

*Admiral Nimitz Historic Site  
National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Center for Pacific War Studies*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

Interview with

**Colonel (Ret) John H. Ellis**

(World War II - U.S. Marine Corps - American Samoa, Guam & Iwo Jima)

Date of Interview: November 26, 2002

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My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is November 26, 2002. I am interviewing Colonel John H. Ellis by telephone. He is at his home in San Diego, California. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** John, I want to thank you for taking time to make this interview today. First, what is your mailing address?

**Colonel Ellis:** 3540 Liggett Drive, San Diego, California 92106.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** We have an agreement here that normally a person reads and signs, but since we are by telephone, let me read this to you by telephone and if this is OK with you we will go ahead and proceed. (Mr. Misenhimer reads the agreement).

**Colonel Ellis:** (Colonel Ellis agrees to the terms of the agreement).

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What is your birth date?

**Colonel Ellis:** December 17, 1917.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Where were you born?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was born in the Chillicothe hospital, 10 miles south of the family farm where I grew up.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Is that in Ohio?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, in Ohio.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Where did you go to school?

**Colonel Ellis:** In Kingston. Kingston is two miles to the east of the farm.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What year did you finish there?

**Colonel Ellis:** I graduated from highschool in 1935.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**Colonel Ellis:** I have one brother who is four years younger than I am.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Was he in World War II also?

**Colonel Ellis:** He was also in the Marine Corps. He was in amphibious tractors.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did he survive the war?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were your parents' names?

**Colonel Ellis:** Dean Ellis and Helen Holderman Ellis.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What year did you enter the service?

**Colonel Ellis:** I entered the service in 1937. I went into the Platoon Leaders' Class that the Marine Corps was setting up for reserve officers.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** This was two years after you finished highschool?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, it was my sophomore and junior year in college.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Where were you going to college?

**Colonel Ellis:** At Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So you joined the Marine Reserves at that point?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you stay in college?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, I stayed in college. I graduated from college.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What year was that?

**Colonel Ellis:** I graduated in 1939.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Tell me what it was like to be in the Marine unit?

**Colonel Ellis:** In 1939 the Marine Corps decided they needed a reserve officer program, and they came up with this Platoon Leaders' Class. We called it the PLC summer program. We went to Quantico, Virginia, the Marine Base there, six weeks – the summer between our sophomore and junior year, and the summer between our junior and senior years. Upon the satisfactory completion of those two summers and a final, rather thorough physical exam, my college classmate who talked me into enlisting was disqualified based upon that final physical. Anyway, we were commissioned 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants in the USMCR (United States Marine Corps Reserve)

upon satisfactorily completing those two summers, the final physical, and a college diploma.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK, now the second summer was after your graduation?

**Colonel Ellis:** No, the second summer was between my junior and senior years.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So then when you graduated you were commissioned?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was commissioned on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1939. I graduated that May from college.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** In addition to the summers, did you have drills throughout the year, etc?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. This program was set up primarily to get youngsters who were in colleges that did not have an NROTC or ROTC program. Miami did not at that time.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did your training in the summers consist of?

**Colonel Ellis:** Drills and the usual subjects that were covered for all of the enlisted going through boot camp and that sort of thing. In other words, we had communications, tactics, the whole gamut.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How many weeks was the summer program.

**Colonel Ellis:** Six weeks.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So you had a total of twelve weeks when you finished.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you were commissioned, did you go directly into the Marine Corps at that point?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. You were asked to come in before. I actually came on duty on a voluntary basis, but I did not because I went to Texas A&M to graduate school the Fall of 1940. I had one additional year at Miami, the summer of 1939, and then the Fall of '40 I went to Texas A&M. I might digress to tell you that the Summer of '40 and the extra year at Miami, my Father was in graduate school as a student working on his MA; the girl that I married was taking a summer school course; and I was listed as a graduate assistant in the Botany

Department as part of the faculty.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What was your major at Miami?

**Colonel Ellis:** Botany. If you see any connection between that and the United States Marine Corps, you are a better man than I am.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were you studying at A&M?

**Colonel Ellis:** Plant pathology. It was part of the Biology Department at A&M.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you were going to school at Miami in this Marine leader course, did they pay any of your expenses, or any stipend, or anything to you?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. I think we got \$30 a month when we were PF's when we were in Quantico. We did not get paid any stipend during our college years.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** No tuition or anything like that?

**Colonel Ellis:** No.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long were you at A&M?

**Colonel Ellis:** One semester, the Fall semester. At that time I received orders from the Commandant of the Marine Corps that I was going to be ordered to active duty in February of '41 so I resigned at Texas A&M and was sent to basic school in Philadelphia from February 24<sup>th</sup> until May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1941.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did that consist of?

**Colonel Ellis:** This was an advanced course in the same subjects as I mentioned before from the PLC Program, however, at this time you were an officer and you were supposed to be picking up all of the aspects of tactics, operations, communications, equipment, etc.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What was your pay as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant at that time?

**Colonel Ellis:** My pay as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant was \$125 a month. I got married on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June of 1941, at which time I was enroute out of basic school and going to San Diego. Jean and I were married in Kingsville, Ohio, her hometown, 3 June 1941, at which time my pay went from

\$125 to \$183 a month. Instead of getting 5 cents a mile, I was paid 8 cents a mile because I had a wife. My cross-country honeymoon was at government expense.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You drove out to California?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What kind of a car did you have at that point?

