

# CHENNAULT PAPERS



## Leader of Character

The Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield at the  
US Air Force Academy  
A Commemoration, Colloquium,  
and Celebration

Edited by Dr. Charles D. Dusch Jr.



AIR UNIVERSITY



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**the U.S. Air Force Academy**  
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*Director, Air University Press*  
Dr. Mehmed Ali

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*Project Editor*  
Michael Labosky

*Illustrator*  
Timothy Thomas

*Print Specialist*  
Cheryl Ferrell

Air University Press  
600 Chennault Circle, Building 1405  
Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6010  
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Cover photo: Then-Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr., commander, 332nd Fighter Group, the famous "Red Tails," at Ramitelli Air Base, Italy

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## **The Chennault Papers**

Air University Press established the “Chennault Papers” series in 2021 to provide a forum for historical topics related to the Department of the Air Force. The series is named in honor of Gen Claire Chennault, who famously challenged the Air Corps Tactical School’s “Bomber Mafia” as an advocate for pursuit aviation in the 1930s, before leading the famed American Volunteer Group the “Flying Tigers” in China against the Japanese in World War II. Similarly, the Chennault series seeks to balance the Air Force’s historic bias toward science and technology with historical perspectives on topics of contemporary interest.

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## **Abstract**

On 1 November 2019, the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) held a naming ceremony for the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield during the annual CORONA Senior Leaders Conference held at the academy, since all principals would be present. The naming ceremony occurred the day before the football game against Army, so representatives from West Point were also on hand. This work captures the events that encompassed the airfield naming ceremony, including the ceremony's script and the remarks by the key speakers taken directly from their notes. It also captures the papers presented by the distinguished historians who spoke at the history colloquium and discusses the mission and history of the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield. It also includes a biography of General Davis. It is written from the perspective of the Academy's Office of the Command Historian, which played a key role in naming the airfield for Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. The project highlights not just the way the academy uses exemplars to build future leaders of character, but also the way organizations such as the US Air Force and Air Force Academy use historical memory in their daily activities.



## **Introduction**

### **Leader of Character: The Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield at the US Air Force Academy; A Commemoration, Colloquium, and Celebration**

From the moment President Dwight David Eisenhower signed the legislation authorizing the creation of the US Air Force Academy on 1 April 1954, aviation has been foundational to the institution. The first superintendent, Lt Gen Hubert Harmon, insisted that the new academy be firmly wedded to the operational Air Force mission. The first graduating class of the new service academy, the Class of 1959, all graduated as rated Air Force navigators, though most went on to pilot training and became Air Force pilots. In the decades that followed, the academy's airfield has remained a key pillar to cadet development as leaders of character in service to our nation. Yet it remained unnamed for all that time.

On 1 November 2019, the academy held a naming ceremony for the General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield during the annual CORONA Senior Leaders Conference held at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) since all principals would be present. The naming ceremony occurred the day before the football game against Army, so representatives from West Point were also on hand. The festivities were scheduled throughout the day and were organized around the senior leaders' CORONA activities. The Academy's Association of Graduates (AOG) kindly offered the use of their building, Doolittle Hall, for the day's events. Numerous Air Force aircraft performed flyovers during noon meal formation, passing by Doolittle Hall on the way to the Cadet Area.

The events began at nine o'clock in the morning with the ceremony to name the airfield, which was narrated by Cadet Third Class Ymani Nesmith. Music was provided by the Cadet Gospel Choir. Distinguished guests included Judge L. Scott Melville, nephew of Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr.; Mr. Douglas Melville, great-nephew of General Davis; and other members of General Davis's family. Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen were in attendance, including Lt Col George Hardy, Lt Col James Harvey III, Lt Col Alexander Jefferson, Lt Col Ted Lumpkin, and Lt Franklin Macon, and their guests. Air Force senior leaders who attended included the Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Barbara Barrett; the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen David Goldfein; Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, CMSgt Kaleth Wright; and Gen C.Q. Brown, commander, Pacific Air Forces. Also in attendance were Lt Gen Darryl Williams, the superintendent of the United States Military Academy, and his staff; Lt Gen Jay B. Silveria, superintendent of the United States Air Force Acad-

emy; and many retired generals, community leaders, and their representatives as well as many prominent scholars and citizens from the Pikes Peak region.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the family of General Davis and the Cadet Wing Commander, Cadet First Class Bryant Ashe, unveiled a rendering of the new airfield sign. After a short recess, Air Force leaders met with the guests, both the family of General Davis and the documented original Tuskegee airmen. Next, Cadet First Class Alex Brown and his brother, Cadet Third Class Aryemis Brown, hosted an informal “Fireside Chat” with the Tuskegee Airmen, where cadets and the audience could ask questions about their experience. Cadet First Class Alex Brown was the first Black commander of the Academy Flying Team and placed first in Power-On Landings at the Region 1 National Intercollegiate Flying Association Safety and Flight Evaluation Contest.

A luncheon with the Tuskegee Airmen, the family of General Davis, and selected cadets followed in the lounge of Doolittle Hall, while other guests enjoyed a buffet in the main hall. The family of General Davis then left for a tour of the Davis Airfield, while the Academy’s Office of the Command Historian hosted a History Colloquium at Doolittle Hall celebrating the life of General Davis. The guest speakers included Lt Col Sherman Fleek, USA (Ret), Command Historian of the United States Military Academy; Dr. Daniel Haulman, recently retired Chief of the Organizational History Division at the Air Force Historical Research Agency—a renowned expert and author on the history of the Tuskegee Airmen; and Dr. John Farquhar, Cold War historian from the Academy’s Department of Military and Strategic Studies.

After the colloquium, the speakers met with the Director of the Air Force History and Museums Program, Mr. Walt Grudzinskas, and members of the Office of the Command Historian in a small gathering at the academy’s golf course clubhouse, which concluded the day’s events.

First, some background:

In 2017 during his immersion briefing with the Academy’s Office of the Command Historian, one of the directorates on his staff, Lt Gen Jay B. Silveria, the twentieth superintendent of USAFA, brought up the subject of naming the airfield. He preferred to name the airfield for a prominent Airman from the storied past of the US Air Force, one who might inspire all cadets and especially be an exemplar for minorities who yet had no like representative role model among the buildings or facilities at the institution.

As command historian, I informed General Silveria that a member of the class of 2012, Capt Frederick “Juice” Johnson, who was serving on active duty as an F-16 pilot, had come up with an idea while he was a cadet to name the airfield for Gen Benjamin Oliver Davis Jr., the famous Black Air Force pilot and commander of the renowned Tuskegee Airmen of World War Two and impetus

behind the Air Force Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team. Although the idea was supported by the commandant at that time, then-Brig Gen Richard M. Clark from the class of 1986, the idea did not gain traction, in part because the package did not link General Davis to the Air Force Academy. I explained to General Silveria that General Davis was an ardent supporter of USAFA during his Air Force career and, after retiring from the service, was instrumental to the academy during a difficult time in our nation's history.

The early 1970s were a very turbulent era for the Air Force Academy as well. It was an era of antiwar protests, violence, and drug use that affected both the academy and the Cadet Wing. Cadet attrition was unprecedented. Minority cadets were among the worst affected.

The Academy Superintendent, Lt Gen A. P. Clark, turned to his West Point classmate Lt Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. for help. Davis had been elected to both the USAF Academy Board of Visitors as well as the Board of Trustees of the AOG in 1971. Davis enthusiastically applied the same resolve and integrity to these challenges as he had in his Air Force career, staying personally involved with cadets, faculty, and staff. As president of the Board of Visitors, he collaborated with the superintendent and his staff and helped produce OPLAN 7-73, a contingency plan to integrate women into the Cadet Wing. As a result, attrition was curbed, and the Air Force Academy admitted the largest group of minority cadets up to that time. Two years later, USAFA became the first military service academy to admit women.

Understanding the importance of that evidence, Lieutenant General Silveria decided that Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was the perfect exemplar for the airfield name. He tasked me to craft a staff package to obtain approval by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen David Goldfein, who was the approval authority. My team and I got to work to make the superintendent's goal a reality. The team members in the directorate included Maj Raymond Ng, Maj Keturah Onukwuli, TSgt Denise Flory, and volunteer Ms. Taylor Campbell, who remained until the spring of 2020 when her family moved to a new assignment at the Pentagon. Mr. Michael Stephen served as our next volunteer. They worked tirelessly to make this happen.

There are a great many individuals and organizations to thank. I apologize if I have unwittingly omitted anyone. Their collective efforts were instrumental to making this event a reality, and they have our utmost gratitude.

First, I would like to thank my good friend and colleague, Dr. Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, academy archivist and director of the Clark Special Collections Branch of the academy's McDermott Library, and her assistant, Ms. Ruth Kindreich. They provided invaluable assistance in my research by producing the oral history interviews and papers that were instrumental in crafting the

package that was staffed to General Goldfein. Thanks also to the Academy Memorial Board who gave their approval to name the airfield.

Ms. Meredith Harlow, the academy's museums specialist, also deserves our grateful appreciation. She coordinated with the National Museum of the United States Air Force and the Academy's Special Collections Branch to set up an exhibit of historical photos and artifacts for the ceremony, including General Davis's red Tuskegee Airman blazer, which shared the place of honor on the stage for the ceremony.

Major Onukwuli, as director of staff, drafted and staffed the package through academy channels for the superintendent's signature. Once Lieutenant General Silveria approved the package and signed his letter to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), Major Onukwuli began the painstaking task of staffing the package through USAF channels, first through the Air Force Personnel Center at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, next through the Department of the Air Force staff in the Pentagon until it arrived "behind the Glass Doors" in the CSAF's office.

Since the package required the approval of the commander from the Air Force Personnel Center, Ms. Rebecca Prince and Lt Col Terry Wagner in the Air Force Recognition Programs Branch (AFPC/DP1S) followed the progress of the package and kept Major Onukwuli apprised of the status, so she could in turn keep the superintendent notified. Their help was invaluable.

I am very grateful to Col Joe Don Looney, who was head of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, and Col D'Anne Spence, the academy's liaison in the Pentagon, who tracked the package once it reached the "Building" and insured it progressed steadily to the "Glass Doors." Thanks also to Mr. Walter Grudzinskas, director of the Air Force History and Museums Program, and Dr. Bill Harris, deputy director, History and Museums, for their guidance and familiarity with staffing packages on the Air Staff. I also want to thank Mr. James Frank, deputy director, field heritage program, for his help with obtaining a stylized Army Air Corps symbol for the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield sign.

While the staff work pressed forward, the deputy command historian, Major Ng, insured the logistics aspects of the ceremony were met, and he and Major Onukwuli provided their wise counsel to the action officer, Maj Michael Plummer from the dean of faculty. In addition, Major Onukwuli wrote most of the ceremony script, mentored the cadet narrator and Cadet Gospel Choir, escorted one of the Tuskegee Airmen during the ceremony, and tended to any of the small "fires" that tend to erupt in a ceremony of this size and scope. She made my job much easier.

Likewise, Major Ng's work was particularly important for arranging the historical colloquium. He was assisted by TSgt Denise Flory, the directorate non-

commissioned officer in charge, as well as our volunteers Taylor Campbell and Michael Stephen who provided research assistance. Together they provided instrumental work that insured the ceremony's needs were met, and the daily operations of the directorate proceeded smoothly without interruption.

I would also like to thank Cadet First Class Alex Brown and his brother, Cadet Third Class Aryemis Brown, for their superb job with the Fireside Chat. We spent a very agreeable afternoon in Arnold Hall discussing the obstacles General Davis and the Tuskegee Airmen faced in Jim Crow America. They did outstanding research and preparation, and as a result the Fireside Chat went off without a hitch.

Thanks also belong to Cadet Third Class Ymani Nesmith, the cadet narrator, who practiced long and hard to get the pronunciations right and to ensure the cadence of the ceremony was respectful and dignified. Thanks go out to the Cadet Gospel Choir for their inspired presentation of the national anthem and the Air Force Song, as well as Cadet Wing Commander Cadet First Class Bryant Ashe for unveiling the sign with Judge Melville.

I am very grateful to Mr. Frederick Williams and his dynamic team in the 10th Civil Engineering Squadron for researching and producing the new road signage to the airfield. Thanks also to Lt Col Tracy Bunko, director of public affairs, and her assistant, Mr. Meade Warthen, for their timely and informative press releases.

We owe a big "shout out" to the team in our Strategic Communications Directorate (USAFA/CM) under Ms. Kimberly Tebrugge, including Mr. Mike Peterson, director of outreach; Mr. Mark Kuykendall, the superintendent's speech writer who collaborated with Major Onukwuli on the script; Ms. Leslie Forrester for the invitations; Ms. Ashley Murphy, for coordinating production of the booklet; and Ms. Danielle Orr, the creative artist/designer from Creative Services who designed the commemorative booklet and the announcement for the historical colloquium. Thank you.

Our gratitude also goes out to Maj Edward Montgomery, deputy action officer, who coordinated the fly pasts, as well as Mr. Carlos Cruz-Gonzalez, director of installations (USAFA/A4), and Ms. Daniela Lawrence, the architect who designed the Gen Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Airfield sign. I would also like to thank Lt Col William Hartman, deputy commander of the historic 306th Flying Training Group, who coordinated an airfield tour and support activities.

Thanks also go out to Lt Col Angelic Gonzalez, director of protocol, and Ms. Virginia Ackison, protocol specialist. In addition, a special thanks to Mr. Richard Wolf from the Air Force Historical Support Division, for giving us kind permission to print Dr. Daniel Haulman's paper on Gen Benjamin O.

Davis Jr. as a Tuskegee Airman, which first appeared in *Air Power History* magazine. Thank you.

A big “thank you” to my good friends and colleagues, Dr. Daniel Haulman, Dr. John Farquhar, and Sherman Fleek, for agreeing to present their papers at our ceremony. These distinguished historians added a level of excellence and scholarship to our ceremony that is unmatched. I am most appreciative.

I am also very grateful to our past superintendent, Lt Gen Jay B. Silveria; Brig Gen Houston Cantwell, past vice superintendent; Ms. Gail Colvin, director of staff; and CMSgt Sarah Sparks, command chief, for their inspired leadership that gave us the freedom to act and the top cover to be bold. I also want to especially thank our former Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen David Goldfein, for allowing the Air Force Academy to name our airfield for General Davis.

Finally, thanks to Judge L. Scott Melville, Mr. Doug Melville, and all the family of Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. for their kind permission to name the airfield for the general. It was a pleasure meeting you and spending a delightful day with you. Seeing your joy made the day even more special.

There were many, many folks who made this a special day for the Air Force and the Air Force Academy. Please accept my thanks and the thanks of my entire team.

Sincerely, Charles D. Dusch, Ph.D.

## **Part I: The Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield**

The mission of the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield is to develop leaders of character through programs of airmanship, leadership, and excellence rooted in aviation. The airmanship programs that cadets experience there serve as leadership laboratories in the third dimension, whether they participate in the soaring program, jump program, powered flight program, or the Academy Flying Team.

The academy recruits top candidates from across the country, young men and women who have succeeded in most areas of their lives. Whether sports, academics, or leadership, our cadets are the best—yet many have not faced adversity or failure. It is adversity and failure, not success, that define a leader of character. Adversity finds us and failure is inevitable. Overcoming adversity and failing successfully require practice. A leader of character will fail, learn from it, and succeed the next time. Successful people who have not practiced failure tend to crumble beneath its weight. Our cadets work with a Total Force team using transformative and innovative airmanship methodologies as well as leading-edge technology to motivate, train, and inspire the next generation of combat aviators.

At the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield, that character is forged—like steel—through a process of continual refinement, which includes overcoming fear, adversity, and doubt. The academy's airmanship programs help develop and forge a character in our cadets that is pure and strong—programs that provide incredible opportunities for cadets to refine that character, overcome adversity, fail, and learn. Regardless of a cadet's prior experience, there is something profoundly different about attempting to land an unpowered glider knowing that there is only one chance: throwing oneself out of an airplane with nothing but a parachute; or proving that one can fly alone without the safety net of an instructor. This is the foundation of excellence understood by Airmen—something General Davis understood and appreciated.

Cadets are first challenged through an introduction to soaring program, which they take their freshman year. They fly four times in a glider to become familiar with the basics of flight—including aerobatics. For many, this is the first time they have been at the controls of an aircraft and faced the risk. A smaller group spends a longer time at the airfield during their sophomore year when they attempt to demonstrate the ability to make a solo flight in a sailplane. From this group, a select few compete for a chance to join an elite team. These 75 cadets spend an entire year upgrading to become the Air Force's youngest instructor pilots and earn the coveted wings of an Air Force Glider Pilot—the legacy wings of the World War II glider pilots who flew American forces into harm's

way in places like Normandy on D-Day. These cadet soaring instructor pilots teach 94 percent of soaring training. Twelve are selected to become part of the academy's aerobatic demonstration or sailplane racing teams, and our soaring team are past National Intercollegiate Champions!



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 1. Cadets are challenged through an introduction to soaring program, which they take their freshman year. Here, a cadet attaches the tow cable to one of the academy's competition gliders.**



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 2. A cadet glider instructor pilot being pulled by a tow plane on takeoff in one of the academy's instructional glider aircraft.**



Another staple of the airmanship program is the Basic Freefall Course where 700 cadets annually earn their basic jump wings. USAFA has the only program where all five jumps are made in solo, unassisted freefall. This program consists of over 20,000 jumps per year—over half the jumps made in the Air Force. Cadets can opt for a leadership track in the jump program as well, and every year out of hundreds of cadets, only 25 are selected to train for one year to join the prestigious Wings of Blue. Not only do the Wings of Blue instruct their fellow cadets in the basic jump program, but they also join the competition team or demonstration team. The demonstration team performs all over the US to more than two million spectators annually. The competition team competes in the US Parachute Association’s National Collegiate Parachuting Championships and the US National Skydiving Championships and often proves that the Air Force Academy team is among the best parachuting teams in the country.



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 3. The airmanship program is a major “challenge gate” of the Air Force Academy. The basic free fall course today has its roots very early in the academy’s history, as seen here.**



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 4. The academy's prestigious Wings of Blue competition parachute team in a formation jump.**

The culminating airmanship experience for sophomore cadets at the General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield is the powered flight program. Cadets who desire to attend pilot training take this nine-flight program with the finale being a solo flight for those who become proficient. There is a leadership track in powered flight as well. Freshmen cadets can try out for the Academy Flying Team. After an extensive process measuring their aviation abilities and knowledge, nine cadets are selected to join the team and compete in regional and national championships. The Academy Flying Team has been the Region 1 champion 32 years in a row!



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 5. A cadet and an Air Force instructor pilot prepare for a sortie in the academy's T-53 trainer in the powered flight program.**



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 6. The powered flight program began in 1968 and has evolved to meet the needs of the Air Force. Here, a cadet and an Air Force instructor pilot accomplish the Before Engine Start checklist in a T-41 trainer. The academy still maintains a few T-41 aircraft for the competition flying team.**



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 7. Cadets who are committed to an aviation career have other opportunities to fly, including the Academy Aero Club. Here, an Air Force instructor pilot in the 1960s reviews a flight profile with several cadets.**

Lt Gen Hubert Harmon, the academy's first superintendent and "Father of the Air Force Academy," always envisioned aviation programs as being essential to the mission of the academy. From the moment he was appointed superintendent by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Harmon worked to create a demanding program of military training, academics, athletics, and character development. Academically, he promoted a modern curriculum that incorporated the study of "the western tradition, humanities and social sciences as much as science and engineering, and foreign languages," rivaling that of America's leading universities. He also insisted upon military and aviation programs that kept the Air Force Academy closely aligned with the missions of the US Air Force, and the first class of graduates were commissioned as rated navigators. The airfield was destined to play a key role in the academy's future.

The airfield itself predates the USAF Academy. In the late 1930s, a primitive grass airstrip served the needs of the Pikes Peak region. By 1939, Pine Valley Air Service was established with a flying school that also carried tourists over Garden of the Gods and other scenic areas. During World War II, the airfield became the headquarters for the Colorado Springs Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, which conducted search and rescue missions from this base. The airfield also served a wartime role for the Second Air Force Courier Flight network. In 1943, a 5,000-foot concrete runway was constructed.



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 8. Pine Valley Airport in the late 1930s before the construction of the US Air Force Academy.**



USAF Academy Photo

**Figure 9. Pine Valley Airport looking northwest towards the future permanent site of the USAF Academy.**

In 1948, one of the largest air shows in the Pikes Peak region was held at Pine Valley Airport. The field played an important part in the location of the Air Force Academy in Colorado. In 1954, three sites were under final consideration for the academy's permanent site. Some doubted the high altitude of the area would make cadet flight training feasible. Three members of the Site Selection Commission, Dr. Virgil Hancher, Mr. Merrill Meigs, and Brig Gen Charles Lindbergh, came to find out. Lindbergh, made famous as the first to fly solo across the Atlantic, rented a Pine Valley aircraft and flew the members around the area, convincing them that Colorado was a suitable location for the academy. In fact, the mountain thermals allow cross-country sailplane sorties, with academy-based glider aircraft soaring up to Boulder, down to Pueblo, and landing back at USAFA on a single, nonstop, unpowered mission!

