

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

American Bicentennial

Personal Experience

O.H. 1341

JOSEPH ALESSI JR.

Interviewed

by

Joseph Paul Alessi

on

October 4, 1990

JOSEPH ALESSI JR.

Joseph Alessi Jr. was born March 2, 1931 in Monaca, Pennsylvania, the son of Joseph and Sophia (Molinaro). After four years at his birth place Ahambridge, Pennsylvania, Mr. Alessi's family moved to Salem, Ohio. While residing in Salem, Mr. Alessi attended Salem city schools. He graduated from Salem High School in 1949. Following high school, Mr. Alessi enlisted in the United States Army Corps of Engineers. As a result of this, he actively participated in the Korean Conflict. Mr. Alessi was honorably discharged August 22, 1952.

Throughout his lifetime, Mr. Alessi has held several interesting jobs. In January of 1970, Mr. Alessi began employment with the city of Youngstown. Mr. Alessi currently works for the city. However, during his twenty years of employment he has held several positions. These posts include Assistant City Clerk, Housing Rehabilitation Inspector, and Safety Coordinator for the city. In his spare time, Mr. Alessi participates in many local organizations. Some of these organizations include the Mahoning Valley Civil War Round Table, New Middletown Sportsman's Club, Mahoning Valley Coin Club, and the National Association of Muzzle Loading Rifles.

Mr. Alessi has been awarded numerous awards for his active participation in local organizations and for his work. He was recognized as Top 10 Municipal Safety Officer in Ohio (1977), Coordinator for the Fort Necessity project for the Arms Museum, Outstanding Soldier of the month for all of Fort Belvoir, Virginia (November 1949), second best enlisted man of class for sixteen

weeks of Basic Training Camp at Fort Knox, Kentucky (1949), and many more.

Mr. Alessi currently resides at his home on the west side of Youngstown with his wife Patricia Ann, who he wed on September 6, 1954. Mr. Alessi has four children: Christina, Sandra Lee, Lisa Ann, and Joseph Paul. Mr. Alessi is still active, and enjoys history, wood working, outdoor activities, and various forms of collecting items.

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INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH ALESSI JR.

INTERVIEWER: Joseph Paul Alessi

SUBJECT: Salem, Army, City of Youngstown, Mahoning
Valley Colonial Brigade, Bicentennial

DATE: October 4, 1990

JPA: This is an interview with Mr. Joseph Alessi Jr. for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the American Bicentennial, by Joseph Paul Alessi, at 3857 Baymar Drive, on October 4, 1990, at 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Alessi before we talk about the Brigade, I would like to get some background information about yourself. First of all, where and when were you born and where did you grow up at?

JA: I was born March 2, 1931 in Monaca, Pennsylvania, which is just across the border from Ohio and I lived there for about two years and we moved to Ambridge, Pennsylvania. Until I was about four years old; then my family moved to Salem, Ohio. I went through school in Salem and graduated from Salem High School in 1949.

JAP: As you were growing up in your childhood and your adolescence, what were some of your interests?

JA: I had a lot of interests. I liked fishing. I liked the outdoors. I like camping. I like historical things. I like playing soldiers, as I grew up during the war years. That was done very much at that particular time in my life because I think that I was about nine years old when the war started; and I lived about four years of my life through the war years.

JPA: When you say historical things that you were interested in readings or just events that were occurring at that time?

JA: Well, current events of course. The war itself.

JAP: Which war was that?

JA: That was World War II. Then I also enjoyed reading books of the Revolutionary period, Civil War period, the very early type period of the Frontier of the United States.

JAP: Can you think of any book that stands out in your mind?

JA: Not from when I was a child I don't think, because that is just too long ago. I have read a lot of books since that time.

JAP: Through your lifetime what types of employment have you participated in?

JA: Well, out of high school we had the draft going on at that time and most of the people who were getting drafted were twenty or twenty-one years old and I didn't want to be stuck so I enlisted in the service in 1949 and I got caught up in the Korean War and I got out in August of 1952. So, my military obligation was finished and over with. From that point on I went to work in a factory for a very short period of time, just a few weeks. Then my father had a family type grocery store and I learned to cut meat and I worked in the store cutting meat at that time. Then later, after I met my wife and we got married I then got into sales so I could make more money and we had a baby at that time. I started selling housewares door to door. Following that I went into the insurance business and from the insurance business I went into investment type of a broker selling commodities and mutual funds and ran an office in Youngstown. We moved to Youngstown in October 1959. From there in 1970 then I went to work for the city and I have been employed for the City of Youngstown since that time.

JPA: What type of job do you do at the city?

JA: I am currently on the safety coordinator position. I am responsible for all of the safety of all the city employees, workers compensation, insurance benefits, training and educating them on defensive driving and just the overall phases of safety that is coordinated through all of the departments.

JPA: Did you hold any other job with the city other than this safety coordinator?

JA: Prior to that time I was the Assistant City Clerk of City Council. In 1974 or 1975 is when I became the cities first Safety Coordinator. I was laid off in 1986 and then I went into the Cities Housing Rehabilitation Division where I was in charge of disbursements of money to contractors for the work that they had done. I did that for about three and a half years and then I was called back over to the safety coordinator.

JPA: Do you enjoy your job?

JA: Yes, very much. I do like being a safety coordinator.

JPA: What do you like about it?

JA: Well, I am not stuck in an office, but I do have a certain amount of office work to do. I get out into the field and I am able meet with other co-workers and actually see to their safety. I assist them and hopefully have them learn to do the job safely so that I can instruct them so that they don't get hurt. Of course when they don't have a worker's compensation claim that saves the city and the taxpayers money as well. It is just challenging because everyday is not the same.

JPA: So, you like activities which bring new instances everyday then?

JA: Yes, because when I had the job for three years as an Assistant Housing Director, it became a very boring and mechanical job because it was the same thing day after day. The work that I had to do it was something that I did just automatically because it was the same thing all of the time.

JPA: From this how would you describe your personality?

JA: Well, I think that I am an outgoing guy. I am very amiable. I am humorous and I enjoy a good joke. I enjoy telling a good joke as well. I am pretty well organized and I get accused of that by a lot of different people because of the fact that I want everything in its place.

JPA: So, you hold some characteristics of a good military leader, would you say that?

JA: Oh, yes. I make decisions quickly and direct easily. I teach and I instruct city employees in supervision. So, I am in a sense giving orders. My sales background helps me to learn what other people desire and what they will or will not do.

JPA: You mentioned that you have a wife and children. What is your wife's name and how many children do you have and what are their names?

JA: My wife is Patricia Ann Alessi now. Her last name was Skinner and she was from Leetonia, Ohio. She was just a few miles from Salem. I met her at a dance and we got together from there. We got married in 1954 after I had gotten out of the service for a couple of years. Then we had our first baby in 1955, a girl Christina Jo Alessi. Then a six years later in 1961 we had another girl, Sandra Lee Alessi. Then in 1965 we had Lisa Ann Alessi and in 1967 we had you, Joseph Paul Alessi.

