

*Admiral Nitmitz Historic Site*

*National Museum of the Pacific War*

*Center for Pacific War Studies*

*Fredericksburg, Texas*

*Interview with*

*Marlene Ford, Kristin Dahlstrom, Adrienne DuSell*  
*Daughters of First Lieutenant William J. Ellis, Jr.*  
*U.S. Army, died in Moji, Japan, February 27<sup>th</sup>. 1945*

Interview with Three Daughters of First Lieutenant William J. Ellis, Jr.

Marlene E. Ford, Kristin E. Dahlstrom, Adrienne DuSell

*(Interview already in progress. Did not "record" early enough.)*

**Ms. Ford:** My name is Marlene E. Ford, from Columbia, South Carolina, I am the oldest; my sister, Kristin Dahlstrom, from Des Plaines, IL, is the middle sister and my youngest sister is, Adrienne DuSell, Tarpon Springs, FL. We are here at the ADBC convention, and we come as often as we can. We are here to tell our story of being orphaned because of the Japanese atrocities in the Philippine Islands during World War II.

**Ms. Lane:** Please start and tell us your story.

**Ms. Ford:** In early fall of 1939, we came to Chicago to visit my mother's family. My sister, Kristin, was almost two, and I was almost eight. My mother was unaware of the fact that she was pregnant with my youngest sister. My Father stayed here and continued to work at the shipping company

**Ms. Lane:** Your Father's name?

**Ms. Ford:** William Jesse Ellis, Jr. He was the traffic manager for an inter-island shipping company headquartered in Manila. And he helped the U.S. military when the bombing started by providing the ships and personnel needed to ship water and other supplies throughout the islands.

**Ms. Lane:** Where are you from?

**Ms. Ford:** I was born in Manila in October 1931. My sister, Kristin was also born in Manila in January 1938. Adrienne was born in Chicago in April 1940.

My father was born in June 10, 1906 on Corregidor Island in the Philippines. Coincidentally, my grandmother, Maria Incarnacion Bautista, was also born on Corregidor. We're part Filipino. Anyway, when it became evident that the Philippines was going to be taken over by the Japanese, the Army offered my Dad a commission in the Army for a kind of a reward for helping with the shipping of stuff...and besides, the ships had been bombed by the Japs and sunk or were captured. So there were no more ships anyway. So he accepted the commission because he needed to support us in the United States. So he accepted a commission in the Army as a Lieutenant. He had the experience they needed for moving supplies and he had provided the help when it was needed. He was sent to Bataan in the Quartermaster Corps. And when the war got really bad and they were going to surrender he somehow got to Corregidor. We haven't figured out how he got there yet...but somehow he got to Corregidor and fought on Corregidor, and when the U.S. Army surrendered to the Japanese and Corregidor fell in May 1942 and he was taken to Bilibid, and then Cabanatuan. And then on December 13, 1944 he was put aboard the Oryoku Maru, Brazil Maru, and the Enoura Maru. He got to Moji and died at Moji on February 27, 1945.

**Ms. Lane:** Where is Moji?

**Ms. Ford:** Moji is in Japan. So, we are in Chicago, my sisters and I, and we didn't find out he died until my birthday, in October 1945. He died February 27, 1945. Now my story about being orphaned. In the Philippines I was a little princess. I did nothing. I was taken care of by an Amah. And all of a sudden when we got to the U.S. I was no longer a little princess, my Mom was there all the time and she didn't know how to be a full time Mother. And it was very hard on her having to take care of three of us, after not

knowing actually how to do it, because she always had the help of the Amahs and other servants. So I became her helper against my will. I was always her helper.