In 1967, Congress appropriated \$76,700 to construct airmanship facilities on the Pine Valley site, and the airfield became central to cadet airmanship training and education. The first powered flight aircraft, the Cessna T-41, demonstrated the wisdom of this program when data proved that graduates with this flight experience were more successful at pilot training than non-graduates, saving the Air Force money and ensuring greater competency of its

aviators. For a short period, the airfield also hosted hang-gliding, parasailing, and ballooning. These programs were eventually discontinued because of cost and safety concerns. During the Waldo Canyon and Black Forest wildfires, the airfield served as a strategic base of operations for fire-fighting helicopters and small Forest Service aircraft, playing a key role in successfully battling the fires and defending academy lands as well as those of its neighbors.

The Gen Benjamin O. Davis Airfield has four runways as well as a sailplane landing area—the world’s largest turf landing area. It also boasts a drop zone and ground training facility, four parking ramps, and four hangars. It also has the largest control tower cab in the Air Force. Although the airfield is a day/visual flight rules facility only (no night or bad weather operations), it still has the third busiest tower in the Air Force.

The airmanship programs at the US Air Force Academy inspire cadets to confront adversity, fear, doubt, and failure. Cadets challenge themselves like no other program at the academy. Most succeed and some fail, but we know that failure often forms the cornerstones of future successes. All cadets walk away from the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Airfield with stronger character.<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

1. Information for this section comes from the 306th Flying Training Group Mission Briefing, 9 September 2019.

## **Part II: General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Biography**

DR. CHARLES D. DUSCH JR

*You're a Red Tail . . . you guys saved our [lives] so many times!*

—Fifteenth Air Force bomber crew member

Every Airman today owes a debt of gratitude to Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Before the Air Force became a separate service—before the Air Force Academy established what were to become the Air Force Core Values: Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do—General Davis was living them, often in the face of great adversity. As a combat Airman, General Davis was respected for his leadership and courage under fire, his exacting standards and discipline, his tenacity and commitment, and his ability to innovate and find a way forward. General Davis broke barriers and built bridges that established him as one of our great American leaders.

He was born on 18 December 1912 in Washington, DC, the son of Benjamin O. Davis Sr. and Elnora Dickerson Davis. His father, a renowned military officer, became the first Black General Officer in the United States Army. Sadly, young B. O. Davis's mother died from complications in childbirth in 1916 when the young man was only four years old. His father later remarried Sadie Overton, a professor of English at Wilberforce University, who was very influential in the young man's development.<sup>1</sup>

The elder Davis was a strong role model for his son. Once in 1924, while Davis Sr. was assigned as the Professor of Military Science at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, the infamous Ku Klux Klan staged a parade through Tuskegee Institute one night to challenge the construction of a veteran's hospital that would employ Black doctors and nurses. Leading his family onto the porch, he stood silently in his white dress uniform while his family sat quietly under the porch light in silent protest as the Klansmen marched by with their torches and hoods. Young B.O. Davis Jr. learned an important lesson in courage and resilience from his father that night.<sup>2</sup>

The next year, young Davis attended a barnstorming exhibition at Bolling Field in Washington, DC, (now Bolling Air Force Base) where an exhibition pilot offered him an opportunity to ride in his airplane with him. Davis jumped at the chance and so enjoyed the flight that he vowed to become an airman one day and pilot an airplane himself.<sup>3</sup>

His father's military duties took the family to Ohio, and the younger Davis attended Central High School in Cleveland, graduating in 1929. He enrolled in

Western Reserve University from 1929 to 1930 and later entered the University of Chicago from 1930 to 1932. All the while, he dreamed of being a military pilot and decided to contact Oscar De Priest, the only African American member of Congress at that time. De Priest sponsored the young man for an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after arriving at the US Military Academy, Cadet Davis was isolated by his own classmates and effectively “silenced” during his four years there. Although he described the silent treatment as something reserved for cadets who had “violated the honor code but refused to resign,” Davis endured four years of this treatment because of his race. His classmates only spoke to him on official business. He lived alone, ate alone, and sat on the bus to football games alone.<sup>5</sup> Although this treatment was not sanctioned by the Honor Committee, neither did it do anything to stop it. He faced hostile and often relentless challenges and obstacles during his time as a cadet.<sup>6</sup>

Such treatment only served to stoke Davis’s grit and determination to graduate. He committed himself to proving to everyone at West Point the measure of the man with whom they were dealing. He graduated 35th out of 276 in the class of 1936. When retired General of the Armies John J. Pershing presented him with the gold bars of an Army second lieutenant, his classmates broke their silence and applauded. The *Howitzer* reported it this way: “The courage, tenacity, and intelligence with which [Davis] conquered a problem incomparably more difficult than plebe year won for him the sincere admiration of his classmates, and his single-minded determination to continue in his chosen career cannot fail to inspire respect wherever fortune may lead him.”<sup>7</sup> After graduation, Second Lieutenant Davis married the love of his life, Agatha Scott, whom he had courted while attending the US Military Academy.<sup>8</sup>

Cadets like Davis who graduated with a high standing in their class normally had their choice of assignments, and Second Lieutenant Davis expected that he, too, would at last achieve his dream of becoming an Airman. He applied for flight training in the Air Corps but was denied. The segregated Army did not have an African American squadron or training facility. Further, a racist 1925 study by the Army War College that governed the thinking of many Army leaders opined that Blacks were a “mentally inferior subspecies of the human race,” whose brains were smaller and weighed ten ounces fewer than whites’, making them unsuitable for the highly technical branches of the Army like aviation. This hidebound study would continue to be used to justify racist segregation by the military well into World War II.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, Second Lieutenant Davis was assigned to the segregated all-Black 24th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning, Georgia, where he attended the US Army Infantry School but could not enter the all-White officers club.



His next assignment was to serve as a military tactics course instructor at Tuskegee Institute, and he was promoted to first lieutenant in 1939.<sup>10</sup> That year, strong political pressure from both Black and White political leaders urged Congress and the president to alter Air Corps policies and establish a flying program for African Americans. The Civilian Pilot Training Act established a reserve civilian pilot training program across the nation, including six Black colleges of which Tuskegee Institute was one. In addition, the Roosevelt Administration ordered the War Department to create an African American Air Corps unit.<sup>11</sup>

Promoted once again, now Captain Davis was assigned to begin training in the first class of 13 African American Airmen at Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF), Class 42-C. As the senior officer and with his West Point education, Captain Davis was the obvious choice to lead his class, and he and his father were the only two Black officers in the Army. Life for the new student pilots was extremely challenging at first in the segregationist South. Tents with dirt floors served as their living quarters and the student mess hall was a wooden building with a dirt floor, all which turned into a sea of mud whenever it rained. White service members dined in a finished mess hall with tablecloths and uniformed African American waitresses. Even after buildings were finished, segregation remained the rule at TAAF. Davis described the early base as “a prison camp.”<sup>12</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 10. In September 1941, aviation cadets report to Capt Benjamin O. Davis Jr., commandant of cadets at Tuskegee Army Airfield, Alabama, for training.**



USAF Photo

**Figure 11. Capt Benjamin O. Davis Jr. returning from a sortie in the primary flying training course with three of his classmates. The aircraft are the Stearman PT-17 Kaydet. This aircraft served as the backbone of Army and Navy primary training in World War II. Over 10,000 Stearman trainers were built.**

This did not dampen the spirits of Class 42-C, which commenced its flight training with enthusiasm and determination. Lt Col Noel Parrish, then the base Director of Training, immediately recognized Captain Davis's exemplary leadership skills. Parrish had a breadth of flight training experience in the prewar Army and noted that as a group Military Academy graduates had "a surprisingly high elimination rate" from pilot training compared to their non-West Point counterparts. In a later interview, Parrish stated that the attributes they learned that made them superb infantry officers were a hindrance to their learning to fly.<sup>13</sup> Airmanship required a certain mental agility to think, execute, and lead spatially in the third dimension, conceptually thinking fluidly and far ahead of the aircraft—then accomplishing the required maneuvers. In this regard, Davis was no exception to his West Point peers, and he was not a natural pilot. Parrish, who later became the stellar commander of TAAF, who desegregated facilities and helped transform a program Army brass deemed an "experiment" into an "experience" for its personnel, took a personal interest in Davis's success, applying his vast instructional experience to teach the young officer what it is to be an Airman. The

transformation was efficacious, and Captain Davis became the first Black officer to solo in an Air Corps aircraft. He steadily advanced through the courses of instruction that included the PT-17 Stearman, the Vultee BT-13, and finally the T-6 Texan. He and four of his remaining classmates of Class 42-C graduated on 7 March 1942.<sup>14</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 12. Capt Benjamin O. Davis Jr. climbing into an advanced trainer, likely a T-6 Texan, at Tuskegee Army Airfield, January 1942.**

These men were the nucleus of pilots of what would eventually become the 99th Fighter Squadron, whose ground crews were training in nonsegregated classes at Chanute Field, Illinois. However, the squadron required a complement of 33 pilots, nearly twice that number of administrative, support, and medical officers, and nearly 500 ground support enlisted personnel. It would

be months before the squadron could be fully manned with the full complement of pilots and support personnel and ready for combat. As more classes of pilots arrived at TAAF and graduated, the base received some frontline, though war-weary, combat aircraft—P-39 Airacobras and P-40 Warhawks. Now Lieutenant Colonel Davis and his pilots were building their flight time in the types of warplanes they would fly in combat overseas.<sup>15</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 13. The graduates of the first class of Tuskegee Airmen gather around the cockpit of a Vultee BT-13 basic flight training aircraft with their instructor. From left: Charles DeBow Jr., Lemuel R. Custis, Mac Ross, Capt Benjamin O. Davis Jr., and George S. “Spanky” Roberts. In the aircraft, Lt Robert M. “Mother” Long, instructor pilot.**

Lieutenant Colonel Davis used this training time to mold his Airmen into a fighting squadron with a clear sense of mission and purpose. As Davis later said, “everyone in the 99th understood . . . their performance would create the future environment for Blacks.” They were fighting a two-front war—a war against Nazi racism overseas and a war against racism at home—the so-called “Double V for Victory.”<sup>16</sup> At last on the first of April 1943, the squadron received its overseas orders. After a long train ride to Camp Shanks, New York, the squadron embarked on the troop ship *Mariposa* on

15 April 1943, zigzagging across the Atlantic Ocean for over a week to avoid Nazi U-boats. The *Mariposa* docked in Casablanca, Morocco, on 24 April, and the squadron moved to a former *Luftwaffe* air base at Oued N'Ja. There, they received 27 brand new Curtis P-40L Warhawks powered by the famous British Merlin engine. Lieutenant Colonel Davis immediately began a training regimen. Twelfth Air Force leadership voiced concern to Washington that all new P-40 units lacked critical combat training when they arrived overseas, and Maj Gen John Cannon set up the Northwest Africa Training Command to address the shortfalls. Also, Davis himself expressed concern that although he and his flight commanders had the rank and authority as squadron leaders, they lacked the flight hours and airmanship experience of their peers in other P-40 squadrons.<sup>17</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 14.** *Left*, Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis Sr. visited Tuskegee Army Airfield's Advanced Flying School on 2 November 1942. *Middle*, Lt Col Noel F. Parrish, the able commanding officer of Tuskegee AAF, and *right*, Lt Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr., who had returned from commanding the 99th Fighter Squadron in the European theater and was preparing to take command of the 332nd Fighter Group at Tuskegee.



USAF Photo

**Figure 15. Lt Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr., commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron, in the cockpit of his P-40L Warhawk fighter, North Africa, 1943.**

Col Philip Cochran, an experienced P-40 combat commander who took over training the new units, recommended to Cannon that Davis and his flight leaders be temporarily integrated into an experienced unit and paired with their counterparts in that squadron to gain that experience, but his reasonable suggestion of integration was denied. Instead, Cochran was dispatched to Oued N’Ja along with two experienced Warhawk pilots to begin training in the combat zone. Cochran enjoyed his time with the fun-loving 99 FS, finding that Lieutenant Colonel Davis set exacting standards and his Airmen responded in kind; the pilots flew beautiful and precise formations, which gave them a firm foundation for learning how to dive bomb and strafe in the P-40. Cochran praised the group as “a collection of born dive bombers.”

Cochran also taught the 99 FS aerial tactics and how to best engage Axis fighters. With its four .50-caliber machine guns and rugged design, the War-

hawk had firepower and was well suited for the grueling desert climate. It could out-turn most Axis fighters, and in the hands of a skilled pilot, the P-40 was a lethal machine.<sup>18</sup> However, its greatest strength was when pilots flew as a team. Time and again, from China to New Guinea to North Africa, P-40 pilots learned that when they fought together, they emerged from battle victorious. The African American pilots of the 99 FS embraced this airmanship concept of teamwork wholeheartedly, and Lieutenant Colonel Davis employed it to the utmost.<sup>19</sup>

Soon, the 99th was ready for combat and moved to a new base on Cape Bon, Tunisia, where they began flying dive bombing and strafing missions against the Axis fortress island of Pantelleria, which had to be reduced before the Allies could invade Sicily. For this operation, the 99 FS was attached to the 33rd Fighter Group under Col William Momyer, who gave his new charges minimal guidance or assistance. Momyer made his contempt for the 99 FS known from the outset. When Lieutenant Colonel Davis and his operations officer, Maj George “Spanky” Roberts, reported to the 33 FG headquarters, Momyer failed to return their salutes. He deliberately changed briefing times to ensure the pilots of the 99th arrived late. Once again, Lieutenant Colonel Davis was forced to overcome unnecessary obstacles to prove the mettle of his squadron. His secret was to display an upbeat commitment to the mission at hand—an enthusiasm that was contagious.<sup>20</sup>

The 99th flew its first combat mission on the morning of 2 June 1943, dive bombing the heavily defended installations as enemy anti-aircraft fire surrounded them. For seven straight days, the 99 FS attacked the Axis fortress without spotting a hostile fighter. On 9 June, they put Cochran’s training to the test when a patrol of six P-40s from the 99th was escorting a flight of A-20 Havoc attack bombers over Pantelleria. Suddenly, four Nazi fighters dived on them from above and the rear, but they had failed to achieve surprise. The vigilant African American Airmen spotted the oncoming attack and turned to meet it head on. In the ensuing, inconclusive engagement, the Warhawk pilots damaged at least one Nazi fighter and left it smoking while only receiving minimal damage themselves. Most importantly, they had protected the bombers with which they were entrusted, though another squadron escorted the bombers home.<sup>21</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Davis was somewhat concerned with how his squadron reacted on these early bomber escort missions. Like most squadrons, the pilots of the 99th were eager for a “kill” and hastily broke ranks to engage the enemy, leaving the bombers momentarily exposed. Davis instilled tighter flight discipline, directing that only elements or flights would be dispatched to meet the attack, while the bulk of the squadron maintained “top cover” over

the bombers. In this way, Lieutenant Colonel Davis defeated any decoy attacks and frustrated the enemy's plans. Additionally, the engaging fighters typically dropped their external auxiliary fuel tanks to be more maneuverable for the ensuing battle, which meant they also now had less fuel to continue the escort after the engagement. Davis directed that since those fighters had to return to base after the battle anyway, they should pair up with damaged bombers—"wounded birds"—so that the bombers had safe escort home.<sup>22</sup> His airmanship skills were growing.

Momyer, however, reported this enthusiasm and eagerness as "panicky" and "undisciplined" in his official communiques to the XII Fighter Command Headquarters. Momyer cited this battle as an example of the lack of discipline for leaving the bombers to engage the enemy, concluding "it is my opinion that they are not of the fighting caliber of any squadron in the group." Lieutenant Colonel Davis was not told of the allegations in theater.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Davis continued to lead the 99 FS on missions against Pantelleria Island, averaging two missions daily. While some missions targeted enemy gun sites, other missions flew bomber escort for B-25 and A-20 aircraft. On 11 June 1943, their efforts bore fruit: Pantelleria surrendered to become the first territory ever captured by the use of airpower alone.

Now the Allies prepared for the campaign against Sicily. While escorting B-25 bombers attacking Castelvetrano Airfield in southwestern Sicily, a formation of the 99 FS came under attack from above. In the ensuing battle, 1st Lt Charles "Seabuster" Hall became the first Tuskegee Airman credited with an aerial victory when he shot down a Nazi FW-190. Lt W. I. Lawson claimed a probable. However, both 1st Lt Sherman White and 2nd Lt James McCullin became the first Tuskegee Airmen lost in combat. They were most likely shot down in the diving attack by the Axis fighters. Although designed as a fighter aircraft, the P-40 lacked the high-altitude capability needed by escort aircraft, and the pilots of the 99 FS remained vulnerable to attacks from on high.<sup>24</sup>

For the next several months, Davis's Airmen continued providing excellent air support—flying bomber escort, providing "top cover" for the landing of Allied troops in Sicily, and flying dive bombing and strafing missions. In September 1943, Lieutenant Colonel Davis was recalled stateside to take command of the all-Black 332nd Fighter Group, consisting of the 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons. However, Momyer's inflammatory letter had gotten traction. Endorsed along his chain of command all the way to the Chief of Staff, Gen Henry H. Arnold, he recommended that the Tuskegee Airmen either be disbanded or relegated to benign coastal patrol missions. Further, *Time* magazine ran an article entitled "Experiment Proved?" that released excerpts from the report, including classified information.<sup>25</sup>



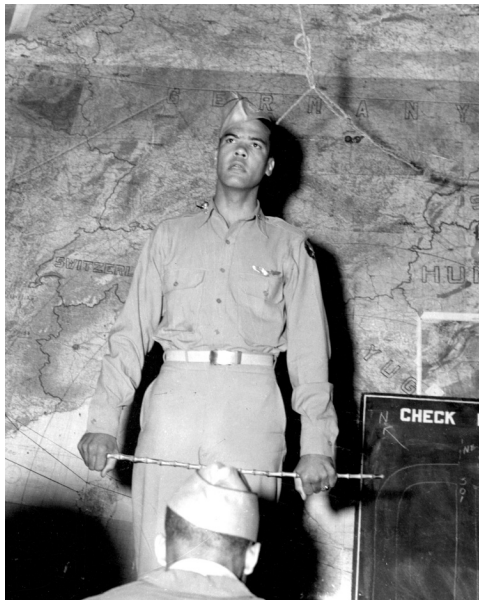
Davis was incensed, but he was on the threshold of one of his greatest triumphs. Called to testify before the War Department's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies (the McCloy Committee), Davis remained poised and composed during his testimony. He was accustomed to maintaining his cool in the face of overt racism. Using data and fact, Davis was able to show that the 99 FS compared favorably with other P-40 squadrons and that one of the main issues of Momyer's argument—that the 99th had not achieved many aerial victories—was irrelevant since its main mission was to support troops on the ground, a mission the squadron had done superbly. Davis also highlighted the fact that the 99th was undermanned compared to White P-40 squadrons, since the sole pipeline training source of TAAF was inadequate to supply replacement pilots as well as build the 332 FG and the newly formed 447th Bombardment Group. This was a poignant jab at segregation's detrimental impact on the war effort.<sup>26</sup> It was also a compelling argument, and Lt Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. carried the day.

