

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



John Joseph Wohlschlaeger  
Source: S. Boester

## Marblehead Biography John Joseph Wohlschlaeger

John Joseph Wohlschlaeger was born on 10 MAR 1914 in the originally French Carondelet section of St. Louis, MO. His parents were Michael Aloysius Wohlschlaeger (1877–1945), 36, a compositor (typesetter) and later printer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and Theresa Katherine Zettwoch (1879–1943), a 34-year old homemaker. Both parents were of German heritage.

John was the 6<sup>th</sup>-born of 8 siblings: Marianna Lucille (1900–2001), Paulina (1903–1996), Michael Aloysius Jr (1906–1984), Eleanor A. (1909–1938), Amadee Lee (1911–2014), Theresa Katherine (1916–2013), and Joseph A. (1918–1956). The family was quite active at St Boniface Catholic Church in St Louis, and at the state and national levels of the church. Marianna and Lucile became nuns. Eleanor died on 29 Jan 1938 of a cerebral hemorrhage just short of 29 years of age. She was single and living with her parents at the time. Michael Jr. became an engineer for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Joseph, an honor roll student through all four years at South Side Catholic High School, was awarded a full scholarship to the University of Dayton where he studied civil engineering and edited the university's yearbook. He was chief engineer for a Chicago real estate firm when he died suddenly of a heart ailment at age 36.



The Wohlschlaegers in 1917 with 7 of their 8 children. John on his dad's lap; Joseph A was born in 1918.

It is unclear what John did after graduating in the Class of 1931 at St. Louis' McBride High School, but as his 1936 letter to the editor of his local newspaper suggested (see right), he was bright, proactive and forward-thinking. His naval career would reflect these qualities as well.

John enlisted in the Navy in St. Louis on 12 AUG 1935. Assigned service #3368412, he went to boot camp at the Great Lakes Naval Training School near Chicago. He joined the [USS Marblehead CL-12](#) on 8 APR 1936, two years before the ship was reassigned from the Pacific Fleet to the Asiatic Fleet. He likely joined *Marby*, as the ship was referred to by her crew, on the U.S. West Coast or in Hawaii.

By the time WWII hit the Pacific, John had been aboard *Marby* nearly six years and the then 18-year old ship was nearly obsolete compared to Japanese ships of its class. However, her leadership and the training and discipline of her crew were superb as the Japanese and the rest of the world would soon learn (see [Marby's own biography](#)).

At some point during those pre-war days, John befriended the ship's tailor, Joe Delude (see [Delude's biography](#)), a thrifty "Old Salt" from Connecticut who had been with the ship since 1924. Eventually, Joe showed John a photo of his sister and thus launched the ship's best-known romance. That long-distance affair began to manifest itself more openly shortly after *Marby* and the rest of the Asiatic Fleet had dispersed from the Philippines in anticipation of Japanese hostilities. At a court martial proceeding aboard ship, prosecutor Ensign Bracken, "*lost patience with the bumbling of the usually efficient court reporter, John Wohlschlaeger.*" Wohlschlaeger, "*...ordinarily the captain's yeoman, was ... in love. It was not with any living, breathing girl that he'd ever seen ...but with a little pile of letters and a photograph. ...There really was a girl back in New England ... but John had never seen her. She was, as a matter of fact, Joe DeLude's little sister.*" Perhaps this budding romance would blossom into something special, but first, a war had to start, bombs had to fall, and a crippled cruiser had to be saved.

### John's 17 Oct 1936 letter to the editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

#### The National Defense.

To the Editor of the Post-Dispatch:

**T**O reduce or even think of abolishing our present national forces is folly. The present European situation, added to the clouds in the Far East, prevents this nation from doing any other than increasing the army, navy and air forces. Not long ago, a report of the British Admiralty stated that the United States air force was far superior to England's. Also, that Uncle Sam would soon rule the waves with his new construction plans. When Japan, Italy, France, Russia and all other nations of the world realize the fact that this country is superior to any other in national defense, then, and then alone, will this country be free from invasion, but also from any interference in its foreign affairs.

JOHN J. WOHLSCHLAEGER.

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

John's stay aboard *Marby* encompassed the ship's bombing and her improbable 90-day, 20589-mile journey to New York. As with all the parents of the sailors aboard *Marby*, throughout that long voyage, John's family thought he was dead or in captivity until he called them with the good news the day after the ship made New York. No doubt Alice received a call from him too.

The exigencies of war often accelerate promotions, and this was true on *Marby*. Court martial distractions aside, John clearly made good impressions on *Marby*'s senior officers. On 14 MAY 1942, nine days after the ship arrived in Brooklyn, he was appointed Warrant Officer retroactive to 19 MAR 1942. From that point onward, he no longer appeared in muster rolls on the *Marby* or other ships. Hence, in the absence of his military records, it is unclear when he left the *Marby* and on which vessels he may have served thereafter.



Alice and John tie the knot in New Britain, Source: S. Boester

Making the most of his stay in Brooklyn, however, John finally met Alice Rosemary DeLude (1916–2005) and they married on 7 JUL 1942 in New Britain, CT, Alice's family's place of residence. She was almost 26 and he was 28. The marriage lasted until John's death 37 years later.

John continued to rise in the ranks of the Navy, and but as mentioned earlier, it is unclear which ships and other duty stations he was assigned to. However, the following is known about the rest of his life:

- On 15 DEC 1943, John's mother Theresa, then 64, died in St. Louis of a cerebral hemorrhage.
- On 15 MAR 1944, he was commissioned an Ensign, the initial rank for commissioned officers.
- On 1 SEP 1945, John advanced to Lieutenant Junior Grade (Lt Jg).
- On 1 DEC 1945, John's father, Michael, passed away in St. Louis at the age of 68.
- On 1 JUL 1950, John was promoted to Lieutenant in the Navy's Supply Corps.
- On 1 DEC 1954, John rose to Lieutenant Commander in the Navy's Supply Corps. (Note: John's obituary states that after WWII, he attended Tufts College. A John Wohlschlaeger is listed on the Tufts tennis team in 1954).
- On 23 NOV 1956, John's brother Joseph died in Wilmette, Cook County, IL at the age of 47. John lived in Norfolk, VA at the time.
- John retired from the Navy as a LCDR in Nov 1962 after 27 years of service. He was 48. It is unclear whether he ever worked again and, if so, in what capacity.

John died on 22 MAR 1979 in Largo, Florida. He was 65 years old. Alice, who had become an avid golfer in Florida, died on 5 FEB 2005 in Manchester, CT. Both are buried at Serenity Gardens Memorial Park, Largo, Pinellas County, FL. Neither of their obituaries suggested that they had any children.

John Joseph Wohlschlaeger appears on pages 65, 81, 197, 214, 228 and 247 of the book [Where Away – A Modern Odyssey](#).

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 member Susan Boester and 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).*