

Ike and "The Great Truck Train"—1919

by John E. Wickman

THE SPRING OF 1919, Dwight D. Eisenhower was twenty-eight years old, and at a particularly low point in his life. Promoted to the temporary rank of lieutenant colonel because of his World War I service as the commander of Camp Colt, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, he was expecting an imminent demotion to his permanent rank of captain. From Camp Colt he had been transferred first to Fort Benning, Georgia, and then transferred again to Camp Meade, Maryland. A lack of dependent housing at Meade had meant a forced separation from his young wife, Mamie, and their infant son, Doud Dwight, who were now staying in Denver with her parents.¹

Equally depressing were Eisenhower's day-to-day duties which revolved around demobilizing troops coming back from Europe; that activity marked the end of the war that he had desperately wanted to fight overseas. Each day he was reminded that he had never gotten beyond the confines of Gettysburg. As he noted in his memoirs, it was a dull period of "hurry up and wait."²

The news of the U.S. Army's projected Transcontinental Convoy brought hope for something challenging to do, and Eisenhower immediately applied for an assignment as one of the tank observers. He also recommended his friend, Maj. Sereno Brett, for a second post on the convoy. When the two young officers finally received their orders to join the expedition, which departed from Washington, D.C., they found themselves caught up in the transportation chaos caused by the demobilization process. They missed the opening ceremonies, held at the Zero Milestone south of the White House, and only caught up with the convoy as it was encamped at Frederick, Maryland. For the next two months, through rain, mud, and the searing heat of summer on the western plains and deserts, Eisenhower and Brett learned firsthand why America needed a transcontinental system of highways.

The Transcontinental Convoy was organized after the army, and the federal government generally, had become convinced, during World War I, of the necessity for better roads across the United States. As originally planned, the convoy consisted of two parts; one moving north and west, along U.S. Highway 30, and the other part, heading south to Atlanta, Georgia, and then west toward Los Angeles, California. Even before the war, the Lincoln Highway Association, chartered in 1913 in Michigan, had campaigned for better roads. The association wanted to establish a transcontinental roadway, and it offered a variety of incentives to towns and cities to help in the project.³

One of the incentive programs of the Lincoln Highway Association was the "Seedling Mile." The association, with the assistance of the Portland Cement Association, would assist any town in obtaining free cement for one mile of road if the town would provide the necessary grading and continuing maintenance. This program was very active between 1914 and 1919.⁴ Both associations hoped that all of the "seedling miles," could be linked together in U.S. Highway 30, and that it would stretch across the country as the first paved, transcontinental highway.

In order to achieve its goal, the field secretary of the Lincoln Highway Association, Henry C. Ostermann, stumped the country selling individuals and businesses on how important the association's program was to them and their economic future. Ostermann was so good at what he did, and so familiar with the nation's roads, that he was frequently used during World War I as a navigator, or pilot, for truck convoys going across the country. This activity was necessary because roads at that time were poorly marked, and in such primitive states of construction, that knowing which roads were passable in bad weather was something to be learned by experience, just as a river pilot learns where the snags are located. It was in the course of this work in 1917, that Ostermann apparently conceived the idea of send-

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1. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *At Ease: Stories I Tell To Friends* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1967; reprinted, New York: Eastern Acorn Press, 1989), 155-68.

2. *Ibid.*, 157.

3. *Ibid.*, 157-58.

4. Peter T. Harstad and Diana J. Fox, "Dusty Doughboys on the Lincoln Highway: The 1919 Army Convoy in Iowa," *The Palimpsest* 56 (May/June 1975): 68-69. This article is one of the best sources on the Lincoln Highway Association and its origins.

ing a military convoy over the entire length of the planned Lincoln Highway. He discussed the matter with a number of military officers in Washington.⁵

One person who heard of Ostermann's idea, and who was responsible for much of the initiatives in getting the convoy started, was Capt. Bernard M. McMahon. McMahon, unfortunately, was not to command the convoy, though he was in charge of the initial preparations.⁶

5. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 69-70.

