WWII Memoirs of Joseph John Miceli

I was at Yankee Stadium watching the Giants play football on December 7th, 1941 when they made an announcement over the loud speaker that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and we were at war. They announced, "Colonel Donovan head of OSS report to your headquarters." The crowd went quiet but the game went on. I wanted to enlist in the Navy right away. I didn't want to be drafted into the Army.

I signed up for the Navy in June of 1942 and I left on October 21 at the age of nineteen. To placate my mother, I first tried to enlist in the Coast Guard, which entailed a trip to New York that I'll never forget. I took my place in a very long line of men standing inside a dark hallway waiting to be examined. When I got to the doctor he said, "Open your mouth…you've got cavities - Goodbye." So I then enlisted in the Navy, which is what I wanted to do. The reason I didn't leave until October was because my mother insisted on me waiting until Nikki, my older sister, had her baby. My nephew, Tommy Martin, was born in September.

I boarded the train in my home town of New London, Connecticut, bound for New Haven, where I was sworn in, and then got back on the train with all the other recruits, passing through New London and arrived in Newport, Rhode Island for three weeks of Basic Training. I didn't know anyone else there.

What I remember most were the physical and dental exams that were done before anything. I had my teeth fixed at the dentist after the Coast Guard rejection so I passed the dental exam, but a boy named Mitch was told he had sixteen cavities and four teeth to be pulled. His dental work was done right then and there – no time to even contemplate how awful it would be. Poor kid came back to the barracks crying that night. I felt sorry for him - he was a nice kid.

To find out what we were best suited for, we took aptitude tests and my first preference was Aviation Machinist Mate, then Motor Machinist Mate, which is what I became. So I was Apprentice Seaman Number 6427125. Basic training consisted of marching, firing guns, fighting fires, taking a swimming test, tying knots and rowing a boat - basic seamanship. We got up to revelry at 5:30 a.m., went out for exercise calisthenics and running and then had breakfast. Afterward we'd have classes such as military discipline, etc. I really enjoyed meeting new people because I had rarely traveled away from home outside of my class trip to the World's Fair in New York City and the Giants game on December 7. After three weeks of training, they shipped me out to Diesel Engine School in Richmond, Virginia, really pushing us through. By contrast, two years later, my younger brother's basic training was three months long.

At Diesel School, I thought I was going to get to work on engines, but all we got was theory instruction. Much to my disappointment, I never held a wrench in my hand the whole time. I also found out how devious some of the guys were. Rather than get up and go for calisthenics they would hide under the building and come out in time for breakfast.

Even though I grew up during the Great Depression, it was also the first time I witnessed real

poverty in Richmond where we were allowed to go on liberty. We saw many poor people sitting on their steps in small, one room shacks. Going to Richmond, however, was a big treat for me, having southern fried chicken in the basket with fries and honey dipped rolls. I had grown up in a traditional Sicilian home, eating Sicilian cuisine, so eating out was a luxury and I was not exposed to a variety of American foods. Besides my high school graduation, it was the only time I'd ever dined in a restaurant. After we ate we would go roller-skating.

We came out of Diesel school two months later as Firemen First Class. I was prepared to maintain diesel engines on a Higgins boat for the U.S. Navy. Higgins boats were a landing craft used in amphibious landings. Their design was based on boats made for operating in swamps and marshes.

Then we got shipped out to the USS Harry Lee at Norfolk, Virginia, the largest base on the east coast, so massive that we had to take a bus down to the pier. It was enormously busy twenty-four hours a day - guns, materials, troops getting ready to be shipped to Europe. We drove up to a brand new ship and I got pretty excited, but it was not mine…mine was the older ship on the other side of the pier.

We went aboard ship and were assigned to "D" division - all engineers for landing boats. The USS Harry Lee was a passenger ship built in 1932, converted to an attack transport (APA-10). So many attack transport ships were built during WWII that the numbers later in the war went up at least to APA-365. We commenced practicing landing in Chesapeake Bay where I had a frigid and memorable experience.

We had left the ship at midnight for a practice landing on the beach. After we dropped the troops off, we were returning to the ship at daybreak. We were told to tie up back aft and come aboard for breakfast. We were tied up about three landing craft boats behind, and I was jumping from one boat to another. It was in February and due to the icy conditions, I slipped and fell into the water but I had one hand on the Jacob's ladder and I pulled myself up to the ship. By the time I got to the top, I was literally covered with a sheet of ice.

