

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

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“Father understood our wants, in fact our desperate need for playtime’s implements and accessories. He allotted each boy a bit of ground out of the land surrounding our house. Each was privileged to raise any kind of vegetables he chose and to sell them, if possible, to the neighbors for a profit. (The main garden was devoted to raising vegetables and fruits for immediate family consumption and for canning for the winter.) For my plot, I chose to grow sweet corn and cucumbers. I had made inquiries and decided that these were the most popular vegetables. I liked the thought that I was earning something on my own—and could keep it or spend it on myself.

Ed hated the whole thing. My older brother thought his prospective purchasers always acted superior when he offered his wares for sale. They would search through his whole pack of vegetables to find the best, meanwhile disparaging the quality of the lot—to beat down his price, Ed thought.

I never suffered this way. For one thing, I set the price fairly low to start with.

It was twenty-five cents a dozen for the earliest corn. As the season advanced, the price per ear went down. I always made it a point to be first if I could, when buyers were eager. Having affixed my price, I would show the corn. If customers said the price was too high, I would pick up my pack and go on my way.

During the time our parents lived in Texas, Mother had learned to make Mexican hot tamales. They were delicious and this gave me an idea. I badgered Mother until she demonstrated the whole process, step by step. After I learned, I started making and selling them. My price was five cents for three tamales. This little enterprise did not make me rich but Eisenhower tamales were fun to make and a good off-season sales idea. If there were leftovers, my brothers and I could consume them without strain. It was, inevitably, a case of being able to sell tamales and eat them too.”