Meanwhile, the 99 FS in Italy began to thrive when they were attached to the 79 FG under Col Earl Bates Jr., who treated his new squadron like the rest of his command. They were equals integrated into his battle formations—Black pilots even led White pilots into battle and vice-versa. While supporting the landings of Allied troops at Anzio beachhead on 27 January, the 99 FS intercepted a formation of 15 FW-190s that were attacking Allied ships. The 99 FS destroyed 10 enemy aircraft, and the next day, when Nazi aircraft threatened American ground forces at Anzio, the 99th destroyed three more enemy aircraft, totaling 13 victories in two days. At last, the Tuskegee Airmen stood vindicated against their detractors. Davis's former command became one of the premier dive-bombing squadrons in the theater and earned the respect of their peers. The pilots of the 99th enjoyed their time as members of the 79 FG and were saddened when they were reassigned to the African American 332nd Fighter Group.<sup>27</sup>

The 332 FG embarked for Europe that same January. Lieutenant Colonel Davis had become the first Black fighter group commander when he assumed command of the 332nd Fighter Group at Selfridge Field, Michigan, on 8 October 1943. Davis discovered that, unlike the 99 FS, the pilots and ground crew of the 332nd lacked unit cohesion, purpose, and identity because of the segregationist policies of its former commander, Col Robert Selway Jr. Lieutenant Colonel Davis now faced one of the most challenging problems of his command since he had to mold his Airmen into a cohesive combat unit ready to deploy to Europe. Having only a few months to prepare what he termed a "gaggle" for combat, Lieutenant Colonel Davis called upon all his leadership

and airmanship expertise to bond his Airmen into a proud, disciplined, and effective fighting force.<sup>28</sup>

In early February 1944, the 332nd Fighter Group disembarked in Italy at last, and by the third of the month had arrived at their first operational overseas bases. The group was assigned to fly coastal patrol missions in worn out P-39 Airacobra aircraft, a mission Davis considered “a slap in the face.” Still, he kept his feelings to himself and embraced the new mission with enthusiasm and commitment to build the morale of his unit. He also used this time to create cohesion and esprit de corps. Although a relatively stable gun platform, the P-39 had unreliable flight characteristics, and the rundown aircraft proved to be more lethal to the unit than enemy aircraft. Several pilots died in crashes. Once again, Davis’s leadership and airmanship skills were tested, but his reputation attracted the attention of the commander of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker.<sup>29</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 16. Lieutenant Colonel Davis addresses the 332nd Fighter Group at a mission briefing in the group’s “war room.” He stands in front of a large map of the Fifteenth Air Force theater of operations. Here, pilots learned their “target for today,” escort responsibilities, and route of flight, indicated by a ribbon on the map.**

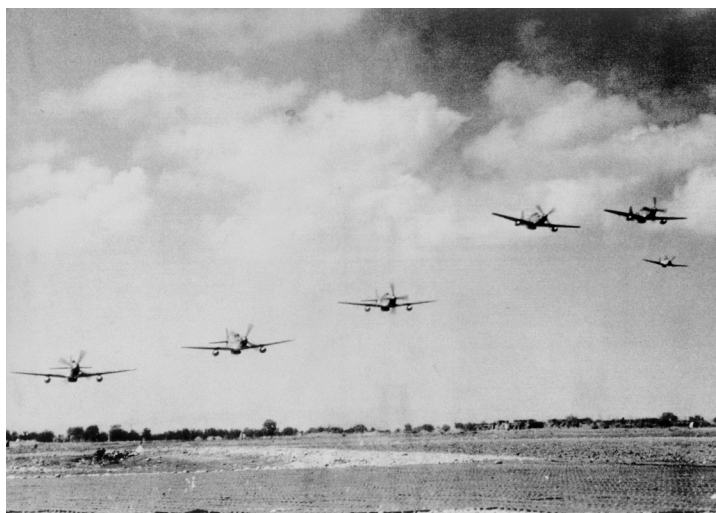
In early March, Lieutenant Colonel Davis met with Eaker at the latter's headquarters at Caserta. Eaker had a problem that spring of 1944: his Fifteenth Air Force, which led his strategic bombing effort against Nazi Germany, had just 21 bombardment groups with only six fighter groups to protect them, unlike his previous command the "Mighty Eighth" Air Force flying out of Britain that at its peak had 40 bombardment groups and 15 fighter groups to provide protection. Eaker had lost 114 heavy bombers carrying 1,140 Airmen in February. He was facing even greater losses as the Fifteenth Air Force intensified its attacks against the Nazi's "Fortress Europe" in the coming months. Eaker wanted to complement the 332 FG with the 99 FS so that he could add a "heavy" fighter group of four squadrons to his escorts (most fighter groups consisted of only three squadrons).<sup>30</sup> Was Davis interested?



USAF Photo

**Figure 17. Lieutenant Colonel Davis stands next to his P-47 Thunderbolt fighter. The 332nd Fighter Group only flew the famous "Jug" for a few months before transitioning to the P-51 Mustang in July 1944. The P-47 was armed with eight .50-caliber machine guns and had a good reputation for survivability.**

Davis jumped at the chance, and in May the 332nd moved for the last time to a new air base at Ramitelli, where they received hand-me-down P-47 fighter aircraft. These aircraft had belonged to a group that used a checker tail paint scheme for identification, and the 332nd painted over that design with a distinctive, solid red paint scheme forever identifying themselves as the “Red Tails.” In addition, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was promoted to colonel. For the time being, the 99 FS remained with Twelfth Air Force supporting a critical offensive—Operation Strangle.<sup>31</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 18. Six P-51 Mustangs of the 332nd Fighter Group buzz their home base in Italy after returning from a mission. Pilots sometimes referred to this maneuver as “cutting the grass.” Note the Mustang at far right has dropped its wing tanks, indicating that it has seen combat.**

Colonel Davis led the 332nd FG on its first Fifteenth Air Force mission on 7 June 1944 in a fighter sweep of the Ferrara-Bologna area. The next day he led the group on its first bomber escort mission, protecting the B-17s of the 5th Bombardment Wing and beginning the group’s storied history of shepherding bombers. Unlike other fighter groups that departed from escort duties over the target area in favor of seeking their own targets of opportunity, Davis’s innovation to group tactics was simple: stay with the bombers as “top

cover” through the target area and stay with them on the way home. He also continued to dispatch flights or elements to stay close to the “wounded birds” that were stripped away from the bomber stream because of battle damage.<sup>32</sup>

Colonel Davis earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for skillfully leading the group’s first mission to Germany on 9 June, when the 332nd helped escort B-24 and B-17 aircraft of the 5th, 47th, 49th, 55th, and 304th Bombardment Wings on a difficult mission to Munich. Despite the lack of enough fighter escorts, which resulted in the loss of two B-24s of the 459th Bombardment Group, the first bombers lost under the protection of the 332nd FG, the Red Tails downed five enemy aircraft.<sup>33</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 19. Lt Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. in the cockpit of his fighter aircraft. This photo was taken when he was commander of the 99th Fighter Squadron, the first of the Tuskegee Airmen squadrons in combat.**

On 4 July 1944, the 332 FG flew its first mission in the P-51 Mustang. Although its first mounts were “hand-me-downs” like the P-47s that they were replacing, the Mustang allowed the Red Tail pilots to soar above the high-flying B-17 bombers and provide a proper top cover while flying escort. It proved to be one of the best piston-engine fighters of the war and allowed the Red Tails to increase their number of aerial victories. The 99 FS joined the group on 6 July. While other fighter groups boasted of the number of their aerial victories, the 332nd celebrated the number of bombers they protected.

During operations with Fifteenth Air Force, the Red Tails flew 179 escort missions and suffered bomber losses on only seven of those missions—a total of 27 bombers shot down by enemy aircraft compared to the average of other fighter groups of Fifteenth Air Force of 46. The Red Tails accounted for 112 confirmed aerial victories over Axis aircraft during the war, including three Messerschmitt Me-262 jet fighters on the 24 March 1945 mission to Berlin—the longest Fifteenth Air Force mission of the war.

Besides bomber escort, they also escorted reconnaissance and transport aircraft, flew fighter sweeps, and flew strafing missions and ground attack missions. Many a locomotive and Axis airfield found themselves under the guns of the 332 FG.<sup>34</sup>

Because of the inability of the training pipeline to provide adequate numbers of replacement pilots, Red Tail pilots often flew 75 missions before rotating stateside whereas their White counterparts rotated after 50 missions. Despite the added burden of the personnel system and the addition of a fourth squadron to the group, Colonel Davis rose to meet each challenge. When 20 B-24s were forced to divert to Ramitelli because of bad weather in December 1944, Colonel Davis used the occasion as an opportunity to bridge the racial divide. The 332nd welcomed some 200 White aircrew who lived with the Red Tails for five days and afforded them warm hospitality. It was the first time many of the bomber crews learned that their “Red Tail angels” were Black, and although a few still retained racial bigotry, most were very grateful and came away with a new perspective.<sup>35</sup>

On 8 June 1945, Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was presented the Silver Star for gallantry in action. Other Red Tails received five Distinguished Flying Crosses, five Air Medals, and one Bronze Star in an impressive ceremony. The group paraded in review to say farewell to Colonel Davis, who was returning to the United States to assume command of the 477th Composite Group at Godman Field, Kentucky.<sup>36</sup>

It seemed that with each return to the United States to assume command of a combat group, Colonel Davis found an even more precipitous obstacle to overcome. Such was the case with the 477th Bombardment Group at Godman Field. First, Godman Field lacked the space to adequately train and prepare the bombardment squadrons for combat. Second, the unit lacked cohesion, in part because it had moved around to various airfields disrupting training.

Ground personnel as well as aircrews were also switched, which prevented cohesiveness. Other causes included inadequate gunnery training and a lack of navigators and bombardiers. In addition, the group was changing from a bombardment group of four squadrons with B-25Js to a composite group of two bomb squadrons and one fighter squadron, the old 99 FS which was being ro-

tated back to the US in preparation for the Pacific War. Finally, the unit's morale was at a low ebb. Davis later described the situation as "just disgraceful."<sup>37</sup>

In April of 1945, Black officers at Freeman Field, Indiana, where the 477th was then assigned, again attempted to nonviolently desegregate the White officers club, challenging the segregationist policies of Colonel Selway and his predecessors that contradicted War Department regulations. This so-called "Freeman Field Mutiny" saw the mass arrest of Black officers and brought unfavorable national attention on the Army Air Forces and foreshadowed the mass protests of the 1950s and 1960s. Eventually, the War Department ordered the release of most of the 120 African American officers who had been arrested. Training had been curtailed. Segregation consumed the entire unit.<sup>38</sup>

This was the situation Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. walked into when he assumed command of the group from Selway on 21 June 1945. The next day, the group was redesignated as the 477th Composite Group (CG) with two bombardment squadrons and one fighter squadron.

Davis had three months before the unit was supposed to deploy to Okinawa, so he got to work re-motivating and preparing the unit for war in his measured, disciplined fashion. Fortunately, he also brought 30 personnel from the 332 FG in Italy with him to assist him in this task. The first of July, Colonel Davis became the first Black officer to command a major air base when he assumed command of Godman Field, and shortly thereafter, the 99 FS began receiving brand new long-range P-47N fighters.<sup>39</sup> The following month, the Empire of Japan announced its intention to surrender, which it did on 2 September 1945 aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, ending World War II.

One might argue that Benjamin O. Davis Jr. made his biggest impact on the Air Force in the second half his career after WWII. In March 1946, the 477th Composite Group moved to Lockbourne Army Air Base, outside of Columbus, Ohio. Although local residents were initially distressed at the arrival of this African American unit on their back porch, Colonel Davis used the opportunity to again bridge the racial divide and cultivate warm relations between the base and the local community. Many of the White employees on the base, such as firefighters, were also in fear of losing their jobs. Davis put them at ease and assured them that they could stay as long as they did their jobs. He won "very great allies" with the local community.<sup>40</sup>

Colonel Davis insisted upon doing the things that base commanders in the military traditionally did with the local community. In preparation for the 1948 Olympics, Lockbourne was designated as a reception base for the eastern US. One of the 477 CG's Airmen won a gold medal, putting Columbus on the sports pages across the nation and earning the esteem of the local community. Local dignitaries came out for Armed Forces Day ceremonies, proud

to be invited to “their base.” Davis promised to make the base the best in the Air Force, and a 1948 Tactical Air Command inspection report called it a model for other Air Force bases. In addition, esteemed WWII generals such as Emmet “Rosie” O’Donnell and Elwood “Pete” Quesada added their plaudits to Colonel Davis and his team at Lockbourne.<sup>41</sup>

Changes were in store for the group. In July 1947, the 477th Composite Group was inactivated, and the 332nd Fighter Group was reactivated at Lockbourne, with the 99th, 100th, and 301st Fighter Squadrons comprising the unit. On 28 July, Davis became the commander of the 332nd Fighter Wing, the first Black commander of a wing, though his tenure was short.<sup>42</sup>

The Air Force was seriously investigating integration, in part because of Col Noel Parrish’s paper describing segregation as “inefficient” and “expensive.” Colonel Davis was invited to serve as an advisor to the Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel at the Pentagon, who was conducting a study on USAF racial policies and practices. Colonel Davis was also invited to work with the Fahy Committee to establish the formal Air Force integration policy. In that role, he reported to the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force. His work in this regard was vital to the Air Force, which became the first branch of the Armed Forces to integrate—even before President Harry Truman’s famous Executive Order 981 went into effect. Both White and African American pilots were soon training together at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona.<sup>43</sup>

In recognition of Colonel Davis’s great leadership potential, Air Force leaders selected him to be the first Black officer to attend Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, in 1949. He found the experience very rewarding, both professionally and socially, before moving on to the Air Staff assigned to the deputy chief of staff for Operations, where he continued to put his airmanship skills to use. In an interview, Davis described how, as chief of the Fighter Branch, his office became “the authority on the Korean War,” developing doctrine for fighter aviation across the entire Air Force, learned from the wartime experience of USAF fighter units. Colonel Davis took his team to the theater of war in Korea to discuss operations with the combatants themselves, earning tremendous respect. He remarked that “our word carried a lot of weight.”<sup>44</sup>

Colonel Davis further described how his team in the Fighter Branch also advanced a Strategic Air Command idea of aerial refueling, using a probe and drogue system to refuel fighter aircraft flying across the oceans for the first time. This collaboration helped make aerial refueling a reality and is one of the core pillars of Global Reach and Global Power for today’s Air Force.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps Colonel Davis’s most widely known achievement as head of the Fighter Branch was the creation of the famous Air Force aerial demonstration team known as the Thunderbirds. Davis sought and received approval for his



idea from the Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen Hoyt Vandenberg, to create a professional aerial demonstration team to demonstrate flying proficiency, create public interest in recruiting and training of aviation cadets, and promote public interest in the Air Force. Known as “America’s Ambassadors in Blue,” the Air Force Thunderbirds are renowned for their skill and proficiency around the world today.<sup>46</sup>

After his success at the Pentagon, Colonel Davis completed the jet indoctrination course at Craig Air Force Base, Alabama, and then attended the Air Force advanced jet fighter gunnery school at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, flying both the F-80 and F-86 before assuming command of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing, Far East Air Forces (FEAF), Suwon Air Base, Korea, in November 1953. In May of 1954, the FEAF Inspector General named his 51 FIW as the “best fighter unit in FEAF.” All too soon his one-year tour was over, and Colonel Davis was named director of Operations and Training, FEAF Headquarters in Tokyo, Japan.<sup>47</sup>

On 27 October 1954, he was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first African American general officer in the US Air Force. His next assignment was vice commander, Thirteenth Air Force. However, he was almost immediately tasked as commander, Air Task Force 13 (Provisional), in Taipei, Formosa, which was under threat from Communist China. To counter that threat, the Chinese Nationalist Air Force in Formosa had received US F-86 Sabre jets, and Brigadier General Davis was charged with creating an air defense system there from scratch. He quickly established both a joint as well as a combined command structure with the United States and Formosan Air Forces and Navies. Once that was in place, he drew on his airmanship skills to develop operational capability, overcoming large and complex problems exacerbated by geography and lack of joint/combined doctrine. Brigadier General Davis was so successful that his reputation as an effective commander and air leader was firmly established, and his Air Force career accelerated.<sup>48</sup>

In April 1957, Davis became the chief of staff of the most powerful tactical air unit in Europe, the Twelfth Air Force at Wiesbaden, Germany. It was a time of increased tension after the Soviets had crushed resistance in Poland and Hungary, and Davis’s duties took him throughout Europe and North Africa inspecting the combat readiness of US and NATO units. In July 1957, Davis hosted 72 Air Force Academy cadets who were visiting Twelfth Air Force as part of their summer tour of European military installations.<sup>49</sup>

Once again, Brigadier General Davis was given more responsibility. In December 1957, he was assigned as the deputy chief of staff for operations at Headquarters, United States Air Forces Europe, directing air operations for two major crises: one in the Middle East as well as the infamous Berlin Crisis.

Once again, Davis demonstrated his coolness and strength of character. He was promoted to major general in June 1959, becoming the first Black Air Force officer to achieve that rank.<sup>50</sup>

In July 1961 Major General Davis was assigned to the Pentagon as the deputy chief of staff for Programs and Requirements, serving also as the director of Air Force Manpower and Organization. In 1965 he was advanced to the position of deputy chief of staff, programs and requirements and promoted to lieutenant general. His meteoric career continued, and in April he was assigned to Korea to serve as the chief of staff for the United Nations Command and Forces in Korea.<sup>51</sup>

Lieutenant General Davis became the commander of the Thirteenth Air Force at Clark Air Base, Republic of the Philippines, in August 1967. It was another laurel in his string of “firsts,” and he continued his excellent service, supporting his fellow numbered Air Force commanders who were fighting the war in Southeast Asia.<sup>52</sup> The next year, Lieutenant General Davis was called upon to serve as the deputy commander in chief, US Strike Command with headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. He was also named as commander in chief, Middle East, Southern Asia, and Africa and became heavily involved in humanitarian operations in Pakistan, India, and Africa. However, owing to the intensification of the war in Southeast Asia, operations at Strike Command were being curtailed, and its senior leaders opted for retirement. This included Davis, who officially retired from active duty on 1 February 1970.<sup>53</sup>

Even in retirement, Lieutenant General Davis continued to serve our nation. He held several government posts beginning in 1970. In response to a surge in airline hijackings, he was named head of the Federal Sky Marshal Program, and in 1971 he was made assistant secretary for Environment, Safety, and Consumer Affairs of the US Department of Transportation.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps Davis’s most important contribution to the Air Force was his work for USAFA. He was elected to both the Board of Visitors of the academy as well as the Board of Trustees of the AOG in 1971. The early 1970s were a very turbulent era of the Air Force Academy as it was for the rest of the nation. It was a period of antiwar protests, violence, and drug use that spilled over to the academy and the Cadet Wing. Attrition soared—reaching 43.77 percent for the class of 1974. Minority cadets were among the hardest hit.<sup>55</sup>

Lt Gen A. P. Clark, the academy superintendent, turned for help to the West Point classmate he had silenced in 1932 asking Lieutenant General Davis to assist the USAF Academy in its time of need. Davis enthusiastically applied the same resolve and integrity to these challenges as he had on active duty. He was personally involved with cadets, faculty, and staff, speaking to classes and in small groups. As president of the Board of Visitors, he collabo-

rated with Clark and his staff, and OPLAN 7-73, a contingency plan to integrate women into the Cadet Wing, was produced. As a result, attrition was curbed, and when the class of 1978 arrived, it saw the largest admission of minority cadets of all kinds that the Air Force Academy had ever received up to that time. Two years later, USAFA became the first military service academy to admit women.<sup>56</sup>

The academy's Falcon Foundation paid tribute to him with a scholarship named in his honor, and General Davis served as a member of the Foundation from 1982 to 1991. In 1995, General Davis was honored by the Cadet Wing when he was presented the Thomas D. White National Defense Award. His indispensable work for the Air Force Academy secured its mission of creating leaders of character for our nation for many generations to come.<sup>57</sup>

On 9 December 1998, President Bill Clinton recalled him to active duty and advanced him to the rank of General, US Air Force (four-star rank). Gen Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. then returned to the roll of retired officers. President Clinton stated during the ceremony, "General Davis is here today as living proof that a person can overcome adversity and discrimination, achieve great things, turn skeptics into believers; and through example and perseverance, one person can bring truly extraordinary change."<sup>58</sup>

Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. passed away on 4 July 2002 and was buried with full military honors on 17 July 2002 at Arlington National Cemetery. He is survived by his nephew, the Honorable L. Scott Melville, as well as other cousins and family.

Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was a command pilot in the United States Air Force who received many military and civilian awards and decorations, including:

- enshrined in National Aviation Hall of Fame
- Langley Gold Medal
- Air Force Distinguished Service Medal
- Army Distinguished Service Medal
- Silver Star
- Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters
- Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters
- Philippine Legion of Honor.<sup>59</sup>

## Notes

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2. Davis, 11–12.
3. Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr., interview with Col Alan Gropman, 3 February 1990, 11–12.
4. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 12, 17–20.
5. Davis, 21–27. Quotation is on page 27.
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8. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 48–50.
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10. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 56–67.
11. Moye, *Freedom Flyers*, 23–26, 28–30; and Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 69–71.
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22. Davis, interview, 108, 113, 136–40.
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24. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 98–102; Bucholtz, *332nd Fighter Group*, 21–23; and Daniel L. Haulman, “The Anatomy of an Error and its Correction: The Deaths in Combat of Tuskegee Airmen 1st Lieutenant Sherman H. White and 2nd Lieutenant James L. McCullin,” [n.d.], Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) white paper. Dr. Haulman served at AFHRA for 37 years, including as chief, Organizational History Division. The author of three major works about the Tuskegee Airmen, he has also published numerous papers and is renowned for his presentations about the famous Red Tails as well as the 477th Bombardment Group. Dr. Haulman searched official Air Force records and unit histories to conclusively prove that lieutenants White and McCullin were shot down and not killed in a collision as some historical works erroneously claim.
25. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 102–3; Bucholtz, *332nd Fighter Group*, 25–26; and Moye, *Freedom Flyers*, 101–2.
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34. Daniel L. Haulman, “The Tuskegee Airmen and the ‘Never Lost a Bomber’ Myth,” *Alabama Review* 64, no. 1 (January 2011): 30–60; Edward Jablonski, *Flying Fortress: The Illustrated Biography of the B-17s and the Men who Flew Them* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 256–59; Broadnax, *Blue Skies, Black Wings*, 134–41; and Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 121–37.
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39. Moye, *Freedom Flyers*, 134–44, 149–150, 175.
40. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 142–46.
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42. Davis, interview, 166–67; and Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 159–65.
43. Bucholtz, *332nd Fighter Group*, 119.
44. Moye, *Freedom Flyers*, 146–48, 150–52; and Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 159–65.
45. Davis, interview, 181–84, 201–4.
46. Davis, 204–7.
47. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 185–86.
48. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 186, 193–94, 196–99, 205–8; and Davis, Gropman interview, 212.
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50. Davis, 238–41.
51. Davis, 241–45.
52. Davis, 263–66, 269–72.
53. Davis, interview, 282–88.
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55. Davis, 354–65.
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59. “Government Hero: Benjamin O. Davis Jr.”

### **Part III: The Colloquium**

This section contains the presentations of three remarkable historians who added their unique perspectives to the body of knowledge on Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. The colloquium was held on Friday, 1 November 2019 at Doolittle Hall on the Air Force Academy from 1:15–3:15 p.m., and several Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen and members of their families attended.

