



# A Bouquet for Mamie



Ike and Mamie on their wedding day, July 1, 1916.

Ike won many a military and political battle—but he met defeat in trying to preserve his bride's wedding flowers 46 years ago

By LESTER DAVID

THE JULY DAY in 1916 was cloudless and sunny—a perfect day for the wedding of a pretty 19-year-old Denver belle, Mamie Doud, and a handsome 25-year-old army officer from Kansas, Dwight Eisenhower.

A few guests were lingering on the wide front porch of the imposing Doud home on Lafayette Street, where the wedding was to take place. But most of them had moved into the large parlor. There, a harpist was playing in soft background to the hum of polite conversation.

Ike, chatting in a corner, looked all West Point in his starched white uniform with choke collar and gleaming brass buttons. But a slight shifting from foot to foot betrayed his uneasiness. (As Mamie recalls, "It was the only time I ever saw Ike nervous. He was so scared of creasing his white trousers that he refused to sit down until after the ceremony!")

Then someone nodded to Ike, and he moved toward the fireplace, which was banked with dozens of pink gladioli (the flowers he still sends his wife). The harpist began the wedding march—and petite, blue-eyed Mamie floated down the broad stairs, a vision in Chantilly lace.

Ike's jitters had passed, and he spoke his "I do" clearly and forcefully. Later, at the reception, he gallantly drew his ceremonial sword and handed it to Mamie, who used it to cut the wedding cake.

The ceremony had been so moving that the young husband was eager to preserve some tangible memento of the occasion. He considered a number of things, then hit upon the idea of preserving Mamie's bridal bouquet by dipping the flowers in wax.

There was no time to try his idea right after the ceremony or during the couple's whirlwind two-day honeymoon to Eldorado Springs, Mo. But they took the bouquet with them to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where Ike was stationed.

As the youngest officer in his outfit, Lieutenant Eisenhower didn't rate fancy quarters. There was a tiny bedroom, a bath, a cheerless living room, and an electric grill and an icebox that made up the kitchen. But Ike hardly noticed. His eyes immediately lit on the icebox, and he hurried to get the fast-aging bouquet inside.

After they finally got unpacked, Ike went to the icebox and reverently withdrew the flowers. Then, as Mamie looked on curiously, he began shaving bits of wax off a candle. Soon he had collected a painful of shavings, which he heated on the grill. When the wax melted, he gingerly dipped some of the flowers into the hot liquid.

**C**ALAMITY! The blossoms shriveled. Ike looked stricken; Mamie stifled a giggle.

After a moment's thought, Ike tried again. This time he sprinkled drops of hot wax over the petals. Desperately, he tried this technique on each of the various flowers in the bouquet. But it didn't work on any of them. Soon the bouquet was a shambles—and Mamie could no longer control her laughter.

For a second, Ike was taken aback; then he saw the humor in the defeat of his elaborate plans. His face broke into that good-natured grin which, years later, would be famous throughout the world—and he, too, doubled up with laughter.

"Maybe it was just as well he didn't succeed," Mamie said recently. "The bouquet would have been awfully difficult to carry with us on our innumerable moves of the past 46 years."

## What Ike Could Have Done

### How to Preserve a Bride's Bouquet

■ Young Dwight Eisenhower's attempt to preserve Mamie's bridal bouquet with molten wax was disastrous. But in trying it he was merely acting on a widely held belief that flowers can be kept that way.

Unfortunately, most people don't realize that there is a practical method of preserving fresh flowers so they retain their color and form indefinitely. The process, which involves drying the flowers, is so simple that anyone can do it after a few practice "trial runs." Here are the six steps to follow:

1. Mix equal amounts of corn meal and borax, adding three tablespoons of salt for each quart prepared. (The exact amount of the mixture needed will depend on the number of flowers you dry.) Then spread the mixture about an inch deep on the bottom of a roomy cardboard or plastic (but not metal) container.

2. Select the freshest flowers from the bouquet, discarding any that are damaged or past their prime. Also discard excess foliage. Lay the flowers on the mixture in the container. Then, add small quantities of the mixture, working it very gently around the flowers until they are buried in it.

3. Store the uncovered container in a place that is warm and dry but where there is a normal circulation of air. Do not disturb the flowers during the drying period.

4. After 10 days, test for dryness by inserting a fingertip into the mixture and feeling whether the petals have stiffened. If not, leave the flowers in the mixture until the petals do become stiff.

5. When the flowers are dry, ease the mixture away from them by tilting the container and letting the mixture flow out slowly. Tap the flowers gently to dislodge the mixture and use a camel's-hair brush to remove the last bits of it.

6. Reassemble the flowers into a bouquet, adding the ribbons and other frills that originally were part of it. Display in a vase or, better still, in a covered container of clear plastic or under a Victorian glass dome.

Friends of the bride might enjoy organizing a "bouquet-preserving party" after the wedding and present the flowers to the bride when she returns from her honeymoon. Such an idea could start a new and charming wedding tradition!

—Mabel Squires, author of "The Art of Drying Plants and Flowers" (published by M. Barrows & Co., New York.)

## COVER:

Admired for his acting ability and castigated for his romantic escapades, Richard Burton is as complex as he is handsome (see p. 6). He's shown in his much-ballyhooped role as Mark Antony in epic, "Cleopatra."

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