

Notes 42N, Copy 2

Brig. Gen. Thomas J. Davis

San Antonio, Texas

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Interview with Brig Gen Thomas J. Davis, former AG and PRD chief of SHAEF, at his home in San Antonio, Texas, 12 April 1952, by F. C. Pogue.
(THIS IS SECRET)

General Davis enlisted in the army in World War I and served in Europe. He was the last officer to leave the army of occupation in Germany returning in 1923 to Governor's Island. There he helped with the recreation program and came to the attention of the Army. Because of his work he was sent along in 1928 to Amsterdam with the Army members of the Olympic team. Ford Trimble was General MacArthur's aide and was along with the General on the trip. Because of the Shanghai Menace he became diplomatically ill and went to Paris. MacArthur, therefore, made use of Davis. Davis helped to run the arrangements on board the ROOSEVELT. (Fed the team members on board and any other half-starved royalty in that area. MacArthur's description of them). Has some wonderful stories of Prince Henry, the Prince Consort, and his capacity for beer and food; also his gold-natured reactions to drunken U. S. officer's reference to that "big old porker." When asked who he was, the Prince said "I'm Henry." On return to U. S. Davis was picked up by MacArthur as aide. Stayed with him for 12 years, 1928-40. Trimble went elsewhere. Later Davis recommended him for SHS job at SHAEF.

Remembers in 1928 that MacArthur noticed Ike who was working for Frank Paine in the old Army-Navy-State building. MacArthur went by one day and said I want that man and he was reassigned. Close friendship of Ike and Davis dates from that. Were together in CofS office and in Ph. Is; then in Medit and Europe.

Davis and Ike brought back under Manchu law in 1940. Davis organized Special Services. Was only a major so he could not be its head? Became the executive officer. Was also director of the Army Motion Picture Service? In 1941 was transferred to the Office of the Chief of Administrative Services, War Dept. Executive of that. In 1942 went to see Ike one day at -Ft. Myer. Ike had a heavy cold. Asked Davis who was best in the Army. Davis said "Monk" Lewis, Asked who is second best; Davis said Lewis. Who is third best, Davis said Lewis.

Ike than said it "If I get an overseas assignment I want you as my AG." When he became CG, ETO, he picked Davis. Davis said "I would like to go, but you need a first rate AG if your problems arête be solved, I am not that good." Ike said "I want you because you are not an AG." When Davis looked injured, Ike said "I don't want a man who knows all the reasons I can't do something and will get me tied up in Red tape." (Davis had asked MacArthur to get him into AG corps and Mac had it done. M. had ordered Davis transferred from Inf immediately, but Davis told TAG "No I want to stand my two years probation like the others. Otherwise I can't live in the outfit.")

Davis went to ETO in June 1942, then to Medit and then to SHAEF.

(Trimble came from Fourth Army to succeed Gilmer).

Davis pointed out that several people had asked him to comment on Ike's relations with MacArthur. He said he had told everyone he considered it in bad taste to comment. He did say that it was not true that MacArthur fired Ike. He denied strongly that Ike did anything to cause any trouble. He added that the only reason Mac could have for disliking E. would be the fact that Mac wanted the Presidency which Ike seemed in a better position to get. Davis kept saying "MacArthur was like a father to me," Mrs. D obviously disliked Mac. Davis said that Eisenhower worked very hard for Mac. He says that E wrote the 1933 report with the exceptions of some typical MacArthurian expressions which were added. He says Ike has denied writing it. Did represent Mac's views. In Ph. Is. E. frequently disagreed strongly with some of Mac's views and his extreme optimism. Was a good soldier and went along with Mac.

Davis said Mac was a good Scotsman. Liked his cash. Wanted to keep getting the \$30,000 he was being paid as Field Marshal. So he painted a rosy picture. Talked of great army (he said could drill Filipinos to fight in three months; Ike said nine months at least). Talked of gunboats which would knock out the Japanese. Waved aside the Army's ORANGE plan. His fleet consisted of a Navy captain and a gunboat-finally enlarged to three. At the time he talked of fleet he had the one plus two depth charges and two torpedoes. Grandiloquent. Ike too straightforward for that. The plain fact was that MacArthur's plans couldn't be supported on the type of budget the Ph Is had. Quezon was not about to raise the taxes to support a big plan. So Mac just talked about a big outfit which he didn't have. Davis spoke of interview Mac gave a Collier's man (he thinks Courtney) while Davis squirmed. MacArthur magnificent-speaking of planes, army fleet. When it came out MacArthur denied ever having seen the reporter. Davis reminded him, but M. insisted. Davis warned of Collier's reaction. It later sent Jim Marshall. He came over, didn't see MacArthur, but snooped around. Wrote a piece about the Boy Scout Field Marshal. Davis said MacArthur tended to get some very poor people around him (he grinned and said--I know, Ike and I worked for him too.) Davis thought very little of Whitney, whom he had known a long time,

Says first trouble between MacArthur and Marshall came because Mac thought Drum should have been C of S. Said should have not overlooked seniority. Forgot that he (Mac) had been jumped over a lot of people all his life. At the same time MacArthur never said anything against Marshall. MacArthur a good man to work for. Demanded careful work of his subordinates.

