UCF Veterans Legacy Program

Dale D. Davis (1920 - 1994)
Florence Doak Davis (1921 - 2003)

https://vlp.cah.ucf.edu/biographies/BMC-0-57-F.html

Dale D. Davis was born on July 3, 1920, in Effingham, IL. Dale's parents, John and Ollie, married on September 21, 1902. Dale had two older brothers, Kenneth and Arlin. Dale's father worked as a farmer during Dale's childhood. John later became a school superintendent. He passed away in 1925, and Dale's mother later remarried. By 1930, Dale was living with his stepfamily, with his stepfather Mance McCallen and stepbrothers.

Dale attended Effingham High School and graduated in May of 1938. He married Florence Doak, originally from Connecticut, who was living in Effingham at the time. Dale and Florence graduated in the same class of Effingham High School. After graduating, Davis attended Eastern Illinois Teacher's College in Charleston, where he was on the honor roll. He attended the Teacher's College for two years before he began his military service.

Davis enlisted in the US Army Air Corps on November 26, 1940 at age 20. He enlisted in East Saint Louis, IL for a one-year term as an Aviation Cadet. In April 1941, he began advanced pilot training at Randolph Field in Texas, and flew as a cadet until July 11, 1941. During his time there, the Army promoted Davis from Second to First Lieutenant and in 1943 promoted him again to the rank of Captain.

In World War II, Davis spent over a year and a half fighting in the Pacific Theater, where he flew a twin-motor bomber. Pilots like Davis played an important role in missions that targeted the Japanese Navy. In May of 1943, Davis was recognized with a Distinguished Flying Cross, for acts of heroism and skill, and a Purple Heart, for wounds he suffered during combat.

Dale Davis' wife, Florence, got her pilot's license around 1943 and was part of the US Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) during World War II. The WASPS became the first women pilots to fly every kind of Army Air Force plane. The women flew planes in the US, which freed up male pilots for combat. Some of the missions WASPs participated in moving new or repaired aircraft from factories to bases; towing targets for practice; testing new and refurbished planes; flying military personnel; training male pilots; and piloting bombers to train navigators, gunners, and bombardiers. The US government considered WASPs civilians, which means they could not receive military benefits during or after their service until President Jimmy Carter signed a law in 1977 recognizing WASPs full Veteran Status.

After World War II, Florence gave back to the country by volunteering at the Red Cross for forty years. Dale continued his military career, fighting in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars. During his service, Davis became a commissioned officer and transitioned from the Army to the Air Force, when President Eisenhower made it a separate branch of the US military in 1947. He attended the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana as a military student and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Engineering in 1949. In 1950, Princeton University's Guggenheim Jet Propulsion Center selected Davis as one of four out of over one hundred applicants, and the only member of the military, to study and research jet and rocket propulsion for 2 years.

Davis continued to work in jet propulsion through the 1960s, including working as the Deputy for Aircraft and Missile Test at an Airforce Base in New Mexico. Davis left Holloman Air Force Base in 1963 at the rank of Colonel. He became a manager of the Federal Aviation Agency's supersonic transport program. President Kennedy announced the new program with a goal of creating passenger planes that could transport civilians at speeds greater than the speed of sound.

By 1967, the Air Force stationed Col. Davis at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, OH, where he worked as the Director of the Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory. As part of his job at the laboratory, Davis co-hosted a conference and presented awards to scholars doing innovative research in the field. In 1972, Davis moved from Ohio to Florida to retire.

Dale and Florence Davis had 2 children, a son and a daughter, and at least 3 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. The Davises passed on their legacy of service and academic achievement to their children. The American Association of University Women awarded their daughter a "Girls of the Month" in high school. Their son served as an officer in the US Army.

Dale Davis died in Bradenton, FL on February 1, 1994 at the age of seventy-three. Florence Davis died 9 years later in Florida on June 29, 2003. Both Dale and Florence Davis are buried at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, FL where their many years of service to the country will be remembered.

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