Lt Col Sherman Fleek, USA, retired, Command Historian of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and author of *History May Be Searched in Vain: A Military History of the Mormon Battalion*, winner of the 2007 Utah State Historical Society, Best Military Book Award, presented first. His paper discussed Gen Davis's experiences at the United States Military Academy.

He was followed by Dr. Daniel Haulman, who had only recently retired from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Dr. Haulman is a renowned authority on the Tuskegee Airmen who has published numerous works about their history, and he is co-author of *The Tuskegee Airmen: An Illustrated History*. Dr. Haulman's topic was General Davis as a Tuskegee Airman.

Dr. John Farquhar, a noted Cold War historian from the Air Force Academy's Department of Military and Strategic Studies, presented on General Davis's experience after World War Two, specifically as the Commander, Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) from July 1955 to March 1957, when he played a critical role in the defense of Taiwan against Communist Chinese aggression.

Dr. Charles Dusch served as panel chair and provided the opening remarks and introductions to each speaker. Their papers are offered as submitted and in the order in which they presented.

## **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Dr. Charles Dusch, Command Historian of the United States Air Force Academy. Welcome to our colloquium honoring General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. and the Tuskegee Airmen. We're grateful that you took time out of your busy schedules to celebrate with us today.

We are fortunate in that we have three distinguished scholars sharing their work on Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. with us: From the United States Military Academy, Col Sherman Fleek, USA, retired; recently from the AFHRA, Dr. Daniel Haulman; and from our own United States Air Force Academy, Dr. John Farquhar.

Please join me in welcoming them.

## **Overview**

Every Airman today owes a debt of gratitude to Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Before the Air Force became a separate service—before the Air Force Academy established what were to become the Air Force Core Values—Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do—General Davis was living them, often in the face of great adversity. As a combat Airman, General Davis was respected for his leadership and courage under fire, his exacting standards and discipline, his tenacity and commitment, and his ability to innovate and find a way forward. General Davis broke barriers and built bridges that established him as one of our great American leaders.

His famed “Red Tails” of the 332nd Fighter Group earned a storied reputation in World War II for protecting “the Heavies” in the skies over Nazi Germany. Together with the crews of the 477th Bomb Group, which General Davis also commanded, the Tuskegee Airmen challenged assumptions and established a reputation for excellence pivotal to the outcome of World War II. They battled against Nazi racism in Europe as well as racism here in the United States—the so-called “Double V for Victory.”

After the war, General Davis was instrumental in creating the Air Force aerial demonstration team known as the Thunderbirds. He was the first Black general officer in the Air Force as well as the first Black numbered Air Force commander. Most importantly for your Air Force Academy, he served as president of the Board of Visitors at a time of great institutional turmoil and was personally engaged with improving the academy's inclusiveness and paving the way for the integration of women into the Cadet Wing.



## Perspective

Some historical perspective is necessary to understand the magnitude of challenges he faced: Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was born on 18 December 1912, during a period the Library of Congress has termed, “the Segregation Era,” a time when segregation tightened—when ethnic and racial oppression escalated across the United States.

This was a time of intense nativism and bigotry. General Davis’s childhood was marked by open discrimination against Italians; Germans next became targets of intolerance as the United States joined the belligerents to fight World War I.

In the post–World War I United States, intolerance against immigrants and African Americans became more widespread as it was codified into law. The Immigration Act of 1924 excluded Asians as well as Greeks, Poles, and other Slavic peoples. The goal was to preserve a racist ideal of US homogeneity. Jews and Catholics were likewise targets of bigotry and hatred, in part because of a resurgence of the hate group known as the Ku Klux Klan. Membership in the Klan exploded in the mid-1920s, and although it remained a clandestine society, its membership swelled between three and eight million men, with much of the organization centered in the Midwest of the US. Black Americans, of course, remained its chief target, and Klansmen marched frequently—even openly without their hoods—to intimidate and sway public policy.

My colleague, Lt Col Sherman Fleek, USA, retired, will describe how a young Benjamin O. Davis Jr. sat in silence on the front porch with his family while one such demonstration marched through Tuskegee, Alabama. Yet, the more poignant example for the young man was the courage displayed by his father—a Black officer in the United States Army—who stood defiantly in uniform while the marchers passed.

Of course, the US military of the 1920s was not immune to the racism and bigotry of the day. A 1925 War College study that would be used to justify racist segregation by the military well into World War II pronounced that Blacks were inferior and unsuitable for the highly technical branches of the Army, like aviation. Such a study, Colonel Fleek will show, affected how Cadet Davis was treated at West Point and his career choices—even though he graduated near the top of his class. But Davis was tenacious and, as Dr. Daniel Haulman will prove, able to overcome impossible odds to become among the first Black military flying cadets and combat Air Force leaders.

Before becoming a general officer, numbered Air Force commander, and president of the Air Force Academy Board of Visitors, he was first and foremost a Tuskegee Airman. Dr. Haulman will explain how, under the leadership

of Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the Tuskegee Airmen overcame seemingly impossible odds at home and in Europe and established an exemplary combat record of ground support and bomber escort in World War II that helped win the war and shape the United States Air Force.

Finally, Dr. John Farquhar will examine how General Davis carried that reputation for integrity and excellence forward into the newly established US Air Force, becoming one of our service's most important airpower leaders. Whether influencing Air Force fighter doctrine, advocating aerial refueling, or helping the Air Force Academy—which he dearly loved—in a moment of crisis, General Davis played a major role.

Our first presenter is the command historian of the United States Military Academy. He is a retired Army officer who served as an aviator, special forces officer, and enlisted armor crewman, ending his career as chief historian of the National Guard Bureau. A native of Layton, Utah, he holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in English from Brigham Young University and a Master of Arts degree in American History from the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. He served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Idaho.

As an historian, he has more than 30 articles published on military, frontier army, Mexican War, and Civil War history in national periodicals and historical journals. In 2006, his first book appeared, the award-winning *History May Be Searched in Vain: A Military History of the Mormon Battalion*; his second book, *Place the Headstones Where They Belong*, a biography of Thomas Neibaur, a World War I recipient of the Medal of Honor, appeared in 2008. He later published two historical novels on the Mexican War in the Far West. His latest book, *Saints of Valor: Mormon Medal of Honor Recipients*, was published in late 2011 and again in 2013.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming our distinguished guest from West Point, Col Sherman Fleek.

## **Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr.: Red Tail of the Long Gray Line**

SHERMAN L. FLEEK

The life story, career, and professional accomplishments of Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. were truly extraordinary. As an African American, he was a pioneer. Not only his personal achievements but also his entire life and distinguished military career are symbols of meeting and surpassing the hardships and challenges he faced.

Not only was General Davis a pioneer, but his father, Benjamin O. Davis Sr., was also. Davis Sr. was the first Black to be promoted to general officer in the Regular Army in 1940 after some 42 years of service. The Davises, father and son, are sterling examples of perseverance, determination, devotion to duty, and overcoming obstacles to achieve professional excellence.

### **Family Background and Early Life**

When the time came for their second child to enter this world, 1st Lt Benjamin O. Davis, a cavalry officer, and his wife Elnora Dickerson Davis were stationed at Fort D. A. Russell (later F. E. Warren Air Force Base) in Cheyenne, Wyoming. On 18 December 1912, their only son, Benjamin O. Davis Jr., came into the world. Tragically, Elnora Davis died in 1916 as a result of childbirth. Benjamin never really knew his mother because he was only age four at the time.

During World War I, Captain Davis once again returned to the Philippines with the temporary rank of major in the expandable National Army. In 1919 Benjamin Sr., married Sadie Overton, an amazing woman, who was gifted, educated, and refined, but was also determined and charming at the same time. The three Davis children called her “Mother Sadie,” and they loved her dearly.

In the summer of 1920, the family arrived in Tuskegee, Alabama, where Captain Davis, having reverted to his permanent rank, served as professor of military science at the all-Black Tuskegee Institute. At Tuskegee that summer, young Benjamin witnessed a march of the Klu Klux Klan along the streets of the college. The Ku Klux Klan sought to reinforce racial segregation, demonstrating the prejudice and attitudes of the times.

In 1926 Benjamin had a transforming experience at age fourteen while visiting his grandparents in Washington, DC. He paid five dollars for a ride in a biplane with a barnstormer and later wrote:

Most of the details of this first flight are lost to me. I was completely overwhelmed. We flew in an open-cockpit airplane, and I had to wear goggles and a helmet. . . . I was not to experience those sensations again until my

Army Air Corps indoctrination rides. . . . About all I really remember are the takeoff and the feeling of exhilaration at being in the air. . . . And I remember a sudden surge of determination to become an aviator.

### **His Desire To Be a Pilot Became His Calling In Life**

Over time, young Benjamin considered the opportunity to attend the United States Military Academy, and at age nineteen, he earnestly sought an appointment to West Point. He was an outstanding student and attained nearly straight “A” grades through his student years and graduated at the top of his class in high school. In March 1931, Benjamin took the entrance examinations and physicals at Fort Sheridan in Chicago but failed to attain a passing grade in several subjects, especially European and English history. He was sorely disappointed. Since he had obtained fine grades in college, he assumed he had prepared sufficiently.

Though a regrettable and humiliating experience for Benjamin Davis, he determined to succeed and obtain an appointment to the Military Academy. Here Davis began to develop the drive, confidence, and stubbornness that became a hallmark of his character to achieve a goal regardless of the adversity and barriers in the way. He committed himself to study and preparation for nearly a year and intensely improved his shortcomings, especially in history. In the spring of 1932, Benjamin passed the examination and then obtained an appointment to West Point from Republican Congressman Oscar De Priest of Illinois, the only black member of Congress.

### **Four Years of Silence**

As with nearly every arriving cadet of the United States Military Academy, young Benjamin Davis was enthralled with the experience as he approached West Point. He later recorded rather poetically: “When the big day finally arrived, I was so excited that the train ride to West Point seemed to take forever. I marveled at the blue sky and the green forests, shimmering in the summer sunshine, that covered the domed hills of northern New York. The scenery was spectacular, and I felt lucky to be alive and at the beginning of what promised to be the greatest adventure of my life so far.”

Upon reaching the garrison gate, “We were met in a civil manner and driven by bus to the central barracks, where all civility promptly disappeared,” Davis recalled. Forced into a strict regimen of standing in an “exaggerated position of attention” or “bracing” as it was called then, Cadet Davis recalled,

“We were greeted by the raucous voices of handsome young men who sought, successfully, to convince us that they were God’s chosen creatures, and we were the lowest possible dregs.”

Harassed and harried all day, the first indication that Davis had that he would be treated differently than the other new cadets was when he was quartered alone in a large barracks room by himself. Later he read on a bulletin board that “Room 1844 will be occupied by only (1) cadet.” He realized he was the lone cadet, quartered in Division 18 of the old Central Barracks in the Central Area. Then within a day or two, he also realized that no other cadets, upper classmen or his peers, would take a seat at his table in the mess hall or allow him to sit with others.

As summer training, called Beast Barracks, ended, Cadet Davis realized that like a half dozen other African American cadets before him, he was singled out and isolated because of only one factor: he was a Black man. The concept of silencing another cadet by the entire Corps of Cadets had been commonplace for generations to punish a cadet for what others felt was an infraction of the academy’s values of “Duty, Honor, Country” and the Corps’ Honor Code. In some cases, silencing was enforced by race as with Henry O. Flipper, the first Black to graduate from the Academy in 1877. For the next four years, the only time White cadets talked or acknowledged Cadet Davis was in formal settings, class room discussions, and official performance of duties, training, and field exercises. Other than those occasions, Benjamin Davis was a lone island in a sea of gray and gloom among the fortress walls and buildings of West Point. Among his classmates were notable historical figures destined to have a major impact in the Army and the nation: William C. Westmoreland and Creighton W. Abrams Jr. both served later as the senior commander in Vietnam and as Army chief of staff.

Over time Davis learned to endure this treatment. He had open access to the commandant of cadets, who seemed outwardly sympathetic, but who did little to change or alleviate Davis’s treatment and conditions. Davis was a member of M Company and did his best to meet institutional racism with firmness and resolve. By Christmas holiday, Davis noted later that of 435 cadets who arrived with him on 1 July 1932, 52 had been dismissed.

Life at the academy was challenging for all. Cadets entered a world of strict regimentation covering nearly every facet of their lives for four years. Uniforms, parades, classrooms, and even marching to class led by “section marchers” were all based on strict adherence to regulations. The young men from across the nation endured the seasonal climate in ancient, gray-granite barracks that were nearly a hundred years old, complete with an obsolete heating system, consisting of oil- and coal-burning boilers that provided irregular

heat by steam radiators. Lighting was by natural gas lamps though there were some electric outlets. Then there were the “sinks” across the central area in another building where cadets washed, showered, and used the toilets. If a need arose to use the toilet in the middle of the night, a cadet would don his West Point robe and hasten down stairs, out into the dark, and then on to the sinks. With no internal plumbing and antiquated heating and lighting, the comforts and convenience at the old barracks were depressing.

Eating in the three-winged Cadet Mess was another drudgery that young cadets faced. Cadets sat at strict attention with a straight posture, using only three inches of the front of the seat, eyes straight, and chin in. The Plebes, or freshmen, ate “square meals” using their utensils to make a “square,” that is, bringing the utensil straight up from the plate, level with the face, then bringing the food straight into the mouth. The cadet then replaced the utensil the same way on the table, made three chews of the food, and then repeated the process again. If the strict routine of such illogical practice was not enough to ruin one’s appetite, the constant haranguing and questions and performances by upperclassmen during meals was enough to badger any plebe.

The fact that cadets had almost no free time to leave the confines of West Point for 18 months, until Christmas break of the second or Yearling (sophomore) year, was a major challenge. Incarcerated in this prison-like institution, cadets existed more than lived. Though hazing was forbidden, the practice of cadets harassing their fellows continued.

At the end of his first (Plebe) year, Davis was warmly accepted at the annual Recognition Ceremony during graduation week. Many upperclassmen praised and congratulated him for persevering through great adversity. But soon thereafter, it was back to normal: silence and isolation. “I had become hardened to the personal abuse,” Benjamin Davis wrote, “when people hurt me, either by ignoring me or outright maltreatment, I gave no indication that I had been hurt.” Benjamin Davis turned this situation into a reservoir of strength and confidence.

These protocols, traditions, and austere discipline were applied to all cadets in the 1930s before the liberalization of the 1960s and 1970s. If one considers this environment and adds “silencing” to the equation, then Cadet Davis encountered very difficult challenges. Once he was qualified and trained to ride a horse, Benjamin often rode among the green hills of the Hudson Highlands, finding great pleasure and relaxation. He also ran hundreds of miles through the surrounding hills for his own personal fitness program. Benjamin was not allowed to participate in intercollegiate sports, but he did play lacrosse, soccer, and ran cross country in M Company intramural teams. One of the spe-

cial tasks he had was to coach deficient cadets in their weak classes. This took an amount of humility to teach and tutor cadets who then ostracized him.

Davis also took up the habit of smoking, which he continued much of his life. One of the many training exercises that became tradition over time was the summer marches that cadets endured. In the summer of 1933, Davis and the Corps of Cadets conducted a five-day march through the Hudson Highlands during a constant rain storm. They slept in tents on the flooded ground, and on the last day of the exercise, the Corps marched 20 miles up and down highland ridges in a driving rain. This infantry experience convinced Benjamin Davis even more so that he should become a pilot in the fledgling US Army Air Corps.

The grim life among the granite walls has proved a difficult situation for all cadets when faced with the challenge of seeking female companionship. Like all cadets, Davis, on several occasions at home or while on leave in New York City, pursued the opportunity to meet young ladies with vigor. During his Yearling second year, Benjamin had his first leave in 18 months. On New Year's Eve of 1933, Davis met his social desires as he did with all challenges—with determination and decisiveness. In fact, the evening started out with three separate dates, and during the highlight moment at midnight ushering in 1934, an attractive young lady tossed confetti down his full-dress uniform collar. He was instantly smitten by this young lady but failed to learn her name. Eventually, through due diligence, he learned she was Agatha Scott of New York City. For the next two and half years, they wrote hundreds of letters to each other. Agatha also often visited him at West Point during his upper-class years.

Still, Cadet Davis endured the prejudice of the era. During summer training, for example, he slept alone in a tent. No one conversed or socialized with him—he had no friends. As time went on, Benjamin was extremely careful not to cause a problem and to avoid demerits and negative reports in performance or leadership. Excessive demerits and any minor violation could be used as an excuse for dismissal. As a Yearling, Davis was caught with a personal radio, an unauthorized or contraband item. He had to walk five punishment tours (or hours) and received five demerits for this infraction. Later, he learned to be more clever about hiding the radio and was never caught again.

He knew that other African Americans before him had been dismissed due to academic standing and grades or poor military and tactical evaluations. His performance had to be perfect to remain in the Corps and graduate. His plebe year he earned 69 demerits, and 83 his second year as a Yearling, but as a Firstie, or senior, he received only 43 demerits. He hardened and trained himself to survive. The few pleasures, relief, and diversions he enjoyed were always overwhelmed by the reality of silencing. He wrote years later, “I was silenced solely

because cadets did not want blacks at West Point. Their only purpose was to freeze me out. What they did not realize was that I was stubborn enough to put up with their treatment to reach the goal I had come to attain.”

As the months rolled on, Cadet Davis had two major goals in his professional life: graduate and become a pilot. In 1935, his Cow (junior) year, he took the flight medical examination and submitted his application for flight training upon graduation. During summer training, Davis had the opportunity to visit Mitchell Field in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he spent five days flying in Army aircraft as a passenger. He was thrilled. After this flying experience, Davis was even more determined to become an aviator. He wrote later, “I enjoyed every minute of it, and there was no doubt in my mind that the Air Corps was for me.” The hammer blow fell in November 1935, when Superintendent, Maj Gen William Connor, called Cadet Davis into his office and showed him a letter from the War Department notifying him that current policy did not allow “Negroes” to undergo flight training. The letter explained that since there were no Black aviation units, there would be no billet available for “a colored officer.” Benjamin Davis was denied flight training because of his race.

Cadet Davis was mortified. “The decision, which came as a complete shock to me, was shameful,” he recalled. It was “unworthy of the great democratic nation in which we lived; it was another manifestation of the Army’s long-standing position that no black officer should ever command white troops.” Young Benjamin Davis realized more than ever he would face the same discrimination that his father endured where African Americans had no command authority over White soldiers. This was not at all appealing to Cadet Davis. To the Army leaders of the day, it was unthinkable to have Black officers command White troops.

In his autobiography, General Davis quoted a 1925 Army War College study entitled, “The Use of Negro Manpower in War.” This study and other documents of the era established the policy the US Army employed to segregate the races, to limit Blacks from serving in technical fields, and to prohibit them from leading and being superiors over White officers and soldiers.

### **Having No Real Choice, Cadet Davis Became an Infantry Officer**

Finally, the great day arrived: Graduation, 12 June 1936. Cadet Davis had compiled an excellent academic record during his four years at the academy. He graduated thirty-fifth in a class numbering 276. He graduated ahead of both of his more famous classmates: William Westmoreland, who also served as first captain, graduated 112th, and Creighton Abrams finished 175th.



Academically over four years, Davis had done well:

- Engineering and Military History 71
- Ordnance and Gunnery 61
- Tactics 54
- Law 132
- Economics and Government 74
- Conduct 65
- Overall Order of Merit (class ranking) 35

The keynote speaker on graduation day, 12 June 1936, was General of the Armies, USA, retired, John Pershing, who himself had served in the all-Black 10th US Cavalry, one of the Buffalo Soldier regiments. When Cadet Davis walked across the stage or platform a thunderous roar greeted him, which he did not realize at the time. Soon articles and newspaper accounts appeared nation-wide heralding the “Black graduate of West Point.” Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Sr. commissioned young Second Lieutenant Davis after the graduation ceremony on the famous Plain of West Point. Benjamin in his simple prose remembered: “I went back to my room, got out of my cadet uniform for the last time, and dressed in the civilian clothes I would wear for the next three months. None too soon, I left behind the orders, the routine, the silence I had endured for four years.”

Less than two weeks later, on 20 June 1936, Agatha Scott and Lieutenant Davis were married in the Cadet Chapel. There were no classmates nor professors nor officers nor any guests present. Sadly, Agatha visited West Point many times over a two-year period, and she never met or was introduced to one White cadet.<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

1. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., American: An Autobiography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991). All information and quotations in this section from the Davis autobiography.

Thank you, Colonel Fleek.

Our next presenter has served for 37 years in federal service and is the acknowledged Air Force expert on the Tuskegee Airmen. He recently retired from the AFHRA where he had served as Chief, Organizational History Division. He has authored six books, including four print books and two e-books. Three of his major works are about the Tuskegee Airmen. He has also published numerous papers and is renowned for his presentations about the famous Red Tails as well as the 477th Bombardment Group.

He recently published, *The Tuskegee Airmen: An Illustrated History* with Joseph Caver and Jerome Ennels. His other works include *The Tuskegee Airmen and the "Never Lost a Bomber" Myth*; *What Hollywood Got Right and Wrong about the Tuskegee Airmen in the Great New Movie*, *Red Tails*; *Air Force Aerial Victory Credits: World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam*; *The United States Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations, 1947–1994*; and *One Hundred Years of Flight: USAF Chronology of Significant Air and Space Events, 1903–2002*.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor to introduce Dr. Daniel L. Haulman.

