

GENERAL EISENHOWERS MILITARY DRIVER DURING WW2
WARS END MADE A NON-PERSON OF EISENHOWERS DEVOTED SHADOW
A 'PERSONAL PERHAPS CRUEL SIDE" OF WW2

KAY SUMMERSBY

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SOURCE OF ARTICLE

Hugh A. Mulligan, Associated Press-LA Times
May 28, 1995

LEAD IN TO STORY

Kathleen Helen Summersby (23 November 1908 - 20 January 1975), known as Kay Summersby, was a member of the British Mechanized Transport Corps during World War II, she served as a chauffeur and later as personal secretary to Dwight D. Eisenhower during his period as Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force in command of the Allied forces in northwest Europe. They were together a great deal until the war ended when Eisenhower cut ties and returned to the United States. It is generally agreed that Summersby and Eisenhower became extremely close during the war, and some writers have suggested that they had a sexual relationship, although people who knew both of them at the time have rejected that claim, as have most of Eisenhower's biographers.

The end of World War II in Europe signaled the end of the road for chauffeur Kay Summersby's three-year relationship with her boss, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Her face was censored from the official photo taken by Technical Sgt. Al Meserlin, Ike's photographer, on that May morning in 1945 when the Germans surrendered at the red-brick schoolhouse in Reims, France.

BEFORE EDITING



AFTER EDITING



Kay Summersby was even as only woman present when Ike signed the German surrender, ending World War II in Europe in May of 1945. She was cut out of the official picture hidden behind General Walter Bedell Smith

In a print of the original picture, (SEE ABOVE) which Meserlin has kept in his scrapbook for 50 years, Summersby is in the background as Eisenhower holds aloft, in a V-for-victory gesture, the two pens used by the high-ranking German officers to sign the surrender.

Meserlin, now living in Sea Girt, N.J., has no idea why the photo was altered after he shipped off his film to the Army Pictorial Service laboratory in Paris. "All our stuff went through the wartime censors," he said.

"Usually they just cropped out identifying terrain details so as not to reveal Eisenhower's whereabouts, like when he went to Bastogne."

When Eisenhower left Europe for a Pentagon assignment some months later, Summersby's name was dropped from the travel orders of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) staffers joining him. She was the only member of what he fondly called his "immediate wartime family" to be left behind.

She was devastated, as she recorded in a bittersweet autobiography, "Past Forgetting: My Love Affair With Dwight D. Eisenhower," written after Eisenhower's death and during her final illness.

It depicted a passionate but unconsummated love affair that consisted mostly of "stolen kisses" along a woodland path or aboard "a darkened plane to Cairo."

KAY COMMENTS ABOUT HER BOOK

"The story I am about to tell happened a long time ago. I ask the reader to be lenient. My sources are my memory, my old blue leather diary - and my heart. If an occasional time sequence is twisted or a fact misplaced, it is only because of the tricks that memory plays as one grows older. The conversations in this book ring true to my ear and my heart, but it must be understood that they have been reconstructed from my memories. The events that I am writing about meant so much to me, however, and I have lived them over to myself during so many long nights, that I think my story is as close to reality as if it were only last night that I said my unsuspecting goodbye to the General, to Ike, to the man I loved."



General Dwight D. Eisenhower



Kay Summersby Morgan

From PAST FORGETTING: My Love Affair With Dwight D. Eisenhower, by Kay Summersby Morgan. PAST FORGETTING is the true, intimate account of the secret love affair between Ike and Kay Summersby, the English model who became his driver in wartime London, his staff aide -- and the woman he loved.

Published by Simon and Schuster.

She wrote of holding hands, sitting before the fire in his quarters listening to favorite records while sharing cocktails for two, "almost telepathic" bridge partners, golfing together, horseback riding in the countryside or the desert, romping with "Telek," the coal-black Scotch terrier he bought for her.

Eisenhower mentions her only once in his diary, "Crusade in Europe," just a name on a list of aides.

Kathleen McCarthy Summersby, a perky, coquettish Irish divorcee and former fashion model for the House of Worth in Paris, was 33 when as a civilian volunteer with the British Motor Transport Corps she was assigned to drive Eisenhower around London. He was 20 years older.

One of her earlier assignments was driving an ambulance in the heavily blitzed East End dock area, picking up bodies and delivering them to the morgue. Twice she had to drive around all night searching for a morgue that had room for more corpses.

