

On the Death of Telek
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Kay Summersby was a vivacious fashion model who became General Dwight Eisenhower's driver in Britain early in the U.S.'s involvement in World War II. Summersby was in her early thirties and Eisenhower was in his early fifties. He was married, his wife remaining in America for the duration of the war. During Summersby's time with Eisenhower, he rose from a relatively unknown Two-Star General to Four-Star General and Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe and became one of the most prominent and respected people in the world. Summersby's relationship with Ike, as she called him, grew in intimacy to a companion and confidant and woman-at-his-side in public events, and eventually they began a romantic relationship.

Together, Kay and Ike bought a little black Scottie puppy that Ike named Telek. No one knew the origin of the strange-sounding name Telek until, late in her life, Kay revealed that it was a combination of Telegraph Cottage, where Kay and Ike lived in Britain, and the first letter of Kay's name.

Kay loved Ike deeply, and it seemed to her that he loved her. She hoped that they could some day be married and have a family. But it wasn't to happen. At the end of the war, Ike went back to America and his wife and broke off all contact with Kay. She was devastated. She kept Telek, who became her only link to her years with Ike.

Ike's remarkable professional successes continued after the war years as he became first European Commander of Europe and then President of Columbia University, and then was twice elected President of the United States.

Kay moved to New York City in the early 1950s and saw Ike briefly in his office at Columbia after having had no contact with him for six years. Ike was cordial but formal and distant, and it was a strained time for Kay with someone who had once been so close. For Telek, however, it was like old times. He jumped out of Kay's arms and bounded over to Ike and flipped on his back with his paws up inviting Ike to scratch his belly as Ike had done so often all those years ago, and, with a wide smile, Ike did.

Kay never saw Ike again after that one meeting. But she never stopped loving her dear Ike. She observed from a distance his ascendancy to the White House. She always pictured him in her mind as the vibrant man she knew during the war years, and she never got used to the idea of Ike growing old. She would see a picture of him in the paper and think, Oh God, I can't believe it. With each of his illnesses, Ike seemed to shrink a little. During his final illness, Kay's heart ached for him. What Ike went through seemed so cruel. Kay felt relieved when he died. He had suffered too long.

Then death caught up with Telek. He was seventeen years old. One morning, he staggered as he got up and fell down. He tried to get up again but just couldn't manage it. Kay knew what it meant; the vet had told her she had to expect this. In her book written just before her own death, Kay wrote:

I picked Telek up, put him in my lap and talked to him. I told him how much he had always meant to me, how much I had loved him. I told him he was an important part of my life, that when I was sitting at home and he was curled up at my feet, I never felt alone. I talked to him about Ike. I told that poor tired Scottie how much Ike had liked him. I reminded him of how he used to ride in the car with us, of how he had visited Buckingham Palace, of how President Roosevelt had held him, of all the adorable scampering puppies he had sired. I suppose it was a bit silly, but Telek knew that I was loving him. I let my voice and my memories surround him. I wanted him to feel comfortable, loved and secure. Then I put him on my bed, buckled his little tartan coat around him and carried him out to the taxi and to the veterinarian.

“Please put him to sleep,” I said, and burst out crying.

Source: Kay Summersby, *Past Forgetting: My Love Affair With Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Simon & Schuster, 1976).