To illustrate how inexperienced we were, one boat was picked up by a civilian tugboat. The motor had conked out and they didn't have any tools or any experience to fix it. Because of the salt water, they later changed to diesel engines from gasoline, because diesel is much more reliable than gas. I was in charge of the emergency diesel engine for the ship's auxiliary power, which was a very finicky engine. We didn't know it at the time, but we were being prepared to make the landing in Sicily.

On June 8, 1943, we left Norfolk and passed through the Straight of Gibraltar on June 21st. We had no idea where we were headed when we left. We arrived in Oran, North Africa on June 22nd. We were told to not eat anything in Oran because of the unsanitary conditions, but I couldn't resist. I got a salad with delicious tomatoes, vinegar dressing and bread and luckily did not get sick. We left Oran on July 5th.

We arrived for the Invasion of Sicily on July 10 and delivered our troops on shore in Scoglitti, Sicily, which was the first action the United States, took against Europe with ground soldiers at the Invasion of Sicily. There were over 100 ships, with 1,500 soldiers aboard, and we had 17 landing craft. I was the engineer on one of the bigger landing crafts, which carried 55 soldiers.

The procedure was to bring the landing craft along side of the ship and the soldiers climbed down a net into the craft where we proceeded to the beach in a single line. In the meantime, the Germans were bombing us with their German Stuka dive-bombers, which were the best and most precise dive-bomber of World War II. They were equipped with a screaming siren that sounded during a dive intending to psychologically intimidate the enemy. The following link will show you a picture of the Stuka and you can hear the wail of its' siren: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZZ504TGDpE. The Stuka was very slow, though making it an easy target for anti-aircraft ships. I saw at least six Stukas shot down that day. The Germans were flying so low that our ship got hit by one of the other U.S. ships that were firing at the German planes. The only man wounded on our ship that day was my shipmate "Dead Eye" Smyrll, who suffered a minor injury when he was hit by a piece of shrapnel from one of our own anti-aircraft ships.

We took the guys in to shore, dropped the ramp and they ran up the beach. Then we went back for another load of men and then we brought the supplies. There was a storm and we lost many landing craft, including our own. We had been towing boats off of the beach and because of the waves; the ropes wrapped around our propeller and killed the engines. We floated sideways and broached on the beach, as a result. Because of this, we were ordered to dig a foxhole and take cover in it for the duration of the night, as it was too dangerous for them to come in for us. A major called out to us to watch out for land mines when we dug. So I spent the first night on the beach in Sicily where I picked up some Italian bullets for a souvenir that I still have today (see picture and description of shadow box). The only time I was ever hit by anything in WWII was in Sicily when an American jeep went over a land mine and the pieces of the tire landed in the foxhole and struck me. Volunteers were solicited to stay and salvage boats, but Chief Colombo discouraged me and I'm glad he did. As it turned out, the men who stayed were dive bombed by the Germans and we had to sink our salvaged landing craft. Sicily was my first war experience. We left Sicily on the 12th of July and arrived back in Oran on the 16th.

On July 23rd we departed Oran, arriving in the Brooklyn New York Navy Yard for maintenance on August 3rd. The Chief Petty Officer liked me and took me under his wing and wanted to teach me a lot of things, but I was afraid the other guys resented it, so I didn't cooperate and ended up being like "Beetle Bailey," given the lousy jobs. When we got there I got a five-day leave and I went home for the first time.

We left Norfolk on August 24, 1943 headed for San Francisco, by way of the Panama Canal, an amazing experience, arriving on September 10th. We had to stay overnight because traversal of the canal was prohibited at night for security purposes. It took a long time because we had to zigzag to avoid submarines. After loading up with soldiers and materials we headed for Honolulu on September 26th. We left on the 29th again not knowing our destination and arrived in Wellington,

New Zealand on October 12th, without escort. Our mission was to pick up Marines to go to Tarawa, part of the Gilbert Islands.

We had liberty and a grand time in Wellington, riding horses. My horse did what he wanted and I was just hanging on for dear life, almost getting run over by a trolley car when the horse stopped dead on the tracks. The bell went, "Ding, Ding, Ding," and the horse just stood there. The trolley stopped and I finally was able to pull the horse off the tracks. We ate steak and eggs for 50 cents. Milk was 10 cents a quart; cookies 20 cents a pound. It was a beautiful harbor ringed by mountains all around it.

