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Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Collection - Miscellaneous (Military Career)

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34 GENERALS OF THE ARMY AND THE AIR FORCE AND ADMIRALS OF THE NAVY

[[image - black and white photo of Adm. Chester Nimitz in uniform]]
[[caption]]U. S. Navy Photograph
FLEET ADMIRAL CHESTER W. NIMITZ[[/caption]]

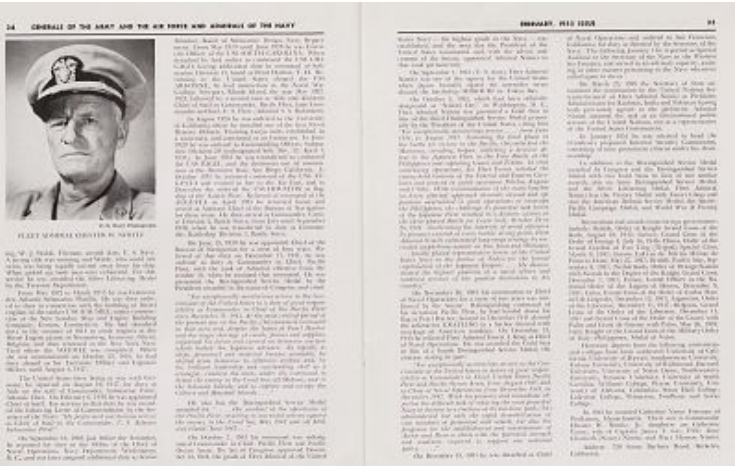
drowning. W. J. Walsh, Fireman, second class, U. S. Navy. A strong tide was running and Walsh, who could not swim, was being rapidly carried away from his ship. When picked up, both men were exhausted. For that service he was awarded the Silver Lifesaving Medal by the Treasury Department.

From May 1912 to March 1913 he was Commander, Atlantic Submarine Flotilla. He was then ordered to duty in connection with the building of Diesel engines in the tanker USS MAUMEE, under construction at the New London Ship and Engine Building Company, Groton, Connecticut. He had detached duty in the summer of 1913 to study engines at the Diesel Engine plants in Nuremberg, Germany, Ghent, Belgium, and then returned to the New York Navy Yard where the MAUMEE was completed. When she was commissioned on October 23, 1916, he had duty aboard as her Executive Officer and Engineer Officer, until August 4, 1917.

The United States then being at war with Germany, he reported on August 10, 1917, for duty as Aide on the staff of Commander, Submarine Force, Atlantic Fleet. On February 6, 1918 he was appointed Chief of Staff. For services in that duty he was awarded the following Letter of Commendation by the Secretary of the Navy: "He performed meritorious service as Chief of Staff to the Commander, U. S. Atlantic Submarine Fleet."

On September 19, 1918, just before the Armistice, he reported for duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and was later assigned additional duty as Senior Member, Board of Submarine Design, Navy Department. From May 1919 until June 1920 he was Executive Officer of the USS SOUTH CAROLINA. When detached he had orders to command the USS CHICAGO, having additional duty in command of Submarine Division 14, based at Pearl Harbor, T. H. Returning to the United States aboard the USS ARGONNE, he had instruction at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, the year May 1922-1923, followed by a second tour as Aide and Assistant Chief of Staff to Commander, Battle Fleet, later Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Fleet (Admiral S. S. Robinson).

In August 1926 he was ordered to the University of California where he installed one of the first Naval Reserve Officers training Corps units established in a university, and continued as an Instructor. In June 1929 he was ordered as Commanding Officer, Submarine Division 20 (redesignated Sub. Div. 12, April 1, 1931). In June 1931 he was transferred to command the USS RIGEL and the destroyers out of commission at the Destroyer Base, San Diego, California. In October 1933 he assumed command of the USS AUGUSTA and cruised in her to the Far East, and in December she relieved the USS HOUSTON as flagship of the Asiatic Fleet. Relieved of command of the AUGUSTA in April 1935 he returned home and served as Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Navigation for three years. He then served as Commander, Cruiser Division 2, Battle Force, from July until September 1938, when



he was transferred to duty as Commander, Battleship Division 1, Battle Force.

On June 15, 1939 he was appointed Chief of the Bureau of Navigation for a term of four years. Relieved of that duty on December 17, 1941, he was ordered to duty as Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, with the rank of Admiral, effective from December 31, when he assumed that command. He was presented the Distinguished Service Medal by the President awarded in the name of Congress, and cited:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in a duty of great responsibility as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet since December 31, 1941. At the most critical period of the present war in the Pacific, (he) assumed command in that area and, despite the losses at Pearl Harbor and the tragic shortage of vessels, planes and supplies, organized his forces and carried on defensive warfare which halted the Japanese advance. As rapidly as ships, personnel and material became available, he shifted from defensive to offensive warfare and, by his brilliant leadership and outstanding skill as a strategist, enabled the units under his command to defeat the enemy in the Coral Sea, off Midway, and in the Solomon Islands; and to capture and occupy the Gilbert and Marshall Islands..."

He also has the Distinguished Service Medal awarded for "...His conduct of the operations of the Pacific Fleet, resulting in successful actions against the enemy in the Coral Sea, May 1942 and off Midway Island, June 1942..."