Davis as Press Rels chief. Trouble arose because it was felt that McClure should not hold both PRD and PW. Was felt that he was PW and might influence PRD reports. Some press people felt that no censorship should be involved and that PRD would tend to influence press releases. Bedell asked Davis to write a memo on the subject. Davis worked it out and asked McClure if it was all right (it proposed split of G-6), McClure said OK and asked that Davis sign it. Davis asked instead that it be sent forward by Gen McClure who agreed. (This explains why McClure signed the memo and a little later favored something slightly different). After some consideration of a chief for PRD it was decided to give to job to Davis. Davis says he had no experience for it and did not want it. I asked Davis if Dupuy couldn't have done it. He said yes, but that Bedell didn't particularly like Dupuy. Says that he (Davis) tried to get Dupuy promoted to BG but that Bedell blocked it. Davis said that the job would have killed him had he continued with it. Most of Davis' work done before D Day -- collapsed soon afterward. Had

dizzy spells; finally collapsed -- passed out one day and was unconscious for 24 hours. In hospital or recuperating most of the summer. Returned to AG office in time to replace Boehnke who had heart attack at that time.

Says British very bad about Press Relations, Treated press like servants. Didn't want publicity on a lot of things. Talks of fine work of Sarhoff and Phillips. Told of the flap over communications in British zone. First Army people set up their beach communications ahead of time. Decided that he couldn't stop 1st Army but would have to do something for Monty.

BBC said it would boycott D Day communiqué if voice which read it was American. McClure upset and told Davis they should let Britisher read it. Davis said Dupuy in charge of matter and should read it. He said BBC wouldn't dare boycott. So an American read it. They carried it.

As AG had to undo COSSAC arrangement for secretariat and to set-up US correspondence system. Filing system never completed adopted--British system kept in G-2 and G-5. Had to have correspondence where Bedell could get it in a hurry.

Press Relations--awful flap at last minute before D Day to get several hundred enlisted men for communications set up. Didn't like Lee and Lord, but this time he had to admire them. Went to them and said I have no authorization but I need so many men with this MOS and that MOS and I need them in two or three days. Don't ask for an authorization now because I don't have it. They put it through for him).

(Quezon may have hurt Ike because of praise for him--hurt him so far as MacArthur was concerned. He said onetime in a banquet at which MacArthur was present--"If MacArthur goes, here is the man I want as his successor. He (Eisenhower) is the only general who has told me the facts." Quezon had previously said something similar (I want him for M's successor) about Ord --who was later killed),

Quezon a very brilliant man. Very delightful, Very crooked.

Comments on individuals--

Eisenhower--always straightforward. Wonderful person to work for. Great patience. Not a man to upset things. Sensitive to press criticism in North Africa. Tremendously hard worker. Anxious not to have special privileges for himself or family. Great man on press relations ends part press to play.

John Eisenhower -- close friend of ours. Always afraid someone would think he was getting something special because he was son of Ike. Worried about getting stars for grades and conduct at school in Ph Is. When overseas he refused special treatment. Ike asked me to persuade him several times to spend the weekend at SHAEF (this when John at 1st Div). John said no--would look like special treatment. Didn't want to go on Moscow trip, but I told him I wanted revenge for a beating he had given me at gin rummy. He and I went on special sightseeing trips. John handled self well in the toast giving business--toasting the GI.

Bedell Smith - hard worker, took many burdens off Ike, even encroached on his field. Good man to growl at British and others, so Ike could avoid doing it. Could be smooth. Sick much of the time. Interesting example of his changes. After war Bedell asked me what I wanted to do. I said stay as long as Ike needs me and then go home- I have been overseas much of my service. Bedell said OK. A little later Ike asked me the same-I said I have already told Bedell I want to go home. Ike sent a memo--unknown to me ordering it done. Bedell raised hell with me for going around him. Later we came home with Ike on homecoming visit. He sent Bedell, Bull and myself back. Bull and I stopped for a few drinks in New-found land. Bedell couldn't drink. We were laughing and talking at our end of the plane. Bedell came back and suddenly began attacking me-saying "You don't know what you want. Now you want to go, now you want to stay. Make up your mind." Bull said "There's no use of that." Bedell wouldn't speak to me next day. Then suddenly he called me and said "I've had a wonderful idea. You can be my deputy chief of staff without portfolio and just take things easy." Never any indication of anything more. Important not to let him feel you were going over his head. I got into trouble several times because Ike would ask me about things and then Ike would tell Bedell "Tommie thinks so and so." Then Bedell would ask me "Who's boss." I was very fond of Bedell and enjoyed working with him. Art Nevins couldn't stand him and thought Bedell blocked his promotion. Mrs. Nevins wouldn't speak to mom on grounds I was a crony of Bedell's. Nevins wrong in this case. There was just no TO spot. Later there was a plan to give him a division in the field, but he had a fistula and had to come to hospital.

