

Odette Harper

Negroes of N. Y.

June 8, 1939

Interview with Col. Benj. O. Davis

During the World War Col. Benjamin O. Davis now in command of the 369th (old 15th) Infantry, New York National Guard, was assigned to the Ninth Cavalry at Camp Stotesburg, Pampanga in the Phillipines where he served as a Captain, a Major, and a Lieutenant Colonel. He returned to the United States in 1920. At the time of the entrance of the United States into the World War, Davis had already spent twenty years at soldiering. ^{having first} ~~he~~ entered ^{the} army at the outbreak of the Spanish American War. A year and a half after the close of the Spanish American War Davis qualified for a commission as 2nd Lieutenant, Regular Army, by examination at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Colonel Davis was born in Washington, D. C. and attended the Public Schools of that city.

Explaining his opinion of the Negro in the army as compared to the white man Col Davis said:

"During the period of 1930 - 33 I accompanied six parties of Gold Star mothers on their pilgrimage to the cemeteries of Europe. Upon my return I was asked by a white West Point cavalry officer to describe the behavior of these Negro mothers abroad. My answer was to ask him if he had ever been made aware of any

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difference in the performance of a horse because that horse was black ~~xxxxxx~~ or white or brown or sorrel colored. Women are women the world over. Grief is universally grief. In regard to the bravery of the black soldier on the battlefield I cannot see that color of the skin has had or will ever have any influence one way or another."

When questioned about his own reaction to the World War Col. Davis said:

" As a professional soldier I forfeit the privilege of a reaction. Going off to war, any war, is my business. I must regard it in much the same way as a lawyer regards going to court. As routine." }

Col Davis served with the 2nd Squadron, 10th Cavalry in Samar and Panay in the Phillipine Islands during the Insurrection 1901-02. On his return to the United states he was stationed at Old Fort Washiki, Wyoming. He has also served as Professor of Military Science and Tactics at Wilberforce University in Ohio and at the Tuskegee normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. For a time he was military attache to the American Legation, Monrovia Liberia. From 1912 to 1915 he was with the Mexican Border Patrol. He was present at the capture of Naco Sonora by Mexican forces under General Obregon who later became President of the Republic of Mexico.