6. The basic document on the convoy is the official report which was kept by Lt. E. R. Jackson. A copy of his report is in the holdings of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [hereafter cited as EL]. See U.S. Army, Transport Corps, Transcontinental Convoy Records, 1919, A65-13, Box 1 [hereafter cited as Official Report]. That designates the finished typed copy of the report; there are two other items in the same box which need to be distinguished from the Official Report. One is a copy of the official Lincoln Highway Association Road Guide. It was in this document that Jackson daily recorded the events and mileage. The second item is a typed copy of Jackson's handwritten notes. To further complicate this matter of the "official report," there have been some citations to a report entitled, "Transcontinental Convoys," in *U.S. War Department, Annual Reports, 1920*, vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), 1789-90. This is the only source which mentioned the second convoy which attempted to go south, and then west to Los Angeles, California. To date, I have found no copy of a report on this second convoy.

On July 4, 1919, Lt. Col. C. W. McClure, of the army infantry, became the expedition's commander. That circumstance was to produce a rather interesting problem, for Captain McMahon was still involved as the train's prime officer in charge and he traveled 3,251 miles across the United States under the direct command of someone who had come only belatedly to the whole expedition. McMahon, however, was a good officer, and he seems to have accepted the secondary role without recrimination. Indeed, in the official report of the convoy, he is cited with having done more to keep up the morale of the enlisted men, and thus contributed to the overall success of the expedition.⁷

The question of who was initially responsible for conceiving the idea of the convoy as a military operation has been the subject of some disagreement over time.⁸ The

7. Official Report, 5.

8. Harstad and Fox, "Dusty Doughboys on the Lincoln Highway," 69, credits Henry C. Ostermann with the inception of the idea for the convoy. Lt. Col. William S. Graf, "The Great Overland March," *Soldiers* (October 1975): 47, credits Dr. S. M. Johnson (who was on the convoy) with the basic idea.



official report of the convoy leaves no doubt on the subject, and indicates that Captain McMahon had sparked the idea as early as January or February of 1919.⁹

When Eisenhower and Brett did catch up with the convoy, (or as Eisenhower was to refer to it in his own report, "the truck train,") it consisted of eighty-one military vehicles, thirty-seven officers, and several hundred enlisted personnel. There was also one federal civilian employee, Edwin A. Reis, on loan from the Raritan Arsenal, and he was assigned to the large Militar tractor. In the official report, Reis was given high praise for the success of the convoy for he frequently was the only person who could figure out what to do when vehicles broke down or were totally mired.¹⁰

In addition to the military vehicles and personnel, there were a number of civilian vehicles. These carried the representatives of three tire manufacturers and several automobile and truck companies, a number of reporters, and a variety of "good road boosters." As the convoy proceeded, the latter would join for a time, then drop out, and other individuals would take their places. When arrayed in travel formation, the convoy stretched out over two miles.¹¹

The vehicles used in the convoy were basically trucks, motor cars, motorcycles, and one small tank on a flatbed trailer. The tank was the responsibility of Eisenhower and Brett, as both were posted at Camp Meade as tank officers. The firms represented were Packard, Dodge, General Motors, Mack, Riker, White and Garford. In addition, the Willys Company, one of the major sponsors of the convoy, had decided to try out some of its civilian models not yet released for sale to the public. These were the so-called "mystery cars."¹² In addition to the aforementioned, there were some special purpose vehicles which had been developed very late in World War I, such as a blacksmith shop on wheels, a wrecker, a gasoline truck, a water truck, and a van that pulled a 3 million candle-power searchlight. Ahead of all of this equipment were scouts on Harley-Davidson and Indian motorcycles. The scouts were necessary because of the unknown conditions of the roads and bridges up ahead.¹³

Conditions out on the roads ran the gamut from comparatively easy in the eastern part of the United States, to extremely difficult on both men and vehicles in western portions. When writing his memoirs forty-seven years later, Eisenhower figured that in the first three days on the road, travel consumed a total of twenty-nine hours, to complete 165 miles, for an average speed of 5

2/3 miles per hour. Throughout the trip the maintenance crews were kept busy repairing vehicles, which were towed in by Reis and his Militar tractor.¹⁴

Life on the road with the truck train was similar to what it would have been on a foot march with the army of that time. Each morning camp was broken, tents taken down and stored, and each night a tent city was again raised. The entire schedule of travel was worked out ahead of time, and the commander had been ordered to stick to it. That was to be a sore point with many of the officers, as it was difficult to maintain the exact daily schedule throughout the entire trip.