Art Nevins -- wonderful person. Did great work in G-3. Should have had two stars. Unfortunate that he disliked British. This was known and may have counted against him in SHAEF. We lived in same mess and were fond of each other. Ike liked him very much.

Bull - Very good man. Extremely likeable. Very good to his subordinates. Hard worker.

Gale -- thinks Gale the most efficient of the British deputies. Worked awfully well with me on administration.

Morgan-- most American of the British. Extremely likeable, Picked up American slang. Thinks he didn't work too hard at SHAEF.

Robb - Didn't know too much about it him. Likeable.

Patton -- I disliked him for his obscenity and bad manners. Here was a man with background and education and yet talked like a stable boy. Difficult to work with. Acted like a small child. Ike told me to tell him to watch his step in England. So he proceeded to talk to a British audience about how much we liked their women at a time when we were trying to offset German propaganda which was doing some good among British soldiers by showing them dying in Italy while US soldiers were getting their women. Then there was his second speech. Ike, I think, was really ready to can him. Mrs. Patton has no reason to be angry at Ike. Patton dead wrong to make his offhand statements about Nazis after war's end. Ike had no alternative. Gave him 15th Army to avoid sending him home. Ridiculous assignment to give George that assignment. The poor people on the Historical Board were having trouble enough without having to put up with

him. When it came to fighting he was a boy worth having and worth the things we had to put up with.

Grasset-- doesn't understand why he was chosen. Not much weight.

Holmes-- good man. He did the work in G.-5.

Prince Bernhard good natured. A real royal poacher. Nearly ran Bedell crazy. Always wanting something. I had to supply him with Philip Morris cigarettes out of my own stock. Spoke good English, had great charm. But you had to nail down anything you didn't want him to take away. He came about once a week. I had to take the honor guard out for him each time. He said "Don't do that for me." I said "They need the practice. We don't do it for you."

I attended part of the talk Churchill had with Ike on ANVIL in August. He coaxed and cried and came close to threatening (but never went all the way). Did everything he could to move Ike. When Churchill went to wash up, Ike said "Keep him busy as long as you can." Ike then went to cable Washington. Had Marshall's strong reply back before dinner was over.

(Didn't know of any of the other conferences personally. Missed all the fuss over Monty).

Marshall -- First experiences with Marshall not happy ones. Was called in to explain about Morale Branch in Pentagon in 1940. Marshall gave me a fish eye and asked me several questions I was in no position to answer as a major. I felt he was heckling me. Ike knew about it and often would say "I know you don't like Marshall. But you don't understand him. He wasn't heckling you." Later, when I came back with Ike and others at end of war, Marshall singled me out to congratulate me. Ike said "Wasn't that worth all the heckling."

Whiteley-- Excellent man, one of best men in G-3. Good to work with de Guingand. He could be a bit brusque.

Briggs -- Perfect assistant. Could put Bedell in his place. Once when she was invited, along with two other WACS, to go to Switzerland with some generals Bedell said it was all right to go, but "Oh God what a choice of friends you have." She said sweetly "Yes, General, I have known you for a long time." She got by with it.

Brendan Bracken -- a screwball.

Biddle -- very fine person in his field. Made everyone think he was his special friend.

Vullimany--splendid communications man

R Q Brown -- first rate commandant.

JCH Lee-- Couldn't stand all his fussiness and the big staff he kept and the big show he put on.

Davis says he kept the DIARY much of the time when Butcher was away. Some of the things Davis dictated others he collected for it.

One or two AG problems. Lee wanted to prohibit officers and enlisted WACs from having dates. Ike's view was that it was all right, but said officers would be held responsible for conduct of both. Davis who had helped to get WACs to ETO opposed to Lee's proposal. Nearly all the people in on conference favored a ban. Ike passed matter on to Bedell. Bedell said to Davis -- issue the order. Davis said "Did Ike order it?" Finding that no specific order had been given, Davis said he would wait a while, which he did. It was never issued.

Great deal of trouble with SHAEF clubs.

Barker -- Probably good worker at COSSAC. Knew nothing about G-1. Merely put there so he could be taken care of. Difficult man on promotions and awards. Never interested in awards for enlisted men. Davis (had view "Take care of them; and junior officers and the other officers will take care of themselves." Tried to get awards taken care of before V-E Day so Ike wouldn't be confronted with huge list at the last. Ike said give every enlisted man who has been on duty here a year a Bronze Star. If they have put up with us that long they have deserved it. Barker bucked it. Said he wanted Ike's OK. I said he could call Bedell. Barker held it up.

Gen Osborn -- good man. No idea of army. Had habit of making promises to big people and then army had to follow up. Promised of the people backing USO that Army would charge 25 cents for all shows. I told him--"This will cause trouble. The boys will write: the shows you contributed \$10 for cost me money. Then they will write George Marshall and you will get your ears beat down." In time this happened and he got his ears beaten down. He came around and said he wanted to eat crow.

Osborn had same funny ideas about questions to ask soldiers. We wouldn't let him ask "Do you like your company commander?"