We left New Zealand and arrived at the New Hebrides on November 7, 1943. We left there for the invasion of Tarawa, which occurred on November 20, 1943. This was my first landing in the Pacific Theatre and it was a difficult landing because the tide was low and there was sharp coral preventing the landing craft from dropping the soldiers at the beach. Instead, they had disembarked into the water and walked to the beach. There was a lot of opposition from the 4,700 Japanese soldiers.

Almost all of the Japanese soldiers were killed in Tarawa. It was very bloody and I vividly remember the sight and stench of American and Japanese bodies floating in the water. It was here that I had my first look at a Japanese soldier up close. The marines brought six prisoners aboard our craft and told us to bring them back to the flagship for interrogation. The Japanese soldiers were stripped naked to prevent them from hiding grenades on their bodies, which was a common tactic they used. I later learned that only thirteen Japanese soldiers survived this battle, which begs the question, were these six among them? We brought them to the flagship and I saw that they were wrapping America dead marines in flags and buying then at sea.

For seven days we stayed in Tarawa where we had to spend our time in the landing craft because the ship would leave at dusk to avoid enemy submarines and "Washing Machine Charlie" air attacks. Washing Machine Charlie was what we called the Imperial Japanese aircraft because of the distinctive sound of their engines during nocturnal flights. I was dirty so on one of the runs between ship and shore, I took off my clothes and tied them to a line and threw them overboard to wash. Unfortunately, the line came undone and we were unable to return to our ship so I spent the next five days in my skivvies. Because I had no clothing to protect me, my skin had darkened from the hot sun and my hair turned from brown to red. When I finally was able to climb aboard our ship they had a muster to see who was missing and they didn't recognize me.

While we were at sea, we had different assignments to stand watch, gun watches, and to make fresh water. The ship was twice as long as a football field and weighed 10,000 tons. Some of the places we had to stand watch were scary, dark and eerie at night and sometimes you would see a rat. My friend Slim fell asleep one night while we were on gun watch, on the 20 mm gun platform where Ensign Spargo caught him. Slim, instead of being worried about being put on report, said, "You little S.O.B. - if you ever sneak up on me again, I'll throw you overboard." The ensign did not put Slim on report.

We headed back to Pearl Harbor and arrived December 7, 1943, exactly two years after the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was in Hawaii that I ate my first Chinese food. I didn't know what I was ordering and they gave me something with a rooster's head on top! I paid for it, left it there and left. It wasn't until forty years after that I dared to try Chinese food again.
At Pearl Harbor we loaded up to go to the Marshall Islands. We left Honolulu January 22, 1944 and we arrived at Kwajalein, Marshall Islands on January 31st for the invasion, which took place from January 31st to February 3rd. This was one of the stepping-stones of the plan to go across the Pacific to Japan creating airstrips closer and closer to Japan.

This landing was uneventful because the battleships and the air strikes had preceded us successfully. The enemy was not waiting for us on the beaches as we unloaded our ships. What stands out in my mind about that landing is seeing one tank that fell into a shell hole in the water when it drove off the landing craft. The four men inside the tank perished. What our crew did to avoid that from occurring again was to leash three landing craft together to spread the weight of the tank and thus we were able to be above the coral, avoid shell holes, and bring the tank ashore. Upon completion of unloading, we left Kwajalein on February 5, 1944.

We arrived at Funafuti in the Ellice Islands on February 9, 1944 and we departed on February 19th and arrived in Nouméa, the capital of New Caledonia, a French possession, on February 24th. This was out of the war zone and we had rest and relaxation there. It was very beautiful with a thriving town on the harbor. We went swimming, had baseball games, and the drinkers caroused. They would come back so drunk that we had to lift them aboard ship in a cargo net.

We left Nouméa on March 8th and arrived at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on March 11, 1944. The Americans, in a very gruesome battle, had already captured this island. The Battle of Guadalcanal had taken place from August 1942 to February 1943 between the Allied Forces and the Empire of Japan. We left bay there on March 27th and arrived at Empress Augusta Bougainvillea on March 28th.