As a staff driver Kay preferred "the breezy easy-going Yanks to the stiff-upper-lip, swagger stick-carrying British officers" she usually saluted and opened the door for. For his part, Eisenhower liked her sparkling smile and ready wit, even when the buzz bombs began falling, and was amused that she kept her compact and lipstick in her gas mask. He called her "Skib," because she was from Skibbereen in County Cork, and "stubborn as an Army mule."

Summersby wrote of falling in love with the face in the rearview mirror: "I succumbed immediately to that grin which was to become famous."

SHAEF staffers noticed that her bubbly presence relaxed Eisenhower as the pressures of planning the D-Day invasion mounted. Harry Butcher, the general's naval aide, rated her "better than any man at driving that big Packard in a total blackout and through London's pea-soupers with those pinpoint headlights."

Soon she was more than a chauffeur: sitting in on top-secret meetings, going to 10 Downing Street with the general for lunch with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, dining with President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and key advisers such as Averell Harriman, Harry Hopkins and Bernard Baruch.



She accompanied Eisenhower to combat areas and shared GI rations and "liberated champagne" with Gens. Omar Bradley and George S. Patton. Often she presided as hostess at his formal dinners. "We have no secrets from Kay," Eisenhower told Churchill, who was charmed to sit on her right at the table and later awarded her the British Empire Medal.

Eisenhower recommended her for the Legion of Merit, but Chief of Staff George Marshall turned that down. But Eisenhower was successful in wrangling her a lieutenant's commission in the WACs and promoted her to the secretary in charge of his "unofficial mail."

When another driver took over, Kay still went everywhere with the supreme commander, often joining him in the back seat. On the eve of D-Day, she was at his side at an airfield in Newbury in Berkshire, England. From the roof of a hangar, they watched U.S. paratroopers with blackened faces filing aboard transport planes for the night drop behind enemy lines. She saw his eyes brim with tears as the C-47s lifted off under a full moon.

Patton often saw them together and found Eisenhower "very nasty and show offish in her presence."

Bradley, Eisenhower's West Point classmate and favorite field commander, called her "Ike's shadow."

Bradley thought she made him "decidedly pro-British." He and others faulted Eisenhower for summarily busting U.S. officers who criticized British colleagues but patiently suffered the snubs and insults of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery.

It was Summersby who got Eisenhower hooked on the English habit of 4 o'clock tea. The joke at the American officers' mess was that "Eisenhower is the best general the British have."



Bradley was shocked to see Summersby turn up in Algeria after the landings in North Africa but was less surprised when she twice accompanied Eisenhower on brief holidays at a villa on the Riviera.

Rumors, innuendoes, and bawdy barracks jokes were rife in the ranks about their friendship. Eisenhower once complained to Patton that he was speechless with rage when "the other day Kay and I were out riding and a soldier yoo-hoed at us."

Passing convoys in combat zones, Summersby was amused and flattered, as she later wrote, when "truck drivers saluted me with whistles, wolf calls and all kinds of interesting proposals" that made "Ike livid."

"I took her picture many times," said photographer Meserlin, holding up a snapshot of her playing with the dog, Telek, in the snow at Ike's quarters in Reims, a chateau belonging to a champagne baron. "But we don't know what went on at night."

Technical Sgt. Barkev Sagatelian, the senior map-maker in Eisenhower's headquarters, saw Summersby "quite often, but she never came into the war room." Sagatelian, retired as an architect in Ormond Beach, Fla. still asks himself: "Was she his girlfriend? Who knows for sure? High-ranking officers had their own lives. Probably they had love affairs, but we didn't know about those things."

Eisenhower's son, John, who briefly served as his aide after graduating from West Point on D-Day, later described her as "the Mary Tyler Moore of headquarters. She was perky and she was cute. Whether she had any designs on the Old Man and the extent to which he succumbed, I just don't know."

On several occasions, Eisenhower demonstrated his affection for his winsome lieutenant. Although he confessed to being a member of "the awkward squad" for marching out of step at West Point, they sometimes went dancing together after a movie or the theater. He gave her a Beretta automatic and taught her how to shoot at tin cans.

Eisenhower had his tailor measure her for two uniforms after the troopship she boarded to join him in Algeria was torpedoed and she escaped without any luggage into a lifeboat. His aides had to search high and low for the phonograph record of "I'll See You Again," her favorite song from Noel Coward's "Bittersweet."

In her autobiography, published more than a year after she died in 1974, Summersby tells of one attempt at intimacy that failed when "we both came to our senses . . . there were eyes and ears everywhere," and another because Eisenhower was too exhausted after a long airplane journey.

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Pictures of them together in newspapers, magazines, and newsreels made Eisenhower's wife, Mamie, increasingly suspicious. She was furious when her husband, on a brief home leave at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia, kept calling her Kay.

