**Description:**

In episode 14 of *George Washington Slept Here*, host Jason Raia joins special guest David Eisenhower, grandson of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. David and Jason discuss Dwight Eisenhower's role as Supreme Allied Commander and his achievement of mobilizing America to help defeat the Nazis. David also dives into Eisenhower's Presidency, the influence of his father and grandfather throughout his life, and his written works on Ike's impressive career.

David and Jason also discuss Dwight Eisenhower's integral role at Freedoms Foundation, a legacy continued by David's father and David himself, and the importance of Freedoms Foundation's programs for future generations.

Join us as we journey into personal and historical perspectives, gaining unique insights from one of America's most distinguished families. This episode is a must-listen, offering a genuine tale of leadership and legacy.

**Books Mentioned**

[*Eisenhower at War*](https://www.amazon.com/Eisenhower-at-War-1943-1945-David-ebook/dp/B00ZU5N4DU?ref_=ast_author_mpb) by David Eisenhower

[*Going Home To Glory: A Memoir of Life with Dwight D. Eisenhower*](https://www.amazon.com/Going-Home-Glory-Eisenhower-1961-1969/dp/1439190909/?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_w=vs3UB&content-id=amzn1.sym.579192ca-1482-4409-abe7-9e14f17ac827&pf_rd_p=579192ca-1482-4409-abe7-9e14f17ac827&pf_rd_r=132-9129704-7918733&pd_rd_wg=uoWk1&pd_rd_r=aebf805c-f6af-4c13-b8e0-a0a500ea3c79&ref_=aufs_ap_sc_dsk) by David Eisenhower

**Quotes**

*"Essential leadership qualities, like organization and authority, create a profoundly positive impact on everyone's lives" - David Eisenhower*

*"Experiencing history and its emotional impact can drive powerful change and awareness." - David Eisenhower*

**Featured Guest**

**David Eisenhower**

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**Transcript:**

We the people of the United States. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

 **Jason Raia:**

Hello, and welcome to *George Washington Slept Here*, the civics education podcast from Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, where we explore American history, civics, and the idea of liberty through conversations with some of our favorite thinkers, writers, and leaders. I'm Jason Raia, chief operating officer at Freedoms Foundation and the host of *George Washington Slept Here*. The format is simple. A long form conversation with a friend of Freedoms Foundation where everyone can learn something new. Before we go any further, a little housekeeping. We encourage everyone to subscribe to *George Washington Slept Here* wherever you listen to podcasts, and make sure you get every new episode as soon as it comes out. We love hearing from our listeners, so please email us at gwshpodcast@gmail.com

with your comments, questions, or suggestions. And hit us up at Freedoms Foundation social media at @FFVF on Twitter, and on Facebook and Instagram @freedomsfoundation. Today's interview is with David Eisenhower of the University of Pennsylvania where he teaches in the Annenberg School of Communication. Hello, David.

**David Eisenhower:**

Jason, How are you?

**Jason Raia:**

I'm great. So you've been a longtime friend of Freedoms Foundation. And, normally, I would say tell us where you were born and raised, but because you've been part of Freedoms Foundation for so long, tell us where, or when you first knew of Freedoms Foundation.

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, let's see. When would I have known of Freedoms Foundation? We are sitting here, looking at each other across the table and between us, is a picture of me with my grandfather in 1962, just before I went off to prep school, and I would have been aware of Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge by then because I almost went to Valley Forge Military Academy. My grandfather was very fond of Valley Forge and the area. He revered it. He felt that, there are there sacred places in America. Valley Forge, being one, Gettysburg being another where he lived, and West Point where he'd gone to college. And, so I would have been aware of Freedoms Foundation then in a dim sort of way. I became aware of it in a big way when my father and mother are making plans to move from Gettysburg at the end of my lower year at Exeter, because my father is becoming executive vice president at Freedoms Foundation. So when they moved here to Phoenixville, I'd say about two miles from where we are sitting right now.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

That is when I became aware of it. And for the first time, I heard my father, on radio, broadcasting advertisements for the foundation and advertisements about their contests and–

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

–various things that they were doing in that period.

**Jason Raia:**

So let's go back to the beginning. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Because you have, in some ways, a very unique experience because of your family.

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, right. I've always been aware that fact, from my earliest conscious thoughts. I was born at West Point.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

In March of 1948. And, at the time, my father was teaching English at West Point. He had been, he was a 1944 graduate. He served in the European theater. He had occupation duty, which is in Austria, which is where he met my mother and I believe his first stateside assignment when he got back was to join the faculty at West Point. He was always that kind of person. He was a student. He was a scholar. He's a writer. Wanted to be a writer. His father oriented him towards West Point, and he's very close to his father. So he went, but he was somebody who was always gonna wind up, in the literary or history field, which he did. He wound up writing 12 books. So he's teaching at West Point, while going to graduate school at Columbia.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh, interesting.

