

# U.S.S. Marblehead (CL-12)



E J Alford, US Navy.  
circa 1940's  
Photo courtesy of E.J.'s cousin  
Cherie

## Marblehead Biography

### E. J. Alford

E. J. Alford was born on 15 JUL 1918 in El Centro, CA to Thomas Zachary Alford (b. 15 NOV 1886), an ice puller and later a butter maker at a creamery in California, who originally from Patrick, McLennan County, TX, and Lillian 'Lily' Mae Bickley (b. 26 AUG 1895), a homemaker, also from Texas. E. J. was the 3<sup>rd</sup>-born of three children, and the first in the family not born in Texas. His siblings were Aaron Leon (1913-1976) and Adron Odon (1915–1997).

Researching E. J. was especially difficult because he stuck steadfastly to the use of only his initials in every document he ever signed, from his WWII draft registration card signed in 1938, to his marriage certificate in 1944, to his social security documents, and the muster rolls of the ships upon which he served. This fact was specifically noted by recorders of some of the records he left behind. The search was further compounded by his low profile in the press and another higher-profile Alford who used the initials 'J. E.' Also, that Alford is a common surname did not help (about 38,000 Alford's in the U.S. alone today). In the end, his daughter Darlene explained it as follows: "Since he was named after his paternal grandmother Elvira Josephine, he always insisted he was E only, J only. Having a name like that was the source of many phone calls from teachers and other officials demanding to know his real name!"



Marby at full speed.  
Photo courtesy of USSMarblehead.com

E. J. grew up in El Centro, California. His parents eventually separated and later remarried - his dad to Luella Alford and his mother to Jay Patchin. Around 1938, something drew E. J. to Florida, where his military history began when he filled out a selective service (draft) registration form that year, probably just after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At the time, he was unemployed and temporarily resident in Miami, Florida, about half a mile from the shore of Biscayne Bay. Eventually he returned to California, where his dad lived. He enlisted on 8 SEP 1939 at San Diego, CA and was assigned service #3812871.

By 15 MAR 1940, E. J. had made [Seaman](#) 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (S2c) and was received from [USS Boise CL-47](#) for transfer to Asiatic Station (i.e., [Manila, Philippines](#)). By 27 MAR 1940, he was received aboard veteran transport [USS Henderson AP-1](#), sailing from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor, [Territory of Hawaii](#). On 1 MAY 1940 at [Shanghai, China](#), E. J. transferred to [USS Augusta CA-31](#).

On 9 NOV 1940, in Manila, Philippines, E.J was received aboard the light cruiser, [USS Marblehead CL-12](#), affectionately referred to by her crew as "Marby". Marby ended 1940 in nearby Cavite. By then, E. J. was a S1c.

E.J. would serve 3 ½ years on *Marby*. The events of this period, which include the bombing of the ship on 4 FEB 1942, its subsequent escape to New York, and its wartime exploits in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, which E.J. was party to, are more fully described in [Marby's own biography](#).

In mid-44, in the run up to Operation Dragoon, the invasion of Southern France, E. J. transferred from Marby to Receiving Station, Washington, DC on 2 JUL 1944 for further forwarding to the Naval Training School (GM&EH) at the Navy Yard there. Between July and NOV 1944, in addition to the Naval Training School, E. J. was very likely transferred to the detachment outfitting the Haskell-class attack transport [USS New Kent \(APA 217\)](#) at the Naval Supply Depot in Oakland, CA. Also, during this time E. J. got married.

first met Canadian-turned-Floridian Gloria Gertrude Angus at a USO club in Miami, probably in 1938 when he used her father's address on the draft registration form he signed that year. She was the daughter

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Gloria kept busy while E.J. was gone

flowers and wedding gowns for Miami brides.



E.J.'s bride, Gloria Gertrude Angus.

Photo courtesy of The Miami News and Newspapers.com

There she engaged in amphibious and air-submarine training exercises until 29 MAY when she sailed for San Francisco and then Seattle arriving 6 JUN. At [Puget Sound Navy Yard](#), Bremerton, WA where she underwent overhaul until 26 JUN when she loaded general cargo and troops at Seattle and departed for Honolulu. She sailed for San Francisco on 5 JUL with 300 Japanese prisoners of war and US Army and Navy personnel, arriving on 11 JUL. While in San Francisco, her berthing compartments were enlarged to accommodate more troops.



