

PRACTICE & THEORY



What happened to Charlie Davis, when he was a student at the Army's great Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, shouldn't happen to a rookie.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles W. Davis of Montgomery, Alabama was an infantry officer during the war. Out on Guadalcanal, during the height of the fighting on January 12, 1943, Davis volunteered to carry orders to the leading companies of his battalion. To reach them he had to creep and crawl through murderous Jap machine gun fire. But Davis delivered his messages and next day again volunteered for another dangerous task, this time to lead an assault against a strong enemy position. "Following his leadership," said the War Department afterwards, "American troops seized the hill and broke enemy resistance in that quarter." For his valor Charlie Davis received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

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Thus honored, Davis arrived several months later at the Command and General Staff School to study military tactics in the classroom. One of the problems that he was called upon to solve concerned an infantry assault on an enemy position. For five days the School's instructors told how such an attack should be made. On the sixth day there was a three-hour written exam. Davis came out of the test looking glum. "The action described in the test was the same one I fought through on Guadalcanal. Now the way I fought that action isn't the way the School teaches . . ."

When the exams were handed back, most of the class received "Satisfactory." But Davis—the only man in the School to have actually eye-witnessed the action—got an "Unsatisfactory." At Fort Leavenworth they are still chuckling over that one. The School's explanation, which is logical, is that the Medal of Honor is awarded for personal valor and has no direct relationship to tactical decisions in battle.—*Julian Bach, Jr.*