**David Eisenhower:**

So he's getting an advanced degree.

**Jason Raia:**

And is your grandfather at Columbia as well yet? Or?

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah. I think he might have been or or this would have been just before he became president of Columbia, or it might have coincided. And I hadn't actually made that connection, but you're correct. So, that's where I'm born. My first memories of the world are being with my grandfather in France in the summer of 1951, he'd just been appointed Commander of NATO. And, I remember him boarding an aircraft. I remember his uniform. I remember the aircraft.

In fact, I saw the aircraft about four years ago in, near Tucson, Arizona. There's a great big place called the Boneyard.

**Jason Raia:**

Sure.

**David Eisenhower:**

Where surplus aircraft are kept. I saw that very aircraft.

**Jason Raia:**

And you saw the same aircraft?

**David Eisenhower:**

Same aircraft is identified by a plaque. So I remember that, my grandfather's uniform, and I remember going back to West Point, which is where we remained when my father went off to Korea.

**Jason Raia:**

Mmmm, okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

And then we went through a succession of army bases. We went to Benning. We went to Leavenworth. We went to Belvoir. My father then joined the White House, the Pentagon, he had a he was, stationed at the Pentagon and then kind of on loan to the White House and and, spent the last three years or so, working with my grandfather as a confidential secretary.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

In the White House, signed there as an army man. When my grandfather left the White House in 1961. My father took a leave of absence from the army, to help him write his memoirs. The army was fine with that. Year one, they extended him for a second year. He went back for a third year and a third extension, and they said, I I think the the story I heard, and I don't know if this is true, the army told him, well, there's only one individual in U.S. army history who's ever had three leaves of absence, and that was Robert E. Lee. And you're not quite in that league. So my father is faced with a choice. Stay in the army or or or leave the army, and that's when Freedoms Foundation I came calling, and so he moved over here. And that's when, that's when I became familiar with the –

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

–operation in its full glory.

**Jason Raia:**

So you, for those who don't know, General Eisenhower and then President Eisenhower was for the first 20 years of Freedoms Foundation's existence from 1949 to 1969, he was either chair of the board or he was chairman emeritus. And so this connection to Freedoms Foundation was incredibly important, in putting Freedoms Foundation on the map and bringing in lots of people. One of the someone you talk about in your, in your monumental, Eisenhower War book his name comes up over and over and over who was on the board here was Omar Bradley.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

And that's, of course, directly related to General Eisenhower. Normally, I would ask about influences, but you talk about in a number of places the people that sort of paraded through your house, your grandparents' house, that you got to know up close and personal. Tell us about some of those people that you met in your younger years.

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, you know, when I look at my grandfather's appointment calendars and I see the things that he did on television and so forth, I realized that there were actually a lot more people there, not passing through that I was even aware of. But, I would say a typical afternoon at the Gettysburg Farm. I've got about 5 friends over. We're playing basketball, you know, in the rear parking lot, which is right next to a well that dates back to the American Civil War. We had a basketball net, hoisted there and maybe, Dwight Eisner and Harold Macmillan walked by. Harold Macmillan, prime minister of Great Britain, something happens to be on the property. That happened all the time. And so I saw I was around a lot of political people, and I was around a lot of military people and interestingly, not I know that Bradley you mentioned Bradley. I know that Bradley and my grandfather did several interviews, joint interviews, in Gettysburg, in my grandfather's office. And so I'm, he was a visitor, but I didn't happen to be around when Omar Bradley was visiting. I was there when General Montgomery, who was visiting, and other personnel from the war. I did have an opportunity, in the late seventies, when I began to research a book that I wrote on the European theater of operations, *Eisenhower at War*: *1943 through 45*, I had a opportunity to spend a day with Omar Bradley.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh, really?

**David Eisenhower:**

And to interview him. And in fact, we've been moving stuff out of my office, over the last several days because of a mishap, there's a tree falling in the office.

**Jason Raia:**

That's a mishap.

**David Eisenhower:**

But, I recovered the cassette tapes of the interview that I had with General Bradley in the late seventies. He's a wonderful man, class of ‘15 at West Point, and he and Dwight Eisenhower would have had very similar life, philosophies, and life experiences.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

One of the things that, of course, drew my grandfather to this field and Freedoms Foundation. And this would have prompted Bradley to do the same thing, would have been many hours and days, meditating, on the American war effort overseas, and why we were doing that. And what that required of Americans and what that required of Americans in the future. And so they would have returned home, with a sense of the importance of that effort and the price of that effort, and the importance of that effort to the future of America.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

As well as the willingness to contribute towards the end of preserving freedom and liberty in the United States. And, Freedoms Foundation has, as an institution, and institutions have cultures. One of the things that's always fascinating to me about Freedoms Foundation is the emphasis on responsibilities and duties.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

As well as, the rights, advertising the rights we have, but also promoting awareness of the responsibilities and duties we have to the country. That's exactly what Eisenhower and Bradley would have taken away as one of life's lessons, one of the affirming history lessons of World War II.

