

In his book *Waging Peace*, former president Dwight D. Eisenhower recalls the day following his serious stroke: "My eyes happened to be attracted to a favorite picture of mine, done by Turner, the noted British watercolorist. It was called *The Smugglers*." The picture was a favorite not only because it portrayed a Scottish castle recently given to the Eisenhowers, but also "because of the skill of the artist. . . . With the doctors once more in my room, I tried to tell them about the picture. I could remember neither its name nor that of the castle. In every way I could, I tried to give hints and clues to the assembled company, which again included my wife and son. . . . I had sense enough by then, however, to cease trying to force myself."

Eisenhower's own paintings, sixty-five of which are exhibited along with memorabilia of "The Memorable Eisenhower Years" at Huntington Hartford's Gallery of Modern Art in New York, manifest a similar ease. Many are fall or spring scenes of "spots" where he has enjoyed fishing or golfing. These are generally in the style of scenic picture postcards, somewhat mildly influenced by Turner or

## Eisenhower and the Hippies

Sisley. *Loneliness* is an allegory admittedly copied from a Christmas card. A man on horseback is riding through an isolated snowscape toward a frozen river gorge that serves to divide the picture plane.

Portrait likenesses of Sherman Adams, Miss Woods (Mrs. Eisenhower's maid and companion for fifteen years; "a most important member of our ménage"), a Lapland shepherd, and two *Melancholy Lincolns* (one "has a beard and is looking philosophical," the other is younger and bears a striking resemblance to Richard Nixon) all seem pleasantly competent at first glance. Their remarkably bland, nonexpressive content derives perhaps from the artist's indifference to his subject matter. Eisenhower's description of his initial meeting with Generalissimo Franco belies a like opacity: "I was impressed by the fact that there was no discernable mannerism or characteristic that would lead an unknowing visitor to conclude that he was in the presence of a dictator. Generalissimo Franco is a rather small man of regular features and modest manner. Whatever the reasons for the Spanish Revolution, it is clear that Franco has proved himself a strong and enduring leader."

### Lacking in Incident

Noticeably lacking in incident is *The 16th Hole*, a painting in which the foreground (about three-quarters of the picture's surface) is filled by an empty, circular, artificial lake; this provides an obstacle for the hole itself, pinpointed immediately to the rear.

Ike sees painting as simply a form of relaxation. "There's nothing philosophical. You put the surface of your mind there, while the rest of your mind is making decisions." The general's attitude toward his art is not unlike the "cool" aesthetic of many Primary Structuralists. He writes: "Even yet I refuse to refer to my productions as paintings. They are daubs, born of. . . my pleasure in experimenting, nothing else." This quote is from *At Ease*, a recently published collection

of essays, whose title, like the mixed metaphor of *Waging Peace*, manages to balance ambiguously between the militaristic and the pacifistic.

One of the salient features of the Eisenhower years and of Eisenhower as a person is a lack of memorabilia. Among the memorabilia exhibited are: a photograph of a creamery in Abilene where Ike worked after high school; a letter "A" earned for playing halfback for Army's football team; photographs of houses where he and Mamie have lived; his academic robes from Columbia; "I Like Ike" campaign paraphernalia (including a water bucket bearing the painted inscription, "Let's Clean Up the Mess in Washington"); a series of doodles drawn by the president during cabinet and leadership meetings (one of which is a drawing of the point of a pen, "Collection of Robert E. Merriam"); a collection of Christmas cards received by the White House from various heads of state; flags of all the NATO nations; a painting given to him by Sir Winston Churchill; a painting by a golfing buddy of Ike painting a picture of his friend painting the picture of Ike (apparently accomplished with the aid of a mirror); his Gettysburg farm as imagined by Grandma Moses; the ceremonial shovel used to break ground for Eisenhower College; and a photograph of Ike breaking ground, with Governor Nelson Rockefeller and Bob Hope as onlookers. There is one hoax. Eisenhower, peering into a glass case purportedly containing one of his cadet uniforms, remarked, "This is absolutely false, a replica."

The show also contains a group of Ike apothegms:

"America does not prosper unless all Americans prosper"

"Under God, we espouse the cause of freedom and justice for all."

"Courage in principle, cooperation in practice, make freedom positive."