**Colonel Ellis:** It was a Chevrolet. I believe we called it a sedan, a 2-door sedan. It had a huge trunk. I could put my locker box in the back and we moved all of our personal effects in this one vehicle.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What year model was it?

**Colonel Ellis:** 1937 Chevrolet.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Any particular experiences on the way out there that you recall?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. The only one that I can think of is that we went through Denver because my wife's Mother had a friend there, so we did a little bit of sight-seeing of the country. I can tell you that we got to Las Vegas and spent a night there. The bellman was taking us upstairs and he said, "Now here is the wedding chapel. A lot of our people like to take advantage of this." I embarrassed my wife by saying, "No, we don't have time for that."

**Mr. Misenhimer:** That didn't go down too well?

**Colonel Ellis:** She hasn't let me forget that.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Where in California were you stationed at this time?

**Colonel Ellis:** I reported to the Marine Corps base at San Diego to the 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you do there?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was assigned to on-the-job training as the Battalion Communications Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines. General Harry Liversedge was the Battalion Commander. He made his name at Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Yes, I know the name quit well. Where did you live there? Did

you live off post?

**Colonel Ellis:** We shared a home here in San Diego in the Kensington area, with another couple, a classmate of mine at basic school and his wife and their daughter.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did your wife work at that point?

**Colonel Ellis:** No.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were your duties?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was the Assistant Battalion Comm Officer. Everybody was putting in for a school, so I decided I should put in for a communications school since they assigned me to communications, which was really not connected with botany. Fortunately, in October of '41 I was assigned to the Battalion Regimental Communications Officers Course. The Army sent me to school at Fort Benning, Georgia. The Benning school for backward boys on the banks of the \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_ as we fondly called it.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you have to move back out there then? How long was that school?

**Colonel Ellis:** That school was just three months. Yes, we went back to Fort Benning. Jean and I lived in an apartment which one of the local Columbus, Georgia, individuals who owned a clothing store had added to his rather gracious home. We had a small apartment, livingroom, bedroom, bath, on part of his house that he made on the porch. He was a very hospitable gentleman. I have no idea what we paid him for rent.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I am assuming that you drove back there again.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. We drove to Fort Benning. I was concerned because by that time the war had started and was concerned whether or not we would get Christmas vacation. We drove to Ohio for Christmas. My wife still likes to point out the fact that she was able to get a present for everybody despite the fact that we didn't have much

money at that stage of the game even at \$183 a month.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Now you mention the war starting on December 7, 1941. Where were you when that happened?

**Colonel Ellis:** It was a Sunday, and I was at the home where we were staying. I remember the Army couple that were living in the apartment at that same location over the garage, were the ones that told us about Pearl Harbor.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What was your reaction? What were your feelings about that?

**Colonel Ellis:** I assumed that I would be called back immediately from school and sent overseas with my 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Marines, which I wasn't.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You stayed in school then?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, I completed the school. The school was over in January. I might digress and say that there were three other Marines in this class and we had quite a discussion and conference as to whether or not we would salute as you in the Army do when we got our diplomas. The Marines were taught that they are not supposed to salute unless \_\_\_\_\_. However, we agreed that the better part of valor was to follow suit with the Army.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Was the 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment part of a Division?

**Colonel Ellis:** The 8<sup>th</sup> Marines were part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, which was stationed up at Camp Elliott, which is just north of San Diego where the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station is located today. I was assigned there when I returned from Fort Benning.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK. When you left Fort Benning you went...

**Colonel Ellis:** Back to San Diego. I was at Camp Elliott for a short period of time. I was assigned as the Officer in Charge of the message center. The communicators were running Camp Elliott.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you still in the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment then?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. This was the special communications group that was running the school for enlisted communicators.



**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long did you stay there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Damn short. In April of '42 I was pulled out to become the Assistant Communications Officer, the coding officer and custodian of registered publications with the staff of the Commanding General Defense Force \_\_\_\_\_ Group. The Code Name was STRAW Area. We had STRAW Man, STRAW Hat, etc. This was a Major General's assignment. I spent most of my time in the code room encrypting.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you still a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant at this point?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. I made 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant a few days before I sailed for American Samoa in 1942. I made 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant the next month and I think I made Captain in April or May of that year.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** May of 1942?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. This was all at the time the Marine Corps was expanding like mad.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So rank was coming fairly quickly then?

**Colonel Ellis:** The youngsters went up pretty fast.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What are some of the things that happened while you were there in that coding school?

**Colonel Ellis:** The thing that sticks in my mind most about working in the code room in American Samoa was the concern that they had in Samoa as to where the Jap fleet was when actually they were headed for the Battle of Midway. We thought they could be heading for Samoa, however, nobody was shot at during the time I was at American Samoa.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When did you sail for American Samoa?

**Colonel Ellis:** April of '42.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you travel on to go there?

**Colonel Ellis:** The USS Zielin. In other words, we had troops, we had this staff of this Defense Force Samoa. I know the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> Radar Battalion

was on the ship with us.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** About how many men were on the ship?