Gloria and E. J. with oldest daughter Dee Dee, circa 1951

Photo courtesy of E.J.'s cousin Cherie; details courtesy of E.J.'s daughter Darlene

of Victor M. Angus (1903-1989) and Faith Amelia Evers (1903-1976), owners of the Orchid Flower Shop on NW 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Miami, and both originally from Toronto, Ontario, Canada. E. J. and Gloria married on 17 SEP 1944 in Holy Comforter Church in Miami.

Following the honeymoon, E. J. was officially received aboard the USS New Kent on the day of her commissioning on 22 NOV 1944. Gloria stayed in Miami, apparently working with her parents as she gets several credits in news articles assisting with



E.J. writing Gloria, circa 1940

Source: E.J.'s cousin Cherie

E. J. and the New Kent remained in the San Francisco Bay area until 8 DEC 1944 when she proceeded to San Pedro and later San Diego where she completed a shakedown period and engaged in amphibious training. On 20 JAN 1945, New Kent left San Diego with the replacements for the [4th Marine Aircraft Wing](#) and cargo destined for [Majuro](#) and [Eniwetok](#) in the Marshall Islands via Pearl Harbor. While underway, her escort, the [USS Edenton PC-825](#) rammed New Kent amidships, sustained severe damage and returned to Pearl Harbor. New Kent proceeded to Majuro arriving on 6 FEB and leaving the next day for Kwajalein. On 13 FEB, she arrived at [Guadalcanal](#) and from then until 15 MAR, she engaged in combat loading troops and equipment of the 3rd Battalion, 1st Regiment, 1st Marine Division and in exercises in preparation for the [invasion of Okinawa](#).

On 15 MAR 45 New Kent departed Guadalcanal, stopped briefly at [Ulithi](#), and arrived off the western beaches of Okinawa on the morning of 1 APR 45. Landing her troops that afternoon, she sent a beach party ashore the next day and remained in the transport area, subject to frequent enemy air attack, until 7 APR when she departed for Guam and then Pearl Harbor, arriving on 23 APR.



USS New Kent in Houghton, WA Jun 45; E.J. is aboard

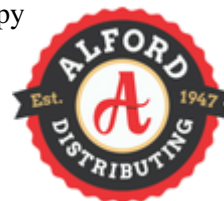
Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.com

Japan accepted the Allied terms of surrender on [15 AUG 45](#). E. J. and his shipmates got the good news while at sea from San Francisco via Eniwetok and [Ulithi](#) to [San Pedro Bay, Leyte](#) where they arrived on 17 AUG 1945. Depositing troops at various locations on Luzon, New Kent arrived in Manila on 25 AUG and proceeded to Subic Bay on 29 AUG returning the same day. On 7 SEP 1945, E. J., still a GM1c, left the New Kent for the nearest receiving station on west coast of US for further transfer to separation activities for discharge from USN. His Navy days complete, E. J. headed home to Gloria in Florida. At



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least one residential directory in Miami indicated that he worked as a newspaper copy man for the Miami Daily News. Later he joined the American Automobile Association where he worked for more than 25 years, retiring in 1979, just prior to his death. E.J.'s brother Aaron founded Alford Distributing Inc. in El Centro in 1947, and the business was continued by his son Jon Richard 'Rich' Alford upon Aaron's death on 5 JUN 1976 in El Centro. E. J.'s other brother, Adron, also died there on 8 JAN 1997.



Gloria and E. J. on engagement night, probably at the Miami USO Club.  
Photo courtesy of their daughter Darlene

E. J.'s dad, Thomas Zachary, passed away on 21 JUN 1976 in Banning, Riverside, CA. His mom 'Lily' died on 17 DEC 1979 in El Centro, CA.

Gloria's mom, Faith Amelia, died on 8 OCT 1976 in Boynton Beach, Palm Beach, FL. Her dad, Victor, died on 21 MAR 1989 in Ocoee, Orange County, FL.

E. J. died on 28 APR 1980 in Miami, Dade County, FL. Gloria followed twenty-one years later 24 FEB 2001 in Marco Island, Collier County, FL. They raised two daughters, Dee Dee (b. 1949) and Darlene (b. 1953), and a son, Kenneth (b. 1959).



E.J. and Gloria circa 1972  
Photo courtesy of E.J.'s daughter, Darlene

E. J. Alford is listed on page 234 of the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey.](#)

*Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with contributions from E. J. and Gloria's daughter Darlene and cousin Cherie, a multitude of Ancestry.com, Wikipedia.com, Newspapers.com, and other Internet records.*

*Corrections, additions and photos are welcomed by email to [spwade@gmail.com](mailto:spwade@gmail.com).*