

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

pp. 76 - 77

“All her life a woman of peace, my mother was born close to war and the clamor of battle. Growing up, she could see its ravages in a devastated land and in broken bodies. If her hatred of war arose out of childhood memories, she had justification. War’s tragedy, inescapable in its waging and in its aftermath, was no tale she had read or heard. She knew it of her own seeing and pondering.

Mother was born May 1, 1862, at Mount Sidney, Virginia, ten miles or so from Staunton in the Shenandoah Valley. That week, Stonewall Jackson and his Confederates were at Port Republic, three or four miles down the road, at the head waters of the south fork of the Shenandoah River. Defeated six weeks earlier at the north end of the valley, he was now planning the whirlwind campaign that would become a classic in military tactics.

During her first few weeks, the road outside my mother’s home, leading down to Staunton, Jackson’s base, must have carried the turmoil and noise of military movement as Jackson gathered all the troops and guns he could rally for the battles that shortly would wreck the Union strategy for the taking of Richmond. They would, too, for the second time in a year, terrify Washington by the threat of a Confederate army crossing the Long Bridge from Virginia into the District of Columbia. To her infant ears, as she lay in her crib in the second month of her life, the winds may very well have carried the sound of artillery fire at Cross Keys and Port Republic where Jackson met the divided Union forces and defeated them. But the worst of the war was still two years off.”