**Colonel Ellis:** I would hesitate to say that. I'm not at all sure.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** A large number?

**Colonel Ellis:** Several hundred I would say.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you in a convoy, or with a group of other ships?

**Colonel Ellis:** Not that I remember.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Just your ship alone?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes as I recall.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When did you arrive down there?

**Colonel Ellis:** We got to American Samoa in May of '42.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Was there a particular area there you went to?

**Colonel Ellis:** It was at Happy Valley in the vicinity of Tutuila on American Samoa. It is right on the harbor.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you live in there?

**Colonel Ellis:** We lived in the old Navy quarters when there was a Naval detachment there prior to the war. Being with this Commanding General staff group we lived rather "high on the hog."

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did they have good food there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, I would say that the Commanding General staff had good food.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So, when the battle of Midway took place, you were there looking for the fleet. You thought they may be coming toward you?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you hear about the battle of Midway?

**Colonel Ellis:** I really don't recall details that we heard, however, due to the classifications and coding equipment that we had, I think we were able to follow the battle. I won't say that we were addressees on the messages, etc., but we were capable of breaking the messages and I recall the staff had to do that. We did have the official classified reports.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What else did you do there on Samoa?

**Colonel Ellis:** I don't think of anything extracurricular that went on. Periodically we would go to Polo, which was British Samoa, on inspection trips and that sort of thing. I think I rode in PBY's the General had when he went up to Burin Budi and Ellis Island. On occasion we went over to New Polo to check things at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade which was at New Polo. Wallace Island was also included in that command.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you say the General's name was?

**Colonel Ellis:** Charles D. Price.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Anything else you recall from that time?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. The only thing I can add to that is the fact that I recall that you had officers who hadn't gotten married before the war, getting married by proxy in order to get their \$183 instead of \$125 a month.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Getting the higher pay.

**Colonel Ellis:** I won't say that it was just for the pay. I guess the way it came out it sounded like that. You couldn't afford not to do a proxy marriage if you had it fairly well locked in. I remember people in Samoa standing up for the bride.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Interesting. How long were you on Samoa?

**Colonel Ellis:** Twenty-two months.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** From May of '42 until

**Colonel Ellis:** January of '44. I count April of '42 since that is when I sailed. I was overseas twenty-two months.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When did you leave Samoa?

**Colonel Ellis:** January of '44.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Where did you go then?

**Colonel Ellis:** I came back to the States. I had received orders while on Samoa to organize and command the 3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Assault Signal Company. I was worried. I couldn't find out too much about what they did. Needless to say, I felt honored to be designated as commanding

officer of this outfit. I was anxious to get home at that point. I will digress and say that our fifth wedding anniversary was the first one that Jane and I celebrated together – 1946 after the war. I did have 30 days leave; I will say that. In other words, it was February of '44 that I got back to Camp Pendleton where this 3<sup>rd</sup> JASCO was being organized. When I got back to Pendleton I was greeted with the fact that I had an early April '44 sailing date.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** But you had 30 days of leave, is that correct?

**Colonel Ellis:** I had the 30 day leave in the month of January.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you got back from your leave, what did you do then?

**Colonel Ellis:** This was a busy time because this JASCO is made up of a headquarters, shore beach party communications group, air liaison section and a naval gunfire section. We had a very short training period since we sailed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April '44, but these enlisted communicators of the shore beach party teams, plus some of the communicators in the air section and the naval gunfire section were trained there at the comm school at Camp Pendleton, California. The air liaison people were trained at North Island Naval Air Station here in San Diego, and the naval gunfire officers, some of their naval gunfire senior NCOs were trained at the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado. My headquarters was at Camp Pendleton at what we called the Boat Basin, which is now called Camp Delmar.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How many men were in your unit?

**Colonel Ellis:** At that time, at the beginning of this, the unit was 52 officers, 490 enlisted, for a total of 542.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** And you were the commander of this unit?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. In other words, it was a heavy company in sense of numbers.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** It was about twice the size of a normal infantry company.

**Colonel Ellis:** It was known as a company, Joint Assault Signal Company, and it was the word “joint” because we had 123 of those 490 men were

sailors, communicators, signalmen, cooks, etc. They were assigned originally to the company. When I got to Guadalcanal they took the Navy away from me. During this training period, we had Navy enlisted as well as Marine enlisted and a bunch of officers.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you left there on April the 10<sup>th</sup>, where did you go?

**Colonel Ellis:** We sailed for Guadalcanal.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Do you recall the name of the ship?

**Colonel Ellis:** Oh yes, that ship was one of the Liberty Ships, the Mormacwren. We sailed unescorted. I remember that too. It was a slow ship. We went by Espirito Santos on our way to Guadalcanal.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you stop there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. I think we left supplies, etc., off there and then went on down to the Canal.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** About how long did it take from California to Espirito Santos.

**Colonel Ellis:** As I recall, the better part of a month.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** At any time did you have to go to "General Quarters" because of submarines, planes, etc.?

**Colonel Ellis:** Not that I recall.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you have duties on the ship of any type?