## **Benjamin O. Davis Jr. as a Tuskegee Airman**

DR. DANIEL HAULMAN

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After he was a West Point graduate and before he was the first Black general in the Air Force, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was a Tuskegee Airman. He was unquestionably the most important of them, serving as commander of their most important units. Today I want to focus on that very important part of his distinguished career, which lasted from 1941 to 1949.<sup>1</sup>

It was natural for Benjamin O. Davis Jr. to be among the first Black military flying cadets. At the US Military Academy at West Point, where he graduated in 1936, Davis had applied unsuccessfully for pilot training. There were no Black flying units to which he could have been assigned at the time. In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promised to allow the training of Black American military pilots and appointed Davis’s father the first Black general in the US Army. In March 1941, the War Department activated the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the future 99th Fighter Squadron, but it did not yet have any pilots. The War Department selected Tuskegee as the place where those pilots would be trained. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. had already served at Tuskegee Institute as an ROTC instructor from June 1938 to February 1941.<sup>2</sup>

Davis entered flight training at Tuskegee in August 1941 as one of 13 Black cadets in the first class. He was the only West Point graduate among them. After nine to ten weeks of primary flight training in biplanes on grass at Tuskegee Institute’s Moton Field, Davis was one of only six of the 13 cadets to move on to basic flight training at the much larger Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF), an Army Air Forces facility several miles to the northwest of Moton Field.

Davis was among only five of the cadets to complete basic flying training phase in January 1942 and went on with them to complete the advanced flight training on 7 March.<sup>3</sup> The graduates received their wings and became the first Black pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron, the former 99th Pursuit Squadron, which had been activated the previous March as the first Black flying unit in American military history.

Despite his credentials, or perhaps because of them, Davis did not immediately become the commander of the 99th. The squadron’s first two commanders had been White. Around the time Davis graduated from advanced flight training, he was promoted, like other West Point graduates elsewhere, to the rank of lieutenant colonel, as the War Department girded for the com-

ing conflict. He outranked the White commander of the unit, so at first Davis served at TAAF headquarters.<sup>4</sup> Lt George “Spanky” Roberts, with whom Davis had graduated from flight training, assumed command of the 99th Fighter Squadron in June 1942, as Davis completed his base duties.<sup>5</sup> Two months later, Davis assumed command of the 99th with Roberts as his subordinate.<sup>6</sup>

By the time Davis assumed command in August 1942, the 99th Fighter Squadron finally had enough pilots from subsequent flying training school classes at Tuskegee to be operational.<sup>7</sup> Fighter squadrons were typically assigned in sets of three to a fighter group, but at the time the 99th Fighter Squadron began, there was no Black fighter group to which it could be assigned.

While the squadron transition-trained with P-40s, the Army Air Forces activated the 332nd Fighter Group at Tuskegee, but instead of assigning the 99th Fighter Squadron to it, three other fighter squadrons, the 100th, 301st, and 302nd, also activated at Tuskegee, were assigned to the group.<sup>8</sup> The first commanders of these units were White. In March 1943, a full year after the 99th Fighter Squadron received its first pilots, it continued to languish at Tuskegee, while the 332nd Fighter Group and its three other fighter squadrons moved to Selfridge Field, Michigan.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in early April, the 99th Fighter Squadron deployed, not to Michigan, but overseas.<sup>10</sup> At last the first black flying squadron in history would have a chance to show what it could do in combat, and Davis would lead them there.

After proceeding by rail to the New York port of embarkation, the 99th Fighter Squadron crossed the Atlantic Ocean aboard the ship *SS Mariposa*. There were other units and personnel aboard, but because Lieutenant Colonel Davis was the senior officer, he served as troop commander during the voyage and worked with a small staff of other officers. The week-long transoceanic trip to North Africa was uneventful with only one submarine alert.<sup>11</sup>

Since there was no Black fighter group overseas to which the 99th Fighter Squadron could be assigned, it was attached in May 1943 to the 33rd Fighter Group, a White fighter group that already had three White fighter squadrons assigned. Serving with the Twelfth Air Force, like those other squadrons, the 99th flew P-40s on tactical missions in support of surface forces. The group moved from North Africa to Sicily and then to the mainland of Italy. Some of the White units resented the 99th. The 33rd Fighter Group’s commander, Col William Momyer, dealt cordially with Lieutenant Colonel Davis, who was not aware of the friction beneath the surface. In October, the same month Davis returned to the United States to take command of the 332nd Fighter Group and prepare to take it to Italy, a critical memorandum from Momyer’s staff was forwarded up the chain of command all the way to Army Air Forces Headquarters, with endorsements from Twelfth Air Force major generals. It

recommended that the 99th Fighter Squadron be taken out of frontline combat and be reassigned far behind the lines. The War Department referred the report to the War Department's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies (also called the McCloy Committee), and Colonel Davis was called to testify before the committee. Surely if the 99th Fighter Squadron was performing poorly in combat, Army Air Forces leaders would question whether the 332nd Fighter Group should be deployed overseas and take part in frontline combat. Not only Davis but also the reputation of his Black flying units was on trial.<sup>12</sup>

In testimony before the McCloy Committee, Davis ably defended the combat record of the 99th Fighter Squadron and explained the challenges faced by the first Black fighter flying unit in combat. The 99th had fewer pilots than the other squadrons because expected replacements had not arrived. They lacked the guidance of experienced combat pilots from other units with which they had little association. Davis's arguments convinced Army Air Forces leaders to remove the squadron from Momyer's group, not from combat, and attach it to another group. Commanders of other White fighter groups to which the 99th Fighter Squadron was subsequently attached gave the Black pilots more opportunities, and they excelled. Although Davis was with the 332nd Fighter Group in January 1944, leading it from America to Italy, his old 99th Fighter Squadron performed magnificently that month, shooting down several enemy airplanes that threatened Allied troops at Anzio. The War Department launched a study to compare the performance of the 99th Fighter Squadron with other P-40 units in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Although the study was not finalized until March of 1944, it confirmed that the 99th Fighter Squadron was flying as well as the White fighter squadrons with which it served in the Twelfth Air Force.<sup>13</sup>

Under the leadership of Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the 332nd Fighter Group deployed to Italy in early 1944. By then, all personnel were African American. Davis was the group's first Black commander. Like the 99th Fighter Squadron that was already in Italy, the 332nd Fighter Group flew missions for the Twelfth Air Force in support of surface forces. Unlike the 99th, the 332nd Fighter Group's squadrons flew P-39s instead of P-40s. The P-39, with a cannon and its ammunition in its nose and with an engine situated behind the pilot, was designed more for destroying enemy targets on the ground than in the air. The group's pilots had little opportunity to shoot down enemy airplanes or become aces.<sup>14</sup>

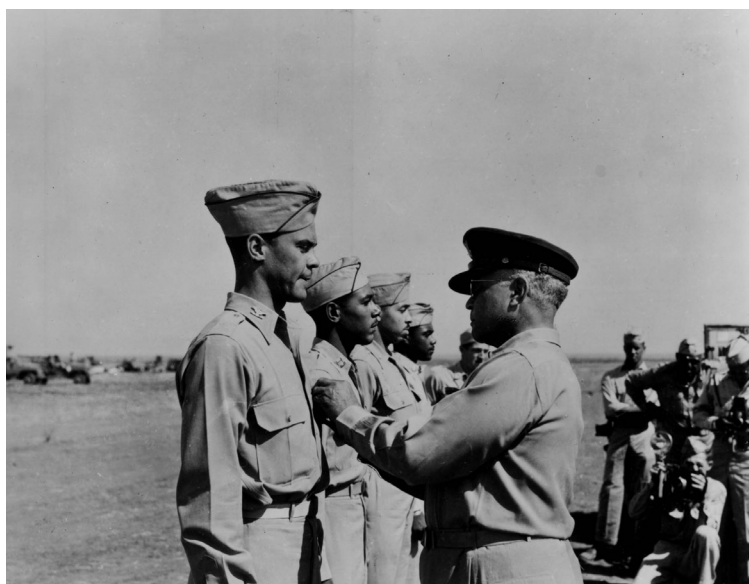
Even though by early February 1944 all four Black fighter squadrons were in Italy flying for the Twelfth Air Force, and even though Colonel Davis had commanded the 99th and was then commanding the 332nd Fighter Group

with its three other fighter squadrons, they were not yet serving in the same group. For months, the 332nd Fighter Group and its three squadrons served separately from the 99th Fighter Squadron, which continued to serve attached to White fighter groups, flying P-40s instead of P-39s.<sup>15</sup>

The door opened to the Black fighter squadrons in Italy in the middle of 1944. General Ira Eaker, once commander of the Eighth Air Force and now commander of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, managed both the Twelfth and the Fifteenth Air Forces.<sup>16</sup> The Fifteenth Air Force had 21 heavy B-17 and B-24 bomber groups assigned to it, and each of those groups had four bombardment squadrons. There were only six fighter groups, each with only three fighter squadrons, to protect them against enemy fighters when they flew deep over enemy territory. Eaker wanted to add Davis's 332nd Fighter Group to the escort groups of the Fifteenth Air Force and to give it the 99th, which would make it the only four-squadron fighter group in the Army Air Forces. Moving all the Black fighter squadrons into the 332nd Fighter Group and reassigning it from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Air Force revolutionized the situation. The Black fighter squadrons would get better aircraft and begin to fly missions deep into enemy territory where they would have opportunity to demonstrate their flying skills and down more enemy airplanes. Davis readily accepted the challenge. By the middle of 1944, the 332nd Fighter Group moved to Ramitelli Field near the east coast of Italy, and the 99th Fighter Squadron joined the other three squadrons already assigned to the group. They got new airplanes, first P-47s and then P-51s, the fastest, most maneuverable, and longest-range fighters in the service. Davis became the commander of the largest fighter group in the Army Air Forces. To distinguish their airplanes from those of the other fighter escort groups, they painted the tails of their P-51s a solid red. The P-51 tails of the other three local Mustang groups were other colors.<sup>17</sup>

As leader of the 332nd Fighter Group, Davis demanded that his fighter escort pilots stick with the bombers they were assigned to protect and not go off looking for enemy fighters to shoot down. He knew that the Germans often used fighter decoys to lead away the escorts so that other German fighters could more easily attack the bombers. Keeping their fighters closer to the bombers would better protect the B-17s and B-24s they were escorting, but it would also reduce opportunities for Black pilots to shoot down enemy airplanes. Each of those heavy bombers had a crew of at least ten men. To Davis, getting the bombers home safely was more important than shooting down enemy fighters. Partly because of Davis's policy, there were no Black aces in World War II.<sup>18</sup>

Those who compared the 332nd Fighter Group with the other P-51 fighter escort groups in the Fifteenth Air Force might have noted that the Black pilots shot down fewer aircraft, but it was for good reason. The 332nd Fighter Group flew 79 bomber escort missions for the Fifteenth Air Force during the period between early June 1944 and the end of April 1945 and lost bombers to enemy aircraft on only seven of those missions.<sup>19</sup> The total number of Tuskegee Airmen-escorted bombers shot down by enemy airplanes was 27, but the average number of bombers lost by the other groups in the Fifteenth Air Force was 46.<sup>20</sup> The Tuskegee Airmen lost significantly fewer of the bombers they escorted than the other fighter escort groups in the Fifteenth Air Force. In fact, their reputation for protecting the bombers spread, and some of the bomber crews expressed a preference for the Black escorts. Davis even named his own aircraft "By Request" and had his Mustang's nose painted with those words.<sup>21</sup>



USAF Photo

**Figure 20. Maj Gen Benjamin O. Davis Sr. awards the Distinguished Flying Cross to Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. at Ramitelli in September 1944. Next to Colonel Davis are, left to right, Capt Joseph D. Elsberry, 1st Lt Jack D. Holsclaw, and 1st Lt Clarence D. "Lucky" Lester.**

Davis himself flew on many of the missions with the other Tuskegee Airmen pilots. For the second heavy bomber escort mission, on 9 June 1944, Davis

earned a Distinguished Flying Cross. Present at the presentation ceremony on 10 September, there were no less than four generals, including Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces; Maj Gen Nathan F. Twining of the Fifteenth Air Force; Brig Gen Dean C. Strother of the XV Fighter Command; and Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis Sr., father of the recipient, who pinned the medal on his son. The citation noted that "Colonel Davis so skillfully disposed his squadrons that despite the large number of enemy fighters, the bomber formation suffered only a few losses."<sup>22</sup> In fact, only two of the escorted bombers were shot down by enemy airplanes that day.<sup>23</sup> At the same ceremony, three other Tuskegee Airmen also received Distinguished Flying Crosses.

The great majority of the Red Tail missions escorted bombers, but some of them were missions launched to strafe enemy installations and equipment. On another mission on 15 April 1945, Davis earned a Silver Star for leading a dangerous strafing mission against an enemy railyard in Austria that destroyed or damaged 35 locomotives and even more railroad cars. Colonel Davis himself destroyed or damaged six of the locomotives on the raid.<sup>24</sup> Although Davis never shot down any enemy airplanes, he flew a great many missions, leading the red-tailed squadrons in escorting bombers that were rarely shot down by enemy aircraft or in strafing enemy targets on the ground.

In April 1945, back in the states, the only Black bombardment group, the 447th, was still training for combat. Its White commander was Col Robert Selway, who had also commanded the 332nd Fighter Group before Davis took it overseas. Like Davis, Selway was a West Point graduate. Unlike Davis, Selway had a reputation as a segregationist. He enforced segregation at Selfridge Field when the 332nd Fighter Group was stationed there, and he continued to enforce segregation on the field when the 477th was stationed there.<sup>25</sup> When the 477th Bombardment Group moved from Selfridge to Godman Field in Kentucky, Selway's segregation efforts were easier. Black officers used the only officers club on the base, because the White officers used the officers club at Fort Knox, which was next to Godman.<sup>26</sup>

When the only Black bombardment group moved to Freeman Field, Indiana, in April 1945, there was trouble because at first the base had only one officers club, and there was no other base nearby. Selway set up a separate officers club for the White officers of the group, whom he deemed "trainers" as opposed to the Black "trainees." One hundred twenty Black officers either attempted to enter the White only club or refused to sign a new base regulation that segregated the base facilities and were arrested. To quell the unrest, which began to receive national attention, the Army Air Forces moved the whole group back to Godman Field and released all but three of the arrestees who were court-martialed. Only one was convicted, but the others were given



written reprimands that remained part of their personnel records and hindered their future promotions. The ultimate solution was to reassign all the White officers of the 477th Bombardment Group to other groups, and to make it an all-Black group like the 332nd Fighter Group had become by the time it went overseas.<sup>27</sup>

By the summer of 1945, the war in Europe ended, and the 332nd Fighter Group was inactivated. Colonel Davis was reassigned to the 477th, becoming its first Black commander. At the same time, the 99th Fighter Squadron was reassigned to the 477th, transforming it from a bombardment group into a composite group. In 1946, the group moved from Godman Field to Lockbourne Field in Ohio. Lockbourne replaced Godman as the only all-Black Army Air Forces base in the United States.



USAF Photo

**Figure 21. Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. assumes command of the 477th Bombardment Group from Col Robert R. Selway Jr., 21 June 1945. Selway's segregation policies in violation of Army regulations led to the so-called Freeman Field mutiny that disrupted group training and kept it from entering World War II. From left: Maj Gen Benjamin O. Davis Sr.; Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker; the Honorable Truman Gibson (behind Eaker), advisor to the Secretary of War; Selway; and Colonel Davis.**

On July 1, 1947, the 332nd Fighter Group, which had been inactivated at the end of the war in Europe, was activated again at Lockbourne, and the 477th Composite Group was inactivated there. The Black personnel who had been assigned to the 477th were reassigned to the 332nd Fighter Group and its squadrons. In August, a 332nd Fighter Wing was established and placed over the 332nd Fighter Group at Lockbourne, and Davis moved up from being commander of the group to commander of the wing. Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first Black wing commander.<sup>28</sup> The next month, September 1947, the United States Air Force was born, and most of the aviation organizations that had been part of the US Army were transferred to the new Department of the Air Force. Davis was then leader of what some called “the Black Air Force” since he was the commander of the only all-black flying units in the new service and the only Black Air Force base commander.



USAF Photo

**Figure 22. A B-25J Mitchell medium bomber of the 477th Bomb Group**

President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948, the year after Air Force independence, mandating that all the United States military services end racial segregation.<sup>29</sup> The new Air Force was already moving in that direction and was already training new Black pilots with White ones at Williams AFB, Arizona. Some of the Black officers at Lockbourne had mixed

feelings about integration. They knew that racial integration made perfect sense, not only because “all men are created equal,” but also because of organizational efficiency; furthermore, because some of them had struggled against racial segregation at Selfridge and Freeman Fields, they also knew that integration of the Air Force might mean the end of the all-Black flying units with which they had identified. There would be no more “Black Air Force” and no more Black-run Air Force base. The Black officers might be scattered among the white units and lose their racial identity.<sup>30</sup>

In 1949, its last year, the 332nd Fighter Group had one final hurrah. It sent a team of pilots to an Air Force-wide gunnery meet at Las Vegas. In competition with other groups that also flew propeller-driven airplanes, it won first place in the conventional aircraft category.



USAF Photo

**Figure 23. Winners of the first Air Force gunnery meet (now Gunsmoke) in the propeller category, with their trophy in 1949. Left to right: 1st Lt Halbert L. Alexander, 1st Lt James H. Harvey III, Capt Alva N. Temple, and Harry T. Stewart Jr.**

Another group won the jet aircraft category. Many of the Tuskegee Airmen, who prided themselves on their outstanding bomber escort record in World War II, also celebrated their victory at Las Vegas.<sup>31</sup> They had proven that they

were as good as (or better than) the White pilots, both in combat overseas and in competition at home.

The Tuskegee Airmen chapter of Benjamin O. Davis's life closed in mid-1949, when his all-Black 332nd Fighter Wing, 332nd Fighter Group, and its assigned fighter squadrons were inactivated to implement the integration of the Air Force.<sup>32</sup> Instead of assigning White personnel to the famous Black units, the Air Force decided to inactivate them and reassign their personnel to formerly all-White units across the country. Davis himself was reassigned to Maxwell Air Force Base to attend Air University and begin a new chapter in his continuing distinguished career.

Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was unquestionably the most famous of the Tuskegee Airmen during the nine years of their experience, having commanded the 99th Fighter Squadron, the 332nd Fighter Group, the 477th Composite Group, and the 332nd Fighter Wing. The members of those organizations succeeded in large measure because of their commander, and their exemplary record reflects his outstanding leadership.

#### Notes

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2. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., American* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 44, 65; biography files of Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. and Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., at the AFHRA; Histories of the 99th Fighter Squadron; and Lineage and Honors History of the 99th Fighter Squadron, later the 99th Flying Training Squadron, AFHRA.

3. History of Tuskegee Army Air Field, 7 Dec 1941–31 Dec 1942, 289.28-2, AFHRA; History of the 99th Fighter Squadron, Mar 1941–Oct 1943; and Robert J. Jake-man, *The Divided Skies* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1992), 303.

4. Official biography of Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., AFHRA, and lineage and honors history of the 99th Fighter Squadron, later the 99th Flying Training Squadron, AFHRA.

5. History of the 99th Fighter Squadron, March 1941–17 Oct 1943, SQ-FI-99-HI, AFHRA.

6. History of the 99th Fighter Squadron, March 1941–17 Oct 1943.

7. History of the 99th Fighter Squadron, March 1941–17 Oct 1943.
8. Organizational record cards and lineage and honors histories of the 332nd Fighter Group and the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons, in the organizational histories branch of the AFHRA.
9. History of the 332nd Fighter Group, Oct 1942–1947, GP-332-HI, AFHRA.
10. 99th Fighter Squadron history, Mar 1941–Oct 1943.
11. 99th Fighter Squadron organizational record card, AFHRA; and Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 94–95.
12. Davis, 103–5; and Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, US Army, 1966), 485.
13. “Operations of the 99th Fighter Squadron Compared with Other P-40 Aircraft Squadrons in the MTO, 3 July 1943–31 January 1944,” Statistical Control Division, Office of Management Control, War Department, 134.65-496, AFHRA.
14. Monthly histories of the 332nd Fighter Group and 99th Fighter Squadron GP-332-HI and SQ-FI-99-HI, AFHRA.
15. Organizational record cards and lineage and honors histories of the 332nd Fighter Group and of the 99th, 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons for 1944, AFHRA.
16. James Parton, *“Air Force Spoken Here”: General Ira Eaker and the Command of the Air* (1986; repr., Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2000), 338 [https://.apps.dtic.mil](https://apps.dtic.mil).
17. Lineage and honors histories and periodic histories of the 332nd Fighter Group and the 99th Fighter Squadron, 1944, AFHRA; and E. A. Munday, *Fifteenth Air Force Combat Markings, 1943–1945* (London: A Beaumont Publication, n.d.).
18. VIII Fighter Command Operational Message, 17 Oct 1943, from Papers of Lt Gen W. E. Kepner, commander of VIII Fighter Command under Eaker and then under Doolittle (17–18 Oct 1943), 168.6005-69, AFHRA.
19. Found in Fifteenth Air Force mission folders, containing the daily narrative mission reports of the fighter and bomber groups, and missing air crew reports (MACRs), which indicate which aircraft were lost, when and where they were lost, and how they were lost. These MACRs are available on microfiche at the AFHRA.
20. Comparison of the 332nd Fighter Group bomber losses to enemy aircraft with total Fifteenth Air Force losses for the period early June 1944 through April 1945, according to the Army Air Forces World War II Statistical Abstract, on file at the AFHRA.
21. Photograph of Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. with his aircraft at Ramitelli, among the Tuskegee Airmen photographs at the AFHRA.
22. Fifteenth Air Force General Order 2972 dated 31 Aug 1944.
23. 332nd Fighter Group history for Sep 1944, AFHRA.
24. Fifteenth Air Force General Order 3496 dated 31 May 1945.
25. James R. McGovern, *Black Eagle: General Daniel “Chappie” James Jr.* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 43–45.
26. Alan Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates, 1945–1964* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1985), 20.

