .

Best to you both,
Homer

The campaign of 1952 was still to be concluded when Homer Gruenther wrote the above letter to his brother and sister-in-law. General Eisenhower ran hard, and so did Governor Stevenson. President Harry S. Truman entered the campaign in its last weeks by whistle-

stopping across the country somewhat as he had done in 1948. But the issue this time was not so much a matter of policies, domestic or foreign, but one of personalities and behind them, a desire for change. The Democrats had held national office for twenty years and the Korean War was increasingly unpopular (and seemed interminable; it would end in the summer of 1953). The popular World War II general was elected president fairly easily. Homer Gruenther became a White House assistant and also served in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations until his retirement in 1965. He died in Washington in 1977. – The Editors

NOTES

¹The letters are in the Gruenther family series, Alfred Gruenther MSS, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. The editors are deeply grateful for the cordial assistance, during a recent visit, of the library's director, Dr. John Wickman, and of the very able archivist, Katherine Struss.

²Family stories provided by Colonel Richard L. Gruenther, a member of the staff of the Association of Graduates, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, New York.

³The Republicans met in Chicago in July 1952 where Eisenhower won the nomination in a contest with Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio.

⁴Frederick A. Seaton, Wherry's successor as senator from Nebraska, was later secretary of the interior. He was the manager of the Eisenhower whistlestop tour. Matthew J. Connolly was appointments secretary to President Harry S. Truman; Stephen Early was press secretary to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Leslie L. Biffle was secretary of the Senate.

⁵Carroll had joined Eisenhower's NATO staff (supreme headquarters, Allied powers in Europe) as an aide in early 1951 and after the presidential election, he moved into the White House. Promoted to the rank of brigadier general, he died in 1954.

⁶Eisenhower returned to his boyhood home of Abilene, Kansas, to launch his campaign for the presidency.

⁷For General Eisenhower golf proved an antidote for the pressure of the campaign. Homer later recalled: "Sunday Ike played golf with some newsmen and on one occasion he picked out a 7 iron for a shot. The caddy advised against the iron, and so did his partner. 'Listen,' said Ike, 'I'm using a 7 iron on this shot, and I want you to know it is the only decision I have made myself since I left Paris.'" Homer to Alfred Gruenther, July 1, 1952, Gruenther MSS.

⁸Mamie Eisenhower to Alfred M. Gruenther, October 16, 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower series, A.M. Gruenther MSS, Eisenhower Library.

⁹James Byers Black was president of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company of San Francisco.

¹⁰William F. Knowland was senator from

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California. Charles Halleck, longtime congressman from Indiana, was an Eisenhower favorite. Eugene D. Millikin was senator from Colorado.

¹¹Eisenhower had met Harry C. Butcher in 1927 in Washington, where Butcher was editing a fertilizer journal. Eisenhower's brother Milton was then working in the Department of Agriculture. Afterward Butcher became an executive of the Columbia Broadcasting System and served as Eisenhower's naval aide during World War II, achieving the rank of captain. After the war he published the headquarters diary, much of which he had kept, under title of *My Three Years With Eisenhower* (New York, 1946). The book was a best-seller. There was some feeling about this book on Eisenhower's part, for Butcher revealed many of his chief's intimate views of contemporaries, military and civil; perhaps for this reason the general did not permit Butcher to quote from his (Eisenhower's) personal wartime diary. In addition Butcher had divorced his wife after the war and married a woman he had met during military service. Mamie Eisenhower was a close friend of Butcher's first wife.

¹²The head of Eisenhower's personal campaign staff, Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr., was the son of the late senator from Michigan.

¹³McCann had been an Eisenhower aide during World War II and became one of his assistants when Eisenhower served as president of Columbia, 1948-52. A speechwriter on the campaign train, he was the author of a campaign biography, *The Man From Abilene* (Garden City, N.Y., 1952).