**Jason Raia:**

Absolutely. And and it's one of – in the defense of those rights is one of the the key responsibilities, that they would have seen. And there is a quote from his speech, Eisenhower's speech at the end of the war.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Where he is, presented, with essentially the key to the city of London.

**David Eisenhower:**

Freedom of – it's called the Freedom of London

**Jason Raia:**

Yes.

**David Eisenhower:**

The address is the Guildhall Address, June 12, 1945. That was probably - that's a fascinating address. It's one that Franklin Roosevelt might have given. Franklin Roosevelt was not alive.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

To deliver the summation of the American effort in Europe. And so that devolved, that that came to Dwight Eisenhower, who received a distinction called the Freedom of London. I think four Americans have received it.

**Jason Raia:**

And there's this great, in his speech, there is just this quintessential line, and, that just feels so, so very Freedoms Foundation. He says, “to preserve this freedom of worship, his equality before law, his liberty to speak and act as he sees fit, subject only to the provisions that he trespasses not upon similar rights of others – a Londoner will fight. So will a citizen of Abilene.”

**David Eisenhower:**

That's right. Well, Jason, you came right to my favorite line in the entire my favorite speech right there. And we didn't even discuss it, before we came on the air here. That is, to me, the most powerful line in that speech because that is an affirmation, and that is what World War II did affirm.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And on the eve of World War II, we were not sure that principle was going to be affirmed. One of the things that I enjoy doing, in my spare time, I'm a kind of professional reader at University of Pennsylvania, so I watch a lot of documentaries in my off hours and historical movies. One of my favorite recent ones is, *Darkest Hour* about Winston Churchill. And this is Great Britain coming to grips with the magnitude of the challenge that they were going to have to face in order to defend their Isle life and their freedom, in Europe. And that was a very hard thing to face, but the movie is very powerful because it demonstrates how leaders and led kind of came together at this great moment, in June of 1940 to commit themselves to doing exactly that, to defending their Isle life, whatever the cost may be. We will fight them on the beaches. We will fight them in the hills, and so on. And it's sort of that's what that line conjures up in my mind. And that's the spirit that connected the Americans and British in World War II.

**Jason Raia:**

So I'm, one of the things I found fascinating, and and I will be honest in saying I, I skimmed *Eisenhower at War*. I'm hoping to tackle it. I just got it last week, but it is thorough. Let's put it that way. But one of the ideas I found fascinating in it that I had not you know, even though I've taught World War II, at the high school level, I had not really thought about, was this idea that the Tehran what I'm calling the Tehran Conference calculus.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

There is this calculus that in order to affect the Normandy invasion and, and eliminate the Nazis, total surrender is what is the goal. There you know, there's no negotiating with the Nazis.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

That it would essentially require, saving, extending the life of communism in the east.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

That that was known and understood, stood, and that was the decision that was made.

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, in fact, Jason, I would say one thing that occurred to me in researching the book and by the way, I emphasize that very, point of decision that you refer to. In fact, I found the beginning of *Eisenhower at War* by looking in front, looking behind, going back to birth, going back to end of his life, this and that, looking for a place to a book on Dwight Eisenhower and I came up with the Tehran Conference of 1943, which is where the Soviets confront the Americans and the British with a demand, and that is a demand that they name a Commander for Overlord.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

What is his name? His name is Dwight Eisenhower. This is where he appears, eternally, in history. The decision made there, people are always interested in apportioning credit. And one of the things that I say Franklin Roosevelt gets credit for in American history and, genuinely deserves credit, is that in evaluating the threats to freedom in the world, he was able to discern a difference, in degree, not only in degree, but I think in kind, between the communist threat, and the Nazi threat. He felt that we could coexist with communism, and in time, we would bring communism under control. He felt we could not coexist with the Nazis. So Roosevelt makes a pact with the USSR on that basis in 1943, and there is no other way of looking at it. Historians try to rationalize this. This is dealing with enemies and succession. No. There's a clear cut decision by the western powers to attempt to enter into an alliance, an alliance of integration, with the communist world to meet the common danger of Nazis.

**Jason Raia:**

So the British are not as convinced. And it seems that, you know, we see that in Bernie Montgomery is sort of agitating for, just, you know, this idea that if they just went directly to Berlin, they could smash the Nazis, and thus arrest the Russians coming in from the east. And and and your–

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, the whole theory of the dash to Berlin, and that's,1944 to 45. I don't know how much history we wanna go into, and so I won't go into it much. But, there was an argument between the British and the American command, after the Normandy landings in 1944 over, how quickly this war could be won. And the British came up with a proposal, that they, in effect, stood behind from July of ‘44 through practically the end of the war.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And the whole theory of it, these proposals, was that there are very good Germans out there, and all we have to do is position ourselves to receive their surrenders, and they will overthrow Nazis. They will cast off Nazis, and they will surrender to us. And we can avoid the kind of pitch battles that are raging on the Eastern Front. I asked my father once, because I was immersing myself in all these strategy arguments, could the British strategy for World War II’s, strikingly resembles American strategy in the Cold War? In other words, contain the Germans.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

Wait for things to happen within Germany, and then, win without firing a shot. That's sort of what the ring strategy was. So I asked my father, was the invasion of France truly necessary?