Dwight D. Eisenhower at his easel.



**Pot, Pussy, Peace, Perversion**

A proliferation of alliterative p's was the hallmark of the Eisenhower presidency. Ike perhaps took greatest pride in his "People-to-People" program, which sought through peaceful exchanges to promote international understanding among peoples. He sincerely disliked conflict. At the president's instigation, the nation's defense program was redesignated "Power for Peace."

In earlier years, the general had amiably professed a "politics for the maintenance of peace," a program that might mirror that of the old Roman emperors like Marcus Aurelius. "Today we seem to be plunging into an era of lawlessness, which in the end can lead only to anarchy," he notes in an article in *Reader's Digest* entitled "We Should Be Ashamed." Ike seems particularly concerned with the recent "shameful outcroppings of lawlessness . . . which [have] torn asunder whole areas of our cities." Such public disorder, the threat of widespread sacking and looting by these latter-day Teutons, could be met with a "Committee of Ten Million" citizens dedicated to law and order in this country. Members would pledge themselves to proper principles in their own lives and homes. They would also agree to contribute one cent a day to the cause, and give some of their time to community organizations trying to combat crime and delinquency.

A second cause for alarm according to Ike are the attitudes of a misguided segment of young people: "Some campus demonstrations," Eisenhower observes, "verge on riots." He notes clear signs of deterioration among our youth: "All this long hair, this lack of decorum . . . look at the way they dress. Some people say to me; 'Well, all right, but what can we do about it? How do you treat this thing?' And I say: 'Well, maybe one way is to have all the girls turn their backs on boys like that. That might bring them around.' But then you have to remember that some of the girls are just as bad—hair stringing down like baboons." It all seems to be involved with "the way so many young people are so loath these days to respond to words like patriotism—or to 'The Star Spangled Banner' or the flag."

Ike interprets this "attitude towards their country" as a portent of "moral decay" sharing "many symptoms of the dying days of the Roman Empire."

**Ike's Likenesses to Young People**

Oddly, however, the younger generation of "flower children" seems content with the president of the Era of Tranquillizer's likening their time to the era of the Pax Romana—casting themselves as the early Christians. As with the Stoic emperor and the Christians in that epoch of relative tranquility, perhaps posterity will prove the two more alike than apart.

The latter days of the Roman Empire saw the emergence of the astrological Piscean-Christian era. Pisces, the sign for the psychic diagnostician, represents in its better aspect sympathetic, benevolent love holding in check a darker, sensation-seeking side, sometimes given to weaknesses of sloppy emotionalism. Astrologists believe we are currently in the final "seed period," portending the dissolution of this age and pending the advent of the next Aquarian age, when Piscean attitudes will flower while the world goes to pot.

"Love associations" such as Warmth practice a benign, "do-it-yourself" pacifism. One example of their activities is the "love brigade" they sent to New-

*Dwight D. Eisenhower. Melancholy Lincoln, ca. 1951. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. "One younger and bearing a striking resemblance to Richard Nixon . . ."*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower. Melancholy Lincoln, ca. 1950. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. "One where he has a beard and is looking philosophical."*

ark during the riots to spread love, hope, and charity among the Negroes. The hippies hoped to pacify (and perhaps convert) the populace with offerings of flowers, candy, toothpaste, buttons, food, cameras to film the action, and free piggy-back rides for the kids. A local housewife, asking for an explanation of the strange invasion, received the reply, "We thought it would be nice to have a picnic."

More substantially, a hippie newspaper advocates setting up "shops that are called Calm Centers . . . Places where people just come and sit . . . with softness and hereness . . . just people being together." This spirit of STP (Serenity, Tranquility, Peace) is close to the idea of the "Human Be-In," a practice that combines features of Eisenhower's easygoing pacifism with an ethic of tolerant



*On September 21, 1965, Nelson A. Rockefeller (left) and Bob Hope (right) joined their good friend "Ike" (center) in the groundbreaking ceremonies of Eisenhower College, Seneca Falls, New York.*

Hippies gather in Tompkins Square Park, New York City, 1968. Photo by Dan Graham.



