In 1939, shortly after the beginning of World War II, Eisenhower returned from the Philippines to take up a series of important staff assignments and to begin his meteoric rise through the army's higher ranks. In June 1941 he became chief of staff for the Third Army and was stationed at its headquarters in San Antonio, Texas. In September 1941, just before his fifty-first birthday, he was promoted to the temporary rank of brigadier general. Meanwhile Swede, who had suffered a severe heart attack in 1939, had returned to light duty as a teacher and administrator at the United States Naval Academy. On October 5 he sent Eisenhower a letter of congratulations on his recent promotion. "It gave me as much pleasure," he wrote, "as if the honor had come to myself. For I still feel, you know, somewhat responsible for your having launched yourself in a service career."

Among the old Abilene friends to whom Eisenhower refers in his reply were Charles Harger, the owner and editor of the Abilene Daily Reflector, a prominent Abilene Republican who had helped Eisenhower secure his appointment to West Point; Charles A. Case, an attorney and director of the Abilene National Bank; Arthur Hurd, another prominent attorney; Reynold Rogers, a banker; Joner (sometimes Jonah) Callahan, who ran a drugstore; Oscar and William Sterl, who owned a men's clothing store; and John Henry Giles, an Abilene lumber dealer.
Dear Swede:

Of all the things that have happened to me incidental to my promotion, none has been nicer than the receipt of your very fine letter. I truly appreciate it.

I am happy to know that in spite of the affliction of a defective "pump" you are engaged in work that is not only necessary, but which is an integral part of our effort to re-arm. While it is naturally a disappointment to you that you cannot be taking part in the more strenuous phases of naval activity, it must be a source of great satisfaction to know that you are doing something well that must be done. In the Army our biggest job is the production of young leaders. To it we give more concern than to any other single thing. Anyone who has studied this defense problem seriously will readily see that your job is one of vital, even if indirect, importance to the final solution. On top of all this, you must be developing into a bang-up "prof" when they have already made you the Executive of the department.

Both last summer and this I made very short visits to Abilene. My Father and Mother are both still living there, although both are getting feeble. During each visit, I have had a chance to call on most of our old friends, notably Mr. Harger, Charlie Case, Art Hurd, Reynold Rogers, the Sterl Brothers and Henry Giles. I mustn't forget Joner Callahan. All of them seem to be going their accustomed ways with very little noticeable change either in themselves or in the town.

I will not worry you with a recital of the many various details since I last saw you. However, shortly after coming back from the Philippines, I was again placed on staff duty, and at present am Chief of Staff, Third Army. I scarcely need say that I am kept busy.

My son, John, entered West Point this summer. I think that his deeper affections really attracted him toward Annapolis, but some years ago we discovered in him a slight color confusion with respect to the fainter shades; enough so that we were told he could not meet the Naval Academy requirements in this respect. For some years, his O.A.O. [one and only] has been a young Navy gal named Nancy Sabalot. One of his final acts before entering the Point was to go through Washington to see her once more. He is 6'1", weighs only about 145, and is blond, gangly and awkward. When he fills out he ought to be quite a boy. So far, he is
apparently doing well enough in his studies, but is having a terrific time with demerits.

You are quite right in your thought that you are responsible for my being in the Military Service. As you well know, it was only through you that I ever heard of the Government Academies. To the fact that you were well acquainted with the methods for entering the Academies and my good fortune that you were my friend, I owe a lifetime of real enjoyment and interesting work. Incidentally, every time I go home I remind all and sundry of this.

Mamie and I send our very best to you both. I will try to do my part in seeing that our correspondence is not interrupted by another three year lapse.

As ever,