Eisenhower, in particular, was also critical of the level of discipline, or lack of it. In his official report, he noted:

Lessons from observation of personnel are that officers and men should be thoroughly trained as soldiers before entrusting to them the valuable equipment of a motor train.¹⁵

In the summary of his report, Eisenhower further noted, "it is believed the E.T.C. [Expedition Train Commander] should pay more attention to disciplinary drills for officers and men, and that all should be intelligent, snappy soldiers before giving them the responsibility of operating trucks."¹⁶ In fairness to the recruits, many with little military experience, it must be noted that their young officers were not above a good deal of non-military behavior. Eisenhower and Brett became famous for their pranks.¹⁷

One very serious problem for the convoy concerned food, both its quantity and quality. From the beginning of the trip this important item was the responsibility of the supply officer, First Lt. Howard G. Shockey. That actually meant that he had two jobs. By the time the convoy reached North Platte, Nebraska, it was obvious that something had to be done, as the quality of food service was suffering. Shockey was relieved of his mess duties, and Capt. Richard J. Gurvine was brought on as mess officer. Gurvine had been a regular army mess sergeant during World War I, and his appointment, according to the official report, "resulted in excellent meals being served during the second half of the journey."¹⁸

The convoy was not solely dependent upon its own resources for entertainment and refreshments. Almost every town in the vicinity of the route of travel, and the nightly encampments, would provide some social activity as well as food and drink. These events ranged from dances and banquets, to melon feeds, and outdoor

9. Official Report, 5.

10. *Ibid.*, 7.

11. Harstad and Fox, "Dusty Doughboys on the Lincoln Highway," 71.

12. Albert D. Manchester, *Trails Begin Where Rails End* (Glendale, Calif.: Trans-Anglo Books, 1987), 81.

13. Official Report, 8-9.

14. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 159-60.

15. Lt. Col. D. D. Eisenhower to Chief Motor Transport Corps, "Report on Trans-Continental Trip, dated November 3, 1919, Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois," Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1916-1952, EL.

16. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

17. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 161-65.

18. Official Report, 8.

Memoranda

July 20. — Chicago Heights, Sunday rest period. Ordulana Beerover spent the night at the Chicago Automobile Club, as guest of the Four Wheel Drive Auto Co. Had breakfast with Mr. R. M. Newbold at the Congress Hotel, followed by motor ride over Lake Shore Drive thru Lincoln Park. Took Mr. Newbold out to camp to inspect convoy at noon. Buses: #47905, 47986, 48043 + 48047, Cadillac Touring Car #18852 and GMC Ambulance #24212, to replace damaged ambulance #37309, added to convoy at this point. Serat, Lt. J. Wood, Jr. did a few demonstration stunts with the Military for the instruction and entertainment of the camp visitors. Several movie weekly camera men shot this exhibition, and also groups of the officers. Citizens of town took most of the collected money to their homes for Sunday dinners. Godgear Band in place at the disposal of the Expeditionary Commander for the remainder of the trip. All necessary adjustments made.

In an official Lincoln Highway Association Road Guide, Lt. E. R. Jackson daily recorded events and convoy mileage. On July 20, Jackson noted activities accompanying a rest period in Chicago Heights, Illinois—including a demonstration for "camp visitors" of the Military tractor.