**Colonel Ellis:** People from the Company had watches as far as fire watches and that sort of thing. Of course there was practically a constant mess line. When you finished one meal, you started the next. It was hot and stuffy going down.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were there others besides yours on that ship?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. We had a Black Marine Ammo Company that was going over with us. Those African-Americans were stalwart boys because I remember that we had one of my people and one of theirs box as part of the entertainment as we were going down. It was quite an event. We also had the crossing of the equator and the International Dateline ceremonies.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did that ceremony consist of?

**Colonel Ellis:** Making a fool out of the individual that was being initiated primarily. Nothing off-color or derogatory necessarily, but the old-timers liked to play up the initiation to the max.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you got to Espirito Santos, how long did you stay there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Just a day or so and then we went on to the Canal.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Again, were you unescorted there, or did you have an escort?

**Colonel Ellis:** Unescorted.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did the Liberty Ship go about 11-15 knots? In that range somewhere?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Pretty slow.

**Colonel Ellis:** I think that perhaps 11 is top speed.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I know they were pretty slow.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did anything happen on your way to Guadalcanal?

**Colonel Ellis:** No.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Do you recall when you landed there?

**Colonel Ellis:** I think it was May. We set up Camp in Coconut Grove, which is a loose term, but it was definitely an area full of coconut trees. We set up a regular tent camp. We had our tents with us. That is when the Navy personnel were transferred back to the Navy and most of them worked with the Navy beach master on the ship or on the shore. However, a number of them are still members of our reunion groups, the 3<sup>rd</sup> JASCO, and they come to our reunions. They feel very loyal to the Marine Corps. That dropped our total down to 52 officers and 419 men.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So the Navy no longer worked directly with your group then?

**Colonel Ellis:** That is true. They worked with our group, but they were not part of my command.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long were you on the Canal?

**Colonel Ellis:** We had a rehearsal for the Guam operation on the 23rd and 27<sup>th</sup> of May, which means we had not been on the Canal much before the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Embarkation began soon after the 27<sup>th</sup> and we were scheduled to make the landing at Guam soon after the landing was made at Saipan and Tinian. That operation was known as “Forager.” The Guam portion, which was Phase II, was known as “Stevedore.” When things got rough for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division that was going into Saipan and Tinian, they held us off of our landing in Guam. They held us in reserve, and as a result we sailed around the South Pacific for the better part of a month because we didn’t land until the 21<sup>st</sup> day of July.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Let’s go back to Guadalcanal. What were some of the things you did there?

**Colonel Ellis:** It was mainly a case of getting the teams assigned to their battalion. In other words, I mentioned how we had these primarily shore party, air and naval gunfire teams at the headquarters, and they were assigned to battalions and regiments. In some cases we had a division team. Getting these people a part of their parent organization for the landing took a lot of time, as well as trying to get shaken down a little bit of this camp that we had. Of course there were field exercises before the rehearsal so we were spending a lot of time getting ready for the landing of Guam.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What division were you with now, or were you with one?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, I reported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division on Guadalcanal. In other words, the Marine Corps had six of these JASCO’s, one with every division, and I happened to be the one whose number three was the JASCO and the number three of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK. So when your men were put in with the various battalions, did they still report to you, or did they report to the local...

**Colonel Ellis:** No, I would lose control of them when they would go to the battalions. In other words, as a company commander you are not like an infantry company commander with this JASCO. These people are farmed out and they work directly with the infantry. The shore party people work with the people on the shore handling logistics. They work laterally from one beach to the other on the beach. They also have a beach master there with them that works back to the ship. So you are providing communications laterally, to the rear, and forward. The air people are up with the forward companies. The air parties were one officer and three enlisted, which meant that normally the air liaison spotter was with the battalion commander. They may have some of their men that were up front with the company. The gun fire parties were made up of Naval officers who were the Naval liaison officer, primarily with the battalion or the regimental commander, and in the case of the gun fire people we had Marine artillery officers who were spotted and calling in the general gun fire.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So you had the headquarters part left?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How did the practice go?

**Colonel Ellis:** Rehearsal?

**Mr. Misenhimer:** The practice landing you made?

**Colonel Ellis:** It went fine. You are talking about the rehearsal?

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Yes, the rehearsal. Where was that conducted?

**Colonel Ellis:** We made the landing right there in the Guadalcanal area. Cape Esperance is where we made the rehearsal landing on 23-27 May.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** That is up on the northwest part of Guadalcanal.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK. You say that you left there and spent about a month just roaming around the ocean, waiting for time to go in?



**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. As a matter of fact, I think it was while we were at sea it was decided that we would not land until July, which we did, and they sent us to Eniwetok. I can remember getting sunburned badly at Eniwetok because they put us all ashore, and of course the wild characters that we were, you cut off your khaki trousers (you made shorts out of them) and got your legs burned. Of course, it was an opportunity to get off of the ship which everybody relished.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What type of a ship were you on when you left Guadalcanal to go there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Transports.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** APA?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, APA. We also had, some of these teams were on LST's.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long were you on Eniwetok?

**Colonel Ellis:** I think it must have been a week. I'm not certain about that.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you have any particular thing there, or...

**Colonel Ellis:** It was mainly recreation. I don't remember that we did anything in particular preparing for battle.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So then you loaded back up and started for Guam then?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** On July 21<sup>st</sup> you landed on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** Right.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Which wave did you go in with?