JPA: Well, was it a well deserved wait?

JA: We will pass on that one.

JPA: You said that you were involved in many things and you liked history and your likes and dislikes, what was it about military history in particular that drew your interest? Why were you interested in military history?

JA: It just seemed as though...I guess that it was the bravery or the challenge or the final job-like situation that they were in. In other words you had to do it or die in effect. They had to call all of the strength and all of the will that they had within them to really pull themselves up from bottom so to speak to go forward and do their assignment, which most people would not ordinarily do.

JPA: In military history, what figures do you have the most respect for or hold in the highest esteem?

JA: Well, I think that those on the top of my list would be those men who I would have to determine more or less as being the Frontiers or the early scouts who went forward alone and took on all of the elements and everything that there was out there-the unknown risks so to speak around every turn something knew was happening and it was unknown. They didn't know what was going to happen and to me it took a lot of bravery and courage to go ahead and not stopping. Then next in my line would probably be those men who had the courage and the where-with-all to make the decision to lead groups of men into the battle or into the unknown. For example, Lewis and Clark. They headed out to the unknown to map the wilderness and they were in charge of a crew. Lewis & Clark had to be the ones that made the decisions. The guy at the top, well it is a lonely place to be.

JPA: As you mentioned the people that you desire or don't desire that you respect the most in military history, you noted those from earlier periods, which is around

the time of the Colonial period. Now the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade that was a unit which reenacted and reproduced from that time period, why was it the Colonial era? Because of your likes and dislikes of that period?

JA: Well, that could be but in 1960 when they started the same reenactment for the Civil War period I attempted to join a local reenactment company...I had just moved here to Youngstown and here in Canfield I attempted to join a Civil War unit out of Ohio where some men had gotten together. They had a meeting and so on and I attended it, but when I got to the meeting I discovered that they were only interested in those people who could actually trace someone who was actually in the Civil War, some family member. My father didn't get to this country until 1920 and that left me out. I just didn't follow up on it from there but as the years had gone on I wished that I had followed up and found another unit because that was of interest to me as a reenactor. Then when the winds of the Bicentennial began to come along and then I thought to myself that I was going to get involved in it no matter what! I made it one of my priorities.

JPA: So, then it really wasn't a Revolution aspect of or that period aspect of the Bicentennial which intrigued you, it was just the whole historical significance of the military background?

JA: Well, you could say that but also I felt that I knew a whole lot about the Revolutionary and earlier period of America. I felt that I should be leading something like that rather than be following. Now in the Civil War I more or less felt that I would be part of a unit, but when the Revolutionary and Colonial period came along I was eager not to be just one of the rank and file; but I wanted to be actually in charge because I felt that I knew a whole lot more than a lot of other people did to be very honest with you.

JPA: So, then in a sense it was the whole idea that that period the period it was that you felt a closeness or bonding towards it that you felt that you should be a leader of it and that is why you started the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade?

JA: Yes, because...There was no doubt in my mind I knew what I wanted to do with the Brigade and the unit and everything that I wanted into it. I don't know whether I formulated in my mind beforehand or not, but it came along better than I hoped that it would.

JPA: When and where was the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade formed and how long did it last officially?

JA: Well, it started in my mind in late 1973. The first meeting was held I believe in February of 1974 and that is when it started. The meetings were in downtown Youngstown at the Mahoning County Bicentennial Commission office, which was in the meantime being formed. We were given use of that building, which had a second story office right above what is now McCCorey's and across from Strousses (now Pharmore). We had a meeting and to my complete shock and amazement when I went down to the meeting there were so many people there. I couldn't believe it. I knew some reporters from the news media and I got them to interview me and Ray Moore on television for just a few minutes about what I had in mind. I also had put an add in the paper. When we got down to the meeting place there was something like forty men and women lined up and interested in this Brigade thing. I was absolutely shocked. I was thinking in terms of like seven or eight good men. We ended up with sixty some men and about twenty-seven of what I called good men who were constantly at all of the events. It lasted and went through the end of 1976, the end of the Brigade was then; but some of us went on to the Brigade of the American Revolution unit that I formed within my Brigade. Some of those people are still in the B.A.R. today.

JPA: What was the idea behind the Brigade? Why were you doing it? Was it just a jump on the Bicentennial band wagon or to preserve and illustrate an era of history that you liked?

JA: Well, I was interested in a living history and I thought that if we could reenact as close as possible the way the men and women were during the Revolution that people could have a better understanding and enjoy the Bicentennial itself and maybe get involved a little bit more themselves. I feel certain today that because of some of the things that we have done, because we didn't start off with sixty men as in the end, we started off with about twelve or thirteen good men. Out of those first forty people that showed up of men and women we probably ended up with about eighteen men who were willing to be in Brigade itself. So, that when I started them off doing the accurate research on uniforms, and all the equipment, and everything that we used from the camping equipment right down to the buckles on the shoes. Then people had a keen interest every place that we performed. They would question us about our uniforms, about period stories about things that we could tell them, and the items that we were using like equipment. So, I am sure that they became very interested in it.

JPA: Was the idea of the Brigade solely yours or did you have campaigns in that?

JA: Well, initially it was my idea, my brain child but I had my best friend and my brother-in-law, Raymond Moore, whom we called "Butch" for his nickname. We were looking for trapping sites one late September 1973 and I didn't know how he would take this but I wanted him on this and I wanted to do this thing and so I suggested to him and said, "What would you think about starting a unit or something for the Bicentennial?" When he became very excited about the idea then I became doubly excited and it just took off from there. The two of us began to work to give and get together the organization I had in my mind.

JPA: So, you can say that you and Raymond Moore were the founding members of the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade?

JA: Unquestionably.

JPA: Now back to your first meeting, we know how you got them there and where they were at; but what did you discuss at the first meeting?

JA: Well, I told the people what I had in mind, what I wanted to do, and what I expected out of them if they were interested. I told them about what the cost would be. Now up to this point Butch and I had already made ourselves an outfit, a uniform that was not totally accurate but fairly good. So, we wore this at the meeting. In the interview that we had on television we wore the uniform. So, I told them what we wanted. I told them that there would be a cost. I told them that we wanted the ladies as part of the Brigade. We wanted to have the children as part of the Brigade. That we wanted to bring the whole family into this living history and that is what they wanted to do too.

JPA: At this first meeting did you elect officials?

JA: Well, I can't recall if it was the first or second meeting but we did have an election and they elected me as the Colonel of the Brigade since I was the one that came up with the idea and then I had made a list of officers and people that we would need and how we wanted to separate the military from the organization. We had both the Brigade as a military unit and the Brigade as an organization. So, we had presidents, vice-presidents, secretary, and treasurer of the organization but then we had the officer element of the military part of it. We kept those two separately except all of the money that the military organization earned through all of the benefits and events that they

were in went into the organization. It was used for the benefit of covering the cost of a lot of things. All of the money was earned by the military unit, paid to the organization who in turned budgeted the monies for all concerned.