I realized later that we were doing a lot of zigzagging to confuse the enemy. We left that same day and arrived at Milne Bay, New Guinea on March 31st, (well after the Battle of Milne Bay from August 25, 1942 to September 7, 1942) then departing on April 4th and arrived in Buna, New Guinea on April 5th. We left New Guinea on April 15th and arrived at Finchhaven, New Guinea on April 16th, leaving on April 19th, moving again up the coast and arrived for the invasion of Aitape, New Guinea on April 23rd. The Japanese had occupied Aitape and built an airfield near the coast. American and Allied forces undertook an amphibious landing at Aitape on northern coast of Papua New Guinea.

This landing too was uneventful, the least hazardous of them all. The Japanese had taken off again - a game of cat and mouse. We unloaded, left the Army soldiers there, and went back up to Buna on April 28th. We left Buna that same day and arrived at Saidor, New Guinea on April 29, 1944 where the allied amphibious Landing at Saidor had occurred on January 2nd. We left Saidor on May 1st and arrived back at Aitape on May 3rd and we left there that same day continuing to zigzag up and down the coast of New Guinea.

During the month of May 1944, we left Buna and went to the New Hebrides then Guadalcanal, where we stayed until June when we arrived back in Kwajelinn. We left there on June 12th, 1944 and arrived off of Saipan in the Marianna Islands on June 16, 1944. The Battle of *Saipan* was a battle of the Pacific campaign, fought on the island of Saipan in the Mariana Islands from June 15 through July 9, 1944. The intent was for the U.S. Forces to attack simultaneously Saipan, Guam, and Tinian in the Mariannes Group. (July 21 — August 10, 1944 The Battle of Tinian occurred between July 24 and August 1. The Japanese opposition on Saipan was so great that this plan had to be abandoned. This battle was one of the worst in the Pacific. The USS Harry Lee was a backup force and we circled off the coast of Saipan for ten days waiting to see what would happen.

During that time, we used up all of our food supplies and we ended up eating New Zealand Mutton for breakfast, lunch, and supper. It was fatty and bad and we had it cooked, fried, baked, broiled…you name it. When victory was assured on Saipan, we were forced to return to re-supply the ships at Eniwetok, Marshall Islands. That was June 30, 1944.

After re-supplying the ship, we left for Guam on July 7, 1944 for another invasion, arriving July 21st. Known as the Second Battle of Guam occurring between July 21st and August 10th, this was the third invasion where I actually was in the line of fire. In landing, beside the enemy gunfire, we encountered coral reefs, and we were unable to get up close to the beach. We were forced to drop the Marines off in deep water up to their necks and they had to wade into shore. The coral also tore up the bottom of our boats and when we returned to our ship, we were taking on water, and were forced to make emergency repairs. The bottoms of the crafts, the gashes in the steel, were welded and we went back out again with the 55gallon gasoline drums, which the Marines had to float ashore because of the coral.

This battle, along with Iwo Jima (which occurs later) and Tarawa (my first), was one of the most heavily defended by the enemy and consequently one of the most dangerous for me. As we headed for the beach with our load of 55 marines, in line with the other 150 landing craft from the 17 attack transports, the force of the enemy's machine guns and mortar was so heavy that we shielded ourselves behind the coxain's enclosure. It was the only protection available. The Marines were in the well of the boat. I saw one mortar hit the water, then another. The third landed right inside the control boat, which was about one hundred feet from us, blowing it up and killing all of the men aboard.

One of the things that I observed in this war is that fear affects men in many different ways and you just can't predict who is going to succumb and who will endure. I remember one time when the Japanese were bombing our ship. I watched helplessly from my post as the sailor who ran the soda fountain hit the deck and tried to claw his way through the metal for shelter.

Four days later on July 25th, we left for Pearl Harbor arriving on August 7, 1944. We left Pearl Harbor on August 10th, and arrived back in the States on August 18, 1944 at San Piedro, California, the Long Beach Naval Shipyard, for ship overhaul and sailor's leave. I went home to the east coast by train, which took five days each way, leaving me a total of only four days in New

London. During this leave, my friend Corky married his sweetheart, Jackie. It had been 18 months since I had seen my family and, of course, they were happy to see me.

On October 15, 1944, we left San Piedro, California and arrive at Port Hueneme, California, above Venice, and loaded up there with food, ammunition, and supplies. We also loaded 600 black men who were a labor battalion. There were 15 million people who served in the Armed Forces for World War II - hard to visualize. We left there on October 21st, two years after I had joined the Navy. We crossed the International Date Line on November 1st through 3rd, 1944. I turned 22 years of age that month. We also crossed the equator going south on November 8th.