**Colonel Ellis:** I landed at H+ 90 minutes, which is an hour and a half after the first wave went in.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK.

**Colonel Ellis:** I went in on Green Beach. I do have notes that say that I debarked on the Blue Debarkation Station and I went in on an LCM with the Division Staff Group Number 1. In other words, on this load going in I had my division air liaison party, a Lieutenant and his enlisted, the halftrack that was the communications vehicle for the air net,

plus there were a number of corpsmen in that same group that went ashore.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Now, to get in the LCM, did you have to climb down the cargo nets?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Just go ahead and tell me your story about how things happened.

**Colonel Ellis:** Well, as I recall, we hit the coral reef and waded in. The water was close to waist deep on into the beach. I do not recall a lot of what went on the rest of that day, however, I do know that the following morning I was out checking communications on Green Beach where I had beach party teams set up. There was a Jap artillery barrage where they would fire, rise their elevation, and fire again, etc. Why, I've never been able to explain, I hit the deck underneath a jeep – certainly not a very smart move for a young Major. However, the thought hit me that I had better move. I did and the next round splattered that jeep. I got shrapnel in my right thigh. My World War I artillery born spotter uncle preacher said, “John, when you reached down, did you think it was blood?” I was evacuated to an APA to have this shrapnel removed from my thigh. It was sort of like a boil, it came in from the back and raised up on the front of my leg that night. We didn't return ashore until the next day. That was the night that the Japanese ran a banzai attack down through the division hospital, down near the beach. This is the time that ever since I believe very strongly in Devine guidance as far as John Ellis is concerned.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Was this the first night?

**Colonel Ellis:** The shrapnel incident was the morning of the second day.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** OK.

**Colonel Ellis:** In other words, D+1. Not the day we landed, but the next morning.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** That was the night of the banzai attack?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, that night is when the banzai attack came down. As I say, I

hesitate not to tell anybody that wants to listen, my belief in Divine guidance.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So they patched you up and sent you back in? Is that correct?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. I went back on D+2.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Just go ahead and tell me what happened after that.

**Colonel Ellis:** Well I worked closely with the division battalion headquarters, who was handling the beach party responsibilities on Guam. We didn't have a shore party battalion per se, we had this engineer battalion at that time. Since I had teams with them and was on the beach, I worked closely with them and also with the division signal officer, Colonel Lasiter. He was the one who had been my mentor when JASCO reported to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Him being the communicator, he pretty much dictated where the people got assigned, etc. The reason I say all of this is the fact that the division had made the landing in Bougainville before us, and they decided that we were extra baggage and they really didn't want to take us. As a result, there was an order put out that the division would take these JASCO teams. When they got ready for Iwo these wanted two of these teams. I point this out just because the men did do an outstanding job. Well, one of the reports points out the fact that the lessons learned in amphibious tactics during the landing at Guam was the importance of naval gunfire support, close air support, ships-to-shore supply engagement. Those were the three things my troops were involved with.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Let's go back to the first day you went in. Was there quite a bit of wreckage on the beach?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were there a large number of casualties also?

**Colonel Ellis:** I can't speak to the casualties because I did not see a lot of casualties that first day on the beach.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** But there was a lot of wrecked equipment and things?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you got back on the second time, then please go ahead and tell me what happened?

**Colonel Ellis:** As I say, I worked with the division signal officer and also the pioneer guy in headquarters, but a little later on it was decided that the Assistant Division Commander, a brigadier general with the 3<sup>rd</sup> division, General Noble, was to establish a reserve, in other words with the banzai coming through and all that sort of thing, they decided that needed an additional reserve, and for some unknown reason I was assigned to work with a colonel by the name of Ben Orden, who was to be the chief of staff of this ADC group. I can remember riding around in a jeep with him. This character had his own of private sort of machine gun. We had it in this jeep with us. We didn't have to use it. I guess I had been designated signal officer of this group. That is just a sidelight.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you actually encounter any Japanese?

**Colonel Ellis:** Negative. To my knowledge, I don't remember being shot at or dodging bullets.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you bombed by Japanese planes there?

**Colonel Ellis:** No.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you see any American and Japanese planes have a dog fight or anything?

**Colonel Ellis:** I did not.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long did it take to secure Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** If I remember correctly, it was into the early part of August before Guam was secured.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Two or three weeks – something like that?

**Colonel Ellis:** I would say the better part of a month.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you there the whole time?

**Colonel Ellis:** It was quite overgrown there on Guam. We were really fighting in the jungle.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You were the whole time?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Is there anything else that you recall from there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Between Guam and Iwo I lost 28 people, either killed or wounded. By far the largest group was at Guam. I believe I lost two officers and 17 men. At Iwo I lost a couple of officers and six men.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** These were people up in the front lines with the companies?

**Colonel Ellis:** Primarily yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did your wound give you any trouble or did it heal quickly?

**Colonel Ellis:** It healed up fast.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Is there anything else that you recall from your time there on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** Not at the moment.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** If there is later we will put it in. When did you leave Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** We didn't leave Guam. We established a camp there on Guam after the operation was over. This camp was adjacent to the division headquarters. In other words, again we had a head camp, but we were right adjacent to the division headquarters. That was the period of training and regrouping, etc., getting in replacements and getting ready for Iwo. Iwo came February 19<sup>th</sup> of '45.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** About six months later or so?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division stay on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You got replacements, regrouped, etc?