JPA: What type of election process did you use to elect your officials? Popular vote, secret ballot?

JA: Well, first we asked for nominations from the floor and then we passed blank ballots around and each member voted by filling out the ballots and dropped them into a hat. A committee made the count and named the election winners.

JPA: How were you nominated?

JA: Well, I have to confess something here you already know. I was pretty sure that I knew how I wanted this Brigade to run and as I mentioned earlier I didn't really feel confident that someone else could do it as well as I could do it. So, I had Butch nominate me for the Colonel.

JPA: Well, didn't you need a second nomination?

JA: Yes, I had another friend that did that, Gary Carlisle.

JPA: So, then in a sense what you are saying then is you and your cronies got together and you said, "Butch you nominate me first and Gary you second it." Was there any words spoken by Mr. Moore or Mr. Carlisle?

JA: Well, in reality it was just pretty obvious that Butch would have nominated me so I had Gary make the nomination and I had Butch second it and I can't recall if they said any good words about me other than the fact that, "Since Joe was the one that brought us all together that I nominate him" or something to that effect.

JPA: How many meetings can you estimate or say passed before you actually did something, not an event per say but let's say a drill or a meeting?

JA: Well, we began to have meetings every two weeks. I believe that it was on the Sunday after that initial meeting. We had a lot of dedicated people. Probably it would have been about the third meeting, that would be that meeting after the election meeting. We got together all of the men and women started sewing clothes for us. The men got together and started making belts, pouches, and all of the material that we needed-I started writing letters to other organization for material and information. So by April 19th, which was

Paul Revere's Day, we had thirteen or fourteen men fully clothed with weapons, we had a drummer and a fifer, we had Frank McClennan who was a fifer, you would have to say that he was a professional fifer because he was raised at Williamsburg, Virginia and was in their Drum and Fifer Corps, or whatever it was. So, he was a professional. Frank was in his twenties. George Wedin, was a retired military man and he was a drummer in the Army. So, we had the best possible combination that you could want for that type of unit. We had the perfect music to go with it and they were both dedicated and just really helped to make us move right along and gave us that much more enthusiasm as we were marching. So, that we were fully ready to go by April 19th, our target date.

JPA: So, at these meetings you did more than just discuss topics or you know, "we are going to this event, we are going to that event." You actually did things like make clothes.

JA: The meetings themselves probably lasted fifteen minutes although we would be there three or four hours because we had a quarter master and we had it all organized. For example, we might have decided today at this meeting that next week we are going to get together and we are going to make leather pouches and we would all get together that next meeting and we were told what we might need to bring in tools and so forth. At the meetings work shop we would just set up an assembly line situation and then we just started to make things that we would need, meeting after meeting after meeting; and very often we met in between the regular Sunday meetings. The guys would get together and do it. I was constantly putting four or five days a week involving my free time after work.

JPA: So, there was a general enthusiasm for the whole Brigade by this time?

JA: Very much so. In fact it was impossible for me to do all of the research. I would assign research topics to given individuals who would show an interest in it, you know ask for volunteers, and they always came through. Like someone would have to research how to make a lantern or how do you wear your hat, what kinds of sashes did the officers wear. So, all of that type of information was researched.

JPA: Where did you acquire the majority of your research for the unit and not only that how and why did you research it? I mean obviously the people who were watching you on display they didn't know the actuality or the true nature of what sash an officer was wearing or was it something personal?

JA: We knew and we wanted it to be as historically perfect as possible, and as authentic as possible and that is why we did do the research and that is why we did follow up on it. I mean I can think of one of our men whose sister worked in Washington and she spent hours in the archives over there going through old soldiers diaries and old records of units to see what type of material they had. We actually sent to Liege, Belgium importing from the actual same mills that made the linen in Liege today as they made that same linen for the Colonial men two hundred and fifty years ago. We got our materials from the same mills. The wool was the same way, we imported it all. Uniforms were of wool, the hunting frock and shirts and pants were made of linen.

JPA: Now earlier you were mentioning that at your meetings you had sixty men but you had twenty-seven good men, did you have an attendance problem?

JA: I never had an attendance problem. The smallest number of men that showed up for any event was the very first event because that is all that we had, but I want to say one thing that when I talk about men I don't tend to discount the role of the women of the group or the children because for every man that was there there was always a women and maybe a child or two. So, when we marched into a parade (if it was a parade) the men marched down the parade ground or route first followed by the women and children the same as camp followers did in 1775. This was true for the very first event on April 19th when we marched down around downtown Youngstown during Paul Revere's Ride day anniversary. That evening of April 19, 1975 we were at Powers Auditorium to open up the program and we did a little program, and we did a little bit of a skit and the children... I don't know if you remember that you were there on the stage as well.

JPA: I remember. How was the Brigade organized and the companies, platoons, squads? How was it organized in general?

JA: Well, they say that a good leader follows and so not everybody liked all of the various uniforms. Some of them wanted to be Green Mountain boys. Some of them wanted to be scouts or frontiers men type. Some of them wanted to be in a regular uniform of the period. So, I formed companies so that these men could perform as they wanted to perform, just as I wanted to perform as I wanted to and they wanted to perform as they wanted to. This was suppose to be an enjoyable thing for all of us. So, a group of them wanted to be Green Mountain

Boys and they wanted hunting frocks to be Green just the way the men from New Hampshire and that period and era lived or acted. So, we had a company of Green Mountain boys. Then we had others who...We bought a cannon with the help of the Bicentennial Commission and got the wheels and everything for it so we had an artillery unit. We had a Maryland unit because of some of the men who liked that uniform, that color of frock. Then we had a company of some scouts men who dressed in some buckskins and we called them scouts there were only about three or four of them not enough to form a company. So, we had lieutenants in each company and we had sergeants and corporals depending on what the units were. We had captains of artillery, of quarter master, there were seconds in command and so on, we even had a couple of indians. We called ourselves a Brigade because we were combining several different type companies or units.

JPA: Could you tell me the historical background of some of these things. For example, you mentioned the Green Mountain Boys and the Maryland company, can you explain some of that?

JA: Well, the Green Mountain Boys were from the New England states and they were of a different type of nature of an individual at that time. They were mostly woodsmen who lived out, there weren't many city folks at that time. The reason that they dressed in the green is because of the forest that they lived in they wanted to be sort of a camouflauge type of thing. They were the ones that took the fort at the Fort Ticonderoga. They are the ones that took that fort from the British in the dead of the night.

The Maryland group was called the "Flying Camp." They called it a Flying Camp because they were ready and willing to move out and go to any hot spot at anytime and right on short notice. They had to do that from their experience that they had in fighting the Indians. They more or less roamed the area and when they were called out then they got there quickly and that was us. We were ready to go anywhere and we came quickly whenever you wanted us.

JPA: How was the Maryland Company dressed?

JA: They had frocks the same as the Green Mountain Boys but their frocks were purple you know and they had real bright red collars and cuffs on their frocks.

JPA: Did you have a newsletter or something to get out to these people and if you did what was it called?