In "Plain Talking," an oral biography of President Harry S. Truman, Merle Miller recounted that "right after the war was over" Eisenhower informed Marshall that he wanted to return to the States, divorce Mamie, and marry Kay. The biographer quotes Truman: "Marshall wrote him back a letter the like of which I never have seen.

He said if Eisenhower ever came close to doing such a thing he'd not only bust him out of the Army but see to it that never for the rest of his life would he be able to draw a peaceful breath."

Miller wrote that Truman then revealed: "One of the last things I did as President, I got those letters from Ike's file in the Pentagon and I destroyed them."

Historian Stephen Ambrose, an editor of the Eisenhower papers, labels the story "completely untrue," maintaining that Truman spoke with Miller long after "he had broken with Eisenhower and was approaching senility."

Kay Summersby became a U.S. citizen and settled in the United States after the war, but never found happiness. She was mugged in a San Rafael, Calif., parking lot, broke off an engagement to a San Francisco man who thought she had money, went through marriage and divorce with a New York stockbroker, and had trouble finding a job. She once called on President Eisenhower at the White House and was graciously received but afterward told by an aide not to call again.

"I heard today that my valued secretary is in dire straits," Eisenhower wrote one day in his diary. "I trust she pulls herself together. . . She is Irish and tragic."

Looking back now on those benighted wartime years, unilluminated by the scandal-probing spotlights of supermarket tabloids and TV shows like "Hard Copy," Chicago Tribune war correspondent Jack Thompson may have come the closest to shedding some light on the romantic aspects of driving with Mrs. Summersby:

"You didn't often see a general kissing his chauffeur."



Kate with General Omar Bradley

ADDITIONAL COMMENT FROM PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN: (DENIAL & ANIMOSITY BETWEEN HIM AND IKE)

President Harry S. Truman reportedly told author Merle Miller that in 1945, Eisenhower asked permission from General George Marshall to divorce his wife to marry Summersby, but permission was refused.

Truman also allegedly said he had the correspondence between Marshall and Eisenhower retrieved from the Army archives and destroyed.¹ But Truman's account of the Summersby controversy has been widely rejected by most (but not all) scholars. Historians say Truman had a mistaken recollection, and emphasize that Eisenhower had asked permission to bring his wife to England.

Others have speculated that Truman was not truthful about Eisenhower because of animosity between the two men that intensified during the Eisenhower presidency (Truman stated that Eisenhower did not invite him back to the White House during his administration).

Historian Robert H. Ferrell stated he found that the tapes of Miller's interviews with Truman contain no mention whatever of Summersby, and concludes that Miller concocted the story.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT KAY

BIRTH DATE AND LOCATION: November 23, 1908 - Ballydehob, County Cork, Ireland

DEATH: January 20, 1975 (Age 66) - Southampton, Suffolk County, New York. She died of Cancer.

BURIAL: Cremated - Ashes scattered in County Cork, Ireland



Kay Summersby Morgan was a confidential secretary, driver, and confidante to the General of the Army. Dwight D. Eisenhower during World War II, died yesterday of cancer of the liver in Southampton (L. I.) Hospital. She was 66 years old and lived at 1111 Park Avenue.

Miss Summersby was a member of the British Women's Auxiliary Corps in London in 1942 when she was assigned to drive General Eisenhower. It was the beginning of a friendship, the precise nature of which was a matter of speculation for many years.

Late in 1973, Merle Miller, in "Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman," quoted the former President as saying that shortly after the war General Eisenhower wrote to General of the Army George C. Marshall saying that he wished to divorce his wife and marry Miss Sumrnersby. Mr. Truman was quoted as saying that he had the letter and General Marshall's angry reply, removed from Pentagon files and destroyed.

Miss Summersby, the former Kathleen. McCarthy-Morrogh, who always denied the many recurring reports concerning her purported romance with General Eisenhower, was born on the island of Inish Beg, off the coast of County Cork, Ireland. She moved to London in 1932 to work as a model and movie extra. In the late nineteen-thirties, she was married to Gordon Summersby, but the marriage ended shortly after she became General Eisenhower's driver-secretary.

In December 1942, when she was on her way to join General Eisenhower in Oran, Algeria, after the invasion of North Africa, the ship on which she was traveling, the Strathallen, was torpedoed by a German submarine. Miss Summersby narrowly escaped death during an eight-hour ordeal in which she saw the ammunition-laden ship explode and sink.