We arrived at Manus Island in the Admiralty Group on November 9, 1944. Manus was where a series of battles in the New Guinea campaign was fought from February to May of 1944. On November 10th we left there and went to Hollandia on November 11 where a landing had already taken place in April. We were again leapfrogging from island to island. The crew was in the dark as to what or why or where we were going.

We arrived in the Schouten Island Group in Indonesia on the 13th of November. We left on the 19th, arrived back at Manus on the 21st, staying until the 24th and arrived in Bougainville on the 26th. This is where we left off the Labor Battalion troops. During this time, I got a terrible case of lice, the product of living in close, cramped quarters. I went to the sick bay and got Campho Phenique, which did not kill the lice. I had it on every inch of my body except my head. It was so hot and I itched like crazy - everyone avoided me like the plague. Finally a chief said, "The only way you're going to get rid of it is to wash yourself in Diesel oil!" so I bathed with it and it burned, but it did the job.

We left Bougainvillea on December 15, 1944 and arrived at Lae in New Guinea on the 17th. Left there on the 19th and arrived in Admiralties, Manus Island on the 21st. For Christmas and other holidays, we had nice meals - turkey and all the fixings.

We left there on December 31, 1944 and arrived for the Invasion of the Island of Luzon in the Philippines on January 9, 1945. The Invasion of Lingayen Gulf had begun on January 6 by allied forces. This is where, on Lingayen Gulf, General MacArthur landed up the beach from us and made his famous speech, "I Have Returned." This landing was uneventful too because the Japanese forces had withdrawn and retreated into the jungle. However, we did have difficulty unloading the soldiers due to the high surf, which drove our landing craft up on the beach. We were left high and dry waiting for each wave to come in so we could inch ourselves back off the beach. This is where I earned my First Class rating, Motor Machinist Mate 1/C. What happened was the coxain failed to get the boat off. My efforts to keep the engine heat exchangers clear of sand by running down to the engine room and changing the strainers, enabled us to keep the engines running and not clogged, allowing me to patiently maneuver the boat off the beach.

We left Lingayen Gulf on January 11, 1945 and arrive at Leyte Islands in the Philippines on January 14th, after the battles in the Fall of 1944 where more than 100,000 American soldiers fought in the invasion by General Macarthur, which was the beginning of the end for the Japanese.

That was where I had running boat duty, which was to take officers ashore or to the flagship where they would have their operations meetings. It was here, while we were standing by waiting for our ship's officers, that we decided to cool off and take a swim. The guys on the ship hollered, "Shark!" We thought they were just trying to scare us because they were envious and then we saw the fin! We got out quickly, unharmed! Also, during that same day, we saw a P-47 Lightening plane, the only two engine fighter plane we had, doing beautiful loops in the sky. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, we saw it fall and crash tragically into the sea.

We left Leyte on January 19th and went to Ulithi, Caroline Islands and arrived on January 23rd. The whole fleet was there in that lagoon - battleships, aircraft carriers, destroyers, transports, and supply ships from the U.S., with all the hardships. I do remember some pleasures. One was when we were there we furnished our landing craft to carry suppliers to the ships that didn't have them. So four of us would go in our boat over to the supply ship from the U.S. and pick up fresh food. They would say, "Did you eat yet?" So we would go aboard and eat a beautiful meal compared to our normal fare. Then we would deliver supplies to the destroyers. Someone suggested we put a few goodies under our deck board for ourselves. Then we would deliver the food. They also invited us to come aboard and eat, which we would. And after we returned to our ship and were hoisted aboard, we snuck up to our boats in the evening and enjoyed our stash. I can remember I ate at least a dozen delicious oranges - a highlight of being in the boat crew. Each rating; boiler tender, firemen, seamen, yeomen, laundry workers, boat crews, radar men, etc. had its little perks.