**Ms. Lane:** Now you were living in Chicago?

**Ms. Ford:** We were living in Chicago. We were living with my Mother's sister, Aunt Gladys and Uncle Marshall in his house and I got the mumps. I was a very naughty little kid... they told me not to go around my uncle because he never had the mumps, and 'course I had to go around him. He got the mumps and almost died. Shortly after that my aunt and uncle said we had to move. We had to find an apartment, and we found an apartment and we stayed there until the war was over. Then we went back to the Philippines to sell our house. Our Grandmother was there, and our Father's sister, Aunt Katherine, her husband, Uncle Weaver, and their daughter, our cousin, Elaine Solomon. We were there for a year.

**Ms. Lane:** Now this was your Father's Mother?

**Ms. Ford:** Yes, my Father's Mother.

**Ms. Lane:** The relatives in Chicago?

**Ms. Ford:** The relatives in Chicago were my Mother's family.

**Ms. Lane:** Was she also from the Philippines?

**Ms. Ford:** No, my Mother is German. Her maiden name was Schulz. My Father went to Northwestern University and that is how he met my Mother, in Chicago at the Aragon Ball Room. He proposed to her and she went over there at 18. After the war, we went back and sold the house. We were only there a year, we went to school and then after sold the house we came home. What did Mother do? Nothing. It was really fun 'cause you went to school and you came home and you had to come home for siesta.

You only went to school for half a day. So you came home and took off all your clothes 'cause it is very hot. We took a siesta, and all your clothes were washed and ironed, your shoes polished when you woke up from your siesta. It was really neat. It was the only time I ever had those brown and white leather shoes. What did you call them?

Saddle shoes. I couldn't keep 'em clean.

**Ms. Lane:** How long did you live in the Philippines?

**Ms. Ford:** Before the war?

**Ms. Lane:** Before and after.

**Ms. Ford:** Well like I said, I was almost eight when we came to the States, and we were only there a year after the war.

**Ms. Lane:** How did you get along at school?

**Ms. Ford:** Children are very cruel to each other and because of us looking slightly oriental, they did not believe the fact that I was not Japanese. And they always told me I should go back. Well, we were fighting a war with the Japs so I can understand why children at school were not kind. Oh yes, I am a little oriental. But we were the only people on the block who had lost a soldier. There was no other. We were the only Gold Star family on the block.

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** I would like to interject a few things for clarity. My Father died February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945. My name is Kristin Dahlstrom, and I live in Des Plaines, Illinois. I was born January 7, 1938 in Manila. The thing that I recall about being a little girl who's Father was fighting a war was that we had the star in the window and it was very revered. I played the Statue of Liberty in a ...during...no, it wasn't the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we had a block party...they were protecting the neighborhood. What do you call them? Yeah, it was

like a neighborhood watch...., yes, it was an air raid group and I played the Statue of Liberty for this group. I recall that. And we became a real close-knit family, my Mother, my sisters and I, because we had to rely on each other for everything. So we grew up very tight, and there was always this mystery person that we belonged to. I recall so clearly the day we received the telegram that notified us that our father was dead. I was sent into the back bedroom to read my little sister a story. I don't know what everybody else was doing but I can remember hearing my Mother and her sister, Aunt Hazel Schulz, crying. I just remember what my sister, Adrienne and I were doing. We were to leave the grownups alone. And I know that something terrible happened. We knew that we had a Father, but we didn't understand at age four and six in 1945 what this was all about. And what I remember mostly about being a child without a Father during the war years was things like stamps for shoes and stamps for meat, standing in these long lines to get meat and we had aunts who filled gaps. So those are some of my memories.

**Ms. Ford:** I knew my Father better than my sisters because they don't remember him and I can remember he read the Sunday comics to me every Sunday. My Mother, as I said, wasn't around too much when I was very small. She sang to me when I was going to sleep. They were like the King and Queen of the house and when they were there it was like a fairyland because they weren't there very much. The servants really took care of me. I can remember Christmas Eve, and they had a party in the next room. And they had this wonderful stuff called Ginger Ale. But I couldn't have it because it was not for little kids. I could have part of it, but not the whole thing. I had the Ginger, but not the ale. (*Laughter*).