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

He is somebody who was in it. 6 months later, he entered the war in January ‘45 through La Harve, where we go every spring –

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

–multiple times because we do things in Normandy. I, he thought about it, for a second. He said yes. He says the because the German occupation regime throughout Europe is too brutal –

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

There was no internal force that could possibly cast it off. Now that was also true Germany.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

The brutality of Nazi domination was such that internal forces were not equal to it.

**Jason Raia:**

This idea of that your father had, and not just him, but that that is the brutality of the Nazis.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

I wanna go to, you know, we were talking about the beginning of the war or not the beginning of the war, but the beginning of Normandy and and and, Tehran, to April 12, 1945.

**David Eisenhower:**

Mhmm.

**Jason Raia:**

Your grandfather, George Patton, and Omar Bradley, are out inspecting. And first, they go to, to, Goethe, the salt mine that's filled with looted art treasure and gold, which is, you know, Hollywood staple for World War II is, and then they go -

**David Eisenhower:**

*The Monuments Men.*

**Jason Raia:**

Yes. *The Monuments Men*. And then they went to Ohrdruf, which was a work camp. And, for those who've been to the Holocaust Memorial, they see your grandfather's words, emblazoned, there, where he talks about, how we have to remember this that we that it is so brutal, it is so awful, and he purposely goes into, this one, shed where bodies were piled up that Patton wouldn't even go into. And he's I had to see it for myself.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Because in the future, someone will say that this is just propaganda.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right. Well, that's and in fact, people were saying that in World War II knowing better. I don't think that the American command was surprised by what they found in Germany. But it's one thing to understand that it's there. It's another thing to experience it. To experience it is to set yourself, it is to resolve. To prevent such a thing in the future, to be aware of it is different. But I think that awareness, that the German government was capable of this, explains American intervention in World War II. And interestingly, there's another thing that I would call myself a semi-authority on in that I read all the periodicals of public affairs published in America between about 1939 and 1945. And there's an undertone. There is awareness that this is a very dark chapter unfolding in Europe. There's an awareness of that, but it does not register. It does not prompt action until you experience it.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And so Eisenhower, by calling in the photographers at Ohrdruf, and requiring camps everywhere to be photographed and, requiring people -

**Jason Raia:**

The citizens.

**David Eisenhower:**

The citizens turn out and to, lead the cleanup and things like that meant that awareness is not adequate. Experience. It has to be experienced in some way, and that's what the picture record allows us to do. The experience of it is unforgettable. It's one reason why I urge people to visit battlefields. It's a reason to come to Valley Forge.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep.

**David Eisenhower:**

You don't understand the ordeal that Americans went through in the American Revolution until you see these cabins that have been reconstructed here.

**Jason Raia:**

Well and that that idea of, being in the place where something happened and, and I remember this story, from early on in the war, there is, an escapee from one of the concentration camps who is brought to the United States, introduced to the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, who is Jewish.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

And tells him the story of what's happening at the concentration camps. And he listens, and then he sort of paces back and forth shaking his head and says, I can't believe it. And the person who had brought this survivor into his office says, you Henry, you can't call him a liar. And he said, I'm not calling him a liar. I just can't believe it. It's this inability in that there is no logic –

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

– In understanding what was happening in the future.

**David Eisenhower:**

I had an experience with that, that and this was with a very great man. His name is Elie Wiesel. We met Wiesel a number of times in the ‘80’s. We were just at events that he happened to be at, but we were at one, that was a Washington dinner in honor of the American liberators.. These are the people who entered camps. And, Wiesel got up, and he gave a speech which I'd seen him speak several times. The emotional weight of these speeches is something to have experienced.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

I was in the rotunda, when Wiesel was speaking in the mid-eighties and wails broke out around the room. Just the power of it.

**Jason Raia:**

Sure.

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, anyway, he's he's he's giving a speech. And the first part of it is a kind of challenge. Why didn't Americans bomb Auschwitz? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And then he realizes that I'm following him to the podium, and he's there. The dinner is in honor of the American liberators. And so he kind of catches himself a little bit, and he says, but I must relate that when I was at Buchenwald, I will never forget the arrival of American jeeps. And I and as they entered, and David is about to follow me here, it was as though General Eisenhower was in the first, first Jeep. We were so grateful and our lives resumed, you know, at that moment. And I was able to get up and you have one coincidence like this in your life, you'll consider it pretty remarkable. I got up and what I was able to was, Mr. Wiesel you did not see Dwight Eisenhower in the first Jeep, you saw John Eisenhower, my father in the first Jeep. He was in the first Jeep. And I discovered that years later, just picking books off my dad's bookshelf, on a rainy afternoon, not far from here, in fact, on Valley Forge Mountain.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

]And, it was a photo album that he had taken to Buchenwald that day. He entered the camp with a camera there's a lot of the GI’s did have, and, they hid the camera.