We left Ulithi on February 6, 1945 and arrived in Guam on February 8th, the Marianna Islands and we loaded up with Marines for the invasion of Iwo Jima. Iwo Jima was a volcanic island where the famous picture was taken of the Marines raising the American flag at the summit of Mt. Suribachi. We left Guam on February 17 for what was to be my worst experience of the war. We arrived at Iwo Jima on February 21st where we remained until the 7th of March. It was pretty bad the whole time. We were in about the third wave to hit the beach. There were at least twenty transports, all loaded with Marines, I estimate 25,000, hit the beach. Over 6,000 Americans were killed and the Japanese lost over 25,000 men. When we hit the beach, the swift slope of that mountain made a landing and footing difficult and we took water on every time we dropped the ramp. On each return trip to the ship we would bring back wounded. We had over 600 wounded Marines aboard. Our two doctors aboard the ship were operating continuously during our entire time there. There were arms and legs that had been amputated thrown in the passage way from out of the operating room.

During this period we made many landings with supplies and ammunition, returning to the ship at sunset. On one occasion, we didn't beat the darkness and were unable to return to the ship. During that night, we ran into difficulties when one of our boat crew of four stepped on a fuel line, disabling one of the engines. To make a repair, I was going to go aboard an LST, which was beached and was unloading supplies. We were tied up to it and I was about to go aboard when it was hit by enemy mortar and set afire. We were ordered to cast off so we went from there to an oil tanker that was in the area. There I was able to get a fitting to repair the fuel line. Also during this time at Iwo Jima, we went in once with a load of ammunition and there was no one on the beach with a bulldozer to help us unload, so our boat crew had to unload it by ourselves with shooting

going on around us.

On another trip to the beach, we had this 25-ton bulldozer to take ashore. When we dropped the ramp, we discover the bulldozer blade was too wide to get through the ramp opening. So we were forced to return it to the ship to have the blade taken off and then bring the bulldozer ashore.

Talk about fireworks, before we had landed, the sky was lit up with explosions from the ships and planes bombarding the island trying to soften up the enemy defenses prior to the invasion. But the Japanese had honeycombed the island creating tunnels and were safe below ground.

We departed on March 7, 1945 and arrived in Saipan on March 10th where our boat crews transported the wounded. I didn't know it then, but that was to be my last battle. From this time until July 19th, we again crisscrossed between the Philippines and New Guinea and had another rest and relaxation time in California. On the island of Leyte, we saw a USO show, the musical Oklahoma.

We returned to San Francisco on August 8, 1945 for overhaul. During this period, the U.S. dropped the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. I was in San Francisco on V-J Day, amidst its' huge celebration. The people were rioting in the streets overturning trolley cars and throwing trash out of windows. That was the first and only time I ever got drunk in my life to this day. We bought a bottle of Three Feathers Whiskey and I ended up in a hotel passed out while my more experienced buddies continued to celebrate.

The next day we sailed for Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands, leaving San Francisco on August 24, 1945 and arriving on September 1st. Then we were shuffling back and forth between New Guinea and Leyte in the Philippine Islands.

On October 4, 1945, we loaded up in Luzon with a unit of the First Calvary Division of the U.S. Army, 1.500 soldiers, sailing toward Yokohama, Japan. During this time a typhoon hit (Louise) and caught us off guard. We were in a convoy and our bigger ship could survive the 30 – 35 foot waves and 90 mph winds, but the smaller ships, destroyers were capsized and I believe the sailors perished. I later learned that 12 ships and craft were sunk, 222 grounded, and 32 severely damaged.

We arrived there on October 12, 1945, the first ship to arrive in Tokyo Bay for the occupation of Japan. The first Calvary Division erected a big billboard which said, 'First Calvary Division, First in Manila and First in Tokyo aboard the USS Harry Lee.' I have a picture of this.

While we were there, we were given liberty at 12:00 noon and told to be back at 6:00. I was back on the ship by 3:00. The city was a mass of bombed out ruins and burned tin shacks. There were no people around that I saw. We were offered a Japanese rifle that had the bolt action removed as a souvenir. A few days later, on October 17th, we sailed for home, landing in San Francisco on November 4, 1945 as part of the "Golden Carpet Fleet" - being home soldiers who had accumulated enough points for discharge.

So ending my war experience on the USS Harry Lee. It turns out that aboard that ship we were among the first U.S. ships to land in Europe at Sicily, the first to land in Manila, as well as the first to arrive for the occupation of Japan. So my experience encompasses three and a half years of the four years in a period and in both the Europe and Asiatic Theatres.

When we arrived back in the States, I had enough points to discharge. I was offered a promotion to Chief Petty Officer if I would stay, but I opted to go home. I left for New York and was discharged from Lido Beach, Long Island on New Year's Eve 1946.

