



**William V. Davis Jr., Vice Admiral, USN**

Date of Designation: January 1927

Dates of Active Duty: 5 June 1924 - 1 April 1960

### **Duty Assignment Chronology**

William Virginius Davis, Jr., was born on January 28, 1902, in Savannah, Georgia, son of William V. and Winifred Bonney Davis. He attended public schools in Savannah and entered the U. S. Naval Academy from the First Congressional District of Georgia on August 5, 1920. As a Midshipman he participated in swimming and lacrosse. He was graduated and commissioned Ensign on June 5, 1924, and subsequently attained the rank of Vice Admiral from August 1, 1956.

Upon graduation from the Naval Academy, he reported to the Receiving Ship, San Francisco, California, and was assigned to the USS *Idaho* on January 7, 1924. He served in that battleship until January 1926, when he reported to the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida, for flight training, completing the course and being designated Naval Aviator the following January. He was then assigned duty with Fighter Squadron 6 and Bombing Squadron 2 of Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet, attached to the USS *Langley*, and later the USS *Saratoga*. During this period until June 1929 he participated in the Dole Air Races, Oakland, California, to Honolulu, August 16-17, 1927, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation follows:

For extraordinary achievement in aerial flight and in recognition of his courage, skill and resourcefulness as navigator of the airplane WOOLAROC which won the Dole Air Race from San Francisco to Honolulu on August 16, 1927.

He took part in this hazardous undertaking voluntarily in the interest of the development of aerial navigation and by his signal achievement became the first Naval Officer to reach the Hawaiian Islands from the mainland by air.”

He also was a member of an aerial stunt team “The Three Sea Hawks” at the National Air Races of 1928, Los Angeles, California.

He served as an instructor at the Naval Air Station Pensacola from July 1929 until June 1932, when he was ordered to the USS *Saratoga* as Landing Signal Officer. Except for two years when stationed at the Naval Air Station, Anacostia, D. C., as Flight Test Officer, he served at sea from June 1932 until June 1941, with aircraft squadrons of the Fleet aboard the USS *Saratoga*, USS *Concord*, USS *Idaho* and the USS *Yorktown*, the last year of this period in command of Torpedo Squadron 5, based on the *Yorktown*.

In May 1941 he was ordered to the Naval Air Station, Naval Operating Base, Norfolk, Virginia, to establish the Aircraft Armament Unit, and served as Officer in Charge of that unit until July 1943. In August he was transferred to duty with the Air Force, Pacific Fleet, and in October of that year was appointed to the staff of Commander Aircraft, Central Pacific Force. From May until December 1944 he served as Deputy Chief of Staff for operations to Commander Shore-Based Air Force, Forward Area, central Pacific; and as Chief of Staff, Headquarters Strategic Air Force, Pacific Ocean Areas, from December 1944 until January 1945. For outstanding service in those assignments, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, the citation following in part:

For exceptionally meritorious conduct...during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War Area from May 1, 1944 to January 19, 1945...”(He) successfully organized the section of his command and performed operations of vital importance and, as Chief of Staff, was in large measure responsible for the efficiency of the strategic air force. In addition, he carried out his duties as Air Liaison Officer on Saipan, directing and coordinating all shore-based aircraft of his command throughout the Saipan-Tinian campaign...(and) contributed to the success of our operations...”

In May 1945 he assumed command of the USS *Tulagi*, which was supporting operations at Okinawa. In June his ship sailed for Pearl Harbor with passengers and cargo and thence to the United States to undergo extensive overhaul. When detached from that command, he was ordered in January 1946 to duty as Project Coordinator Operational Development Force, Atlantic Fleet, commanded by Admiral R. P. Briscoe, based at Norfolk, Virginia. In April 1947 he reported as Director of Flight Test, at the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. During this period he became the second Naval Aviator to fly faster than the speed of sound in the Douglas D558-2 “Skyrocket” in August 1949. He was also awarded the National Air Council award for

for his work in high altitude jet flight, and development work in helicopters. In August 1950 he became Commanding Officer of the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVB 42).

Returning to the Naval Air Test center, Patuxent River, in August 1951, he commanded that activity until January 1952, when he was ordered to report for duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department. In April 1952 he became Navy Deputy Commander, Field Command, Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and from February 1955 until February 1956 commanded Carrier Division FIVE. He served as Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Fleet Readiness), Navy Department, for several months and on August 1, 1956 assumed duty as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations.

On June 25, 1958 he reported as Deputy Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and Chief of Staff and Aide to the Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet. He continued to serve in that assignment until relieved of all active duty pending his retirement, effective April 1, 1960.

In addition to the Legion of Merit and Distinguished Flying Cross, Vice Admiral Davis has the American Defense Service Medal Fleet Clasp; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal Europe and Asia Clasps; and the National Defense Service Medal.

He was married to the former Miss Margaret Cary of Pensacola Florida, and they had four children: Judith Gary, Mary Winifred, William V. III and Margaret Wright Davis. He has been an active radio ham since 1919, and among his other hobbies are fishing, hunting and Photography.