**Jason Raia:**

Yes.

**David Eisenhower:**

Because they didn't want people to feel humiliated, and the inmates insisted that they take pictures. And so I'm looking through this. And I said to dad, what was it like? And he said, how many grains of sand are there on a beach? Incomprehensible.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

Now that's Morgenthau's response right there. He didn't wanna believe it. There was another thing too, and that was the hard part of it, is that If the American and British government had acknowledged what they knew.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

That'd be true, that would have given the Germans power over us because that would have forced our hand. It would have forced us, in effect to negotiate, for the release of people that they're holding. And, we were determined to bring them down. Nothing was gonna stand in the way of, burying the Nazis and closing in. And, so there is this devastating episode, recounted in Anthony Cave Brown's *Bodyguard of Lies*, where, early June, in and around the time the allies are landing in Normandy –

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

The World Jewish Committee, whatever it was called, was a negotiating partner. I believe the state department was represented. The British were represented. The Nazis were represented at a meeting in Istanbul.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

At which Adolf Eichmann offers the Hungarian Jews in exchange for 10,000 allied trucks. In other words, let's form NATO right now.That, that was the offer. And, the offer was declined because we're not going to negotiate with them on any basis.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep.

**David Eisenhower:**

They are we are going to pave them. We are not going to–

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

Negotiate on a basis.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

This is a ghastly, tragic moment. This is awesome.

**Jason Raia:**

It wasn't about saving this particular group of people, or it was it it was almost a viewpoint that was bigger that we have to make sure this can never happen again.

**David Eisenhower:**

And the way they did it was at Nuremberg.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

By trying these people and establishing in international law. It is a crime to commit crimes against humanity. It is a crime, and you will be held responsible for it regardless.

**Jason Raia:**

Of orders.

**David Eisenhower:**

Orders or, level of responsibility. There are no sovereign rights to commit crimes against humanity and so forth. That that is what prevents this long range. It does not prevent genocide in every case, but it does, it has a huge impact, I think. No one supports the principle of genocide.

**Jason Raia**:

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

Which, by the way, was a word that was actually invented by a Polish attorney, I believe, in about ‘90 late 1942. The word did not even exist.

**Jason Raia:**

Wow.

**David Eisenhower:**

Genocide.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

Until mid-course through World War II. That's how astonishing this entire thing was. And as I say, that is what direct experience does, and that is why I think that, I really rank that decision, I could see this when I was putting *Eisenhower at War* together. I could see that as one of the most important that my grandfather made, in the European theater. And I don't think it was one that he thought about. Particularly, I don't think that it's one that he agonized about it all. It's just what he did.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah. So you talk about *Eisenhower at War* that this was that his that that Ike's, experiences as supreme allied commander, is really a political training ground that sort of prepares him to become president.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah. Right.

**Jason Raia:**

So I'm curious in the most general way–

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, let me put it this way - I'd say his presidency is an extension of that responsibility.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

Directly preparing to be president. I think what he brokered in the War was as or more significant than what he brokered as president. Right? The president's presidency is consolidation.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

But the achievement that is mobilizing America in the West to defeat the Nazis and and, positioning the world to move beyond that, is the heavy lifting.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And then the rest is consolidation.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. Right. So I'm curious if you can think about, if you have thoughts about the lessons from his World War II experience, and and you talk about consolidation that he brought into the presidency and and and what was he trying to accomplish?

**David Eisenhower:**

I think one of the things he became aware of in the War, and this one reason for Freedoms Foundation, is that America is a favored land. We live, as early as 1837, Abraham Lincoln, in a speech is saying that, the mightiest nation in the mightiest army in Europe could not so much as take a drink from the Ohio River. In other words, we're living in a kind of, I wouldn't call it bubble, but we are very fortunate in many ways. And being as fortunate as we are, it is very easy to forget responsibilities, and that is what World War II was all about. We've faced duty, and the question is, what kind of price do we have to pay, to bring ourselves to that point of acceptance in the future. And I think the more we have activities like Freedoms Foundation, the more we promote understanding this, I would say the less cost there is ultimately to, mobilizing ourselves when necessary.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. And I do sometimes wonder if the further we get from World War II, the further we get from these even the Cold War, it is easy to forget how good Americans have it.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah.

**Jason Raia:**

And I think when we look to those who will give anything, to come here-

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

-to raise their family here, we see it once again that people who understand deprivation, people who understand poverty, people who understand political violence, there’s the great hope, the beacon.

