

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



Floherly's impression of tailor Joe DeLude inspecting his work.  
Source: John J. Floherly, Jr. Illustrator, *Where Away*

## Marblehead Biography Joseph Florimond Delude

Joseph Florimond DeLude was born 5 OCT 1905. He was the 2<sup>nd</sup>-born of five children. His siblings were Donald L. (1903–1982), Beatrice (1912–1983), Alice Rosemary (1916–2005), and Donat Paul (1920–1992).

The 1910 U.S. Census gives Joe's birthplace as Connecticut, probably in Windham, Willimantic Ward, where that census was taken in Joe's fourth year. Joe's dad, Julian Amede (1881–1974) was born also in Connecticut, but all of Joe's grandparents and his mom, Amanda Coté (1880–1969), were of French-Canadian birth. Amanda was from the tiny town of Lanoraie, Quebec, on the St. Lawrence River, 70 miles northeast of Montreal and 400 miles north of Windham. The couple had married on 2 Oct 1902 in Windham.

The same census listed Amanda as a homemaker and Julian as a twister in a cotton mill, probably the plant of American Thread Company, which was then the signature industry in Willimantic town three miles west of Windham. Julian indicated that he was working for that company when he filled out his WWI draft registration card in the 1918. His 1942 WWII draft registration card showed him and Amanda living at 463 East Street, New Britain, CT, about 40 miles west of Willimantic and he was employed by Grindley Machine Company. New Britain would remain the family home for some time and Joe would list it as his shore-based residential address until he left the Navy in the mid-1940s.

Joe appears in the first sentence of the 1944 book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#) which chronicles the early-WWII exploits of American light cruiser, [USS Marblehead CL-12](#) or *Marby* as she was affectionately referred to by her crew. Described as “broad of rump and well-upholstered around the middle” and “childless and wife-less”, Joe had recently had his 36<sup>th</sup> birthday when the story begins in late-NOV 1941. By that time, he was perhaps the longest-serving member of the ship's crew, having joined *Marby* in 1924.

It is unclear which schools Joe attended or when he first enlisted in the Navy, but his service # was 2067911 and several of the WWII muster rolls indicate that he joined *Marby* on 10 SEP 1924. Based on that date, Joe would serve 19 years aboard the ship. His time aboard included *Marby's* bombing off Java's north coast, her subsequent 90-day, 20589-mile escape to New York, and her overhaul in Brooklyn which are described in [Marby's own biography](#). The following paragraphs provide a glimpse of the trials Joe faced after the bombing began.

*When the bombs began hitting Marby on 4 FEB 1942, Joe was a member of standby repair party manning Central Station, the headquarters and central direction point for coordinating damage control. The officer in charge was 26-year-old Frank Blasdel. The early strikes threw Blasdel and his men into the air, and when they came back down, the phones were out, water was pouring from the voice tube that led to the I.C., and the gyro-compass had jumped its gimbals, its internal balance-wheel, turning at 9,000 revolutions a minute and, posing imminent danger of breaking free and wreaking havoc in the room. Heat emanating from the overhead (ceiling) above also told Blasdel that fires were raging above. He knew he had to get his men out – fast!*

*Water was already knee deep in Central Station when Blasdel went to reconnoiter escape options. On the deck above, he crawled as far he could through the smoke, but found every path out blocked by fire. He returned to his men and their only remaining option for escape - the cable-and-voice-tube-cluttered hollow leg of the ship's tripod mainmast, the lower end of which began in the ceiling of Central Station. “It was a 40-foot climb up to the first outlet.” It would be a tight fit, but he judged that most of the men could make it. Joe DeLude was the only question mark. Joe's waist*

## To DeLude family members

If you can share a photo of Joseph Florimond Delude please do so by email to [spwade@gmail.com](mailto:spwade@gmail.com)

Source: TBD

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was bigger than the circular entry hole. Dodging that issue, Blasdel simply said, “We’ll leave in order of size. The smallest man first.”

Once boosted to the fist rung, the first man squirmed his way up “like a large ant in a cluttered drinking straw”. Blasdel, who went third, had to push the man above him up because that man was too tall to bend his knees enough to reach each successive rung. Finally, now standing waist deep in rising water, only Joe remained.