JA: I thought that I had to have a newsletter in order to

keep the people informed, to keep a central theme of keeping them together with something so I called it "The Brigade Dispatch." Fortunately a gentleman by the name of John S. Probst, Jr. wanted to join the Brigade. He either owned or managed or was president of an envelope printing company and the name Church Postal Envelope Company on Southern Boulevard, and he wanted to become actively involved but he just didn't have the time required because of his work. We were getting involved in reenacting, even though that was what he wanted to do. So, he begged off from that and asked me if there was anything at all that he could do and I said, "Yes, there is." I wrote the monthly Dispatch, I would take it out handwritten to his secretary and she would retype it he would print it and mail it at no cost to the Brigade to all of the members every month. This was a very important item maintaining the Brigades cohesiveness.

A kind woman named Dorothy Fritz was kind enough to make a Brigade flag for us to tally around. It was not however truly authentic. It was the shape of the current day State of Ohio Flag. In place of the Ohio "O" were the thirteen stars. Sown letters at the top said, "Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade." Across the bottom, "Honor, Valor, Freedom." I personally designed the flag. The Brigade was proud to carry this flag.

JPA: Was the Brigade runned like a military unit and if so why did you run it that way?

JA: Well, we had a meeting like I said before and we had to run it to make it perform and do all of the things that we had to do. We had a lot of events in one year. We marched in twenty-eight parades in one year (I can't remember which year it was). That may not seem like a lot but we were there after work at night on weekends. There was one day (I can't remember which day it was) that we marched in either three or four parades in one day in different areas in different cities. So, you can imagine how we were rushing around to get here and get here and get there. So, we had to kind of keep hold or tabs on all of this. So what we did in the Women's Auxiliary, they had their own officers and they were ready and willing and did help us on anything that we wanted to do, but they had their own organization. They did a lot of things on their own. They attended a lot of events as we did, schools, churches, clubs, and organizations just to tell things from the woman's eye and to talk about the Revolution and the historical period. The children were more or less under the Women's Auxiliary department because the men took care of themselves as a military part of the organization. I mentioned earlier then we had the organization itself with a president and a vice-president and the women had

the same thing as the auxiliary and they had their own officers. I don't recall whether the ladies collected dues or not but anytime that they needed money for anything at all we would give them the money from the money that we were paid from events to help them get a lot of the things done.

JPA: You said that you went to churches, parades, reenactments, did you do anything inside the Brigade itself? For example, dances, parties, picnics?

JA: Yes, we did that pretty frequently. More so in the wintertime because we didn't have as many parades going but that is when we did a lot of the preparation for the upcoming events; but we did have picnics ourselves. We had our own winter campouts and rendezvous. We would camp at places and go out on canoe trips together. We had dances and dinners together. We got together like that. We became a very close knit family and to this day many of us are very close friends.

JPA: How did you raise money for the Brigade? Of course you had dues, but was there any other ways that you raised money such as a raffle?

JA: Yes, we did have I believe only one raffle and we raffled off a musket, but the other way that we were paid is that everyday I was getting letters or phone calls once we got started from people asking for our participation in their parades or what ever event they planned. The very first parade that we marched in was in Salem, Ohio, my hometown and to much of my amazement and happiness their committee picked our unit as the number one unit in that parade and were presented a trophy. It seemed that from that point on that we actually had to turn down people because we had so many places asking us to perform at their events. We fired our weapons a lot. It was expensive and so if they wanted us they had to pay us to be there and they did so willingly. So, we had a treasurer and he got the money and we paid for and furnished the clack powder for the men to fire their weapons. Sometimes we paid for mileage depending on how far we traveled because we went far and wide with the Brigade.

JPA: Now you say that the Brigade members were very close, often in a family you have a lot of interconflicts, you have, "Did you know that my sister did this," and that isn't right. Did you experience a lot of interconflict among the Brigade members and themselves and if so was it because of the way the you ran it or just because people just got on each others nerves?

JA: I don't know if the people got on each others nerves but there were conflicts. I wasn't like it was all

smooth sailing. I think that the biggest problem might have been the way that I ran it because most of the problems were with the women part of the Brigade, in the very beginning, until I helped the women understand it was really the men's part that most of the people were interested in and that the decision making had to be made by the men and that we were the ones that were going to make the decisions for our own units.

JPA: So, what was the biggest complaint? Were you the topic and were you part of the problem? Were you the problem in some people's viewpoint? I guess what I am asking is what was the biggest complaint and you mentioned that you helped the ladies understand, how did you do that?

JA: Well, I simply told them the way it was going to be. They felt that they should have an equal footing money wise as with the men. In other words they wanted half of the money because they said they marched in the parades as well and this was true. However, the people who called who were putting on the parades and the events were not calling for the women they were calling for the men. So, I felt that the men were there and that the women were welcomed to come along if they wished and they always did, but as far as the money dispersement was concerned that it was going to stay in the organization of the men unless the men voted otherwise. All the men whole-heartedly agreed that the money would stay in the organization of the men and that when the women needed any money to help them with any event or anything at all that we would be more than willing to come up with the money, which we did and they did.

JPA: Now I am sure that behind every strong man there is a women and since you made so many women mad was there any type of movement to remove you from your position as Colonel?

JA: Well, it was done once or twice but it failed and yes my wife Patti was in the Women's Auxiliary and I had the whole-hearted support of the great majority of men and women. There were just a very few, three or four in fact, who really didn't like the way things were being handled and no matter which way they turned as far as trying to have it changed...Even their husbands were perfectly happy with the way things were being done.

JPA: So, all in all the Brigade was a close knit group?

JA: Yes, it was.

JPA: During the Brigades existence I know that you mentioned parades and things like that, the unit was involved with many activities, what were these activities and how did they relate to the Bicentennial committee? I

know that there are so many of them and I did a little research and if you don't mind I am going to ask you about a few of these events and if you could enlighten me and tell me what the event was and your role and how it was related to the Bicentennial and the committee itself and the organization; and if it wasn't a part of it tell me if it wasn't.

The first thing, what was the Old-fashion days? In one of your newsletters, The Dispatch, that I saw there were references to the Youngstown and the Warren Old-fashion days, does that strike something in your memory?

JA: Well, that just happened to be a regular event which people just got together to themselves, no organization in effect but the general public. It would be like a festival or a fair that you would have in which you would have an Old-fashion day when everybody would just come down and just do everything that was old in nature, the Bicentennial era or period. So, the people/public could come down and just see everything that was going on in that era.

JPA: What type of events went on? Finger-weaving? Shootings?

JA: Right. There was shooting. There was weaving of the flax, wool and other period fabrics, and spinning wheels. There was candle making, soap making. There was black-smithing. There were bullets being poured from lead. There was leather work going on. Just all that type of thing that you can imagine was done in the old days. The dying of clothes with natural roots and nuts and things of that nature.

JPA: So, you did more than just dress up on a Sunday and go in a parade. You actually recreated the whole history of that era?