**David Eisenhower:**

We had an au pair. One, she was, I think she lives in California now, but she's Italian.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And, and I wanna say this periodically, we have really, I would say, dark moments. We have sagging markets. We have a lot of inflation. We have a lot of pessimism, and that was a pessimistic era.

**Jason Raia:**

I remember 19% interest rates.

**David Eisenhower:**

19% on and I mean, this was a and I remember wringing my hands and, this is terrible and that's terrible. And in a way, I thought thought I was making kind of an impression on this Italian girl, maybe with how sensitive Americans aren't. She says, this is an amazing country. She says everything works here. You don't, you don't have any idea, what, the Russians are nowhere around. I mean, you know, she's from Northern Italy, so she's, she's, conscious of the fact the Russians are in Hungary, which is not far away. And, I stopped, paused. Wow.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

Think about that.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

For as dark as our problems seem to be, they were making a citizen out of her, at one of our darkest moments. And so here we are in 2023. We, you know, we're very conscious of the divide that we have in this country and, the various controversies we haven't yet, there's a stampede for our –

**Jason Raia:**

That's right.

**David Eisenhower:**

Stampede for this country. So we live with great privilege and wealth, and I would say opportunity and things like that. But life is not complete, if all you do is enjoy it.

**Jason Raia:**

Yeah.

**David Eisenhower:**

That the essence of freedom is the ability to be a good person and to find a way to be a good person, and that that's where responsibilities kick in. And I just drove past the point here at Freedoms Foundation where the Bill of Responsibilities is posted. That is a unique insight, it sets Freedoms Foundation apart from many, many other organizations that emphasize the notion of Americanism or rights. Everybody talks about rights. They don't talk about responsibilities, but that's reinforced by the Medal of Honor, Garden or Grove, and things that happen here.

**Jason Raia:**

I think that's exactly, that's exactly right. You wrote a second book, *Going Home to Glory.*

**David Eisenhower:**

Mhmm.

**Jason Raia:**

Which is this wonderful, family memoir, and it's, you know, set in the years after -

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Grand your grandfather left the White House. They, he and your grandmother settled in Gettysburg, Again, you are there with them.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

And, it is just filled with wonderful stories, but I want you to relate One of my favorite stories that you share pretty regularly with our teachers when you come here, which is the day you got fired by your grandfather.

**David Eisenhower:**

Fired. Yeah, well, I knew he was a dynamo. He mentored me in a lot of areas, you know, instructed me and so forth. But, I would say that day, that was in, summer of ‘63. I was working with a couple friends.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And, we were having fun over lunch hours. We were playing a honeymoon bridge, and two, two people were playing a bridge game. We got involved in a game a couple of times, actually, and we thought that the general had gone back to his office downtown, we thought he was off the farm. And By Jove, he walks through the door.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh.

**David Eisenhower:**

There we are. It's 1:15 in the afternoon. I mean, lunch hour has been over for 15 minutes, and boy, he just, bang. You're fired. And I think that's what he said. I'm not sure. I saw the lips move. Not sure what I heard. And the power of it is certainly being around an explosion.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And, So I picked it up. We lived on the corner of the farm, so I'm walking home. And, I'm asking myself, how do I explain this when I get home? And then the second thought that went through my head was, oops, we have a golf game this afternoon. I wonder if he's gonna show up. This is 4 o'clock, the two of us were gonna go out and play Gettysburg Country Club. And, so I was kinda sitting in the living room to see if the car was gonna show up. It did. He pulls up. And, so I had one of these seven minute car rides over to Gettysburg Country Club with him in total silence, and he was kind of an interesting driver to say the least. He's somebody who had not driven a car in 25 years when he's relicensed by the state of Pennsylvania, getting out of office. They didn't know how to say no. So anyway, we made the country club and first hole played in silence. The second hole played in silence. Third hole in silence. On the fourth hole, just downhill par four, I remember this, he says, Dave, I allow my associates one mistake a year. You've had yours. And then on fifth, we, I was rehired, along with everybody else. And so, this was my one mistake of 1963. Out of the loud. But I just say that he ran a very tight ship. Everything about him was, was, very organized and buttoned down. I can remember the atmosphere in the White House. The farm, same thing. Everything was, everything was very brisk. Everything moved, and you could see why. He's very powerful personality.

**Jason Raia:**

So you're from the Eisenhower family, your grandfather, is this war hero. He becomes president. And then you meet Julie and her father who happens to be Richard Nixon.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

And you become part of that family.

**David Eisenhower:**

Mhmm.

**Jason Raia:**

Another incredibly incredible political family in the 1950’s and 60’s and you go through Watergate.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yepp.

**Jason Raia:**

You're part of the family.

**David Eisenhower:**

Exactly.

