

Interstate 5, near the Stonelakes
National Wildlife Refuge,
Sacramento, California

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Ike's Grand Paving Plan

"Americans are living in the midst of a miracle. A giant nationwide engineering project—the Interstate Highway System—is altering and circumventing geography on an unprecedented scale. Rearranging the geography of America, the revolutionary Interstate Highway System creates a 41,000-mile network of super-roads from border to border. Yet an individual can no more grasp the scope and magnitude of the entire project than an ant can comprehend New York City . . . [It is] perhaps the greatest revolution in ground transportation since the wheel."

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IN JUNE OF 1945, America's most triumphant general of its largest war effort ever returned home. The victorious Supreme Commander of Allied Forces and an armada of warplanes first touched down in Washington, D.C., before heading to New York City for a ticker-tape parade. On Capitol Hill, Senators, Congressmen, and anybody who was anybody packed into the nation's Capitol building to hear the man speak. After a heartfelt speech to a war-weary audience, the five-star general received the longest standing ovation in Congressional history. In a town where people disagree for the sake of it, everyone seemed to agree, "I like Ike."

More than seven years later, Ike returned to Washington. On January 20, 1953, Dwight David Eisenhower was sworn in as the 34th President of the United States. Transforming his hatred of war into a relentless pursuit of happiness for all Americans, the President made the construction of the Interstate System his favorite item on the domestic agenda. Eisenhower knew that superhighways could tie the nation together—socially, economically, and militarily.