¹⁴Andrews was a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

¹⁵Frank Carlson was senator from Kansas. Representative Leonard W. Hall of New York was manager of the campaign train and later chairman of the Republican National Committee. Governor Sherman Adams of New Hampshire, chief of staff of Eisenhower's personal campaign, would become White House chief of staff. Dr. Howard Snyder, major general in the U.S. Army, was Eisenhower's personal physician.

¹⁶James F. Byrnes, former secretary of state (1945-47), former associate justice of the U.S.

Supreme Court, long-time representative and senator from South Carolina, succeeded Strom Thurmond as governor of South Carolina. In the late 1940s, perhaps because of his return to state politics, Byrnes had turned increasingly conservative. A member of the faction of Southern Democrats known as the Dixiecrats, he edged closer to the GOP.

¹⁷Newspapers were relating the vice-presidential candidate's access, as a senator, to a special fund provided by California friends. See further comments in this same letter and in footnote 22.

¹⁸Robert Cutler was a Boston banker who emerged from World War II as a brigadier general. Wilton B. Persons, also a brigadier general, would become special assistant to Eisenhower during the presidency.

¹⁹Senator Karl E. Mundt of South Dakota had originated what Republicans hoped would be the winning campaign formula: K¹C², meaning Korea, Communism, and corruption. The contention was that the Truman administration had created the Korean War, was soft on Communism, and tolerated corruption in government.

²⁰Here Gruenther probably meant that if Ike dropped Nixon from the ticket Stevenson would have "walked right into the White House."

²¹Senator John J. Sparkman of Alabama was Stevenson's running mate.

²²Homer Gruenther's remarks about the Nixon slush fund and the vice-presidential candidate's defense of himself are quite interesting, for Eisenhower's position in regard to Nixon has never been clear. Perhaps it never will be. Letters and memoranda in the Eisenhower Library in Abilene show that in 1956 the president would have been willing for his vice-president to step down and indirectly presented the possibility to Nixon. The latter agonized over the issue, for he was looking toward the election of 1960 in which, with luck, as Eisenhower's two-term vice-president, he might become the Republican presidential candidate in succession to his chief. After a considerable delay Nixon found himself forced to ask to remain on the ticket, and Eisenhower carefully consented. During the elec-

tion of 1960, Nixon seems to have believed that Eisenhower was not very active in supporting him, especially when things became very close between the Republican and Democratic candidates. Years later Eisenhower's grandson David married Nixon's daughter Julie and the president of 1953-61 lived just long enough into the year 1969 to receive the new Republican president at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington. By that time any anti-Nixon feeling, or anti-Eisenhower feeling if it had existed, had probably disappeared. William Bragg Ewald, Jr., who served in the White House and also as assistant to Secretary of the Interior Seaton, and went with Eisenhower to Gettysburg to assist on his two volumes of White House memoirs, has presented a plausible analysis in his *Eisenhower the President: Crucial Days, 1951-1960* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981). He believes that during the so-called Checkers speech (when in 1952 the vice-presidential candidate went on national television to explain the special fund and referred to the family dog Checkers) Nixon made a proposal that infuriated Eisenhower: He proposed to bare his personal finances and in effect challenged the presidential candidates and the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Sparkman, to do the same. To Eisenhower, Ewald has written, such a proposal was anathema — it involved no one's business but his own. It promised to reveal the sources of a modest personal fortune. Years earlier Eisenhower had entrusted his wife's inheritance, which was sizable, to a Denver friend, Axsel Nielsen, who had invested the money very shrewdly, with impressive results. Too, it again would ventilate a controversy that had arisen over publication of Eisenhower's World War II memoir, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, New York, 1948). The general had sold the rights for a lump sum of \$635,000 and obtained a ruling from the internal revenue authorities that because he was not a professional author the sale could be treated as a capital gain, with a twenty-five percent tax. Because of the resulting outcry Congress in 1950 passed the so-called Eisenhower amendment, which forbade any use of capital gains for writers whether professional or amateur.