



I recently finished [\*How Ike Led: The Principles Behind Eisenhower's Biggest Decisions\*](#) by Susan Eisenhower. The book examines who Eisenhower was as a person and a leader through the decisions he made beginning with his time as Supreme Allied Commander in World War II through his presidency. Because it was written by his granddaughter, we get an insider's view on Ike's life and learn about his traits, practices, and habits that are worthy of emulation. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and appreciated Susan Eisenhower taking the time to talk with me about the book, her grandfather, and share some leadership wisdom from one of America's greatest leaders.

**Joe: What lessons would you like readers to walk away with when they finish the last page of [\*How Ike Led: The Principles Behind Eisenhower's Biggest Decisions\*](#)?**

Susan: There are three lessons that I want readers to take with them. The first is that leadership goes beyond position on an organizational chart; great leaders focus on the human dynamics of their organization. Throughout his military career, and even as President of the United States, Dwight Eisenhower understood the importance of the human dimension of leadership. He listened to and got to know the people he led. He showed them respect (regardless of rank) and viewed trust as a central tenant of that relationship.

Throughout the book I described multiple incidents where he worked to engender trust in those around him. My grandfather made it a point to never lose sight of who was being affected by his decisions and this was evident as he made sure that he read every

correspondence from grieving families who lost loved ones in combat during World War II. He also embraced self-sacrifice and knew that putting others and the country above his own needs was a prerequisite for strategic leadership.

I also want readers to walk away feeling they know who Dwight Eisenhower was as a person. Many scholars have written that he was a complex figure, but from my vantage point he wasn't. He seemed to me to be very straightforward. He was a man of integrity and in reading his diaries I saw no inconsistencies between that man and the one I knew. Many of the stories I write about in the book underscore his integrity as a man, and I want readers to see how central that was to how he lived.

Finally, in learning about Dwight Eisenhower, I want people to expect more from our civic leaders. I want them to expect more from the United States as a country. My grandfather believed in America and believed in the goodness of the American people.

**Joe: Throughout the book you reference conversations you had with people who worked for him. Did you get the sense that those people learned from and adopted President Eisenhower's outlook on leadership?**

Susan: Over the course of my life, I've had the privilege of learning more about Eisenhower's leadership by getting to know the people who worked around him during the War and his Presidency.

Throughout the book, I reference one of President Eisenhower's closest advisors: General Andrew Goodpaster. He was the staff secretary and defense liaison officer to President Eisenhower from 1954-1961 and was devoted to his former boss. When Francis Gary Powers was shot down over Russia on May 1, 1960, it was General Goodpaster who woke President Eisenhower up to tell him the news.

In 1983, I founded the [Eisenhower Institute](#) along with General Goodpaster. Over the course of our years working together, I learned so much from him. And often, he would say that he learned a particular way of doing things from watching President Eisenhower do it. For example, Goodpaster came out of retirement in 1977 as a four star general to take over West Point as Superintendent following a cheating scandal that almost ruined the academy. He had to sacrifice rank and become a three star to do it. Like my grandfather, he put that nation above his ego to serve.

Several of Eisenhower's former cabinet members served at the Institute over the years, and

one of the practices they picked up from him was testing a course of action by asking questions. President Eisenhower would always ask: (1) How does it look to the other guy? (2) What are our options? (3) Have we developed contingencies if circumstances change? (4) Are we playing the long game? (5) Is this best for the entire country?

So, as I got to know the people who worked around my grandfather, I learned that leadership has a long wake. How we lead matters. The people who work for us and learn from us will carry-on many of the leadership behaviors we teach them, long after we are gone. It's for this reason that more people need to adopt a long-term mindset when it comes to leadership.

**Joe: As you learned more about the professional side of your grandfather, did you see any crossovers from how he led in combat and in the White House and how he led his family?**

Susan: I saw many things. But I did see that he didn't give up on people and that Eisenhower believed in second chances. He always talked about learning this by training his horse, Blackie, when he was a major stationed in Panama. Blackie was a dangerous horse, but Ike invested a lot of time in him and eventually brought him around -and he came to love this horse. Since I was the family horse rider he would tell me stories about that horse many decades years later. He even mentioned it in [At Ease](#) writing, "in teaching skills, in developing self-confidence, the same sort of patience and kindness is needed with horses as with people."

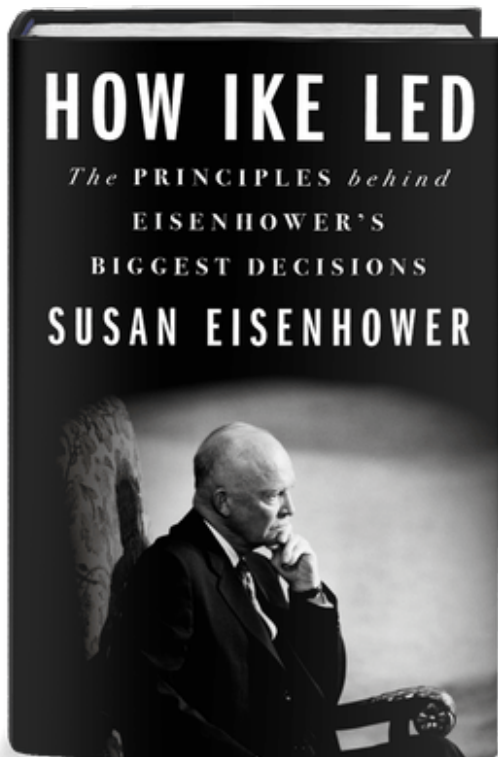
Yes, during the war people got fired. But, if they had the right attitude they could work their way back up the scale, unless the failure was egregious. He gave them second chances, to include General Patton (who got more than second chances). When I was a young girl I ruined the putting green at his Gettysburg house when I accidentally let several of the horses out of the paddock. Not only did he give me a second chance as a horse back rider, but I never heard of it again. So I laugh, because I used my first chance up before the age of eleven!

**Joe: I have to be honest; this is the first book on President Eisenhower that I've ever read. And I want to read more about him. What books would you recommend I read next?**

Susan: This is a great question. President Eisenhower was a phenomenal writer and his voice comes through in the books he wrote. I would recommend [At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends](#). It's a wonderful read and you can really get to know him in that book. More

importantly, my father John said that Ike wrote every word himself without any help. In it you will find some very funny stories, including one about a young Patton and Eisenhower on a shooting range, and how close they came to losing their lives. Can you even imagine World War II without those two men!?!

The second one would be, [Crusade in Europe](#) also by Eisenhower. It's an easy read and I think people will enjoy it because it is a behind-the-scenes look at the war, and he explains his thinking behind some of the biggest decisions of the war.



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***For a chance to win a copy of Susan Eisenhower's How Ike Led, [sign up for my monthly email reading list](#). In addition to providing you with several book recommendations, I'll be giving away a few copies of this great book!***

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