**Colonel Ellis:** Right. There were training exercises and all that. We also got in some recreation in the sense that we had battalion competition. I specifically think of basketball and baseball. This outfit of mine

was overloaded with officers. We showed very well in division competition. There were several battalions in the division. I had a number of division champions in the boxing that went on. We were quite proud of our baseball and basketball prowess.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You lived in tents there?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. Later on we did get Quonset huts. Quonset huts were installed prior to Iwo and after we got back from Iwo, specifically the mess hall and that sort.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division go into Saipan or Tinian?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Division was involved in Saipan. The 3<sup>rd</sup> was supposed to go to Okinawa, but got pretty badly cut up at Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Anything else from your time there on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. The only other thing that I would add relative to Guam is the fact that in addition to the athletic programs, one of my officers had a PhD in education and we did set up an education program. A lot of these kids had not graduated from high school. Dr. Jenkins was involved in that. We were very proud of that program. He ended up being the President of Eastern Carolina College.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What rank did you have at this point?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was a Major. I made Major before I left Samoa. I'm embarrassed to tell you. I think I made Major a year after I made Captain.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Rank came pretty quick then didn't it?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes it did.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you left Guam where did you go?

**Colonel Ellis:** Well, we went to Iwo next.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you do any rehearsals for Iwo?

**Colonel Ellis:** We must have, but I don't remember.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What did you sail on from Guam to Iwo?

**Colonel Ellis:** We sailed on a transport.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** APA?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How long did that take?

**Colonel Ellis:** I hesitate to say. I'm not sure. As a matter of fact, I have not gotten too much done on checking my notes to see what I could find on Iwo. I was there. I was not up at the front lines. I was primarily on the beach. I got in later. We landed on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I think it must have been the 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> before I went ashore.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** But you were out there off the shore at that time?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were there any kamikazes at Iwo?

**Colonel Ellis:** I did not see any.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I think they first came in the Phillippines and at Okinawa.

**Colonel Ellis:** At Iwo they had learned that needed more preparation than we had before we went into Guam.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** As I recall, it was still pretty rough going into Iwo.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes it was. The Marine Corps took the heaviest losses at Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Your unit took less there than it did on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did most of your unit go in the first day?

**Colonel Ellis:** No. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division did not go in. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was in reserve initially because the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions landed at Iwo, and it wasn't until a couple of days after the initial landing that a couple of the regiments of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division were put ashore. In other words, there was one regiment I think did not go in that they kept on boats throughout Iwo if I remember correctly. However, all three divisions did get division headquarters put ashore. We did not go to Okinawa because of the losses we took at Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So, when you got ashore on Iwo, what were things like on the island?

**Colonel Ellis:** There was a lot of damage at that point. I'm talking about wrecked vehicles. That black sand was quite a mess to walk in. We had a lot of wrecked material on the beach line and vehicles, etc., that had not made it all the way up through the sand.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I've heard that sand was bad and that you could not drive vehicles through it, even track vehicles could hardly go through it.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** After you landed there, then what did you do?

**Colonel Ellis:** I was primarily involved with replacement and repair of equipment, etc. I don't recall that I was given any specific job.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you there on Iwo until the end of the fighting?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. I can't tell you exactly when I left Iwo. We returned to Guam after Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You said that Liversedge really got his reputation there on Iwo?

**Colonel Ellis:** That is true.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were some of the things that happened with him?

**Colonel Ellis:** As I recall, it was Liversedge's organization, his regiment, I believe he had the 28<sup>th</sup> Marines, the regiment that raised the flag on Iwo, the famous picture you see of the flag raising on Iwo, as well as the ones that you haven't seen pictures of.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Were you on the ship off of the island when the flag was raised?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Could you see it from your ship?

**Colonel Ellis:** I do not recall having seen it. I think it was seen from the ship, but I don't recall seeing it.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I have read that there was quite a celebration on the ships out there when it was raised.

**Colonel Ellis:** I can't even speak to that one. That does not mean that I was not there, but I just don't recall.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Is there anything else from Iwo that you recall?



**Colonel Ellis:** No, I don't.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I understand there was a very bad sulphur smell. Do you recall that?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, very definitely. You had extreme sulphur odor.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I understand that the Japanese had a lot of tunnels and caves.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you encounter any of those?

**Colonel Ellis:** No I didn't. To be honest with you, I guess maybe I'm chicken. I decided there was no use sticking your nose where you might get it blown off. I didn't go investigating caves either on Guam or Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I think that was wise.

**Colonel Ellis:** I do recall, however, that at Guam having a line after the battle was over having the company come by with their tin cups and they got saki or wine or beer of the Japanese nature. I've often thought that was a stupid thing for a CO to do, not knowing whether it was poison or not.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Fortunately it wasn't.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, fortunately it wasn't.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** After Iwo you came back to Guam. What did you do there on Guam then?