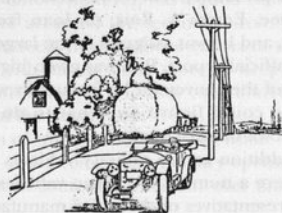
movies. By far the most elaborate of these occasions was one put on by Harvey F. Firestone, while the convoy was camped near his home, "Harbel Manor," outside Columbiana, Ohio. Firestone was much involved with the Lincoln Highway Association project. His interest was also prompted by the fact that a portion of the convoy was riding on his tires. In addition to great quantities of food and drink, Firestone also had a short movie made of the occasion, and Eisenhower appears in at least two frames of the film.¹⁹

The stop at "Harbel Manor" points up another benefit to officers in the convoy. They not only were becoming intimately aware of the geography of a large portion of the country, on a day-to-day basis, but they also were making contact with people such as Firestone and leaders in the Lincoln Highway Association. At least one member of the convoy, Capt. William C. Greany, eventually left the army and spent many years working for the Packard Motor Car Company.²⁰

19. Harstad and Fox, "Dusty Doughboys on the Lincoln Highway," 72-73. A copy of the film is in the audio-visual collection at the Eisenhower Library.

Lehigh Portland Cement Co.

ALLENTOWN, PA. CHICAGO, ILL. SPOKANE, WY.
New York, N. Y. Philadelphia, Pa. Boston, Mass.
Pittsburgh, Pa. New Castle, Pa.
Jacksonville, Fla. Buffalo, N. Y. Mason City, Iowa
Kansas City, Mo. Omaha, Neb. Minneapolis, Minn.



THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

"CONCRETE

WHEREVER PRACTICABLE"

FOR ALL CONCRETE

LEHIGH
CEMENT

Use Lehigh, the National Cement

165

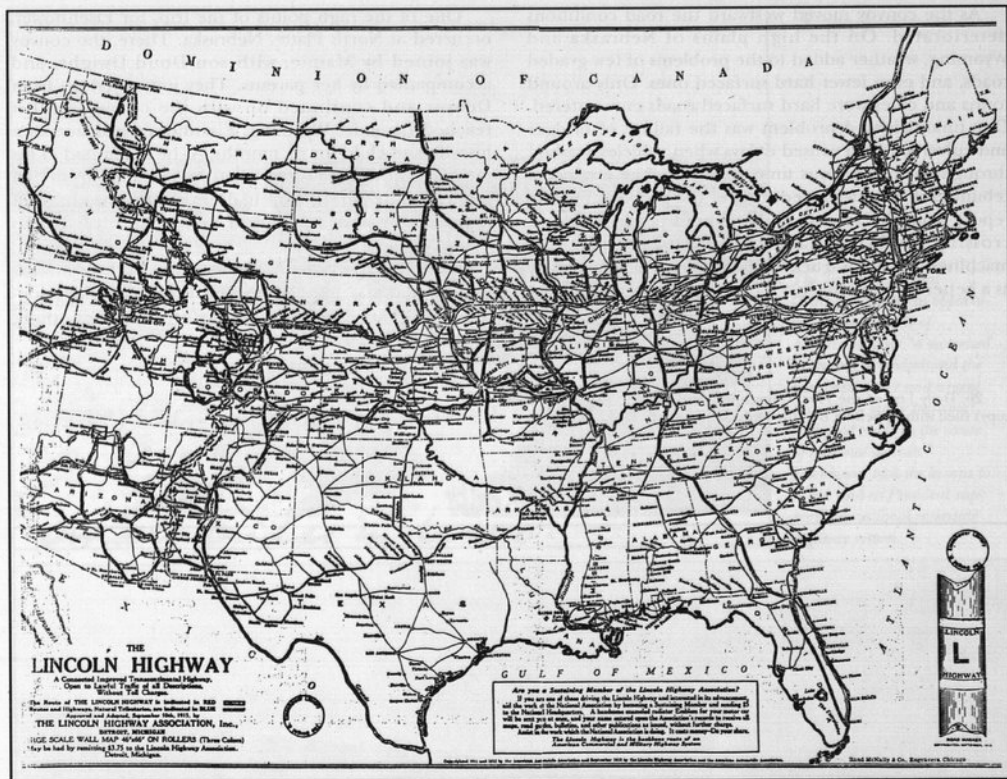
Social activities along the route were actually encouraged by the expedition's mission statement, which said, in part, "an exhibition to the general public, either through actual contact, or resulting channels of publicity, of the development of the motor vehicle for military purposes, which is conceded to be one of the principal factors contributing to the winning of the World War."²¹ Captain Greany in his report also commented on the contact with the civilian population, "In this way, approximately 3,250,000 persons were afforded an opportunity to personally see a unit of a motorized army and to understand the vast importance and urgent necessity of motor transport and good roads in the cause of national defense."²²