He piled furniture beneath the opening and climbed up to the opening. He exhaled and held his arms straight up and jammed against his ears. All alone with no one to help, Joe calmed his fears, summoned “illogically great strength”, and used “small, ingenious and calculated wiggles” to inch (all 480 of them) his way up the only path to survival. Eventually, he freed himself from “steel entombment” and “wormed his bruised and battered body out of the manhole that led to the signal bridge.” “Once more he was free and alive” although “when he looked about him at the burning, almost sunken Marblehead, and the Japanese planes overhead, he wondered if he had much chance of staying that way beyond the next quarter hour.”<sup>1</sup>



Tailor Joe DeLude escaping rising waters aboard *Marby*, 4 FEB 1942

Source: John J. Floherty, Jr.  
Illustrator, *Where Away*

Earlier, sometime during his stay aboard in the second half of the 1930s, Joe had befriended a Saint Louis-born shipmate named John Wohlschlaeger (see [John Wohlschlaeger's biography](#)). Eventually, Joe thought highly enough of John to show him a photo of his younger sister, Alice, who lived with their parents in New Britain. This act launched the ship's best-known love story, an *affaire par la poste* that would go on for years until *Marby* reached New York on 4 MAY 1945 and the thousands of miles of ocean that had separated the lovers were reduced to a mere hundred miles of American road and rail. A New Britain wedding took place on 7 JUL 1942. Alice was almost 26 and John was 28. The union would last until his death 37 years later.

On 15 OCT 1942, Joe shipped out on the newly modernized, post-overhaul *Marby* as she headed south for new wartime duties hunting Nazi U-boats and blockage runners in the mid-Atlantic. She would operate from Recife, Brazil, and it was in that humid coastal town that Joe transferred to the U.S. Naval Hospital at nearby Knox Field for medical treatment on 21 FEB 1943. His ailment remains unclear, but he never returned to *Marby* and no subsequent records for him have yet been found in the muster rolls of other ships or shore-based duty stations. One of the few military records for Joe located on the Internet showed that he was released from the Navy on 31 OCT 1947. His place of discharge was not specified.

Joe had been included in the 1940s' residential directories of New Britain, CT, right up through 1946, as he used his parents' residence as his shore-based address. But the 1946 entry was different. In parentheses following his name, it also included the name of a woman, “Jessie”, who apparently had become his wife. It was also mentioned that they had “rem [removed] to New York” that year. One might then assume that Joe finally married in late-1945 or early-1946, and in anticipation of his retirement, the couple moved to New York, perhaps to Jessie's home town of Sag Harbor or maybe straight to 37 Sherrill Road in East Hampton, just seven miles from Sag Harbor, where 22 years later, in 1968, an intruder posing as a mailman invaded the house and beat and robbed Jessie, then 60, while “her husband Joseph was at work”. She recovered.

Several records suggest that Joe's bride was Jessie Dysken, 39 when they married, who was born on 12 OCT 1907 in Sag Harbor, Suffolk, NY, to Michael Dysken (1875–?), a watch case maker, and homemaker Elizabeth “Bessie” Valancius (1875–1930), of Lithuanian and Polish roots, respectively, both of whom had

<sup>1</sup> Paraphrased from multiple pages of [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).



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immigrated to the U.S. from Russia in the late-1880s. Jessie was the 4<sup>th</sup>-born of ten children. Her siblings were: Sophia 'Sophie' M (1901–1993), Michael Jr 1903–1990), Frank (1905–1906), Jessie A (1907–2000), Mary D (1909–1997), Anastasia A (1912–?), Eva (1913–1974), Adam Charles (1915–1991), Joseph (1918–1943) and William James (1920–1993).

Jessie's brother, Joseph, was serving as a seaman aboard light cruiser *USS Helena (CL-50)* when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 DEC 1941 and sparked WWII in the Pacific. He and his ship survived that battle, but he was not so lucky on 6 JUL 1943 when three Japanese torpedoes sank *Helena* in the Battle of Kula Gulf, Solomon Islands, six hundred miles east of Papua New Guinea. He was 25 when he died.

Joe DeLude would never meet his future brother-in-law, but you can read more about Joseph Dysken, his ship, and what his family had to say about him in the following 2018 [article](#) by Stephen J. Kotz of The Sag Harbor Express.

Joe DeLude died on 20 APR 1989 at the same Sherill Road, East Hampton address mentioned above. Jessie passed away on 23 MAR 2000 in Sag Harbor. Records of where they are buried could not be located nor could their obituaries or any indication that they ever had children, though it is doubtful that they did.

Where Away authors mentioned Joe's thrifty behavior several times in the book, and he no doubt would have gotten a kick out of the fact that, at the time of this writing, on-line real estate firm Zillow estimated Joe and Jessie's former property to be worth \$2.7 million.



Alice DeLude's brother  
Joseph Dysken, USN  
Source: The Sag Harbor Express

Joseph Florimond Delude is mentioned on pages 3, 4, 16, 27, 126-127, 145-147, 174-175 and 238 of the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

Also, don't forget to read [Marby's own biography](#).

*Biography by Steve Wade, son of Frank V. Wade, BM2c, USS Marblehead 1939-1945, with contributions from Ancestry.com, Newspapers.com, and other Internet records.*

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