**Jason Raia:**

And I'm I'm you know, we've never talked about this. And I've always been curious just what that experience was like because this isn't just the President of the United States and your grandfather's Vice President. It is –

**David Eisenhower:**

I think –

**Jason Raia:**

–your father-in-law.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah. First of all, I mean, for the record, I think anybody who knows or meets Julie would back me up on this. I was knocked out by her.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

I was interested in the fact that we had family connections. It's so funny, but I was entirely focused on Julie, who's an extraordinary person. And, so, however, I became swept up in this, and I found that, in a very different way. I became as close to her father as I had been to my grandfather in a very different way. So along comes Watergate. And, the reason I started *Eisenhower at War* at Tehran –

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

– is at some point during Watergate, I became conscious of the fact that an era was ending. And I would say that era really is, 1943 through 1972.

**Jason Raia:**

Oh, interesting.

**David Eisenhower:**

That's a 30 year era. So the question in Watergate was, what kind of country, what kind of government, what kind of presidency are we gonna have in the post Cold War?

Jason Raia:

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And what Nixon, he answers for the specific problems of Watergate, but gen more generally, what he's doing is he's answering for decades of prerogative. At some level, I became aware of that fairly early. Now that's not to minimize the agony. I could see the agony we experienced, but, this the sadness that was befalling the Nixons. Having said that, with few exceptions, Richard Nixon has to be one of the most one of the happiest former presidents in history.

**Jason Raia:**

Interesting.

**David Eisenhower:**

There's a whole book written about it called *The President's Club*. In the star of *The President's Club*, which is about the team of former presidents that happened to be alive during the Clinton Presidency, they all became sort of friends. Clinton befriends Nixon among other things. Is that I think at some level, Nixon had a broader understanding of what had happened there. He wasn't sure of it, but he had an understanding. So he's not somebody who died of regret.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

And he was very useful, in former years and wonderful to be around.

**Jason Raia:**

I wonder if you see parallels with today. You know, when we think about the Vietnam Era that probably happened in the late sixties, early seventies, where there is such tension and division in the country. And for the last decade, two decades since–

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah well, I would say that if anything, Jason, I would say that, the divisions that are going around now, I say the divisions, if anything, are deeper today. They had people with agendas in the sixties, but we didn't have whole peoples against each other. In many ways, it's deeper. But I think that the deeper reason is similar in this sense. I cannot imagine that this country deciding that it faces real problems would tolerate this degree of division.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

For two minutes longer. And I think the real in in many ways, what Americans are debating right now is do we have problems?

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And that has been a refrain since the victory in the Cold War. I'll take you back to an essay. It's called the, what was “The End of History?” Yes. This is a,

**Jason Raia:**

Fukuyama?

**David Eisenhower:**

Fukuyama. Yeah. He was at the state department at the time, but he writes his essay in, foreign affairs 1989 saying that if history can be understood as a debate about the optimal form of human organization in political society, history has ended with the victory of Western liberal capitalism, I think is the way to put it. Well, with that, the whole era, the Reagan, late Reagan era, Bush era, even Clinton era, is a kind of mass celebration.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

It's like the final scene in Star Wars III where the Ewoks celebrate the end of the evil empire.

It's a kind of mass celebration, and it's a sense that we don't have problems anymore. We've arrived at a sort of Reagan's farewell address that refers to the city on a hill. If you look at that, what he's really describing is a passage from Revelations, which describes New Jerusalem. We've arrived in New Jerusalem.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

So we don't have problems. This underlies the mantras of the 90’s and the, you know, anti-government mood and so forth. And the idea that collective effort is in the way of everybody. That has rubbed up, I think, over the last 10 or 15 years against a growing consensus that America faces problems.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And that we're gonna have to rekindle, I'd say, the values of citizenship. I think that's gonna happen. I think it's, I think it's an election or two away, but I think it's gonna happen. Think it's gonna happen, and it’s going to happen because it is necessary, because it's instinctive, and because of the work of foundations like Freedoms Foundation that reminds us that this is, all these things are very necessary. That is a willingness to see things from the other's point of view. Assuming responsibility for your own position in society, all of these things, people want this. It's just a question of whether, a, do we have problems? I think we decided we do.

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

So step two is which problems?

**Jason Raia:**

Right.

**David Eisenhower:**

What comes first?

**Jason Raia:**

Can we agree on what the problems are and then prioritize that?

**David Eisenhower:**

Prioritize. Yeah. That's what national elections are about. I think, ultimately, they're about priorities. And that is what our debate is. And what we're still in the habit of, is thinking that we can indulge, nastiness, things like that.

**Jason Raia:**

You teach and and and this will be our last, set of questions before we get to our quiz where we end all of our episodes. But you teach a course on campaigns and conventions, debates, and the political process.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Every four years when and and you have your students go to the convention. I think you co- teach this.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

So some are going to Republican Conventions, some are going to Democratic Conventions, some are going to both. I'm I'm I'm -

**David Eisenhower:**

We go to 10.

**Jason Raia:**

What is the, as we are looking at another election cycle, we're already really into it.

