

*At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*  
by Dwight D. Eisenhower

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“From time to time we heard about the wandering Uncle Abraham. His first venture into the ministry joined him and Aunt Anna, his wife, with a Brethren preacher, D.H. Brechbill. They traveled in a cumbersome covered wagon to the Cherokee Outlet country in Oklahoma Territory, an area opened to settlement only a few years before. Until approaching winter drove them home, they conducted what Aunt Anna described as a ‘highway and hedge call.’

Back in Abilene, Uncle Abe designed a better vehicle for the next trip. This was seven feet wide, fourteen feet long and six and one-half feet high to the canvas roof. It held a table and chairs, a stove, four cots, and a sliding curtain that divided it into sleeping compartments.

Even as a preacher of the gospel, my uncle had a streak of the carnival barker in him. When he reached Herington, Kansas, ten days or so after leaving Abilene, the small town was crowded with the July fourth celebrants. One man in the street, with a large megaphone, was directing the crowds toward an assembly at the edge of town where bands would play and speeches would be made. Uncle Abraham, confronted with this worldly competition, whipped his team and gospel wagon into the line of march. At the next intersection, he turned down a side street brandishing his whip as he stood upright and shouting at the top of his voice: ‘This way to heaven!’

The lustiness of his tone, the vigor of his gestures, the novelty of his vehicle had the desired effect. The crowd followed Uncle Abraham to the other edge of town where, assembling them around his wagon, he delivered what was described as a soul-rousing sermon.

In an even smaller tow, hard pressed to gather a group together, he planted himself on the sidewalk lying on his back. He elevated his feet against a wall, and resting his head in one hand, began to read his bible. In no time at all, naturally, a crowd gathered and when he considered the group of reasonable size, he sprang to his feet. He had his congregation and the congregation got his sermon.”