

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

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“Bruises and emergencies were normal in a household of six boys who were convinced that they could outwit such small considerations as the law of gravity. In the barn we practiced acrobatics and balancing acts. Mother had to keep herself supplied with liniments, poultices, bandages, and disinfectants. Calmness was even more necessary; she could not know in which direction her first-aid skills would be required next. The simplest chore might produce crisis.

Cleaning the stable was Arthur and Ed’s task. They became experts at it and, as premature experts will, they also became careless. Ed raked out the stall one day without troubling to take Dick outside and tie him up. In raking, he accidentally struck Dick on the hock. This was too much for the horse. He let fly with both heels, scored a direct hit, and Edgar landing in a heap at the far end of the stable. Arthur rushed to get Mother. She came quickly, and the two of them picked up Ed, whose face as a sorry-looking mess, and carried him to the house.

While Arthur went for the doctor, Mother began washing Ed’s face. One eye was blackened, his nose was largely flattened, and both lips hung down until he resembled a human being in only dim particulars. The doctor could not be located right away so Mother fed him a peeled apple to keep him happy. After a while, I eased myself into the living room where the body was installed and soon was arguing with him about a share of the apple.

Ed’s accident could have been serious. As it happened, he was at the end of the trajectory of Dick’s heels. Had he been two inches closer to the horse’s hoofs, he might have had his skull crushed. Soon he was completely restored to respectable visage. But Mother must have taken longer to recover from the shock of seeing still another son bloodied, battered, and bemired.”