One week after I was home, my previous employer, Coca-Cola, called me and I went back to work driving a Coca-Cola delivery truck, just as before the war. I didn't join the 52-20 Club, a Government program which gave veterans $20 a week for a year if they didn't have a job. As always, I wanted to be doing something. I did, as many others, experience depression for at least a year after. Many evenings, instead of going out, I would lie on my bed and stare at the ceiling, trying to make sense of it all.

The Manager of Coca-Cola, Mr. Hoffner, had a pretty daughter, who was Valedictorian of her high school class. She had a short time crush on me and she encouraged me to go to college. Because of her encouragement, I did. Soon after in January of 1947, while I was delivering coke at the Fort Trumbull branch of the University of Connecticut, I stopped in at the Administration Building. I took the entrance exam and was admitted.

I started college that semester, majoring in Industrial Management. The GI bill had afforded me the opportunity to change the course of my life from a blue-collar worker to what turned out to be a career as an engineer at a defense plant that built submarines.

Appendix A - Joseph John Miceli Memorabilia Descriptions

Newspaper clipping from the New London Day newspaper about my enlistment
Lame Duck Discharge Button for the Navy reserve.
Honorable Discharge Button from the Navy - Navy Dec. 31 1945
Lame duck discharge patch – Navy and **Lame duck discharge patch** - Navy Reserve
Rating badge - 1944 Petty Officer 1st class, worn on the left arm.
Golden Shellback certificate - The Imperial Domain of the Golden Dragon is a certificate and an identity given to sailors crossing latitude 000 at the 180th meridian, which I did in 1943. In the ceremony I had laid on the deck wind scoop canvas tunnels that were used to bring air into the cargo holes. People being initiated, like me, had to crawl through them while the previous shellbacks paddled us with wooden paddles.
Domain of Neptune Rex Cards - Cards for my Oct. 1943 crossing of the equator and back.
Bracelet that a girl back home, Ruth Strout, gave me to remember her when I went off to war. I had a picture of Ruth in a towel that I put it in my locker like a pinup poster and all guys would look at it. I never saw her again.
Watch that I wore all through the war.
Japanese Military Pin – from a Japanese Soldier in Tarawa.
American Marine Pin - from a marine lapel at Tarawa.
Italian bullets – From the night I slept in a foxhole in Sicily - found them on the beach.
American 45 caliper bullet that I picked up somewhere. I never had to shoot my standard issue 45. Our guns kept disappearing after each invasion, so by the third landing, we were only issued a knife for protection.
Hawaii charm – souvenir when I was in Pearl Harbor
Amphibious Forces Shoulder Patch
My Dog Tags - Each officer and enlisted man of the Navy and Naval Reserve were issued an identification tag" made of Monel metal, 1.25 by 1.5 inches, but perforated at each end. The face of each tag was to bear the individual's name; officer rank or enlisted service number; blood type; if vaccinated for tetanus, the letter "T" with date in numerals (e.g., 8/40); and service (USN, USMC, USNR, USMCR). A right index fingerprint was etched on the reverse. The use of a second tag, individually suspended by a short length of chain so that one tag could be removed "on death or capture, leaving the other in place." Dimensions of the second tag remained the same, but the tag was to be of "corrosion-resisting material" - 17 percent chromed steel. (Monel metal was no longer specified), perforated at each end, and the etched fingerprint was omitted. Markings consisted of name; officer file number, or enlisted service number; blood type; date of tetanus inoculation; service; and religion, if desired by the service member: Catholic (C), Protestant (P), or "Hebrew" (H). When a service member was buried, ashore or at sea, one tag was to be left with the body and the other sent to BuPers "as soon as practicable under the circumstances."
Black Book – opened to the day we landed in Iwo Jima. I carried this book all through the war and recorded every departure and arrival date.
Picture of the USS Harry Lee – My boat: was a Harry Lee-class attack transport that saw service with the US Navy during World War II. She served in the Pacific War, as well as in North Atlantic Ocean operations, and safely returned home post-war with seven battle stars to her credit. She was the only ship in her class.