27. History of the 477th Bombardment Group for April 1945; and Lt Col James C. Warren, *The Tuskegee Airmen Mutiny at Freeman Field* (Vacaville, CA: The Conyers Publishing Company, 2001).

28. Histories of the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Composite Group, and organizational record cards and lineage and honors histories of the two groups, AFHRA.

29. J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2010), 157–58.

30. Oral history interview, Benjamin O. Davis interviewed by Al Gropman; Davis, Jr., Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.

31. History of the 332nd Fighter Group for 1949, AFHRA.

32. Lineage and honors histories and organization record cards of the 332nd Fighter Wing, the 332nd Fighter Group, and the squadrons assigned to them at the time, AFHRA.

## **Professional Perseverance: Changing Service Culture the Ben Davis Way**

DR. JOHN T. FARQUHAR

(Republished with permission from the *Journal of Character and Leadership Development*.)

Before I begin, I want to give a “shout out” to Dr. Charles “Chuck” Dusch, the Air Force Academy’s command historian, who is the administrative dynamo who made this event possible. I encourage you to read the commemorative booklet he wrote. It is first-rate, concise, yet thorough, in its treatment of Gen Benjamin O. Davis, a truly remarkable man.

Given the task of commenting on General Davis’s post–World War II career—25 years of distinguished service counting those in uniform alone, I realized that I couldn’t do better than what Dr. Dusch had already written. To cover over 25 years in less than 20 minutes would lead to the stereotypical “mile wide and inch deep” treatment. Instead, I will present a case study on a single event that reinforces the themes of the two previous papers. In doing so, I emphasize General Davis’s lifelong professional perseverance as a change agent. By performing all tasks with uniform excellence, Davis demonstrated the equality of men of color and earned the respect of even his most ardent opponents.

Specifically, I will focus on General Davis’s tour as commander, Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) from July 1955 to March 1957. In Dr. Dusch’s booklet, it spans a single, well-written paragraph, but our exploration will reveal Ben Davis’s considerable political, diplomatic, social, and managerial talents that augment his leadership, bravery, and flying skills highlighted in the previous papers.<sup>1</sup> Because I teach cadets full time, I will repeat my main point: Not only did General Benjamin O. Davis Jr.’s professional perseverance accomplish the vital Cold War mission assigned, but also his overall professional excellence acted as an agent of change for Air Force service culture.

In my Foundations of Air, Space, and Cyber Strategy course, students read Thucydides’s account of the Athenian Pericles’s Funeral Oration, one of the sources of our modern concepts of the virtues of citizenship. Near the beginning of the speech, Pericles makes an observation that is appropriate to those commemorating the exploits of General Davis: “The man who knows the facts and loves the dead may well think that an oration tells less than what he knows and what he would like to hear; others who do not know so much may feel envy for the dead, and think the orator over-praises them, when he speaks of exploits beyond their own capacities.”<sup>2</sup>

With that thought in mind, we pick up where Dr. Haulman left off. Then-Colonel Davis advanced through tours as an Air University student, a staff officer in the Fighter Directorate of the Air Staff (where he established the world-renowned Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team), and an overseas deployment as commander of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing at Suwon Air Base, South Korea, where the unit earned accolades from the Air Force Inspector General.

Consequently, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was promoted to brigadier general on October 27, 1954.<sup>3</sup> In this, he became the first African American to earn this Air Force rank and continued his father's legacy with the senior Davis being the first African American to rise to general in the US Army.

The newly minted brigadier general was appointed vice commander of the Thirteenth Air Force, headquartered at Clark Air Base, Philippines, and concurrently, commander of Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) posted to Taipei, Republic of China (ROC), now known as Taiwan. Far from a routine or back-water position, General Davis entered arguably the hottest zone of the Cold War at the time. Along with Berlin, the Taiwan Straits represented a flash-point for a major war with the People's Republic of China and an ideological inflection point for the Cold War in Asia. With the end of hostilities in Korea barely two years old, Americans understood the dangers of either a resurgence of the Korean fighting or a second battle front in Asia with Red China. Unlike Berlin where the risk of World War III was real, but theoretical, many Americans, including my father, had faced the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in combat along the 38th Parallel.

Placing General Davis's assignment in political context, the People's Republic of China (commonly referred to as Communist China or Red China), headed by Mao Tse-tung, viewed the island of Formosa (Taiwan) as an integral part of China and that the Chinese Revolution would not be complete without the subjugation of the Nationalist-controlled islands. On the other hand, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek did not accept Mao's 1949 triumph as final and hoped to use Formosa and two offshore islands, Quemoy and Matsu, to rally anti-Communist forces and as launch points for a Nationalist return to the mainland. Although initially hesitant, the Truman Administration provided Chiang limited military and diplomatic support, but the Eisenhower Administration viewed the Republic of China as a bastion of freedom on a continent "going Red" and a test of loyalty to a valued World War II ally. Influenced by Christian missionaries and the beautiful, English-speaking Madame Chiang Kai-shek, many average Americans viewed Nationalist China with affection. Hence, the "China Lobby" within the US Congress emerged as a major player in American domestic politics.<sup>4</sup>



On the ideological plane, the Taiwan Strait crisis proved an inflection point in the East-West struggle for the Third World. In 1954–55, Chinese Communist propaganda pointed to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu as proof of the rise of communism and the decline of the West and portrayed the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the ally of anticolonial, anticapitalist forces in the Third World. Both the Soviets and Chinese Communists considered Asian and African nationalism as a unique Cold War opportunity. The Red Chinese, in particular, used American racial inequity and racist attitudes toward peoples of color as an ideological weapon.<sup>5</sup>

Militarily, the PRC viewed US–Republic of China mutual defense treaty talks as a threat and mobilized forces along the coast across from Nationalist-controlled islands. On 3 September 1954, the PLA bombarded Quemoy and Matsu with 5,000 artillery shells. Two days later, President Eisenhower sent three aircraft carriers to defend the Taiwan Straits, while the ROC Air Force attacked Communist positions using American-supplied F-84 fighters. After three tense weeks, the situation lessened to an extent. The US did not find any military value in Nationalist control of islands immediately offshore the Chinese mainland and tried to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw forces to less vulnerable positions. Reluctantly, Chiang withdrew garrisons from the Tachen islands, which Communist forces quickly seized, but remained adamant for possession of Quemoy and Matsu. On 2 December 1954, the US signed a mutual defense treaty with the Republic of China, and by 28 January 1955, the US Congress and Senate passed the Taiwan Straits Resolution authorizing the president to employ US forces if necessary to protect Nationalist China.<sup>6</sup>

Into this geopolitical maelstrom entered the newly minted Brigadier General Davis. When he arrived in Taipei, he learned that Air Task Force 13 (Provisional) consisted of two officers and seven Airmen.<sup>7</sup> In his memoir, Davis succinctly described the peril: “The situation in 1955 also held the potential for disaster, but for reasons known to the Communist Chinese, we were permitted to develop our strength to the point that we could defend the island. When I assumed command, the enemy had the initiative and the air capability to seriously threaten our ability to defend Taiwan. We needed to take several actions immediately.”<sup>8</sup>

Formally, Davis faced a sophisticated, three-part mission:

1. Maintain assigned or attached forces and facilities in a state of readiness permitting immediate offensive or defensive tactical operations in defense of Taiwan and the Pescadores.
2. Assume operational control of designated Air Force units and coordinate . . . administrative and logistic support.

3. Organize, train, and maintain on Taiwan, Air Task Force (ATF) 13 [a command-and-control function] capable of employing designated operational forces immediately . . . capable of independent action.<sup>9</sup>

Informally, ATF 13 acted as a joint force coordinating with the US Army and Navy; a combined or coalition force responsible for training Republic of China Air Force units and combined Chinese-American training; a warfighting command; and a de facto diplomatic representative of the US government to Nationalist China. Facing Davis's fledgling command, the PLA Army Air Force numbered over two thousand MiG jet fighters, several hundred IL-28 light jet bombers, and approximately 200 Tu-4s (the Soviet equivalent of the US B-29) with five new airfields across the Taiwan Straits.<sup>10</sup>

How did Davis manage these seemingly insurmountable tasks? With perseverance, with professionalism, and with humility. Unlike many American attaches or defense liaisons of his era, Brigadier General Davis considered his Nationalist Chinese counterparts as valuable allies with valid perspectives and significant resources. He immediately worked to establish close personal ties with leading Chinese authorities. Specifically, Davis paid courtesy calls and followed up with appropriate meetings with Chiang Kai-shek; Chiang Ching-kuo (Chiang's son and later president of Nationalist China); General Wang Shu-ming (known as "Tiger" Wang), Commanding General of the ROC Air Force; and General Huang Jen-ling, Commanding General of the Chinese Combined Services Forces; along with other officials of the ROC's Foreign Affairs Service Division.<sup>11</sup> Equally important, Davis developed extensive ties with the mayors of Taiwanese cities, civic leaders, and cultural organizations. Throughout his autobiography, Davis describes the impressive efforts of his wife Agatha, who forged ties to Taiwanese schools, hospitals, orphanages, and civic groups. In many ways, she served as an effective ambassador for the United States. Through these many personal and professional associations, Davis learned to understand China's culture and perspective. Most of all, he learned patience. His willingness to work with the Nationalist Chinese and to maintain long-term friendships paid great dividends.

Upon completion of Davis's mission, Gen Laurence S. Kuter, commander of Pacific Air Forces (PACAF), observed that Davis possessed the ability to "tactfully criticize at the right time and places" and to say no to the Chinese when their requests did not match US interests, but in a respectful, culturally acceptable way.<sup>12</sup>

During Brigadier General Davis's tour, ATF 13 (P) built a genuine warfighting capability. By September 1955, USAF aircraft and units rotated through Chinese air bases, the Air Force established a Joint Operations Center, and US

personnel trained Chinese airmen in flight operations and maintenance and planned and executed a number of coalition training exercises.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Davis's command established both formal training and operational plans.

Although he viewed the Chinese Air Defense System as still flawed owing to shortages of qualified communications and radar technicians, Davis acknowledged great strides in Nationalist Chinese capability.<sup>14</sup> By the end of his tour in early 1957, ATF 13 also featured pre-positioned stocks of USAF equipment and the creation of a permanent US air base.<sup>15</sup>

The test of General Davis's effectiveness emerged in the Second Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1958. In August 1958, the PRC resumed massive shelling of Quemoy and Matsu, assembled significant land and air forces, and announced the imminent invasion of these important Nationalist outposts. Although no longer commanded in person by General Davis, the command and control structure, air defense network, and USAF-trained Chinese pilots performed brilliantly. Six US Navy carriers, 53 supporting ships, and a hundred top-line USAF F-100 and F-104 fighters deployed to augment the ROC Air Force. Three days of aerial battles conducted entirely by ROC Air Force F-86s resulted in 31 Communist aircraft shot down at a cost of only four Nationalist planes. The effectiveness of the US-ROC coalition efforts made possible by General Davis's efforts achieved a geopolitical impact. The Reds backed down.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, persistence, professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and leadership marked the career of Benjamin O. Davis Jr. As attested by the other panelists, Davis earned respect as a skilled combat aviator and leader of men. In the Taiwan Straits crises, Davis gained additional praise as a politician, diplomat, administrator, planner, and innovator. Without calling attention to race, Davis's actions, performance, and professionalism defeated regressive, negative forces through sheer competency and excellence. In doing so, he acted as an agent of change and shaped a new and improved Air Force service culture. Moreover, in a genuine crisis of the Cold War in Asia, Davis answered the military, diplomatic, and ideological challenge of the Communists with aplomb. Perhaps the most impressive accolade occurred many years later when Gen Bryce Poe visited the Republic of China. Nationalist Chinese officers stated simply that assigning Ben Davis to Taiwan was the "smartest thing the United States could have done."<sup>17</sup>

Finally, returning to the title of this presentation, what do we learn about change the Ben Davis way? I propose five elements:

- Be genuine. Say what you mean, mean what you say, but do it in a tactful, culturally sensitive way.

- Be aware. Know who you are and know your people. Explore cultures not your own. Respect and learn about others, especially when overseas.
- Be excellent. Set high standards and strive to meet them, personally and professionally. Excellence transcends cultural obstacles.
- Be a friend, a team player. Ben Davis's most important friend, confidant, sounding board, and ambassador was his wife, Agatha. His autobiography pays tribute to her in every section.
- Be an American. Davis loved our country and the ideals it stands for. His lifelong quest was to rectify the cultural attitudes where some white citizens did not treat people of color as Americans. Stand up for the values embodied in our flag.

To close, I return to two observations from Pericles's funeral oration where he lauds what it means to be an Athenian citizen:

“When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard. . . . Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free and freedom depends on being courageous.”<sup>18</sup>

Substitute American in those phrases and you capture the essence of General Benjamin O. Davis Jr., a patriot in the true sense of the word and a defender of the higher standard.

#### Notes

1. General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. represented the values of the old Army and consequently emphasized military customs and courtesy. I take the liberty of occasionally using an informal address not to show disrespect, nor denigrate the military aspects of his career, but to emphasize the human dimension of the man. Reading Davis's autobiography builds a picture of a supremely capable officer who was also a “good guy.”

2. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, ed. M. I. Finley, trans. Rex Warner (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 144.

3. US Air Force, About Us, Biographies, “General Benjamin Oliver Davis Jr.,” <https://www.af.mil/>.

4. Lorenzo C. Bradley, “Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis in the Taiwan Straits: Leadership and Legitimacy in the Cold War” (master's thesis, School for Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL, June 2007), 42–74.

5. Bradley, 77–82; and Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to The Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 43–44.

6. Bradley, 67–70, 92; and Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force*, vol. 1: 1907–1960 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 612. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/>.

7. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., American: An Autobiography* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 218.
8. Davis, 217; Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis," 90.
9. Quoted in Lorenzo C. Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis in the Taiwan Straits," in *History, Air Task Force Thirteen, Provisional, 1 June–31 December 1955*, 100.
10. Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 217; and Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis," 102. Note: Today's authorities view early 1950s Air Force intelligence estimates as grossly exaggerated.
11. Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis," 104; Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 220–24; and Gropman, Alan L. "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.: History on Two Fronts," in *Makers of the United States Air Force*, ed. John L. Frisbee (Washington: Office of Air Force History, 1987), 249.
12. Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis," 104; Davis, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.*, 220–24; and Gropman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.," 249.
13. Gropman, "Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.," 249.
14. Joel E. Higley, "The Brains of the Air Force: Laurence Kuter and the Making of the United States Air Force" (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 2016), 468–72.
15. Bradley, "Brig Gen Benjamin O. Davis," 112.
16. Bradley, 112.
17. John G. Norris, "Starfighters on Formosa," *Air Force Magazine* 42, no. 1 (January 1959): 101–4; and Higley, "Brains of the Air Force," 476–79.
18. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 149–50.

Thank you, Dr Farquhar.

Today's colloquium just gave us a snapshot of a remarkable American, whose legacy for our Air Force is enduring. There was so much more to Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. than time permits us today. Words really are inadequate. Perhaps former Secretary of State Colin Powell best summed up what we would wish to say to General Davis.

When the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal at the Capitol in March 2007, Secretary Powell said, "I thank you for what you have done for African Americans, but more, I thank you for what you have done for America . . . you caused America to look into the mirror of its soul, and you showed America that there was nothing a Black person couldn't do, there was nothing a human being couldn't do, if given a sense of purpose, if given the opportunity."

Thank you, Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr., for making our Air Force—our nation—better. Ladies and Gentlemen, this concludes today's events honoring Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. and the Tuskegee Airmen. Thank you for attending.



USAF Photo

Figure 24. Lt Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr., 1965



USAF Photo

**Figure 25. Unveiling the rendering of the Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Airfield sign, at Doolittle Hall, USAF Academy. *Left to right:* CMSgt Kaleth Wright, chief master sergeant of the Air Force; Lt Gen Jay Silveria, 20th superintendent of the USAF Academy; Gen Charles Brown Jr., commander of Pacific Air Forces and Air Component Commander for US Indo-Pacific Command; C1C Bryant Ashe, cadet wing commander; The Honorable L. Scott Melville, nephew of Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr.; Mr. Douglas Melville, great-nephew of General Davis; The Honorable Barbara Barrett, the secretary of the Air Force; Gen David Goldfein, the chief of staff of the Air Force.**



## Appendix

### **The Ceremony With Script**

This section contains the script of the ceremony and the remarks delivered by the speakers. The ceremony was held in Doolittle Hall, the Association of Graduates (AOG) building on the grounds of the USAF Academy, on Friday, 1 November 2019 from 0900–1000. The ceremony was held during the annual CORONA Conference, so there were numerous Air Force senior leaders in attendance. Among them were the Secretary of the Air Force, Barbara Barrett; the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen David Goldfein and his spouse, Dawn; the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Kaleth Wright; and the guest speaker for the ceremony, the Commander of PACAF, Air Component Commander for US Indo-Pacific Command, and Executive Director of the Pacific Air Combat Operations Staff, Gen Charles Brown Jr. and his spouse Sharene.

The guests of honor included the nephew of Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr., Judge L. Scott Melville, and the great-nephew of General Davis, Mr. Douglas Melville. Other distinguished guests included several Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen: Lt Col George Hardy, Lt Col James Harvey III, Lt Col Alexander Jefferson, Lt Col Ted Lumpkin, and Lt Franklin Macon. Mrs. Peggy Shivers, widow of Tuskegee Airman Lt Col Clarence Shivers, the artist who crafted *The Black Airman* statue on display in the Honor Court, was also in attendance, as was Mrs. Shirley Edwards, widow of Tuskegee Airman Mr. Randolph Edwards and Dr. Marilyn Hosea, daughter of Tuskegee Airman Lt Col Richard Biffle Jr.

Other invited guests included Ms. Annie Oatman-Gardner, representing the office of Senator Michael Bennet; Ms. Heba Abdelaal, representing the office of Senator Cory Gardner; the Honorable Andres Pico from the Colorado Springs City Council; Lt Gen Darryl Williams, superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point and his leadership team; Gen Edward Rice, USAF, retired, president of the USAF Academy Board of Visitors; Brig Gen Leon Johnson USAF, retired, president of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated (TAI) and his wife, Mrs. Rita Raines; and several TAI Chapter Presidents and members.

Also honored were Capt Frederick “Juice” Johnson, an F-16 pilot and graduate of the USAFA class of 2012 who as a cadet was the visionary behind the naming of the airfield for General Davis. Dr. Danielle M. Robinson of Diageo North America, the donor of the commemorative coins for the ceremony, also attended, as did other members of the Melville family: Ms. Sonja D. Melville, Ms. Sonja-Lisa Melville, Mr. Scott D. Melville, and Ms. Angelique Chamberlain.

The ceremony was hosted by Lt Gen Jay B. Silveria, the twentieth superintendent of the US Air Force Academy, who was accompanied by the academy's Command Chief Master Sergeant, Sarah Sparks.

The script with the remarks inserted, follows, following the format used by Air Force protocol using all-capitalizations.

0830-0855 Ceremony Seating—Doolittle Hall.

0845 SECAF/CSAF Private Meeting with Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen and the Davis / Melville Family in Doolittle Hall Library.

0855 LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE SILENCE ALL ELECTRONIC DEVICES. THE CEREMONY WILL BEGIN SHORTLY.

0900 GOOD MORNING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I AM CADET THIRD CLASS YMANI NESMITH, AND I WILL BE YOUR NARRATOR FOR TODAY'S CEREMONY.

AS A REMINDER, BECAUSE TODAY'S CEREMONY IS INDOORS, MILITARY MEMBERS SHOULD COME TO ATTENTION BUT NOT SALUTE DURING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM. ALL OTHER ATTENDEES WILL PLEASE STAND IF ABLE, FACE THE FLAG, REMOVE ANY HEADGEAR, AND PLACE THEIR RIGHT HAND OVER THEIR HEART.

AT THIS TIME, PLEASE STAND FOR THE SINGING OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM BY THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY'S GOSPEL CHOIR.

USAFA Gospel Choir sings national anthem from the front and back stairwells and then retires up the stairs.