On October 7, 1943 his command was redesignated Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas. By Act of Congress, approved December 14, 1944, the grade of Fleet Admiral of the United

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States Navy - the highest grade in the Navy - was established, and the next day the President of the United States nominated and, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appointed Admiral Nimitz to that rank permanently.

On September 1, 1945 (U.S. time), Fleet Admiral Nimitz was one of the signers for the United States when Japan formally signed the surrender terms aboard the battleship MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay.

On October 5, 1945, which had been officially designated as "Nimitz Day" in Washington, D.C., Fleet Admiral Nimitz was presented a Gold Star in lieu of the third Distinguished Service Medal personally by the President of the United States, citing him "For exceptionally meritorious service...from June 1944, to August 1945. Initiating the final phase in the battle for victory in the Pacific, (he) attacked the Marianas, invading Saipan, inflicting a decisive defeat in the Japanese Fleet in the First Battle of the Philippines and capturing Guam and Tinian. In vital continuing operations, his Fleet Forces isolated the enemy-held bastions of the Central and Eastern Carolines and secured in quick succession Peleliu, Angaur and Ulithi. With reconnaissance of the main beaches on

Leyte effected, approach channels cleared and opposition neutralized in joint operations to reoccupy the Philippines, the challenge by powerful task forces of the Japanese Fleet resulted in a historic victory in the three-phased Battle for Leyte Gulf, October 24 to 26, 1944. Accelerating the intensity of aerial offensive by pressure exerted at every hostile strong point, Fleet Admiral Nimitz culminated long range strategy by successful amphibious assault on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Finally place representative forces of the United States Navy in the harbor of Tokyo for the formal capitulation of the Japanese Empire...He demonstrated the highest qualities of a naval officer and rendered services of the greatest distinction to his country."

On November 26, 1945 his nomination to Chief of Naval Operations for a term of two years was confirmed by the Senate. Relinquishing command of his victorious Pacific Fleet, he had hauled down his flag at Pearl Harbor, hoisted in December 1941 aboard the submarine GRAYLING in a harbor littered with wreckage of American warships. On December 15, 1945 he relieved Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King as Chief of Naval Operations. He was awarded the Gold Star In Lieu of a fourth Distinguished Service Medal, the citation stating in part:

"For exceptionally meritorious service to the Government of the United States in duties of great responsibility as Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, from August 1945, and as Chief of Naval Operations from December 1945, to December 1947. With his primary and immediate objective the difficult task of reducing the most powerful Navy in history to a fraction of its war-time peak, (he) administered not only the rapid demobilization of vast numbers of personnel and vessels, but also the programs for the establishment and maintenance of Active and Reserve fleets with the potential strength and readiness required to support our national policy....."

On December 15, 1947 he was detached as Chief of Naval Operations and ordered to San Francisco, California, for duty as directed by the Secretary of the Navy. The following January 1 he reported as Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy in the Western Sea Frontier, and served in an advisory capacity, assisting in other matters pertaining to the Navy whenever called upon to do so.

On March 23, 1949 the Secretary of State announced the nomination by the United Nations Secretary-General of Fleet Admiral Nimitz as Plebiscite Administrator for Kashmir, India and Pakistan having both previously agreed to the plebiscite. Admiral Nimitz assumed the task as an international public servant of the United Nations, not as a representative of the United States Government.

In January 1951 he was selected to head the President's proposed Internal Security Commission, consisting of nine prominent citizens under his chairmanship.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal awarded by Congress and the Distinguished Service Medal with two Gold Stars In lieu of two similar awards, also an Army Distinguished Service Medal, and the Silver Lifesaving Medal, Fleet Admiral Nimitz has the Victory Medal with Escort Clasp and star; the American Defense Service Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal.

Decorations and awards from foreign governments include: British,

Order of Knight Grand Cross of the Bath, August 10, 1945; Greece, Grand Cross of the Order of George I, July 16, 1946; China, Order of the Grand Cordon of Pao Ting (Tripod) Special Class, March 8, 1947; Guam, LaCruz de Merito Militar de Primera Clase, May 27, 1947; British, Pacific Star, September 8, 1947; Netherlands, Order of Orange-Nassau with Swords in the Degree of the Knight Grand Cross, December 1, 1947; France, Grand Officer in the National Order of the Legion of Honor, December 9, 1947; Cuba, Grand Cross of the Order of Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, December 13, 1947, Argentina, Order of the Liberator December 11, 1947; Belgium, Grand Cross of the Order of the Liberator, December 11, 1947 and Grand Cross of the Order of the Crown with Palm and Croix de Guerre with Palm, May 26, 1948; Italy, Knight of the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Italy; Philippines, Medal of Valor.

Honorary degrees from the following universities and colleges have been conferred: University of California, University of Hawaii, Southwestern University, Tulane University, University of Richmond, Harvard University, University of Notre Dame, Northwestern University, Syracuse University, University of South Carolina, Williams College, Wayne University, University of Alabama, Columbia, Seton Hall College, Lafayette College, Princeton, Fordham and Loras College.

In 1913 he married Catherine Vance Freeman of Wollaston, Massachusetts. Their son is Commander Chester W. Nimitz, Jr.; daughters are Catherine Vance, wife of Captain James T. Lay, USN; Anne Elizabeth (Nancy) Nimitz, and Mary Manson Nimitz.

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