Authorization card for the ship for the medals earned (from left to right):
1. **American Theater Ribbon** - For service during World War II within the American Theater of Operations, awarded to any member of the Armed Forces who served in the American Theater of Operations during the period from December 7, 1941 to March 2, 1946 or was awarded a combat decoration while in combat against the enemy. The medal is a circular bronze disc showing a Navy cruiser, a B-24 bomber and a sinking enemy submarine above three waves. Shown in the background are some buildings representing the United States. Above is the raised inscription, "AMERICAN CAMPAIGN." The reverse of the medal shows an American eagle standing on a rock. On the left of the eagle are the raised inscribed dates, "1941-1945" and on the right, "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA."
2. **European-African Ribbon** (1 bronze star) Awarded for at least 30 days of consecutive (60 days nonconsecutive) service within the European Theater of Operations between December 7, 1941 and November 8, 1945 (lesser periods qualify if individual was in actual combat against the enemy during this period). The front of the bronze medal shows a Landing Ship, Tank (LST) unloading troops while under fire with an airplane overhead. The reverse has the American eagle, symbol of power, standing on a rock, symbol of stability, with the inscription, "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" and dates, "1941-1945."
3. **Asiatic-Pacific Theater Ribbon** (1 silver star, 1 bronze star) Awarded to members of the U.S. Armed Forces for at least 30 consecutive (60 nonconsecutive) days service (less if in combat) within the Asiatic-Pacific Theater between December 7, 1941 and March 2, 1946. The front of the medal shows a palm tree amidst troops with an aircraft overhead and an aircraft carrier, battleship and submarine in the background. The reverse has the American eagle, symbolizing power, on a rock, symbolizing stability, with the inscription, "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" on the eagle's back.
4. **Philippine Independence Ribbon** – To recognize those members of the military who had participated in multiple Philippine military operations. Service member must have previously received both the Philippine Defense Medal and the Philippine Liberation Medal to be eligible. The Philippine Independence Medal was originally awarded as a ribbon, and it was not until 1968 that a full-sized medal was authorized by President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. The medal is a circular gold disc with a female figure in the center, dressed in native garb and holding the Philippine flag. There are flags on either side of the figure and she is surrounded by a circular border. Inside the border is a raised inscription, "PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE" (in English) around the top and July 4, 1946 at the bottom. The reverse contains the inscription, "GRANTED PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" set in six lines (also in English).
5. **Victory Ribbon** - The front of the medal depicts the Liberty figure resting her right foot on a war god's helmet with the hilt of a broken sword in her right hand and the broken blade in her left hand. The reverse contains the words, "FREEDOM FROM FEAR AND WANT, FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND RELIGION, and UNITED STATES OF AMERICA 1941-1945." The red center stripe of the ribbon is symbolic of Mars, the God of War, representing both courage and fortitude. The twin rainbow stripes, suggested by the World War I Victory Medal, allude to the peach following a storm. A narrow white stripe separates the center red stripe from each rainbow pattern on both sides of the ribbon. The World War II Victory Medal provides deserving recognition to all of America's veterans who served during World War II.

6. **Good Conduct Ribbon -** The medal is awarded to enlisted personnel of the United States Navy and Naval Reserve (active duty) for creditable, above average professional performance, military behavior, leadership, military appearance and adaptability based on good conduct and faithful service for three-year periods of continuous active service. The Navy Good Conduct Medal is a circular bronze disc with a raised anchor and anchor chain circling a depiction of the U.S.S. Constitution and the words, "CONSTITUTION and UNITED STATES NAVY." The reverse side of the medal has the raised inscription, "FIDELITY - ZEAL - OBEDIENCE" around the border with space provided in the center to stamp the recipient's name.

7. Philippino Liberation Ribbon - Awarded to any service member, of both Philippine and allied militaries, who participated in the liberation of the Philippine Islands and must have served in the Philippines for at least thirty days during the eligible time period, or must have participated in one of the following actions: Participation in the initial landing operation of Leyte and adjoining islands from October 7 to October 20, 1944; or Participation in any engagement against hostile Japanese forces during the Philippine Liberation Campaign of October 17, 1944 to September 2, 1945. Personnel who are awarded the medal for participation in the abovementioned operations are authorized a service star to the Philippine Liberation Medal. The medal is gold with a Philippine sword; point up, superimposed over a white native shield having three gold stars at the top and the word, "LIBERTY" below. Below are vertical stripes of blue, white and red enamel with the sword being in the center of the white stripe. At the sides of the medal and below the shield are gold arched wings. The reverse of the medal has the raised inscription, "FOR THE LIBERATION OF THE PHILIPPINES" set in four lines (all inscriptions are in English).