JA: Oh, yes. We had like with the women and the men who could do all of these things that were done back in that period of time. We had the candle-makers. We had the dye-makers. We had the women that ran the spinning wheels spinning wool. We had people that sliced down the wood from branches and made baskets, tin smiths and all sorts of trades and things like that. We had everything that you could imagine that was done at that time.

JPA: I am sure that the public was invited to these things and when they were did you have them get involved? For example, did you have them throw a tomahawk or did you have them finger-weave or work on a flag?

JA: Well, you could always tell when a person was really

interested in something. I mean they would stop. They would question you about what we're doing and so we would get them involved, and yes I taught many a person how to throw a tomahawk. They never knew that they could do so because it always looked so difficult, it's really quite simple if you know how to do it. The Brigade women along with their children would tell the old stories and keep visitors entertained while they showed their mothers how to dip the candles from the candle wax or to do a little combing of the wool and so on open fire pit. Cooking and baking were also very important things that the women did.

JPA: Now you've mentioned this topic several times, Paul Revere's Ride, what was that?

JA: Well, if you recall or have read anything about history, and I am sure that you do, that was when Paul Revere was waiting to see whether or not the British were going to come in to Boston and whether or not they were going to come by land or by sea. They put the lantern in the church steeple and then he and two other men rode their horses to warn the countryside that the British were coming and that was April 19th. When that occurred and they call it Paul Revere's Ride and really there were three different men involved in that ride. The one that got all the way through wasn't Paul Revere but he was the most famous of the three.

JPA: How did you recreate that?

JA: Well, we didn't recreate that, we marched.

JPA: Again can you highlight Paul Revere's Ride and then tell me what your role was and then how that was related to you with the committee?

JA: Well, the Bicentennial commission, which was formed in the community of Mahoning County, this was their event. They wanted to kick off their formation or what ever you want to call it on that historic date. That was their target date and we were ready by that date and so were they. They had a gentlemen who I don't know who he was, but he had his horse and he was dressed as a colonial and he did his ride up and down Federal Plaza at that time and warned us that the British were coming and there was the news media and a crowd and it was an extremely windy and cold April 19th, I can remember that.

JPA: Now, I don't know if this was an event or a group, but who or what was the Sons & Daughters of Liberty?

JA: That is the unit that you were in as a child with the Brigade. We had the men's organization which was the

Brigade itself, then we had the Women's Auxiliary, and then we had the Sons & Daughters of Liberty, who were the children. If you were fifteen years and younger you could not carry a weapon of any kind in the Brigade, but you could be in the Brigade. You could be a military type but you had to have some ability. You had to play the drum or fife or be able to do something, but like I said no weapons. So, most of the children in the Sons & Daughters of Liberty strove to get up into the Brigade because that made them a little better. So, we had a lot of eleven or twelve years old that wanted to kind of get up in there and they learned to play...Some of them learned how to play the drum and fife because of that. You were about eight years old and you and two other boys were the flag bearers for the Brigade because you could follow the commands.

JPA: So, these eleven and twelve years old males were, I suppose, flag bearers and the fife and drummers?

JA: Yes, exactly right.

JPA: What was patriot's day then? I came across it in one of the Dispatchs'.

JA: That probably was just a particular day that some community organization picked to recall the accomplishments of certain patriots of their own choice, patriots of the United States and it didn't necessarily have to be patriots from that era, but just any patriot.

JPA: What was the Spirit of 1776 Drill Team?

JA: Was that a part of our unit?

JPA: It was in your Dispatch. I think that it had reference to do with Powers Auditorium.

JA: Oh, okay. What the Spirit of 1776 was the same event of the day that I spoke about earlier about when we opened up at Powers Auditorium on April 19th in the evening of Paul Revere's Day we were trying to depict the Colonial militia, practicing on the Village Green with the families watching us. So, as the show opened the women and children were already gathered around or sitting on the floor of the stage much as a gathering crowd would do. Then the fife and drum began to play and we marched on the stage and then I put the men through some drill of different manual arms and so on. Then we fired the weapons but without powder of course because we were inside of the building. I had forgotten that we had called it "The Spirit of 1776 Drill Team."

JPA: Is there anything about that night that you can recall since you have mentioned it several times?

JA: Well, yes. Being our first day, my famous brother-in-law Butch Moore, was to carry the flag on stage but unbeknown to him there were wires going across the top for some reason or other to do with the stage setting. As he was walking on with the flag it was too high and it got caught on the wire and the flag started going backwards while we were all going forwards. That was at the practice earlier that day. So, that was corrected when we went on stage. However, I wanted to be sure that everybody was on time for the Brigade. The Bicentennial Commission office was only a block and a half away from Powers Auditorium downtown and we were finished with the afternoons Paul Revere's Ride and so then I asked everybody to be sure and be there a half hour prior to the meeting. So, I was given a key to let us in by the Bicentennial Commission with the order to be sure and lock up, which I did. I got down to the Powers Auditorium as being nervous with the first paid event on stage in front of these people. I looked around to be sure we were all ready and I noticed that our flag bearer was missing, Butch. So, before long the phone rang and here I pick up the phone and it was Butch on the other end of the line. I had locked him in the building back at the Commission office and he couldn't get out. So, I had Howard Sarver, the lieutenant of the Green Mountain Boys, I gave him the keys and we were just almost ready to go on any second and he ran up to the office, let Butch out, and the two of them ran back and they did make it in time. We had just started to march on stage when they arrived.

JPA: Were there a lot of mishaps that happened like that occasionally?

JA: Oh gee, you could write a book on just those. I mean there were just numerous situations and I am sure that the ones that I remember, other Brigade members can probably remember a thousand others combined. Things that might have happened to me, I remember the funny things that happened to other people and not always the ones that happened to me.

JPA: If you can remember what was the Loyalty Day Parade? Can you recall that one?

JA: No, see a lot of different communities would have a parade like Canfield and they wouldn't call it the Canfield Parade they would give that parade a given name you know.

JPA: Like the Loyalty Day Parade?

JA: Yes, like the Loyalty Day Parade or something like that. So, today I really couldn't remember it. There is

nothing that specific about it for me to recall.

JPA: You noted and stated earlier about your comic nature and how you were performing almost for the people, was there anything out of the ordinary that you did? For example, showmanship, did you let friends march in the parade that weren't members, or anything like that?

JA: Well, we always tried to do...Like we had an event up at YSU when they were just rebuilding the whole place and we had a little mock battle and we induced our enemy to surrender to us and we had quite a crowd there. There was probably about one hundred to two hundred and fifty people around there watching us on the green there. So, our enemy surrendered and then we put them all around the firing squad and shot them, the crowd didn't think that that was too right. So, we did things of that nature.

We had a firing squad which we performed once in a while where we would put the prisoner in the center and then we would make a circle around him and then I would give the command to fire and shoot him and when we did that all of the men who were doing the shooting would drop dead, The guy in the middle we would miss because we were in a circle and we were firing at each other is what is amounted to. We call this one the Polish Firing Squad because one of our Polish members dreamed it up.