THANK YOU, GOSPEL CHOIR, FOR THAT BEAUTIFUL RENDITION OF THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE BE SEATED. [PAUSE UNTIL AUDIENCE IS SEATED]

AT THIS TIME, I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE OUR DISTINGUISHED GUESTS. PLEASE HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE UNTIL ALL HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED. THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE, THE HONORABLE BARBARA BARRETT; CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE, GENERAL DAVID GOLDFEIN; HIS SPOUSE DAWN; CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE, KALETH WRIGHT; OUR CORONA ATTENDEES WITH US TODAY

YOUR HOST: THE 20th SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY, LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAY SILVERIA AND SPOUSE VIRGINIA, ACCOMPANIED BY UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY COMMAND CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT, SARAH SPARKS

OUR GUEST SPEAKER: COMMANDER OF PACIFIC AIR FORCES; AIR COMPONENT COMMANDER FOR US INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND; AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PACIFIC AIR COMBAT OPERATIONS STAFF, GENERAL CHARLES BROWN, JR., AND HIS SPOUSE, SHARENE

OUR GUESTS OF HONOR:

THE NEPHEW OF GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR., JUDGE L. SCOTT MELVILLE; AND THE GREAT-NEPHEW OF GENERAL DAVIS JR., MR. DOUGLAS MELVILLE.

OUR DOCUMENTED ORIGINAL TUSKEGEE AIRMEN IN ATTENDANCE:

- LT COL GEORGE HARDY
- LT COL JAMES HARVEY III
- LT COL ALEXANDER JEFFERSON
- LT COL TED LUMPKIN, AND
- LT FRANKLIN MACON

ALSO AMONG US:

- MRS. PEGGY SHIVERS, WIDOW OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN LT COL CLARENCE SHIVERS, THE ARTIST WHO CRAFTED THE BLACK AIRMAN STATUE ON DISPLAY IN THE HONOR COURT
- MRS. SHIRLEY EDWARDS, WIDOW OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN MR. RANDOLPH EDWARDS
- DR. MARILYN HOSEA, DAUGHTER OF TUSKEGEE AIRMAN LT COL RICHARD BIFFLE, JR.

ALSO JOINING US TODAY:

- MS. SONJA D. MELVILLE
- MS. SONJA-LISA MELVILLE
- MR. SCOTT D. MELVILLE
- MS. ANGELIQUE CHAMBERLAIN

WE'D ALSO LIKE TO WELCOME:

- REPRESENTING THE OFFICE OF SENATOR MICHAEL BENNET, MS. ANNIE OATMAN-GARDNER
- REPRESENTING THE OFFICE OF SENATOR CORY GARDNER, MS. HEBA ABDELAAL
- THE HONORABLE ANDRES PICO, COLORADO SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL
- LIEUTENANT GENERAL DARRYL WILLIAMS, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AND HIS LEADERSHIP IN ATTENDANCE
- GENERAL RETIRED EDWARD RICE, PRESIDENT, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY BOARD OF VISITORS

- BRIGADIER GENERAL LEON JOHNSON, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, RETIRED, PRESIDENT OF TUSKEGEE AIRMEN INCORPORATED AND HIS WIFE MRS. RITA RAINES, AS WELL AS ALL THE CHAPTER PRESIDENTS AND MEMBERS WITH US TODAY
- CAPTAIN FREDERICK “JUICE” JOHNSON, USAFA CLASS OF 2012 AND THE VISIONARY BEHIND GENERAL DAVIS’S SELECTION FOR THS HONOR
- DR. DANIELLE M. ROBINSON OF DIAGEO NORTH AMERICA, THE DONOR OF THE COMMEMORATIVE COINS FOR TODAY’S CEREMONY

[INITIATE APPLAUSE]

ALTHOUGH TIME DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO INTRODUCE EACH DISTINGUISHED GUEST, WE EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO THE MANY CURRENT AND FORMER AIR FORCE ACADEMY LEADERS; PREVIOUS SUPERINTENDENTS; OUR US AIR FORCE ACADEMY’S SENIOR LEADERS AND MISSION ELEMENT COMMANDERS AND THEIR COMMAND CHIEFS; OUR FACULTY, AND STAFF; MEMBERS OF OUR MILITARY; COMMUNITY AND CIVIC LEADERS; AND CIVILIAN GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE TODAY.

[INITIATE APPLAUSE]

0905 LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE TURN YOUR ATTENTION TO THE RED BLAZER ON THE STAGE. THIS BLAZER WAS OWNED BY GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS, JR. ITS RED COLOR REPRESENTS THE ICONIC RED TAILS OF THE DISTINCTIVE P-51 MUSTANG FIGHTERS FLOWN BY THE 332nd FIGHTER GROUP GENERAL DAVIS COMMANDED IN COMBAT. IN 2011, BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES BODDIE JR. DONATED GENERAL DAVIS’S BLAZER TO THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY WHERE IT IS PROUDLY DISPLAYED AT ARNOLD HALL.

IN TODAY’S CEREMONY, WE WILL HONOR GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR., WHO ESTABLISHED MANY “FIRSTS” FOR OUR AIR FORCE. HE WAS THE FIRST BLACK AIR FORCE PILOT IN AN ARMY AIR CORPS THAT ARGUED HE LACKED THE SKILLS TO FLY AND FIGHT. GENERAL DAVIS JR. WAS THE FIRST COMBAT COMMANDER

OF AN ALL-BLACK FIGHTER SQUADRON AND FIGHTER GROUP IN WORLD WAR TWO.

HIS FAMED “RED TAILS” OF THE 332ND FIGHTER GROUP EARNED A STORIED REPUTATION OF PROTECTING “THE HEAVIES” IN THE SKIES OVER NAZI GERMANY. TOGETHER WITH THE CREWS OF THE 477TH BOMB GROUP, WHICH GENERAL DAVIS JR. ALSO COMMANDED, THEY CHALLENGED ASSUMPTIONS AND ESTABLISHED A REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE PIVOTAL TO THE OUTCOME OF WORLD WAR TWO. THEY FOUGHT BOTH NAZI RACISM IN EUROPE AND INSTITUTIONAL RACISM IN THE UNITED STATES, EARNING WHAT IS NOW REFERRED TO AS THE “DOUBLE V FOR VICTORY,” HELPING TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.

AFTER THE WAR, GENERAL DAVIS JR. WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CREATING THE AIR FORCE THUNDERBIRDS AND BECAME THE FIRST BLACK AIR FORCE GENERAL OFFICER AND THE FIRST BLACK NUMBERED AIR FORCE COMMANDER. MOST IMPORTANTLY FOR THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY, HE SERVED AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF VISITORS AND WAS PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH IMPROVING THE ACADEMY’S INCLUSIVITY, LEADING TO THE INTEGRATION OF WOMEN INTO THE CADET WING.

ON 20 MARCH 2019, GENERAL DAVID GOLDFEIN, CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE AIR FORCE, GRANTED HIS APPROVAL FOR THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY TO RENAME ITS AIRFIELD IN HONOR OF GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR.

GENERAL DAVIS JR. IS SINGULARLY DESERVING OF THIS HONOR FOR HIS SERVICE AS AN EXTRAORDINARY AIR FORCE LEADER AND AIRMAN WHO EXEMPLIFIED OUR SERVICE’S GREAT TRADITIONS OF BREAKING BARRIERS AND OVERCOMING SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.

0908 LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE COMMANDER OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY, LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAY SILVERIA.

Narrator retreats to seat.

Lt Gen Silveria steps to podium, delivers welcome/opening remarks, introduces General Goldfein and returns to his seat.

## **Gen Silveria Welcome and Remarks**

- Good morning, everyone, and before I get any further—thanks once again to the USAFA Gospel Choir for that wonderful rendition of the national anthem. Well done!
- To everyone here today—thank you for coming to share this proud occasion with us.
- I'd like to reiterate Cadet Nesmith's (Nee-smith's) welcome of our distinguished guests this morning:
  - Secretary Barrett, General Goldfein, General Brown—thank you for coming today and for your steadfast support.
  - Judge Melville and Mr. Douglas Melville, thank you for being here as guests of honor to represent the Davis family.
  - And to our Documented Original Tuskegee Airmen, and the families of Tuskegee Airmen here today—thank you.
  - Thank you not only for coming here today, but for the inspiration that you are to the generations of Airmen who have followed in your footsteps—we can't be appreciative enough

## **Airfield Naming Inception**

- Today is an important day for our academy, and a day that has been a long time in the making.
- Nearly 10 years ago, a cadet took the initiative to try and have the USAFA Airfield named in honor of Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
  - He also tried to get General Davis honored as a class exemplar, getting him into the top three considered.
  - But after nearly 2 years of trying to no avail, he graduated and went on to begin his career in our AF.
- That cadet is now a Captain. Capt Fred "Juice" Johnson graduated with the class of 2012, is an F-16 pilot stationed at Aviano AB, Italy, and made the long trek to be with us today.
  - Capt. Johnson, thank you for being here, and thank you for beginning this process nearly a decade ago.
  - We're proud of you, and proud that what you set in motion is finally being realized today.

- You were determined that Gen. Davis's contribution to our AF and our academy be honored on this campus.
- That determination and reverence for those who came before you will both serve you well in your AF career.
- So, we have Captain Johnson's efforts to thank for us not being even more overdue in honoring General Davis on our grounds, but I would also like to thank everyone who has been involved in making today a realization:
  - Lt Gen Richard Clark who pushed Captain Johnson's idea forward when he was commandant here
  - Col Jules Stephens who was Captain Johnson's AOC and helped keep this idea alive
  - Our incredible Director of Staff, Col Gail Colvin, retired, who was a graduate of our class of 1980, the first USAFA class to include women
  - Our Command Historian, Dr. Charles Dusch, his Director of Staff Major Keturah Onukwuli (Ka-tour-ah O-new-kwa-lee), and historian Dr. Dan Haulman, who were each instrumental in pushing this forward for approval
  - Lt Col Angelic Gonzalez and Maj Michael Plummer and Ryan Meirgerd, our protocol and action officers who put this event together
- And thank you to all our cadets involved in making this event a reality and working this ceremony.
- As you can see it was a big effort to make this happen, and that reflects how important General Davis's contributions are to the history of this academy.
- He served on our Association of Graduates (AOG), board of trustees, and with the Falcon Foundation.
- But in particular during his tenure as chairman of our Board of Visitors, he left a lasting mark on this institution.
- He personally involved himself in improving our culture and climate and improving our inclusivity.
- He advised on reducing our attrition rates and increasing the ranks of minorities on our campus.
- He was critical in developing the plan to integrate women into our Cadet Wing.



- And General Davis helped to foster a relationship between our academy and the Tuskegee Airmen, who came in to speak with our cadets, staff, faculty, and leadership.
- These ties endure, as each spring we hold a Tuskegee Airmen Celebration Lunch and ceremony.
- Once again, thank you all for coming here to honor the accomplishments of this incredible exemplar for our academy and our Air Force.
- It's a proud day for our community, and we're honored to finally and officially recognize the naming of the Davis Airfield at the United States Air Force Academy.
- It's now my great privilege to introduce the 21st Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force and a USAFA class of 1983 graduate, General David L. Goldfein.

General Goldfein steps to podium, delivers remarks, introduces General Brown, and returns to his seat.

**General Goldfein Remarks:**

- GOOD MORNING! AND THANKS FOR THAT INTRODUCTION, JAY!
- MADAME SECRETARY, FELLOW AIRMEN . . . MEMBERS OF OUR FAMED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, CADETS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
- WHAT A PERFECT COLORADO MORNING TO CELEBRATE THIS SPECIAL DAY FOR OUR AIR FORCE . . . AS WE CEMENT THE LEGACY OF A PIONEER WHO TAUGHT US ALL THE POWER OF PERSEVEARANCE . . . AND COURAGE . . . AND CHARACTER . . . AND EXTRAORDINARY COMPETENCE.
- FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF OUR DEMOCRACY, OUR NATION HAS WORKED TO EXPAND FREEDOM TO EVERYONE BASED ON OUR BELIEF THAT ALL MEN . . . AND WOMEN . . . ARE CREATED EQUAL—INALIENABLE RIGHTS.
- IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF WHO WE ARE AS AMERICANS AS WE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND THIS GREAT EXPERIMENT CALLED DEMOCRACY.

- BUT THE ROAD HAS NOT BEEN EASY. SOME HAVE HAD TO BEAR A HEAVIER BURDEN THAN OTHERS TO TEACH US ALL WHAT RIGHT LOOKS LIKE.
- TODAY WE CELEBRATE ONE OF THESE MEN THROUGH THE NAMING OF THIS AIRFIELD IN HONOR OF GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR.
- HIS LEGACY AND STORY OF INDOMINABLE SPIRIT WILL FOREVER BE ENSHRINED ON THIS AIRFIELD . . . AND WILL SERVE AS AN INSPIRATION FOR GENERATIONS OF CADETS . . . JUST AS IT HAS FOR SO MANY OF US WHO SLIPPED THE SURLY BONDS OF EARTH HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
- FOR ME THIS AIRFIELD WAS A SANCTUARY AND A PLACE WHERE THE DREAM OF A YOUNG MAN AND SON OF A VIETNAM VETERAN FIGHTER PILOT FIRST TOOK FLIGHT.
- AS I STRUGGLED THROUGH MY FIRST YEAR AS A DOOLIE, I REMEMBER CALLING MY DAD AND ASKING IF HE WOULD LOAN ME THE MONEY TO GET MY PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENSE AFTER HEARING ABOUT THE AERO CLUB FROM AN UPPER CLASSMAN IN MY SQUADRON . . . STARSHIP 19.
- DAD AGREED . . . ALBEIT WITH 10% INTEREST ON THE LOAN . . . AND I USED TO SNEAK OVER HERE ON THE UPPER-CLASS BUS TO TAKE FLYING LESSONS.
- AFTER A FLIGHT I WOULD WALK ACROSS THE AIRFIELD TO THE ROAD TO HITCHHIKE BACK TO CAMPUS AND OFTEN WOULD STOP TO WATCH THE JUMP TEAM.
- AFTER A FEW MONTHS OF THIS, A SENIOR NCO CAME UP TO ME AS I WATCHED AND ASKED ME MY STORY. I TOLD HIM I WAS GETTING MY LICENSE AT THE AERO CLUB, AND I DREAMED OF ONE DAY JOINING THE JUMP TEAM.
- HE TOLD ME IF I WOULD HUNKER DOWN AND GET A 2.6 GPA, HE WOULD GET ME INTO JUMP SCHOOL, AND WE WOULD SEE FROM THERE.
- WELL . . . I GOT A 2.1 . . . SO IN KEEPING WITH PRACTICE AT THE TIME, THOSE WITH A 2.6 GOT TO PULL THEIR OWN RIPCHORD. THOSE WITH LOWER GOT TO DO STATIC LINE WITH THE ARMY AT FORT BENNING. JUMP TEAM WAS NOT IN MY FUTURE.

- BUT THERE WAS ONE JUMP AT FORT BENNING I NEVER FORGOT. THE NIGHT MASS EXIT TACTICAL JUMP. I REMEMBER EXITING THE AIRCRAFT AT ABOUT 2 AM WITH FULL COMBAT GEAR AND HAVING TO WORK EXTRA HARD TO STEER MY PARACHUTE TO A GOOD PLACE FOR LANDING ON A FULL MOON NIGHT.
- THEN HAVING TO RAPIDLY PACK MY CHUTE AND GEAR AND RUN TO THE TREELINE WHERE THE BUSES AND THE INSTRUCTORS AWAITED.
- WHO KNEW 20 YEARS LATER ALMOST TO THE DAY, I WOULD PULL THE HANDLE OF MY F16 IN ENEMY TERRITORY FOR A FULL MOON NIGHT COMBAT JUMP IN ENEMY TERRITORY . . . STEERING MY CHUTE TO A SAFE LANDING . . . SO I COULD RUN TO A TREELINE WITH ENEMY IN PURSUIT?
- AS THAT GREAT GARTH BROOKS SONG SAYS, “SOME OF GOD’S GREATEST GIFTS ARE UNANSWERED PRAYERS.”
- THIS AIRFIELD AND THE STORY OF GENERAL DAVIS WILL INSPIRE FUTURE LEADERS TO TURN THEIR DREAMS TO FLIGHT.
- HE TOOK ON THE BARRIERS OF RACE AND DISCRIMINATION FOR OUR MILITARY AND OPENED DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MANY OF OUR NATION’S AND OUR AIR FORCE’S GREATEST LEADERS.
- THE NAMING OF USAFA’S AIRFIELD AFTER A TRUE HERO . . . A MAN OF IMPECCABLE CHARACTER AND EXTRAORDINARY COMPETENCE . . . IS A WAY TO REMIND ALL CADETS TO TAKE HEED OF HIS EXAMPLE.
- OUR LONG BLUE LINE IS FILLED WITH AIRMEN WHO TOOK INSPIRATION FROM THE STORY OF GENERAL DAVIS.
- SO, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT JUST ONE . . . OUR GUEST SPEAKER TODAY . . . GENERAL C.Q. BROWN . . . WHO WAS INSPIRED BY GENERAL DAVIS AND HAS CARRIED THE TORCH OF BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER BY EXEMPLIFYING IMPECCABLE CHARACTER AND EXTRAORDINARY COMPETENCE. [CQ BROWN STORY]
- FIRST . . . CQ IS ONE OF THOSE PILOTS . . . LIKE ME . . . WITH AN ODD NUMBER OF TAKEOFFS AND LANDINGS.

- HE EARNED THE CALL-SIGN “SWAMP THING” AFTER EJECTING OVER THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES WHEN HIS F-16C WAS STRUCK BY LIGHTNING AND CAUGHT FIRE. FOR THE CADETS HERE . . . YOU NEED TO ASK HIM TO TELL YOU THAT STORY SOMETIME. I THINK IT IS MORE HARROWING THAN MINE.
- C.Q. BEGAN HIS CAREER FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS. HIS UNCLE AND FATHER WERE THE FIRST AND SECOND AFRICAN AMERICANS TO BE COMMISSIONED THROUGH THE ARMY ROTC PROGRAM AT ST. MARY’S UNIVERSITY IN SAN ANTONIO AND BOTH RETIRED AS COLONELS.
- GENERAL BROWN WAS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO GRADUATE FROM THE F-16 WEAPONS SCHOOL AND THEN LATER IN HIS CAREER TO BE SELECTED AS THE COMMANDANT OF THE SAME SCHOOL . . . WHERE WE SEND OUR TOP 1 PERCENT OF THE AIR FORCE FOR A DOCTORATE IN TACTICS AND INSTRUCTION.
- HE SERVED AS AIDE-DE-CAMP TO CHIEF #15, GENERAL RON FOGLEMAN, FOR NEARLY TWO YEARS.
- YOU KNOW WHEN I SAW THIS, I THOUGHT . . . MAYBE I CAN GET MY CURRENT AIDE TO EXTEND ANOTHER YEAR FOR CHIEF #22 RATHER THAN RETURN TO FLYING THE RAPTOR . . . WHAT DO YOU THINK QUAKE?
- CQ CUT HIS TEETH AS A JOINT WARFIGHTER AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN CFACC [Combined Force Air Component Commander] . . . AFTER SERVING AS MY DEPUTY CFACC . . . LEADING AND MANAGING THE AIR WAR AGAINST THE ISLAMIC STATE. AS THEN-GENERAL MATTIS ONCE STATED ABOUT CQ . . . “PUT HIM IN THE WAR . . . THE ENEMY WILL PAY!”
- AND NOW, HE’S THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMANDER OF OUR PACIFIC AIR FORCES COMMAND.
- AND TO THINK . . . HIS ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO ONLY SERVE OUT HIS ROTC COMMITMENT AS A CIVIL ENGINEERING OFFICER.

- INSTEAD . . . HE FOLLOWED HIS DAD’S BLUNT ADVICE ACCEPTING THAT “FOUR YEARS IN THE MILITARY WILL NOT KILL YOU!”
- CQ HAS ACED THE ULTIMATE TEST OF LEADERSHIP . . . COMMAND AT MULTIPLE LEVELS. HE’S COMBAT PROVEN, AND HE’S A TRUE PROFESSIONAL THAT SETS THE EXAMPLE THROUGH HIS ACTIONS FOR AIRMEN SERVING TODAY AND THOSE WHO WILL JOIN US IN THE FUTURE.
- AND HE IS JOINED BY AN INCREDIBLE TEAMMATE, SHARENE, BY HIS SIDE. TOGETHER THEY ARE A POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF WHAT RIGHT LOOKS LIKE IN OUR AIR FORCE, AND I AM SO HONORED NOT ONLY TO HAVE SERVED WITH HIM
- . . . BUT ALSO, FOR ME AND DAWN TO CALL THEM OUR FRIENDS.
- IT IS THROUGH THE EXAMPLES OF GENERAL DAVIS . . . OUR TUSKEGEE AIRMEN . . . GENERAL ED RICE AND SO MANY OTHERS . . . AND GENERAL BROWN THAT WE STAND UNITED IN THE COMMON BELIEF THAT IMPECCABLE CHARACTER AND EXTRAORDINARY COMPETENCE WILL ALWAYS WIN.
- NEVER FORGET CADETS THAT THE PATH TO THIS AIRFIELD AND YOUR FUTURE CAREER WAS PAVED BY THESE MEN AND WOMEN. LET YOUR DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT HERE.
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . IT’S MY DISTINCT PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE GENERAL C.Q. BROWN.

