

Nomination of the Late MKCM Ellis McKee "Pete" Davis, USCG Retired  
(Served aboard USCGC GLACIER from 1978-80)  
For Selection For 100 Great Coast Guard Chiefs  
By Manson K. Brown, VADM, USCG (Retired)  
27 December 2019

I am pleased and honored to nominate the Late MKCM Ellis McKee "Pete" Davis. To me, he stands as the most impactful Chief during my 36-year active duty career since he defined for me what being a Chief is all about.

I served with Master Chief Davis aboard the Icebreaker GLACIER from 1978-80. He was assigned to the Engineering Department and also served as the Chief of the Boat. I was a newly commissioned Ensign from the Academy and assigned to GLACIER as a student engineer. We made three deployments together, Artic West Summer '78, Deep Freeze '79, and Deep Freeze '80.

Master Chief Davis departed GLACIER a few months before I did and retired a few years later, presumably after serving close to 30 years on active duty. I reconnected with him in 1996, when I was assigned as Group Commander in Charleston, South Carolina. Master Chief Davis and his wife, Barbara, owned and operated a restaurant and bar in Charleston named "Pete's." Taking from my lead, my command embraced Pete's as our favorite spot for wardroom gatherings and Chief's Calls. I remained in contact with Master Chief Davis until he crossed the bar in 2005 at the age of 65. His wife, Barbara, passed away a year later. They are buried at Live Oak Memorial Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina.

I don't have detailed information about Master Chief Davis' career or period of total service. One of his sons served in the Coast Guard, rising to the rank of LCDR before I lost contact with him after my retirement.

Here's the story that drives my nomination: After completing a significant portion of my student engineering program and right before GLACIER deployed to Antarctica in November 1978, I was assigned as supervisor for the Damage Control Shop, which had 9 damage controlmen. After a few weeks as a new division officer, it was apparent that the Chief of the Shop, a DCC, and I were not on the same sheet of music. He was a very popular chief in the Chief's Mess and throughout the ship so I had to be skillful in how I handled my concern.

I called the Chief to the weather deck for a one-on-one discussion and asked him if there was a problem. At first, he was evasive. In fact, he couldn't look me in the eye. After I pressed him, he became very agitated and blurted out that, because of the way he was raised, there was "just no way that he could work for a black man." Becoming agitated myself, I instinctively and firmly told the chief that he could just stay in the Chief's Mess and that I would run the shop. He said fine and departed.

My heart raced with anger and frustration. I went back to my stateroom, put my head in my hands, and thought that my career was over. I assumed that the Chief's Mess and the

Command would rally around the popular chief that I had just essentially fired.

Within a few minutes, there was a knock on the door. It was the Chief of the Boat, Master Chief Pete Davis, a giant of a man. His appearance in officer's country, as with any Chief Petty Officer, was highly unusual and unexpected. I thought I knew what was to come. The Master Chief told me that he heard about what I did and said that I did the right thing. He extended his hand and stated, "I'll be your Chief now!" I was astonished!

Thanks in large measure to Master Chief Davis' leadership and the confidence and support that he conveyed to me, I went on to enjoy great success as a division officer and damage control assistant aboard GLACIER.

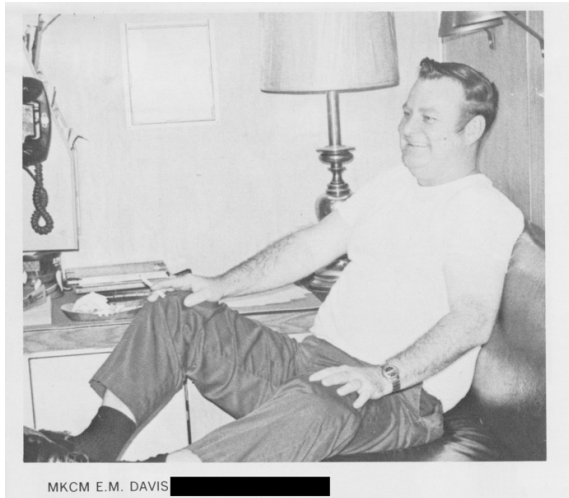
Master Chief Pete Davis's words stand as the most personally inspiring quote of my entire career. They reaffirmed that our Chief Corps is the vibrant heart of the Coast Guard. My admiration for, even love of, Coast Guard Chiefs began on that day.

During our time together aboard GLACIER, I came to realize that Master Chief Davis's positive influence aboard GLACIER with felt by almost every member of the command. GLACIER enjoyed significant operational successes. But we also dealt with challenges including a crewmember killed during an operational accident, persistent racial tensions (culminating in a racially-provoked stabbing between crewmembers and a follow-on race riot on the mess deck), rampant drug use, and significant engineering challenges (Master Chief Davis's engineering prowess helped us overcome most of them). Master Chief Davis's leadership with also instrumental in the successful integration of the first women assigned to GLACIER into our crew.

I lift up Master Chief Davis' legacy up in tribute at every opportunity. I spoke of him and his influence on me at two CPO Academy graduations as guest speaker. I told this story at my retirement ceremony in 2014. I talked about his influence on me when I addressed the Corps of Cadets at the Academy in 2018. I also expressed tribute to all those good Chief Petty Officers that daily convey to their people the spirit of Master Chief Pete Davis' words, "I'll be your Chief now."

When I was selected as the Coast Guard's first recipient of the Captain John G. Witherspoon Award for Inspirational Leadership in 1994, I couldn't help but reflect on the positive influence that Master Chief Davis had on my career and leadership style. When MCPOCG Leavitt and Admiral Papp honored me as an Honorary Master Chief Petty Officer, my thoughts of Master Chief Davis brought tears to my eyes. Of all the recognition I've received in my professional life, being selected as an Honorary Master Chief means the most to me because it signified that I had fully embraced everything that Pete Davis taught me and modeled for me about taking care of our people. "I'll be your Chief now!"

Attached please find pictures of Master Chief Davis and me from GLACIER's Deepfreeze '79 cruise book. The Master Chief is located in the Chief's Mess. I am located in my stateroom.:



MKCM E.M. DAVIS



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While my story is a personal one, I am confident that there are countless Coast Guard men and women who could recount similar stories about how Master Chief Pete Davis positively inspired and impacted them. I reiterate my strongest recommendation that he be honored as one of our 100 Great Coast Guard Chiefs.

I attest to the accuracy of this story and agree to have it edited for possible publication. Please feel free to contact me if you require more information. I applaud your effort to highlight the remarkably positive influence of Coast Guard Chiefs on our Service and our people!

Respectfully Submitted:

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