I had a friend of mine, an old Army buddy that showed up. He is from Los Angeles, California. It just so happened that we were having a parade that day and he was of Mexican decent and a real good friend of mine and I induced him to march in the parade. He didn't have any clothing or anything and we got him clothing and he was properly attired and we made him a flag bearer and as we started marching along he started giggling, this was in Washingtonville, Ohio, and he said to me, "Joe, if my chicano friends could see me now they could never believe this."

JPA: What was your friend's name?

JA: Jack Bernal.

JPA: Other than the Polish firing squad you mentioned that you were in Salem the one time for your very first day and that you won the competition for the best unit, being from your hometown was your family there or anything?

JA: Oh, yes. The family was there, a lot of people. In fact as often happens in a parade we had to stop in one location for a few moments and I could see out of the corner of my eye an old friend of mine taking a double

look at me and he said, "Joe, Joe Alessi is that you?" That was Butch Roth. And I said, "Yes, Butch that is me."

JPA: I recall one incident that might have been another parade in Salem, but my grandmother, your mother, Sophia Alessi was there. Do you remember what you did to her?

JA: Yes, that was not the first parade it was another year, the next year's parade. My mother, my sister, and my brother-in-law were sitting with my Aunt Annie, your great Aunt Annie, were sitting on the side and I stopped the Brigade. At that time I had about twenty-five guys that day and I stopped the Brigade and gave them a left turn and then I made the announcement I said, "Gentlemen, this is my mother, my sister, and my aunt and I made them present arms and we fired the weapons and then we turned and marched away." My mother nearly jumped out of her chair when we fired our weapons, then she grumbled something about the noise.

JPA: When you went by the reviewing fans stand did you do anything certain drills or serves or anything?

JA: Yes, we did pretty much that same thing. We would stop in front of viewing fans stand and we would turn and face them, we would extend our ranks, do a couple manual of arms, and then we would end up my firing and presenting arms to them and they alwaysd enjoyed that immensely.

JPA: Was if often greeted with a loud cheering?

JA: Very, very much so. The cheers and applaudes grew louder as we passed. I guess because we represented our country's freedom fighters, it was in honor to those of the past.

JPA: You mentioned reenactments, what are they?

JA: Well, we went to some places and we were not the only unit there obviously there were other units in other cities and areas and so once we became known to other unites...Well, let's take Slippery Rock College who had a reenactment. What they did is they invited several units from all around and we went over and we had a battle reenactment and we would take on the role of either French or whatever it would be and we would do the fighting and have a mock battle, We performed at Fort Legonier, Pennsylvania and because of the way that we were dressed this was a French and Indian War period so we would fight as French militia. We were at Greenfield Village in Detroit, Henry Ford's place, the museum. We were there twice with the Brigade of the

American Revolution. I can recall others but we were at Dunkirk, New York and just all over, four different states in all.

JPA: I notice that hanging in the corner of your office it says, "Battle Aux Lac Le Bouef 1976."

JA: Le Bouef, that was about a reenactment of a battle at Fort Le Bouef which is in Waterford, Pennsylvania, just south of Erie, Pennsylvania, which was one of a string of French forts that were up there during the 1750's. That was a time when my brother-in-law Butch...We were ready to fight a mock battle there. I think that this was our second year there and he had to work that Saturday. Saturday afternoon was when the reenactment was going to take place and we were about an hour and a half from where he worked and he took his uniform to work and he got dressed immediately after work and was racing up Route 79, and a State Highway Patrolman pulled him over and he took one look at Butch and the patrol officer called another patrol officer who was on the other side of the road to come and take a look at this. They looked at him and they smiled and they said, "Where are you going?" And he told them and they said, "Well, you are going to be late for the battle so you better get going." Which is very unusual in Pennsylvania and as we were formed up and ready to begin the attack we saw the crowd from about fifty yards away down the hill spread apart and I walked Butch running up through the crowd to join us in the battle. It seemed like he was always involved in something. He was our Captain of Artillery.

JPA: What a character. What was the relocation ceremony? It has something to do with Austintown and the Log Cabin or something?

JA: Oh, okay. The Austintown Historical Society they found Austin's Cabin. They did not know that his cabin was still in existence because it had been covered over with siding and so forth and the church (I don't know which church) bought this property and this old house was on it and they were going to tear this old house down but when they removed the siding they saw the Log Cabin was underneath it and then with further investigation they found that it was Austin's first home and so they refurnished it so that it looks as it once did and so we were part of that opening of that ceremony. We camped overnight there because we had tents and so on and we camped there and did that.

JPA: Where was that located at?

JA: That was on Raccoon Road and I can't remember the name of the other road just south of Kirk Road.

JPA: Where was the dedication ceremony of Young's memorial?

JA: That was John Young...The man who founded Youngstown. So, they had a memorial downtown for him and all of the firefighters. It's in that same area which is where Colonel Hillman, who was a trader on the Mahoning River, met Youngs and his party for the first time at the now Spring Common Bridge right around there on the shore Young's party camped and Hillman was coming up the river. I think that it was to make trades with the Indians at Salt Lick, which is over bt Niles and he saw Young's and he pulled over to the riverbank and he met them and so we had a dedication at that location which was a ceremony by the Bicentennial Commission and we were part of it. Nearly every ceremony or event the Bicentennial Commission was involved in we were there. We were always available to them because they had assisted us so much in using their offices and they gave us some financial help in the beginning also. We lef the "Grand March" opening the Bicentennial Ball at Idora Park Ballroom, that was a major event fo the commission. Your mother was the chairperson for that event and it was grand!

JPA: So, you weren't really directly tied to the committee itself you were independent yet you more or less didd them favors?

JA: Well, I wouldn't say favors. I mean we were very happy to do it because we were both worjing for the same situation a memorable celebration, but oyu might say that we were part of them but we were really independ-ent since we ran our own organization making decisions for ourselves.

JPA: You mentioned earlier that you won awards and things like that, monetary awards, what types of awards did you win and how many if you can remember?

JA: Oh, I don't remember how many but we won something. We took nearly "The Best" in the parades that we were in in almost every single occasion. Only occasionally did we come in second or third, just very rarely. I can remember marching in East Liverpool and they had a pottery parade and they had a memorial and we won those parades twice in two years in a row and those were the only two years that we were there. In Salem we won twice in a row. In Youngstown, and Canfield. I can just go on and on in other places like Pennsylvania and so forth. We won just numerous awards.

JPA: Now you say the unit, and I assume that these were trophies in most cases?

JA: They were trophies yes.

JPA: Now other than the unit winning awards or decorations did the individual participants and soldiers and maybe even women and children win awards also? Personal awards?

JA: Yes, some of them did. They did it for like shooting. They did it for dress. This would be not so much at a parade or something but this would be in the reenactments that I talked about where there were many other units and so we all got to...If you wanted you got to do what you wanted to do. So, we had men who were throwing tomahawks, knives, shooting bows and arrows, firing weapons, they had contests of who could start a fire with flint the quickest you know things of that nature. The women had a lot of different cooking and baking contests of all nature. This is all done over open fires.