**Colonel Ellis:** The points program caught up with a lot of people. A lot of people were sent back to the States because we were on Guam at the time the bombs were dropped in Japan. A lot of them started back home at that time. I was a regular. I had become a regular while on American Samoa. Regulars were treated a little different from the reserves, however, I did have enough time overseas so that I came back. I arrived at San Diego on the 15<sup>th</sup> of December of 1945. A small number of my JASCO group came back at the same time that I did. The new arrivals that were replacements had not been in the service very long went on with the elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division that

went into China from Guam after surrender.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Let's go back to your time on Guam, in April of '45 President Roosevelt died. Do you recall hearing about that?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. I don't remember any reaction or any great sadness. I think we got radio reports of it, but I don't recall any reactions.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** In May of '45, Germany surrendered. Did you hear about that and any reaction to that?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, that is more recognized and that meant more to us out there than Roosevelt's passing. We thought that bringing the war closer to an end, and of course, having been separated from family and that sort of thing I was particularly interested in when we were going to get back to the States.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you see many of the B-29's there on Guam?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. As a matter of fact, it was a very interesting sight to go up to the north end of the island after they were starting to put the B-29's out because you had two runways parallel to each other and they had them down one runway and the other runway in sequence taking off on their bombing runs to Japan. It was a rather impressive picture.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you get a chance to talk to any of the pilots or any of the crews on the B-29's?

**Colonel Ellis:** I did not.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** In August of '45 they dropped the bombs. Did you hear about that, and what was your reaction?

**Colonel Ellis:** I think it was a very favorable reaction, from my group at least, that it had been done. There was none of this consideration that it was too nasty or too "what have you."

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Too brutal or cruel?

**Colonel Ellis:** It shortened the war.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When they said "atomic bomb" did anyone know what that was?

**Colonel Ellis:** I don't believe so. I think you had a brief concept of devastation,

but I don't think we really understood all that was involved.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When Japan finally did surrender, was there much celebration then?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, much more. That was our theater and it was a much happier group of Marines.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Well, that was the end of the whole war at that point.

**Colonel Ellis:** That's right.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were some of the things that you did for celebration?

**Colonel Ellis:** I suppose there was an extra ration of this, that, and the other. Seriously, I don't know. I don't know whether I've got that in notes somewhere or not.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** When you got back to Guam from Iwo Jima, were there still any Japanese hiding out there?

**Colonel Ellis:** There sure were. As a matter of fact, the last of the Japanese I don't think were picked up until some 20-25 years after that. That information is from newspaper reports. I don't think that we were being harassed at all. I won't say that we didn't have some kind of security, but I do not recall any particular sentries that I had set up in the JASCO area.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I've heard that patrols would go out from time to time to look for them and then once in a while would find some to bring back.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** As you say, I think the last ones were sometime in the late '60's or even perhaps the early '70's. I am not sure when.

**Colonel Ellis:** I want to say that it was close to 25 years later, but I am not positive.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** That is kind of my impression too. How about mail – could you get mail when you were overseas.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Regularly or how?

**Colonel Ellis:** Fairly regularly. While we were in Samoa it may have been because we were with a headquarters and that it was favored by

being a senior headquarters. I don't men that the men out in the bushes were not getting mail, but it was probably slower getting to them than it was to us at the headquarters. It seems to me that we got fairly regular mail even while we were on Guam soon after the landing and while we were there before Iwo and upon return from Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How about pay? Could you get paid overseas?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Every month as you were supposed to, or what?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, every month.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I am assuming that you were having an allotment sent home to your wife.

**Colonel Ellis:** That is what I was going to say. I think most of the money went by allotment.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you ever have any experience with the USO?

**Colonel Ellis:** Not to any great degree. I do remember the band leader Teagarden being on Guam. Don't ask me why that name sticks in my mind, but that is one that comes to mind.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** He was a very famous band leader back then.

**Colonel Ellis:** The other thing, speaking of name dropping, while I was on Samoa is when we picked up Rickenbacker up in the Ellis Islands. He had gone down on a flight to Australia. He came back and ate at the General's mess. Eleanor Roosevelt stopped to see us in American Samoa. I don't remember any such dignitaries while I was with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division on Guam.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Now Rickenbacker, was this soon after he was rescued, or when was this?

**Colonel Ellis:** This was soon after he was rescued. I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I can recall when the General was getting ready in his PBY to go up and pick Rickenbacker up in the Ellis Islands from

American Samoa, the surgeon was going with him and the surgeon said to the General, “Don’t you think General we ought to take a Doctor with us?” That is not nice is it?

**Mr. Misenhimer:** No, that’s not. Did you come home with any souvenirs?

**Colonel Ellis:** I think that I ended up with a Japanese rifle, if I remember correct. I think that somebody gave me a Japanese flag.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Do you have any of those still?

**Colonel Ellis:** That is the extent of what I remember.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How about the Red Cross? Did you have any experience with the Red Cross?

**Colonel Ellis:** We had Red Cross representatives with us on American Samoa. I do not recall, I know they were they, but I don’t recall Red Cross with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division on Guam or Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What ribbons and medals did you receive?

**Colonel Ellis:** Well, I got a Bronze Star with a “V” for combat for the Guam operation. That was strictly because the troops did a bang-up job and I happened to be the CO. That was from our training that was done before we went out. I got a Purple Heart for being injured on the beach. I also received the Asiatic Pacific Ribbon. I was not in the United States long enough to get the American Theater Ribbon. You had to be in the United States a total of a year, 12 months, between 7 December and sometime in 1946. I have it in writing from Headquarters Marine Corps that I don’t qualify for the American Theater Ribbon, which I consider somewhat of a distinction.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You spent more of your time overseas.

**Colonel Ellis:** It goes along with the fact that Jane and I spent our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary together and that was the first that we spent together.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What were your feelings when you came home? Did you see any changes in this country?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. When I came back the first time I was driven around San Francisco in a sedan driven by a female Marine, which I hadn't seen those types before.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you stay in the Marines?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. They offered me a regular commission while I was on Samoa during the expansion of the Marine Corps. Jane says that I made my mind up before the letter got back where she concurred with all of this. It may have been that it happened that quick, but I decided it was worthwhile and did it. I've been very pleased that I did. I was one of those fortunate individuals that had a lot of command duties during my 30 years in the Corps. I didn't have too much combat.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Did you go to Korea?

**Colonel Ellis:** No, I was with a training outfit here in Coronado at that time. Some of the members of the training organization from here were in Korea with the troops, but we were training the Army troops from Japan and Okinawa were going into Korea and that sort of thing.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** So when did you retire from the Marine Corps?

**Colonel Ellis:** 1967. I digress by telling you that again I was very fortunate because my 30 years counts from the time that I signed up as a sophomore in college for this PLC program as a PFC, whereas the Naval Academy doesn't get credit until they graduate, therefore, I sometimes think that maybe I cheated a little bit, but that is the way that Headquarters treated it. For example, when I went regular I retained my rank as a Major. I didn't go back to a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and then back up. I was put with the Naval Academy Class of '42 as I remember.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What was your highest rank?

**Colonel Ellis:** Colonel. You remember the Marine Corps froze them out after you are passed over twice. I was passed over twice for Brigadier. I

always said that was a good idea because you get rid of the “dead wood.”

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What are some of the things that you recall from your time back there in World War II times?

**Colonel Ellis:** I guess how fortunate I was, particularly on Guam as far as not being hit other than a piece of small shrapnel.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What would you consider your most frightening time?

**Colonel Ellis:** Going ashore at Guam. I can see why we send the youngsters into combat, they don't know what to expect. We were all youngsters then.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** You mention that you have reunions.

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes. The 3<sup>rd</sup> JASCO has had 11 reunions. We started in 1991. I got it started here in San Diego with the help with another one of the men in the company, and we decided that we would have it every other year. At the second one in 1993 we decided that we were dying off and that we had better have it every year, so we've had it consistently every year. We had '91, then '93 and '94 and on through. We've had them in Chicago, Williamsburg, Philadelphia. Last year we had one in Las Vegas. Next year it is going to be in Branson, Missouri.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** What month do you have it planned for Branson?

**Colonel Ellis:** The month has not been settled. Normally it has been in the Fall, however, it has sort of been up to the person that is sponsoring the reunion.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** This is all the 3<sup>rd</sup> JASCO?

**Colonel Ellis:** Yes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> JASCO, and of course that includes some of these Navy boys that were part of that Navy contingent that was transferred from me when we got to the Canal.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** How many did you have at your last reunion?

**Colonel Ellis:** I think that there was about 80. Now that is husbands and wives.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** I was going to ask how many were actual members of the unit.

**Colonel Ellis:** About half of them are members of the unit, the other half are wives. We do have a number of widowers and widows. Incidentally, we found out that the ladies are just as interested in the things that the men are as far as the reunions are concerned – the stories and all of that stuff. I know that we worried at the first one about whether or not we had to have a special event and sent the women off shopping or something else. We soon found out that they were just as loyal. Truthfully, this group is more like a family. Jane and I never had children, and therefore this group truly has been our family. They treat us that way. They refer to us that way, so we are a close bunch, which I'm proud of. While on Samoa I wrote to Dr. Reeds, who was one of my instructors at Texas A&M, that I had not been able to apply his course in grasses. I took a course from him on the various grasses, etc., and he came right back and said, "Have you considered checking the grass skirts of the girls?" I feel that I let you down as far as the Iwo aspects of this thing is concerned, but truthfully I haven't found some of the things that I thought that I had relative to Iwo.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** That is fine.

**Colonel Ellis:** I want to apologize. You probably have more junk now than you want.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** No. You are doing a very good job and I appreciate very much your time.

**Colonel Ellis:** I appreciate you being able to put me off and give me a few days to try to do some digging. I forget when you first called, but it has been a big help to me. I hope that it sounds as though I did a little of my homework.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Oh yes.

**Colonel Ellis:** It has been nice talking to you, and I certainly commend you on all



that you are doing on this because this oral history thing is an important part and I certainly admire what the museum is doing on this. I got involved working with the 4<sup>th</sup> grade children here in San Diego on the history of San Diego. I've taken them on tours of where California began here at our Presidio here in town. I am a volunteer doing all of that, but I certainly am enthusiastic about the program.

**Mr. Misenhimer:** Thank you.

**Colonel Ellis:** I have one last question. We never had children, but we have two that we are very close to. One of them asked me what does the museum have in the form, now I know that they have plaques. Other than that what type of things does the museum have as far as fund raising?

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