Dwight Eisenhower contributed to some of the publicity when the convoy stopped in Boone, Iowa, Mamie

20. Dwight D. Eisenhower to Major William C. Greany, November 16, 1953, White House Central Files, PPF 1063, Box 967, EL.

21. "Transcontinental Convoys," in U.S. War Department, *Annual Reports, 1920, 1790*.

22. Report of Captain William C. Greany, briefed from his original report, White House Central Files, PPF 1063, Box 967, EL.



From the Lincoln Highway Association came this road map. The highway west of the Mississippi passed through Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming; completely bypassed Kansas; and terminated in San Francisco.

Eisenhower's birthplace. Though the stop was a brief one, Eisenhower had a chance to visit Mamie's uncle, Joel E. Carlson, and her aunt, Eda. The local newspaper covered the convoy's arrival and interviewed Eisenhower who was quoted as giving this appraisal of the Lincoln Highway:

I can't say too much on the condition of the Lincoln Highway. Imagine a great truck convoy of this kind over 1,200 miles, practically ahead of its schedule. We lost one truck in Pennsylvania. The hill was slippery and the truck slid over the mountainside and crashed to the bottom. No one was hurt and the damage to the truck will not be over \$200. This is the only accident we have had.²³

Eisenhower's statement about accidents was not quite correct. Depending upon how one defines "accidents," the official report notes several others, including one in Pennsylvania when one of the trucks hit a railroad crossing guard, sending the man to the hospital. Inattentiveness while driving was listed as the cause. Another incident involved a truck running over an embankment, when the driver fell asleep.²⁴ The true situation is a bit murky because Captain Greany, in his report, noted that there were 230 road accidents along the entire length of the trip. However, his count took note of such things as failure of the roads under the trucks, quicksand, and mud related delays in the far western portions of the trip.²⁵

23. Harstad and Fox, "Dusty Doughboys on the Lincoln Highway," 77-78.

24. Official Report, 10.

25. Report of Captain William C. Greany, White House Central Files, EL.

As the convoy moved westward the road conditions deteriorated. On the high plains of Nebraska and Wyoming, weather added to the problems of few graded roads, and even fewer hard surfaced ones. Only around towns and cities were hard surfaced roads encountered. One unanticipated problem was the failure of bridges and culverts, which caused delays when vehicles crashed through them. Precious time was lost as the engineers rebuilt each one destroyed. Part of the problem was the report from the scouts, as they found no problems in crossing the bridges and culverts on their lighter machines. Finally, a truck was sent ahead of the convoy, as a better testing vehicle.²⁶

26. Daily Log of the First Transcontinental Convoy (typewritten copy) filed with Appendix B to the Official Report, 13-14, EL.

One of the high points of the trip, for Eisenhower, occurred at North Platte, Nebraska. There, the convoy was joined by Mamie, with son Doud Dwight, and accompanied by her parents. They journeyed up from Denver and continued on with the convoy until it reached Laramie, Wyoming. Eisenhower had not seen his wife and child for six months. As he recounted in his memoirs, he decided that when he returned from San Francisco, he would stop in Denver and the three of them would have a vacation before he returned to Camp Meade.²⁷

Wyoming also brought another type of diversion for it was there that Eisenhower and Brett began developing their more elaborate pranks on the other young

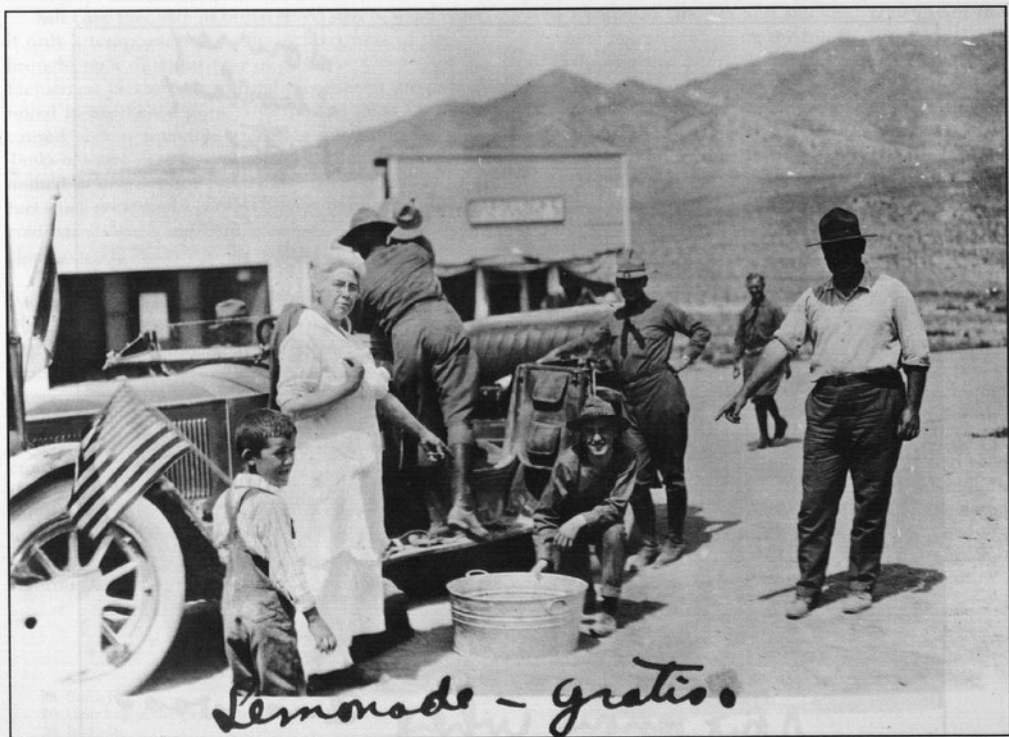
27. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 161.





Small bridge in Wyo.

The Transcontinental Convoy provided an opportunity for thousands of Americans to see "a motorized army and to understand the vast importance and urgent necessity of motor transport and good roads in the cause of national defense." Eisenhower took the lessons to heart, and as President supported a national interstate highway system.



Lemonade - gratis.



"Eats"



Sourney
Shockey
& step

I don't know where this was

officers, most of whom were quite new to both the army and the American West. Eisenhower has described several incidents at great length in his memoirs, but they all had a common thread: playing on the gullibility of those who found themselves in a strange and somewhat forbidding land. As Eisenhower commented in *At Ease* concerning one of the officers who was the butt of their pranks, "he has had no inkling that what he and one or two others went through on that journey was as part of an audience for a troupe of traveling clowns."²⁸

As the convoy crossed Wyoming and traveled on into Utah, what had been considered difficult roads and trails gave way to next to impassable. Not only bridges collapsed, but occasionally the roadway itself collapsed under the weight of the heavily loaded trucks. At one point the Military tractor endeavored to pull a truck through a soft spot in the road, and both vehicles broke through and were buried in soft mud to a depth of four and one-half feet. A steel cable used to try and pull the Military out, snapped and the cable shot thirty feet in the air, cutting off a large limb of a tree. The tractor was eventually run out on planking placed under it, but the work of getting the planking in place was exhausting for the engineers involved.²⁹

Salt Lake City, with its broad paved streets, was a relief, if only a temporary one. The deserts west of the city brought on a different type of problem. On August 22, Lieutenant Jackson, the official recorder of the convoy, noted in his daily report, "Unexpected delay on desert caused serious situation regarding water and gasoline. Tanks of water were placed under guard and water ration limited to one cup for supper and overnight. Stalling of fuel truck prevented a cooked dinner. Supper consisted of cold baked beans and hard bread, mere existence being chief concern."³⁰

The situation was relieved the next morning when Walker Paul, superintendent for road construction for the Utah Highway Commission, learned of the problem and hauled water by horse teams over twelve miles of road to the convoy. Commenting on the crisis and its aftereffects, Jackson noted, "Personnel utterly exhausted by tremendous efforts . . . reduced morale."³¹ It is easy to imagine that more than once the members of the convoy may have wondered if they had not made a mistake by volunteering for such duty in the first place. If the thought ever occurred to Eisenhower or Brett they left no record of it.

Personal hygiene and general sanitation, under the rigorous conditions on the route, was another recurring

concern. Medical personnel with the truck train consisted of a surgeon, a medical officer, and a dental officer.³² Periodic inspections were made of both men and cooking equipment. Daily bathing was also an important item, and Jackson noted this was accomplished in rivers and streams along the way, as well as in the one instance when personnel were transported to a hot springs near Carson City, Nevada.³³

One of the most dangerous parts of the trip was crossing the Sierra Nevada Mountains, via the King's Grade pass. Given the primitive state of development of the vehicles, driving the convoy over the high pass was a considerable achievement. At each stop on the grade, all wheels had to be blocked. Overheating of engines was frequent. To facilitate this portion of the trip, the Nevada State Highway Department suspended all east-bound traffic until after the convoy had crossed down onto the California side.³⁴

The immediate reward for a job well done was a barbeque served by the War Camp Community Service and the Mayor's Committee of San Francisco, which had journeyed up from the Bay area to welcome the convoy. In the evening, personnel of the convoy were guests at a party on the Meyer's Ranch, south of Lake Tahoe, and were treated to "movies and smokes," courtesy of the Firestone representatives on the trip.³⁵

Following the interlude at the Meyer's Ranch, the convoy made good progress on the downgrade to Placerville, California, arriving there the evening of September 2, 1919. The following day, now over very good roads, the group reached Sacramento in eight hours, and were encamped at the California State Fairgrounds. An additional attraction was that the annual state fair was in progress. John N. Willys, president of the motor car company that bore his name, was the sponsor, in absentia, for an elaborate dinner. Afterwards there were dances for both the enlisted men and officers of the convoy.

The dinner actually was in the form of a farewell banquet, and that may account for the elaborate preparations. A printed program was provided, which contained, among other things, words of praise for the accomplishments of the convoy from Mr. Willys; a brief chronology of the trip; and a menu that included such non-standard army fare as "ripe olives, salted almonds, Razor Clam Chowder, Sacramento River Salmon, country fried chicken, corn on the cob, roast sweet potatoes, Turkish melon, Overland ice cream, coffee, cigars and cigarettes, and finally California fruits, nuts and raisins."

28. *Ibid.*, 165.

29. Daily Log of the First Transcontinental Convoy, 16.

30. *Ibid.*, 18.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Official Report, 4-8.

33. Daily Log of the First Transcontinental Convoy, 21.

34. *Ibid.*, 21-22.

35. *Ibid.*, 22.

In addition, the names of all the personnel on the convoy were listed.³⁶

The lead speakers at the banquet were the governor of the State of California, William D. Stephens, and the adjutant general of California, Gen. J. J. Borree. They were followed by the expeditionary commander, Lt. Col. Charles W. McClure, and the train's commander, Capt. Bernard M. McMahon. The Lincoln Highway Association was represented with speeches from Henry C. Ostermann and Dr. S. M. Johnson, who was also given the rather strange title of "Official Spokesman, Motor Transport Train." No such title is mentioned in the official report of the convoy. Johnson was followed by several local officials. The master of ceremonies for all of this was Frank C. Riggs, Western Division manager of the Willys Overland Company. Following the speeches, there was a variety of musical entertainment, and the program closed with a sing-a-long of popular songs and parodies of other well-known songs.³⁷

The next day the truck train proceeded to Stockton where there was an elaborate parade and another dinner, followed by a dance at the Hotel Stockton. There is no record of whether there was yet another round of speeches. On September 5, the convoy left Stockton with the men in new uniforms; the original issue had been sorely tested by the trip and poor laundry facilities. The reception in Oakland was a repeat of that in Stockton with a parade and a dinner and dance as the major events.³⁸

At last, on September 6, the convoy was moving into its final day. The official observer, Lieutenant Jackson, recorded the day as follows:

Departed Oakland, 8:30 a.m. Convoy crossed San Francisco Bay on two ferry boats, and immediately paraded through the city to Lincoln Park. "The end of the Trail," where medals were presented to the entire personnel by the Lincoln Highway Assn., and Convoy was formally received by Col. R. H. Noble, representing Lt. Gen. Hunter Liggett, Commanding General, Western Dept., and Mayor James Rolph, Jr. Milestone marking the western terminus of Lincoln Highway was dedicated. Red Cross Canteen Service served lunch. Convoy parked at the Presidio. Fair and warm. . . .³⁹

Eisenhower and his comrades could look back over the trip and denominate it a success. As a public relations assist for the U.S. Army, it had been very successful. As noted previously, it was estimated that over 3.5

million people viewed the convoy, and it had passed through 350 towns. The vehicles had indeed been tested, though it was learned that most would have to be redesigned with heavier components. The official report was able to pinpoint specific problems, such as parts failures and various forms of metal fatigue.⁴⁰ The convoy's experiences also became a springboard for improving maintenance procedures on all military vehicles. The end of the convoy, however, did not close out Eisenhower's automotive adventures for 1919.

After the final speeches and medal presentations, Dwight D. Eisenhower was more than ready for his long-awaited vacation with his beloved Mamie and their infant son. The plan was for Ike to travel by train to Denver and join his family, plus Mamie's parents, who were on their annual winter trip to San Antonio, Texas. Mamie still planned on living with her parents through the winter, as dependent housing was still not available at Camp Meade, Ike's then permanent assignment.

According to Eisenhower's reminiscences years later, from the moment they left Denver, it began to rain. Driving across Oklahoma, the rain turned the roads into bottomless mires of mud. The man who had just driven across America was now stuck in Oklahoma. In recalling the situation, he observed, "There were moments when I thought neither the automobile, the bus, nor the truck had any future whatsoever."⁴¹

Upon reaching Lawton, Oklahoma, near Fort Sill, it became clear that they could drive no farther until the roads dried out. This experience exhibited yet another reason for more hard covered roads in America. Safely established in a hotel, the little party whiled away a week's wait as best they could. Each day Eisenhower and his father-in-law would walk down the main street of Lawton and watch the posting of the World Series results. For hours the two would debate the reasons why Chicago, representing the American League, and its rival Cincinnati, of the National League, were doing such a poor job of winning. Little did they realize that they were watching the famous Black Socks scandal unfold.⁴²

Eventually the Eisenhowers were able to resume their trip, and later Eisenhower was back on duty at Camp Meade. However, the experiences of the Transcontinental Convoy would form a background to his thinking years later when, as President, he supported the movement for a transcontinental interstate highway system. What had seemed only a dream in 1919, was to become reality forty years later. KH

36. *Ibid.* A full description of the dinner is filed with the Daily Log of the First Transcontinental Convoy under the heading, "A California Dinner in honor of the officers and men of the first transcontinental convoy of Motor Transport Corps."

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, 23.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Official Report, 28-30.

41. Eisenhower, *At Ease*, 167.

42. *Ibid.*, 167-68.