JPA: What type of awards did they win? Metals, Frying pans?

JA: There were metals and there were all kinds of things that you can imagine. It wasn't always money. In fact is was usually something that we could use like camp equipment or pots and pans and that type of things. The other things too that I did within the Brigade itself is we kept a strict record of everybody who participated in all of the events and since we were paid from all of the events we ear-marked a certain percentage of the money from the events to purchase things for those people who were in the events and so once you qualified you might get a big iron skillet or you might have two pounds of extra powder given to you, or you might have pewter plates and that type of things that you could actually use as part of your reenactment.

JPA: While fingering through some material on the Brigade I came across something that was given to you by the Ohio National Guard at the local unit by the quarter master corp, can you enlighten me on what that was?

JA: Yes, the commander at that time of the Ohio State National Guard wanted to start a colonial unit within the National Guard and somehow he learned about me so he contacted me to find out how he should go about doing this and what would be the best way since I have already done it and I helped him along and told him how to do it and so forth and he did. He was from Columbus and he later was so thankful, that he had in his possession from the Ohio Historical Society all the battle flags from the state of Ohio from the Civil War, and also what they did is they took all the flags off of the poles and they hung them in the Ohio Historical Society and you can see them down there today. Well,

they had all of the poles and on the tops of the poles the Halberds that they had and he presented me with one of those Civil War Halberd.

JPA: Halberd?

JA: Yes, which I still have today and which has the brass from the Civil War and he also sent me a letter along telling me the authenticity of it because of the help that I gave him.

JPA: Was there a strong community support for the Brigade from elected officials and from the populace in general or were you well recieved from the general populace or were you looked at as a bunch of "grown men trying to relive their second childhood," or were you more or less like the champion football team representing Youngstown and the valley?

JA: Well, it was both ways okay. I mean I was told a lot of different things by a lot of different people but there were some that did look upon us as players. I am proud of the fact that I told all of the Brigade men and women that if they would follow me and do a good job that someday they would be in the history books. When Howard Aley wrote the history book of Mahoning County he mentioned us in there as "The Colonial Brigade" so I didn't lie.

JPA: How did the aura of the Brigade make you feel personally? Were you like the proud father?

JA: Oh, yes definitely. I was riding high when I was leading the Brigade.

JPA: Can you tell me your personal feelings on the Brigade itself?

JA: Oh, I think that it was quite an accomplishment. I knew that it was a one time situation. I knew that it wasn't something that could live on. It was a thing of the period because the Bicentennial in general since it was being talked about and written about and movies were being shown about it, it got everybody stirred up about it. A lot of people but not everybody. When I presented the Brigade idea in front of a lot of these people they grasped hold of it because down deep they would have liked to have had something like that and they had the opportunity and so it was a very unique mending or melting of different people from different walks of life getting together to do something that they...Some of them did it for their children, some of them did it for themselves, some of them did it just for their country, some of them did it just because it was for the United States. So, we blended together and brought

all of our talents and all of our personalities together and you could never ever again duplicate that. It's there. It is over. It is done with and it was like something that I made and it is not finished. It is made and it is there and it is not gone. It still lives in my heart and mind and I know others who feel the same way.

JPA: Before I had asked you about support from the people and of course you got great rounds of applause when you were seen in public, but how about the elected officials? Did they have nothing to do with you of any significance? Did you have any contact with officials at all?

JA: We had a lot of contact with officials and the mayor of the City of Youngstown, Mayor Jack C. Hunter, was very, very helpful. They would come to the events. They would talk at the events when we wanted them to. Everybody was just behind us. As well as the news media people. We had great news media coverage wherever we went and whatever we did television or the Youngstown Vindicator wrote well of us.

JPA: I am going to give you a quote from something you wrote.

JA: I wrote?

JPA: You wrote, I believe and if you can't tell me what it is, maybe I will give you a little insight and then you can tell me what I am asking you about. "You (the Brigade) were the first memorial of the Bicentennial." Can you tell me what that is from or can't you remember?

JA: Is that what Clingan Jackson said about us?

JPA: No, it has something to do with the Articles of Incorporation on June 11, 1975. Can you tell me what that is about or don't you remember?

JA: No.

JPA: Well, maybe I can help you out a little bit here. From my readings it was something to the effect where it stated that you were conceived or recognized as the first memorial...

JA: Oh, of the Bicentennial Commission?

JPA: Right.

JA: Okay, the Bicentennial Commission...My wife Patti was a member of the Bicentennial Commission and I was also a

member but she was a chairman of part of the commission and we wanted the Brigade to become a part of it. As I mentioned earlier we were independent of them but they helped us along. So, we made ourselves available to them first. Whenever they wanted us we were there and nothing else.

JPA: I got a hold of one of you newsletters and it "was the first corporate meeting of the Brigade." Did you become a corporation?

JA: Yes, we had to...Being the safety coordinator I was concerned of any injury that might happen to any of our people. So, I wanted to have our participation insured because we were around weapons. We were around black powder and those things and so forth and I wanted to get insurance for the group, but no insurance company would insure a group because you had to be incorporated. So, Ted Roberts, he is an attorney and a friend of mine gave up his free time...Like I said there are so many people that did so much at that period of time. He gave us his free time and he incorporated the Brigade with the laws of the State of Ohio and from that we were able to get the insurance to cover us. That was paid for, of course, from the events and things that we involved ourselves in. So, we were a corporation and that is why I mentioned earlier about being separate like the military unit and then the organization where we had a president, vice-president and so forth. That was the corporate part of the thing and the military, which was the whole instigator of the whole thing was really off on the side or was a part of the corporation. The corporation was actually over the Brigade's military functions.

JPA: Did you rise and see the limits of your imagination? Did you go farther than you really thought that you would?

JA: Oh, there is no question about it. I had no idea that...Like I said with the very first meeting, I was shocked to see the number of people that were there. I had gone down there the day before and I set up about fifteen or twenty chairs. Well, there were people sitting...We couldn't even get in the hallway there people sitting in the hallway, sitting in the room. It was filled. There must have been forty or fifty people there. We were just shocked. We couldn't believe that there were that many people there.

JPA: So, it was a genuine spirit of the Bicentennial?

JA: Right, of the people and see then the events and the accomplishments and the degree and the accuracy of our equipment and dress...I went and got a reprint of

General Von Steuben's book and learned to drill and it was a real laugh the very first time that we tried to drill but before we were done we were as good as any professionals were in the military and manual of arms of that period. General Von Steuben was the man that Washington brought to Valley Forge to teach his Army proper military drill.

JPA: Can you give me an example of a couple commands?

JA: Oh, well "Shoulder Arms" and things like that "Right Face."

JPA: I mean how would you in a command voice...How did you give that command to your soldiers?

JA: Well, of course we are in a small room but I would say, "Brigade, Attention, left shoulder your firelocks." Something like that.

JPA: Now you mentioned the BAR, which is the Brigade of the American Revolution, what was your involvement and how did you get involved? I mean why did you get involved?