**David Eisenhower:**

Right.

**Jason Raia:**

2024 is the presidential election in the year. It's already contentious. What are you thinking about your students, when you do this course again, and students writ large, young people writ large, what should they be looking for? What are the lessons that, maybe they we need to remember from the past, from past elections? And, ultimately, do you ever yearn for the smoke filled rooms of the past?

**David Eisenhower:**

Well, I think I do. The thing about conventions is that it's a gathering of professionals.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

And they think things, and they wanna spin things to the world, but they think things. So one of the things that we're examining on the ground floor is, we are getting a real closer look at the election and what people are, what they think that election is about and how they plan to organize their appeals and so forth what the score really is. It's a no spin zone. You can't put 4,000 professionals together, and have them all act and say things that they don't really think.

So it's a great window into what the issues are in a campaign and how they will be communicated and what the consequences of the election will be. And second, it's exposure to the people who are involved in public service. And I think that, what I'm overwhelmed by, which is why I'm sitting here as an optimist when we're talking about America, is the commonalities between Republicans and Democrats as individuals. That's something I reported from 2004, called home. And we're in Boston at the John Kerry Convention, and this is the one that president Obama lit up with.

**Jason Raia:**

Right. That's where he gave his speech.

**David Eisenhower:**

Keynote Address. Yeah. I was 50 feet away from that speech, no, 300 feet away from that speed. I said to Julie, you'd really enjoy it here. I mean, this is you just like being at the Republican Convention of the exact same people. You know, young, inspiring. Wonderful, alert, competent, friendly people. So I think that they have an opportunity. One of the bills of, one of the, I'd say the Bill of Responsibilities, one of the responsibilities is participation.

**Jason Raia:**

Yep.

**David Eisenhower:**

In government. What kind of people usefully participate in the government? They are people who've assumed a lot of responsibility in their lives. They have families. They have jobs, they have positions, and so forth. They make themselves useful. And, so it's a bath, in that.

**Jason Raia:**

Brilliant. I love it. We end each episode with a little a quiz. No study is necessary, but just to get back to you and to know a little bit more about you before we close out. First question, excluding Washington and Lincoln, who's your favorite president?

**David Eisenhower:**

And excluding family members.

**Jason Raia:**

Well –

**David Eisenhower:**

Eisenhower Nixon would be automatic. It's a very good question, And I hate to dodge it because I teach the presidency at University of Pennsylvania. When I find myself, certainly Reagan, in what he accomplishes. And I like Reagan, and I was around him and I thought he's very interesting. I like Lyndon Johnson. I think Lyndon Johnson was a very significant president. As far as enjoyed him, his campaigns until the very end, W.

**Jason Raia:**

Okay.

**David Eisenhower:**

I really enjoyed W, and his father, Herbert Walker.

**Jason Raia:**

Mhmm.

**David Eisenhower:**

The Bush family, the two Bushes were wonderful. I know Herbert Walker is a Congressman, so I hate to answer it this way.

**Jason Raia:**

No, no and that’s well and I think -

**David Eisenhower:**

Who ought to be on Mount Rushmore? I sort of look at it as, the most consequential presidents since World War II that are not Eisenhower or Nixon, in my opinion, are Kennedy and Reagan.

**Jason Raia:**

Next question. What's one thing you would want every American to learn more about?

**David Eisenhower:**

I would like people that's a good question. In fact, this would be fun. Constitutional law.

**Jason Raia:**

There you go.

**David Eisenhower:**

Constitutional law is if that's what lawyers did, I would be a practicing lawyer now. Because –

**Jason Raia:**

For those who don't know, you actually have your JD.

**David Eisenhower:**

Yeah. Right.

**Jason Raia:**

Trained as a lawyer, but you've never worked as a lawyer.

**David Eisenhower:**

Never practiced. But, I think that if that's what lawyers did, I would be a lawyer.

**Jason Raia:**

Last question, bourbon or scotch?

**David Eisenhower:**

My wife likes scotch, and I am a red wine guy myself.

**Jason Raia:**

Ok fair enough.

**David Eisenhower:**

Which strangely is something that I enjoyed as a kind of a college guy, and I'm sort of allergic to it or something. So we were tea tollers for years and now Julie enjoys a good scotch and I enjoy it.

**Jason Raia:**

Well, there you go. And that as long as you enjoy it, that's all that matters.

**David Eisenhower:**

This is a tough quiz, Jason.

**Jason Raia:**

Well, thank you to our guest, David Eisenhower. I can't wait to have you back. I also wanna thank our producers, Lara Kennedy and Sarah Rasmussen. A special shout out to friend of the pod, Bill Franz, as well as, FFVF or interpreter Bob Gleason for their work on art and opening music. If you enjoyed today's episode, please rate and review *George Washington Slept Here* wherever you listen to your podcast like Apple and Spotify, which helps bring new listeners to the podcast. And don't forget to tell your friends.

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