General Brown steps to podium, delivers closing remarks, introduces Judge and Mr. Melville, and returns to his seat.

**Gen “CQ” Brown Intro:**

- One moment
- Sometimes that is all that it takes
- Just over 10 years ago, my wife and I were in a couples’ Sunday School class where the topic was spiritual markers—
- Markers of the One Moment that shaped a relationship, a career, or in some cases the course of history
- For General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. that One Moment came when he was 13.

- That One Moment was a flight with a barnstorming pilot . . . and it sparked a Dream.
- To borrow a quote from Jesse Owens:
- “We all have dreams. But in order to make dreams come into reality, it takes an awful lot of determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort.”

**Thanks:**

- Before going any further, I'd like to express what an honor it is to be with you this morning:
- Madame Secretary, it is an honor to spend the past week with you and welcome you to our Air Force.
- Gen Goldfein and Dawn, I appreciate the kind words, and it is an honor for Sharene and I to serve with you.
- It is an honor to be sharing today with the Family of Gen Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the Tuskegee Airmen, the many distinguished guests, and with all that are present today, both in person and in spirit.
- Finally, I want to sincerely thank Lt Gen Silveria for inviting me to speak today.
- I was truly humbled when you asked me to provide remarks for this momentous occasion.

**Adversity:**

- Pursuing his Dream, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. attended the University of Chicago before entering The United States Military Academy at West Point.
- For four years, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was “silenced” while he never conversed with, ate with, or roomed with any of his fellow cadets.
- As a ROTC grad, I've heard that attending a service academy is not easy, as many of you can attest.
- And I believe we all can only imagine the additional stress of being silenced.
- Suffice it to say, those four years are the first testaments of Benjamin O. Davis's determination and self-discipline.
- They are also evidence of the dedication he had to realize his dream.

- Graduating in the top 15 percent of his West Point class in 1936, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. joined the “Long Gray Line.”
- In a fitting tribute to his accomplishment, the 1936 *Howitzer*, the West Point Yearbook, had this to say about him:
  - “The courage, tenacity, and intelligence with which he conquered a problem incomparably more difficult than plebe year won for him the sincere admiration of his classmates, and his single-minded determination to continue in his chosen career cannot fail to inspire respect wherever fortune may lead him.”
- He had applied to join the Army Air Corps but was rejected because African American applicants were not accepted at the time.
- Instead, he was initially assigned to the infantry where he joined the all-African American 24th Infantry Regiment, an original Buffalo Soldier Unit.
- Undeterred, Capt Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was later assigned to teach at Tuskegee Institute where he would begin to realize his dream, joining the first training class at Tuskegee Army Air Field.
- After taking command of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, he led his unit into combat in North Africa and supported the Allied invasion of Sicily.
- Later as a Colonel, Davis went on to command the 332nd Fighter Group, more notably known as the “Red Tails.”
- The Airmen commanded by Davis flew more than 15,000 sorties, shot down 112 enemy aircraft, and destroyed or damaged 273 additional aircraft on the ground.
- Colonel Davis incessantly advocated on behalf of the units under his command, and the Tuskegee Airmen became synonymous with:
  - Confronting social challenges under combat conditions;
  - A near flawless bomber escort record;
  - And leading the integration effort within the Department of Defense.
- General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. turned his dream into a career of barrier breaking firsts as described earlier by Cadet Nesmith.
  - First African American officer to solo an Army Air Corps aircraft;

- First all-African American air unit commander;
- First African American Air Force general.

**Legacy:**

- As a young officer, I was inspired by Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. and the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen.
- It was shortly after reading his autobiography, while assigned as General Fogleman's aide, that I had the pleasure to meet Ruth Eaker, the wife of another Air Force Legend, Gen Ira Eaker.
- As the Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, General Eaker was a staunch proponent of the 332nd Fighter Group led by then Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
- General Eaker's belief in the 332nd led to his decision to re-designate the group from coastal patrol to fighter escort.
- In 1995, Mrs. Eaker passed away and was buried next to her husband at Arlington National Cemetery.
- With many distinguished members of our Air Force, both active and retired, I was privileged to attend her funeral.
- Of note, Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was also in attendance, and I saw him standing next to one of his West Point Classmates.
- I reflected on "The Silent Treatment" General Davis endured as a cadet.
- I reflected on his determination, his dedication, his self-discipline, and his effort to transform a dream into tangible change.
- Change that provided an opportunity for not only me, but also for so many others.

**Closing:**

- As I modestly address you today to honor a man that has done so much for our Air Force and our nation, I cannot help but think about the significance of renaming the USAFA airfield.
- From an airfield came a moment.
- From a moment evolved a dream.
- From the spark of a dream, a fire raged to change our profession, our service, and our nation.



- Now, an airfield named after General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. will provide future generations their “Moment.”
- And with determination, dedication, self-discipline, and effort, they too can realize their dream to pursue a career of aviation within our Air Force.
- Once again, thank you for the invitation to be here today.
- It is my distinct honor to be part of today’s ceremony and memorialize an Air Force legend, Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr. . . . A legend who, with the Tuskegee Airmen, has been an inspiration and so influential to my success.

### **INTRODUCTION of Judge and Mr. Melville:**

It is now my privilege to introduce the nephew and great-nephew of General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. to provide their remarks:

#### **Mr. Doug Melville makes his remarks:**

- Thank you all for being here today. It has been a pleasure working with the Air Force on this project. Sergeant Rodriguez, Major Plummer, Charles “Dutch” Dusch, one of the best historians I’ve ever met.
- The last week of October has always been a special week for our family: 65 Years ago, this week, nearly 6,000 air miles away, then Colonel Benjamin O Davis Jr. stood tall, shoulders up, gazing straight ahead—in full-dress uniform.
- At 42 years old, with over half his life dedicated to service, he was being elevated to the rank of general, a crowning achievement for himself and for America. A first for the culture.
- Years earlier, his father before him, during the last week in October, would be elevated to the rank of general, becoming the first person of color to achieve that honor.
- So, it isn’t lost on me that this is the week we are here for this monumental occasion.
- I am also forty-two years old. And haven’t even yet passed PT, so I am probably (definitely, absolutely) underachieving.
- While he was a cultural trailblazer for this nation publicly, privately as a family—his inspiration was ongoing.
- He is why I am here today.

- Life milestones are how we grow.
- And if it were not for him—gifting me my first car at sixteen years old (a Honda Accord), or him giving me my first set of golf clubs and encouraging me to learn how to use them—because it would prove valuable in life. Who’s to say how long it would have taken me on my own?
- But his biggest passion was education: on the day I graduated from high school, he gave me a card, and inside that card was a blank check with a note in the memo section that said, “Any College You Want.”
- “Uncle Ben,” as I used to call him, was my North Star. in life—as he is today in legacy.
- As a family we’d spend every Thanksgiving together—until there were no more to spend. He was like Mr. Rogers—always positive, fun.
- And in between those times, he’d stress to me the importance of making the world better for those behind us saying, “If you can only stand tall, by requiring someone else to sit on their knees, you are the problem.”
- Generational influence does pay dividends.
- Today I am a chief diversity officer on Madison Avenue in New York City. I travel around the world and work with the biggest brands to build equal representation in front of and behind the camera. I live everyday under the halo of what General Davis created for us and for our family. In 2002—on America’s Birthday, July 4th—General Davis took his final breath in Dwight Eisenhower’s Bed at Walter Reed Memorial in his hometown of Washington, DC.
- In a ceremony meant for a man who dedicated 89 years of his life to equality, a horse drawn carriage pulled him to his final resting spot in Arlington National Cemetery, a place where he will forever be remembered, alongside his wife, Agatha Davis.
- Three stories: the official story; the press release; the truth.
- And with that, I’d like to introduce my Father, General Davis’s oldest and closest confidant.
- At age seven, then Colonel Davis and his wife Agatha, who had no kids of their own—partly due to paranoia and anxiety, partly because of the fear that the institution would use having a child against him—brought their nephew into their barracks.
- They raised him, quietly and in confidence for much of his life, rarely if ever mentioning him to others.

- They loved him, housed him, fed him, and raised him until he went off to college. That young boy turned out to become a trailblazer in his own right, becoming one of the first judges of color in the state of Connecticut.
- But most importantly to me, he is my Dad.
- I'd like everyone to take a moment and stand on their feet to give a warm welcome to a man who earlier this week, celebrated his 86th birthday. On behalf of his family, the Honorable L. Scott Melville.

**Judge L. Scott Melville makes his remarks:**

- General Silveria, honored guests, cadets, and friends:
- I'm truly honored to be here today to take part in the naming ceremony. However, I'm also a bit nervous speaking to all the generals out there in the audience, since my only military experience was as a two-year Army draftee. So, when speaking to generals, which I rarely did as a Spec-4, I was limited to, "yes, sir;" "no, sir;" "whatever you say, sir!"
- When Doug told me I was expected to speak at this ceremony, I was in a quandary as to what I would speak about. As I looked through the materials Doug sent me, I came across something amazing: at the beginning of World War Two, there were only two Black officers in the entire Army—Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Sr., and his aide, 1st Lieutenant Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
- So, I thought this might be a good place to start. I also decided that the theme of my remarks should be "LESSONS LEARNED." After all, the academy is a learning institution!
- Ben's goal in life was to have a career in the military like his father. But he wanted more. He saw how his father was singled out as a Black officer and how his service was mainly limited to noncommand positions. That's because it was policy in the military that Black officers were not allowed to command White officers or White troops.
- Ben wanted that to change. And he wanted to be remembered as a *good* officer—not just as a good *African American* officer!
- He learned early on that demonstration or confrontation or protesting would not work in the military. So, he decided on a different strategy to achieve his goals. That strategy was to lead by example, and eventually, others would follow.
- Although this strategy demanded both *patience and perseverance*, he nevertheless practiced this strategy from the time he entered West

Point until he retired from the Air Force, over 30 years later. Apparently, his strategy proved to be successful.

- Now I could spend hours talking about Ben's successes, but time will not permit. However, I *do* want to share with you just one of the many stories that illustrate his strategy and the traits I just mentioned.
- Among the materials that Doug sent me was an old photograph of Ben standing in front of his P- 51, [Call Attention to the Photo] flight suit on, oxygen mask hanging from his helmet, and a cigarette held between two fingers [a picture probably worthy of an Army recruiting poster or a Camels cigarette ad!]
- But that's not what I want to talk about. What I want to talk about is the P-51 in the *background*. On the nose of the plane was painted the words, "*By Request*." I thought this was odd, since it was the custom in the Army Air Corps *then* for pilots to paint the names of a sweetheart or a wife or a cartoon that was a parody of some significant event on the nose of their planes.
- Many years ago, I asked Ben about this unusual nose art, and he told me the *story* behind *those* words. Although it was a long time ago, I think the story is apropos today. So, I'll try to relate it to you as best as I can remember it.
- Ben explained that this nose art was intended to convey a *message*. If you're a Tuskegee Airman, you already know the story I'm about to tell. However, since most of you in the audience probably don't know that story, here it is:
  - First, a little background—
  - Circa 1944, Ben commanded the 332nd, an all-Black fighter group known to bomber pilots as the Red Tails. That's because the pilots of the 332nd had the tails of their planes painted red to distinguish their group from all the others.
  - By that time, the Red Tails had established a reputation for not losing any bombers they escorted to enemy fighters. A critically important, but dangerous, bombing mission over Berlin was planned by the high command. The orders were cut and went out to the bomber and fighter escort groups, but the 332nd was not included.
  - At the group briefing session, one of the bomber group commanders who was personally familiar with their reputation, asked why the Red Tails were not included and requested that the 332nd be included in

the mission. To make a long story short, the Red Tails were included in the mission, and to their credit, they did not lose a single bomber to enemy fighters that day.

- Shortly after the mission was over, Ben's pilots learned *why* the 332nd was included in the mission. That's when Ben had the words "BY REQUEST" painted on the nose of his plane.
- It was his way of sending a subtle message to his pilots that the 332nd pilots were just as skilled in combat as their White counterparts and thereby had earned their respect.
- Every time his pilots walked down the tarmac to get in their planes and passed Ben's plane, they were reminded of that message.
- It was also his way to *unobtrusively* send the *same* message to the high command. In that day and the days that followed, the myth that Blacks were incapable of flying or fighting in combat was destroyed forever by the *performance* of the men of the 332nd under the leadership of Col Benjamin O. Davis Jr.
- Apparently, that message was *too subtle* for the generals to grasp since the 332nd remained a segregated unit throughout the war. However, the message was not lost on one person—a person who *only* had a high school education and who *only* rose to the rank of captain in the Army.
- By now, you must know who that person was—you're right, it was Harry S Truman, the thirty-third President of the United States who by the stroke of his pen ordered the total integration of the Armed Forces. As a result, the long-standing policy of racial segregation in the military ended in 1948.
- So, instead of having a *few* Black officers in the military, relegated to teaching military science at historically black colleges, *all* branches of the military, led, I might add, by the US Air Force, now include men, and yes, women of *all* races, serving in *all* command positions thanks, in part, to the leadership of Benjamin O. Davis Jr. and the demonstrated *performance* of the Tuskegee Airmen. The "Tuskegee Experiment" was a success.
- End of story. LESSONS LEARNED.
- So in conclusion, I speak for all of Ben's Living relatives, some of whom are here today, when I say a thank you Air Force Academy, and all those individuals responsible for bestowing this high honor on Gen Benjamin O. Davis Jr., American.

- FULL STOP.

Judge Melville and Mr. Melville step to the podium, deliver their remarks, and remain standing for the unveiling.

0950 THANK YOU JUDGE MELVILLE AND MR. MELVILLE. TO HIGHLIGHT GENERAL DAVIS'S INSPIRATION OF INCLUSION AND IMPECCABLE CHARACTER FOR GENERATIONS TO COME IN OUR LONG BLUE LINE. WE WILL NOW CONDUCT A GENERATIONAL UNVEILING OF THE NEW AIRFIELD SIGN. AT THIS TIME, WE INVITE THE HONORABLE BARBARA BARRETT; GENERAL GOLDFEIN; CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE WRIGHT; GENERAL BROWN; LIEUTENANT GENERAL SILVERIA; CADET WING COMMANDER, C1C BRYANT ASHE; JUDGE L. SCOTT MELVILLE AND MR. DOUGLAS MELVILLE TO COME FORWARD FOR THE UNVEILING OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY AIRFIELD SIGN IN HONOR OF  
 GEN BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR.

Narrator pauses as the participants come forward.

Judge Melville, Doug Melville, and Cadet Ashe lift the linens to unveil the sign. Senior Leaders pose on both sides for photos.

Photographer captures photos. [INITIATE APPLAUSE]

0955 AT THIS TIME I WOULD LIKE TO ASK LIEUTENANT GENERAL SILVERIA TO COME FORWARD TO PROVIDE CLOSING REMARKS.

Narrator retreats to seat.

Lt Gen Silveria steps to podium, delivers closing remarks, and returns to his seat.

### **General Silveria Closing Remarks**

- Thank you once again to our distinguished guests, USAFA staff and leadership, cadets, community members, and everyone in attendance for coming.
  - Many of you traveled a great distance to be here—as far as Italy—and that’s a testament to the importance of this occasion.
- Honoring Gen Benjamin O. Davis’s legacy, and the legacy of our Tuskegee Airmen, does not end here with this ceremony today.
  - In fact, what we’ve done here helps ensure the opposite

- The Davis Airfield will now serve as a visible, physical reminder of his lasting contributions to our academy and our Air Force.
  - It stands prominently in front of our academy; much of our community sees it every day.
  - And as each of our cadets participate in our Airmanship programs, they will spend a lot of their time developing into the next generation of leaders for our Air Force on an airfield that bears the name of a leader they should strive to emulate.
- His example of courage and resilient leadership is one we should emulate—from cadet to general officer.
- General Davis made our academy a more inclusive place, and by extension, our Air Force a stronger force.
  - The seed of inclusivity he helped to plant has grown and must continue to grow.
  - The conversations he helped start on issues in diversity and inclusion must continue.
- These efforts are making our academy a stronger, more effective institution.
- The increasingly complex and volatile twenty-first century battlespace requires us to utilize our collective intelligence and uniqueness and one of our nation's greatest assets—its uncommon diversity.
- The diversity of thought this provides is what will give our Air Force the competitive edge it needs to outpace our adversaries in the face of a great power competition and battlefield challenges that are nearly unrecognizable to generations of the past.
- The foresight of Gen Benjamin O. Davis those many years ago put us a step head in that direction, and for that we owe him and our Tuskegee Airmen our thanks and gratitude.
- Thank you all again for coming, and safe travels home.

0958 THANK YOU LIEUTENANT GENERAL SILVERIA. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PLEASE STAND FOR THE SINGING OF THE FIRST VERSE OF THE AIR FORCE SONG BY THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY'S GOSPEL CHOIR.

USAFA Gospel Choir proceeds to the front and back stairwells and sings Air Force Song's first verse.

[PAUSE FOR DEPARTURE OF OFFICIAL PARTY]

THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY EXTENDS ITS CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MELVILLE FAMILY ON THIS HISTORIC HONOR IN MEMORY OF GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS JR.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

IF YOU WILL BE STAYING WITH US FOR THE LUNCH BUFFET OR WOULD LIKE AN AUTOGRAPH FROM ONE OF THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, PLEASE REMAIN IN YOUR SEATS WHILE THE MELVILLE FAMILY AND TUSKEGEE AIRMEN TAKE PHOTOS COMMEMORATING THIS HISTORIC EVENT WITH SENIOR AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP. ONCE THE CORONA ATTENDEES DEPART AND THE OFFICIAL PHOTOS ARE COMPLETE, AN ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE THAT AUTOGRAPHS WILL BE PERMITTED FOR 10 MINUTES. PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL WITH THE TUSKEGEE AIRMENS' TIME AND ALLOW OTHERS AN AUTOGRAPH AS WELL. FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF AUTOGRAPHS AND ONCE THE MELVILLE FAMILY AND TUSKEGEE AIRMEN ARE SERVED LUNCH, WE WILL MAKE AN ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT WHEN EVERYONE CAN JOIN US IN OUR LUNCH BUFFET.



## **Contributors**

### **Lt Col Sherman L. Fleek, USA, Retired**

Sherman Fleek retired from the U S Army in 2002, after a 25-year career, as a lieutenant colonel. He served as an aviator, special forces officer, and enlisted armor crewman, ending his career as chief historian of the National Guard Bureau. He is the author of more than 30 articles and three books published on military history as well as two historical novels. Fleek has served with many organizations as historian, including as the first ever historian for the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. In 2009, he was appointed command historian for the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY, and since 2013, he has taught military history to cadets at West Point and a graduate course to Army officers affiliated with Columbia University's Teachers College.

### **Dr. Daniel Haulman**

Dr. Daniel L. Haulman is the recently retired chief, Organizational History Division, at the Air Force Historical Research Agency, where he served for 37 years in federal service. He has authored six books, including four print books and two e-books. Three of his major works are about the Tuskegee Airmen. He has also published numerous papers and is renowned for his presentations about the famous "Red Tails" as well as the 477th Bombardment Group.

### **Dr. John T. Farquhar, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired**

Following his graduation from the United States Air Force Academy with the class of 1980, J. T. Farquhar flew as a navigator in the RC-135 reconnaissance aircraft with the 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Strategic Air Command. He also served as director of wing plans for the 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, where he coordinated worldwide readiness, operational, and contingency planning for the largest flying wing in Air Combat Command.

He has taught courses in the history of airpower, sea power, World War II, unconventional warfare, and general military history at the United States Air Force Academy. In 2004, Air University Press published his book, *A Need to Know: The Role of Air Force Reconnaissance in War Planning, 1945–1953*. After retiring from the Air Force in 2002, Dr. Farquhar joined the Military and Strategic Studies Department where he created courses on air, space, and cyberspace power, military theory, and strategy. He has also further authored and published volumes on air and space power, officer professionalism, and strategic studies.

## **Charles D. Dusch Jr., PhD**

Dr. Charles D. Dusch Jr. was the command historian and director of the award-winning United States Air Force Academy History and Heritage Program. He is an internationally recognized historian and author who has presented around the world, including the University of the Sorbonne, Paris, France; Ottawa, Canada; and the US Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Dusch has published for the Institute of National Security Studies, Sorbonne Université Presses, Naval Institute Press, the *Journal of Military History*, the *International Journal of Naval History*, the *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, *Airman Scholar*, *Naval History*, and *Proceedings*. He is a retired Air Force officer with over 2,000 hours in RF-4C and F-15E aircraft, including 28 combat missions over Iraq and Bosnia.





## **Abbreviations**

AB	Air Base
AF	Air Force
AFB	Air Force Base
AFHRA	Air Force Historical Research Agency
AOC	air officer, commanding
AOGATG	Association of Graduates Air Task Force
ATF	Air Task Force
BA	bachelor of arts
CFACC	Combined Force Air Component Commander
CG	Composite Group
CSAF	Chief of Staff of the Air Force
FEAF	Far East Air Forces
FG	Fighter Group
IP	instructor pilot
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
MACR	missing air crew reports
NCAA	National Collegiate Athletic Association
NCOIC	Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
TAAF	Tuskegee Army Air Field
TAI	Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated
US	United States
USAF	United States Air Force
USAFA	United States Air Force Academy
USS	United States Ship

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