My grandfather took me to school and my father picked me up, when he remembered.

Sometimes he forgot me. He would have to go back into town to get me. He would come all the way home without me, and my mother would say where's Marlene?

Oh...he had to go all the way back into town to get me. And he was also a prankster.

One time he closed his eyes while he was driving me home from school and he said, "Now tell me if I'm going to hit anything." So we rode up on the curb and hit a tree.

And I told him.

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** I love to hear Marlene talking about our Father. She's got these memories and she's very lucky

**Ms. Lane:** How did you feel about the Japanese people after your Father had died in the war?

**Ms. Ford:** It just so happened that my first job when I was 19, I worked with a Japanese American girl who was a really, really nice kid. And she was here in the states during the war and she had nothing to do with it. Well, she invited me to a party at her house and I met this Japanese boy. He was very good looking. She had a lot of Japanese people at the house, but they were Japanese-American and they had nothing to do with the war. I feel that it was a long time ago, and at the time if I had met Japanese people from Japan, I might have had some resentment but I never felt any resentment for any Japanese-Americans who were here. Or who were in Hawaii. My Mother had a fit though.

**Ms. DuSell:** This is the youngest sister. My name is Adrienne Ellis DuSell and I live in Tarpon Springs, Florida. I was angry. As a young person, I felt that every Jap in the world was responsible for my Dad's death and I was full of anger and resentment. As an adult, I know that this is not true; however it has only been in the last five years that I will knowingly buy anything that was made in Japan. I do not believe that the Japanese

Government was held accountable for the atrocities that they caused nor have they made to reimburse the prisoners for the profits, which occurred from their slave labor. Their abuse of the Geneva Convention was rampant.

**Ms. Ford:** We just came back from the Philippines and the Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines was a guest speaker there. He apologized for the Japanese atrocities in the Philippines. He was like fifty years too late as far as I was concerned.

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** However there was little attention paid to what he said. His apology was short and really carried no weight and was more or less ignored, and certainly didn't get much applause or attention from the audience or media coverage that I'm aware of.

**Ms. Lane:** What caused your anger toward the Japanese person?

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** This was the Japanese Ambassador to the Philippine Islands. That incident just happened this past April in 2002. The apology is more than very late in coming.

**Ms. Lane:** How did you happen to meet him?

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** We were at the celebration of freedom in the Philippines that was celebrating the liberation of the Philippines and the fight against Japan and the fact that the Philippines were liberated. I'm sorry I can't remember the name of the celebration...it was like a 4<sup>th</sup> of July in the Philippines. There were tons of elderly Filipino veterans at this celebration. It was on the Bataan peninsula, at Subic Bay. It was the Philippine memorial that has that great, huge cross and it has a marvelous, marvelous monument to all the battles during World War II. When we were in Manila in 1947 and 48, one of the reasons we went there was so that Mother could identify my Father's remains, which we did at the American Cemetery. And then his remains were shipped

home a more than a year later. And what was interesting about that was that it was presented in a military fashion. This big fancy Government car pulled up to our house I can remember it so clearly. There was no bugler and there was no flag ceremony, but they did present a flag to my Mother that was already folded along with my Father's remains. We kept his remains all these years until Mother died in 1984. His ashes were then placed in my Mother's coffin with her body and they were buried together with a single marker that identified his name as First Lieutenant William I. Ellis, Jr. I feel bad that he was mixed in with all those ordinary dead people when he should have been memorialized to a greater extent with one of those beautiful white monuments in Manila or Corregidor. It gives us great pleasure to be able to take part in the ADBC because we get to meet the men who suffered with him, although they did not know each other, it's very rewarding.