During the years in which she served under General Eisenhower, she was with him for important meetings with President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, King George VI, and other leaders. She grew ever closer to and was trusted by the general, who in 1944 arranged to have her commissioned a second lieutenant in the American Women's Army Corps even though she remained a British subject. She eventually rose to the rank of captain. She became a United States citizen after the war.

Miss Summersby's best-selling memoir of the war years, "Eisenhower Was My Boss," was published in 1948. In 1952 she was married to Reginald H. Morgan, a Wall Street stockbroker, but that marriage ended in divorce in 1958. In recent years Miss Summersby had worked as a fashion coordinator and set and costume designer for television and stage productions here.

A friend said yesterday that Miss Summersby had been ill for about 18 months but remained active. "Kay was a no-nonsense person," the friend said. "She knew she was dying, and didn't want to die in New York, and so a couple of weeks ago she rented a cottage in Southampton. She fought hard against going into the hospital last Saturday. She instructed that there be no funeral service, just a gathering of close friends soon."

Miss Summersby's body was cremated and the ashes will be scattered in County Cork, where her only survivor, her brother Seamus, maintains a home.

A version of this archive appears in print on January 21, 1975, on Page 30 of the New York edition with the headline: Kay Summersby Morgan Dies; Eisenhower Confidante in War



Kay – In Later years

TAKEN FROM AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ARCHIVES ON JUNE 6, 1991:

EISENHOWER'S LETTERS HINT AT AFFAIR WITH AIDE

By John Kifner, June 6, 1991

A previously unknown collection of wartime letters from Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower to his driver, Capt. Kay Summersby appears likely to stir renewed debate over whether the two were lovers during the last year of World War II.

Both General Eisenhower, who was married, and Captain Summersby initially denied the long-rumored romance.

But in 1976, as she was dying of cancer, Miss Summersby published a second book of memoirs of the war years, "Past Forgetting: My Love Affair With Dwight D. Eisenhower," in which she described a passionate but frustrating affair with the Supreme Allied Commander.

"I feel free to talk about it now," she wrote then, 16 years after the end of Mr. Eisenhower's Presidency and seven years after his death. "The General is dead. I am dying. When I wrote Eisenhower was my boss in 1948, I omitted many things, changed some details, and glossed over others to disguise as best I could the intimacy that had grown between General Eisenhower and me. It was better that way."

In his memoirs of the war years, Mr. Eisenhower referred to Miss Summersby only once, when he listed various members of his staff. But the new letters appear to reveal a more extensive relationship.

The letters, originally part of Miss Summersby's estate, apparently later wound up in other hands and are to be auctioned by Sotheby's on June 13. The auction house has identified the seller only as an American.

The letters include a scribbled note in pencil addressed to "Irish," a nickname for Miss Summersby, in which the general asked to spend a free day with her.

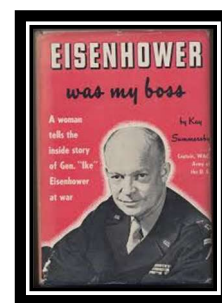
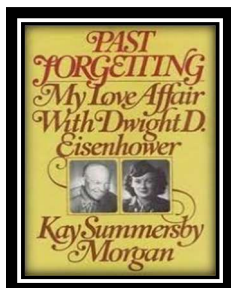
"How about lunch, tea & dinner today?" the note says. "If yes: Who else do you want, if any? At which time? How are you?" The collection to be auctioned consists of autographed photos, other mementos, and 37 letters, 24 of which have never been published, said Selby Kiffer, vice president of the books and manuscripts department of Sotheby's.

Mr. Kiffer described one of the letters as an "extraordinary" message in which "Eisenhower attempts to soften the blow of Summersby's being left behind in Germany" after the war while the rest of his staff was transferred with him to his new duty in Washington.

In her second book, Miss Summersby, a former model, wrote of how her friendship with the general had developed into passion.

"I suppose inevitably, we found ourselves in each other's arms in an unrestrained embrace," she wrote. "Our jackets came off. Buttons were unbuttoned. It was as if we were frantic, and we were." But, she added, the general had difficulty consummating the affair.

Historians' interest in the relationship was spurred by remarks of former President Harry S. Truman during an interview with Merle Miller for an oral biography published in 1974. Mr. Truman said then that General Eisenhower had written to General of the Army George C. Marshall, saying that he wanted to return from Europe to the United States to get a divorce from his wife, Mamie, and marry Miss Summersby. According to this account, **General Marshall threatened to run General Eisenhower "out of the Army" and prevent him from "ever drawing a peaceful breath."**



[DENIED BY SOME CONFIRMED BY OTHERS](#)



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