"togetherness." In Be-Ins, a "separate but equal" philosophy prevails. Each participant is free to do his or her individual "thing" apart from everyone else's and no one (or his or her "thing") is more important than anyone else. The only important thing is that everyone be doing their "things" together.

### Exhaust Pipes

George Harrison of the Beatles has given vent to a similar ethic: "We've got to be doing things because we're part of it and because it's nice," he said. "You've got to have an outlet. It's like having an intake in the front of your head and there's a little exhaust pipe in the back that goes POW and lets a bit out. The aim is to get as much going out the back as is coming in."

Throughout his years, Ike has sought a like complacency: "I make it a point to avoid hating anyone," he has written. A stoic resolve is responsible for his serenity. "If someone's been guilty of despicable actions towards me, I used to write his name on a piece of paper, drop it in the lowest drawer of my desk, and say to myself: 'That finishes the incident . . . and that fellow.' The drawer became, over the years, a sort of private wastebasket for crumpled-up spite and discarded personalities."

Like Ike, hippies occasionally wish things could be "clean as a hound's tooth." For example, some hippies recently helped clean a street in a New York slum with "love and detergents." After cleaning the blocks of debris, they then washed each cop car they spotted. Like the international image of American foreign policy during the Eisenhower epoch, the kids not only want to clean up the world, but to be loved by all its inhabitants. Signs reading "We Love Cops" and "Turn on Cops" have been common sights at Be-Ins. Some flower children who were bludgeoned by police in a demonstration arranged a Mantovani record concert for the officers involved. Rather than hate, the hippie community would prefer to love the Establishment to death.

### Nostalgia for Picnics

There is a particular nostalgia among young people for the communal participation enjoyed in Early Christian and in tribal American Indian times. Working as a "team," San Francisco's Diggers stage elaborate cook-ins followed by the free distribution of food in the manner of suburban backyard cookouts. Other hippie "tribes," in search of community involvement, have literally taken to the hills. Members of the Morningstar Commune (named after the middle-class heroine of Herman Wouk's bestseller) content themselves with raising berries, dogs, and goats: "It was raining when Ron pulled up to the farm in his pickup with Roberta, the pregnant goat," a communist notes in her diary. "Today I watched her grazing outdoors, then returning to her snug nest to chew her cud. I shared her contentment . . . [Later] Nurse Nancy and I went to the berry farm and dug their surplus strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and loganberries . . . crouching in the sun, pulling at the muddy roots and talking about strawberries and cream."

*Heeere, lovely waddle, waddle dog. She would have been on my lap twice. But she wound her neck around my legs and now she is stuck. So she wound the rope around her neck and hung herself. Wound her neck around her legs. Wound so she is stuck. On the patio. First, nice day. How about sailing? We went sailing yesterday. Have you made the beds? The hot dogs are in the freezer. I hear all the restaurants are open. Yes, I love you, too. This is the agony I go through having a son like that. He's up in his room rebelling. Oh, now he's going to laugh. She rambles on, bugged again. Get that in. Strawberries topped with cream. Hey, I see another fire. It's only steak-cooking time . . . Without any clothes on and disengaged. If you weren't so beautiful, dog. Little birds. Oh, to be a vine. Or a bird. Crush them all, make wine and get our feet dirty. Licky dog. La, la, la, la la, lee. Old blue bird-dog, star in heaven. White, Oh, lee, lee, beautiful, gorgeous red, dog, god, love.*



A hippie and his dog. "Heeere, lovely waddle, waddle dog." Photo by Dan Graham.

### Note

First published in *O to 9* (Winter 1968–69). This essay was originally written for *Arts Magazine* as a review of an exhibition of paintings by former President Dwight D. Eisenhower at the New York Cultural Center in May 1967. Sam Edwards, the editor of *Arts*, liked the idea, but before the review ran he was forced to leave the magazine. (Edwards was later editor of the *New York Review of Sex*, for which Graham wrote rock criticism.) Graham then offered the article to Philip Leider, the editor of *Artforum*, who rejected it. In the meantime, Susan Brockman had become editor of *Arts*; she liked the article, but still it was not published. When already in page proofs, it was killed—perhaps because of political pressure from the magazine's owner, a conservative Palm Beach millionaire. It was finally published in *O to 9*, a literary magazine edited by Vito Acconci and Bernadette Mayer.