JA: Well, after about a month or six weeks of the organization I knew that the Brigade of the American Revolution was also dedicated to the authenticity and accuracy of that period. The same as the Civil War people are doing or did do. Major Tom Pieper, who was a history school teacher in Canton, Dover, or New Philadelphia, Ohio in that area, I can't remember exactly though. I got in touch with him and invited him over to our meeting hoping that we could induce our members to become a part of the Brigade of the American Revolution. He came to our meeting along with one other gentleman with him. Tom reenacted a British Major and he brought with him an American Sergeant. Major Pieper came on in with typical arrogant British attitude and just discouraged everybody. None of our members wanted anything to do with the B.A.R. I tried to get them to understand that he was reenacting a role the same way any of us would in a given situation. I mean, when we were in a reenactment or when people were around us we took on the role of that character that we were reenacting. We weren't to act as we are today. The troops addressed me as a Colonel and I spoke to them as a Private. When we were in ear shout of the public. We immediately took the role of those American Revolutionary War soldiers of our chosen character. That is what Tom was doing but our members wouldn't hear of it. As time went by we were invited to some B.A.R. events and eventually what I did is start a unit in the Brigade of the American Revolution called the Ohio County Militia, which was an actual unit formed in 1750's in Ohio county around Wheeling, West Virginia. I researched the history of

that unit and so on and I had ten or twelve of our men who were truly dedicated and wanted to get into the B.A.R. So we did double duty with the Mahoning Valley Colonial Brigade here and we also did it with the Brigade of the American Revolution in the form of the Ohio County Militia, for which I was in command as a Sergeant in that one.

JPA: What was the difference between your Brigade and the Brigade of the American Revolution?

JA: Well, authenticity wise none. There was no difference. Any of our people could have been in the other one either way but the strictness and the rules and regulations of the B.A.R. was not what some of our members wanted to put up with and so they chose not to get into that part of the Ohio County Militia.

JPA: You said, "the Brigade was a creation or was a brain child" of yours, obviously it was your motivation and ambition that kept it going. When did you lose interest in the Brigade and was it then that the Brigade began to die or did it start to decay sooner?

JA: Well, I don't know that I really lost interest in it, but I felt that after...See I think that it was in July 4th, of 1977 I got the feeling you know that it wasn't going to go on for a long time and so that is when I really induced the men...I felt that I knew who would want to really go on and I induced them to get into the BAR, the Ohio County Militia, and we did that. The others I just told them that I didn't want to be in charge of the M.V.C.B. any longer. I suggested that they elect another commander and that I just wanted to be one of the Privates. What happened was...It just gradually faded away. We had a few annual social gatherings after that but it really...That is what I was telling you earlier. It was a one time melting of things that occurred you know. It was a feeling that everything...We put our all into it and then I think that it just started running down and I didn't want it to run down and that is why I more or less stopped it while it still had a little bit of gleam in its eye.

JPA: So, more or less the Brigade is not officially over?

JA: Well, actually it is because Richard Jones, who is a very good friend of mine now and I met through the Brigade, is an accountant and was the treasurer of the Brigade at that time and on occasion for several years there after he kept telling me, "We have about eighty or ninety dollars in there, what are we going to do with it?" So, finally what we did do is we had Ted Roberts, I guess you would say unincorporated or something and that took a certain amount of money and so

forth and then we just gave it to him and told him to do with it what he wanted to do. It only amounted to about \$20 or something at that time, which was left over.

JPA: In the Dispatch, there is another quote that I am going to quote that was by Ray Moore, "Each man should be a walking living history of the era that we are attempting to depict." First of all, I would like you to tell me how true was this and then was this really your goal and how well do you think that you achieved that?

JA: What we did is we had through all of our research, and you have to remember that I wasn't the only one that was doing the research there were a lot of different people in the Brigade, because everybody was interested in that period and there was reading and books and we traded information and loaned information back and forth. We had friends all over the country and as I mentioned earlier about Chuck Pemberton's sister who worked in Washington, she did a great deal of research. So, we picked up information about actual individual characters, individuals like Captain Joe Mason, who was the captain in charge of the Ohio County Militia. Well, I learned all that I could about Captain Mason as I was depicting Captain Mason and I tried to read about him and study about him so that I would be as he was and each individual in the Brigade, most all of the individuals picked a character or an individual a real life person of that period and tried to learn all they could about that person and took on the aura of that individual to reenact it in his honor. I came later to find out that Captain Joe Mason was the guy that was beheaded. He was the one that was in charge of the caves and the bandits down there on the Mississippi River and he was the one that was beheaded by his own men, but he was quite a hero in that period that he was in command of the Ohio County Militia.

JPA: So, you would say then that you did well?

JA: I think that we did very well. The public enjoyed it immensely.

JPA: Was that why you were there? For the public or for yourself?

JA: I was there really for myself to begin with but then after awhile when I found that there were....You know I wasn't the only nut so to speak, but there were other people that were really keenly interested in this and you could tell that they had an interest in it. It wasn't just a passing interest. I mean when we were at events or camp outs people would come by and they would actually sit and talk with you for a half hour or forty

minutes and just discuss things of that period and trade information because they had some information too. We picked up a lot of new members from those type of situations. In fact one of my very, very good friends Don Brown, came from such an event.

JPA: If you had to do it all over again would you?

JA: Definitely.

JPA: Why?

JA: Because I think that it put a flavor to the local area Bicentennial that would not have been there without the Brigade, and as far as the individuals who participated in it I think...Well, like yourself a lot of the young children that I meet every now and then remember those times with a lot of love. They bring out situations and it makes me laugh when they still call me the Colonel when they see me. They say, "Hey, Colonel" when they see me.

JPA: Do you wish that it never would have ended?

JA: Oh, I don't know. Never is along time they say. I think that we all have to go on to new things and I don't think that it is something that could be continued in the same vein for a long period of time, because I think maybe something of that nature would get old to the individual that is doing it and he would lose something from it. Where as if you could leave it when it is still going in your heart and mind then you can carry it with you., but if it dies while you are doing it then it is dead.

JPA: So, then the Brigade still lives on then in its members?

JA: I believe that it does and I know that it does because when I see them that is the first topic that they want to talk about, those good old Brigade days.

JPA: I guess this would be the conclusion of this interview unless you have anything else to add, but what would you say to sum up the Brigade?

JA: What was it all about?

JPA: To you what is the Brigade?

JA: It is a memory of a piece of my life that was very enjoyable. I met a lot of new people. I still have a lot of good friends from that time and I think that we brought a lot of joy and happiness to others as well, to our children and our own families. I think that it

gave a closer tieing to the family members. We were together. We did things together continuously at a very important time in not only the children's lives but the parents lives and the members recall those times and remember those with fondness of the things that we have accomplished not only with their own family but with others as well.

JPA: Do you have anything else to add?

JA: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to recall and share an enjoyable piece of my life.

JPA: Well, thank you very much and I appreciate the interview.

JA: You are welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW