

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

CAPTAIN WALTER J. ELLIS, UNITED STATES NAVY

Walter John Ellis was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on October 8, 1916, son of Walter John Ellis (now deceased) and Mary (Murphy) Ellis. He graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and later received a Master of Science degree from Syracuse University School of Journalism, Syracuse, New York. During 1939-1940 he was Copy Chief in the Advertising Department of Mergenthaler Linotype Company, Brooklyn, New York. He joined the U. S. Naval Reserve in July 1942 and was commissioned Ensign, USNR, on October 21, that year. He subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain, to date from July 1, 1963, having transferred from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy in February 1947.

Ordered to active duty in January 1943 he was Gunnery Officer on board the USS BARNES (CVE-7) until July of that year, when he became Assistant Navigator on the USS MANILA BAY. He is entitled to the Ribbon for and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded that escort aircraft carrier. From October 1944 to February 1946 he had duty as Navigator on the USS MUNDA, after which he was assigned to the Pictorial Branch, Office of Information, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. During the period December 1946 to April 1947 he was Public Information Officer for Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd's Antarctica Expedition.

In May 1947 he returned to the Office of Information, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. to serve in the Press Branch. While there he was designated a Special Duty Officer/Public Information Officer. From April to December 1948 he was a Roving Writer Photographer for two months on the Staff of the Commander in Chief, U. S. Naval Forces, Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean; then for another two months on the Staff of the Commander SECOND Fleet; and finally for four months on the Staff, Commander SIXTH Fleet. In January 1949 he was assigned to the Department of Defense Public Information Office, Washington, D. C., where he served in the Navy Press Branch until November that year. During the period January 1950 to June 1952 he was Public Information Officer on the Staff of the Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Far East, and in that capacity served as Press Advisor for the Senior Delegate to the Korean Truce Talks. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", "For meritorious service...from June 27, 1950 to June 4, 1952..." The citation continues in part:

"Throughout this period, Lieutenant Commander Ellis discharged his many responsibilities with exceptional skill and foresight under extremely trying conditions, and aided immeasurably in maintaining sound Navy public relations policies and in sustaining cordial relations with the press. A capable and resourceful leader, he frequently served as a roving reporter-photographer with Navy and Marine units both ashore and

afloat in the combat areas and, during the historically significant armistice negotiations in Korea, rendered outstanding service in disseminating the humanitarian objectives of the command to the various information media throughout the world. His marked professional ability, superb judgment and zealous devotion to the fulfillment of his missions reflect great credit upon himself..."

In August 1952 he became Public Information Officer at the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, and the Severn River Command, and in July 1954 returned to the Office of Information, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., to head the Magazine and Book Branch until August 1955. Following instruction (Command and Staff Course) at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, he joined the Staff of Commander SIXTH Fleet as Public Information Officer in July 1956. In December 1958 he reported as Public Information Officer at Headquarters Third Naval District, New York, New York, where he remained until October 1961 when he transferred in a similar capacity to the U. S. Taiwan Defense Command. From April 1963 to December 1965 he had duty in the Office of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) and "for exceptionally meritorious service..." he received the Legion of Merit. The citation states in part:

"...As Chief, Navy Press Branch, Directorate for News Service, during the period April 30 to October 1, 1963, Captain Ellis established closer liaison between the Office of Public Affairs and the Navy and Marine Corps and exercised professional skill and sound judgment in disposing of critical and sensitive matters involving the national interest. Later, as Deputy Director (News), Directorate for Information Services, from October 1, 1963 to December 30, 1965, he made a major contribution toward improving the lines of communication from components of the Unified and Specified Commands to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs). Through his careful planning, farsightedness, and initiative, many of the functions in the Directorate for Information Services have been realigned to provide a more effective twenty-four hour service for national news media, and Public Affairs officers have been placed in the National Military Command Center, thus extending the Directorate's news-gathering capabilities. In staffing and coordinating major news coverage of the Defense Establishment, Captain Ellis was responsible for projects involving the President of the United States and other Heads of State..."

He had instruction at the Defense Language Institute, East Coast, Washington, D. C., from January to June 1966 then became Director, Public Affairs, Headquarters, U. S. European Command. "For exceptionally meritorious service..." in that capacity he was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit. The citation continues in part:

"Exercising resourceful leadership and professional competence, Captain Ellis was responsible for the development and implementation of an exceptionally well-coordinated and highly responsive public affairs program for the United States European Command. In connection with the Fast Relocation of U. S. military forces and materiel from France, he developed and directed the execution of a public affairs plan for that militarily and politically sensitive operation which completely realized all the public affairs objectives prescribed by the Departments of Defense and State. During the Arab-Israeli crisis in June 1967, Captain Ellis directed the deployment of public affairs resources to meet the several urgent and diverse requirements resulting from the U. S. military operations in that crisis. The efficient and expeditious manner in which he directed public affairs activities on that occasion resulted in a timely flow of information to the American public. In addition he personally prepared and was instrumental in the promulgation of policy guidance for the operations of the European Stars and Stripes and Armed Forces Radio and Television (AFRT) in the United States European Command..."

In October 1968 he became Assistant for Public Affairs in the Office of Legislative Affairs where he served until April 1970 when he reported as Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Public Affairs), Navy Department.

In addition to the Legion of Merit with Gold Star, Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Captain Ellis has the American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with six stars; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal, Asia Clasp; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal with four stars; United Nations Service Medal; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; and the Antarctica Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation Badge.

Navy Office of Information
Internal Relations Division (OI-430)
27 May 1971