Ms. Ford: The first reunion we went to was in '91 and my sister Adrienne suggested we bring a picture of my Father. And we did and we put the picture on the bulletin board. And we asked does anybody know this man, he is our Father. Please contact us in room... I don't remember the room number...and lo and behold...we had a contact. His name was Major Duke Fullerton, and he was my Father's commanding officer. He had been with my Father the whole time on Bataan and in Cabanatuan POW Camp #1. Major Fullerton was also with our father when he died in Moji. We were very privileged to have met Duke and we have been very grateful for the information he shared with us because that's how we found out everything we know about father's experience and life as a Japanese POW. So we are very grateful to the ADBC for that.

**Ms. DuSell:** One of the things that anger me is the textbooks today allow approximately two paragraphs for the Pacific portion of World War II. The schools do not make a strong effort to educate the kids regarding the Philippine Islands and their involvement in WWII. It's deplorable and something needs to be done about it. If it wasn't for these brave men who lived, fought and died, we would all be speaking Japanese. Anyway, that's my two cents.

**Ms. Lane:** How were you affected, being an orphan of the war?

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** The middle sister. How was I affected being an orphan...well I wasn't an orphan because I had a Mother. But my Father...I was a war orphan as far as the government is concerned because they paid for two years of my college education, which I was grateful for. And the thing that affected me most was I grew up not knowing what men were all about. I did not know what a man was, how a man was supposed to behave, what role a man played in a life. And I was most curious about men's feet. They looked so interesting in their shoes without heels, black shiny shoes...but I had no idea what a man was. I had uncles, but in my family it was a matriarchal family. My Mother's Father left when she was an infant, my aunt's husband was kind of a twerp, and my other aunt's husband was a nere-do-well. Trying to put this all in there...and my other aunt was a spinster and she was really my Mom's sidekick. If it wasn't for my sister Marlene and my Aunt Hazel, I don't think my Mother would have made it. She had several bouts of depression and breakdowns and she looked anorexic, she only weighed ninety-eight pounds and she was 5'5" or something. She went through hell, and not having a man in the house could not teach me what men were about. So I got married, I had no idea what my relationship with a man was supposed to be or what a man was to contribute to the

family. And I'm still married to the same man, but he didn't take the role that I now realize he should have because I didn't have any expectations. And that's really how I was most affected by my Father having died in World War II. But lots of kids don't have Fathers in their homes for lots of different reasons. And I think we were all affected the same way. That's why we need to work toward keeping families together. And I too would like to voice my opinion about what the history books are lacking. If we did not impart to our children the education about World War II and the atrocities, which likened to what went on in Auschwitz, and so forth, our children were not taught any of that in school and our grandchildren are not learning it. And so neither is the country nor the world and we need to make sure that this information is imparted to all school districts through whatever media we can manage.

**Mrs. DuSell:** I concur with my sister; we didn't know anything about men. I married young and didn't know what a wife's role was or what a husband's role was. As the result, I had a difficult time staying married. My sister Kris is right, the country needs to work on keeping families together so that children grow up knowing what it is to have two parents. I would also like to say that I believe growing up with a Father who lost his life in service to his country made us a more patriotic family, definite flag wavers. I believe I taught my children to respect the flag and the country. I have two sons, Robert Staats who served in the Army, and Jayson Keilar who is presently a Lieutenant in the Navy.

**Ms. Ford:** My mother kept a box with all the letters from my Father that she had received, and all the pictures of Manila that she had and all the memorabilia that she had kept of my Father and every once in a while as we were growing up, she would get the

box out and she...I don't know what started it...whether we egged her on or whether she did it herself...and probably came from a question we'd ask. She'd drag the box out and the minute she started going through the box she started crying. And we started crying, so therefore we labeled this box our crying box. And now my sister Kristin has the crying box...and she...I don't think she goes in it too often.

**Ms. Dahlstrom:** Well, no, I don't, because, well...I can cry without opening the box, but my hope is to one day put this all in an album of some kind, so the paper does not begin to disintegrate so that we can pass on our legacy to our family and the world, and we thank you very much for this opportunity to tell our story. Thank you.

**Ms Lane:** Thank you. We appreciate it.

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