

Joseph Vasta

Aviation Machinist's Mate Petty Officer Third Class
United States Navy
Korean War

Joseph Vasta was born in Floral Park, New York in 1932 and was an only child. His family moved to Woodhaven, Queens, New York. Joe quit high school at 16 and held various jobs working on Wall Street until enlisting in the U.S. Navy in September of 1951. He attended



recruit training in Bainbridge Maryland and was selected for sonar training but he wanted to learn a trade he could use later on and elected aircraft maintenance. He reported to Naval Air Station Jacksonville for basic airman school and then Naval Air Station Memphis to be rated as an Aviation Machinist's Mate. His first duty station was with Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron in San Diego at Naval Air Station North Island where

he learned to overhaul aircraft engines. The Sundowners of Fighter Squadron One Eleven (VF-111) was in need of sailors as they were preparing to deploy to Korea. Joe volunteered and was assigned to the line division for duties as Plane Captain for the Grumman F9F Panther jet fighter. After months of pre-deployment training, the squadron embarked on USS Boxer, an aircraft carrier. The carrier and squadron was stationed off North Korea and participated in combat operations with Task Force 77. The catapults were not powerful enough for the fully loaded Panthers to takeoff so Joe and the Squadron transferred to USS Lake Champlain to continue operations. Once a truce was signed and operations diminished, the squadron was

transferred back to USS Boxer and eventually returned San Diego and Naval Air Station Miramar. The squadron was reassigned to Naval Air Station Alameda in San Francisco and



started training again for another deployment to Korea. Joe and the squadron deployed on USS Wasp to the Korean War zone and continued patrols. As tensions built up in China, Joe was assigned additional duty at an airbase near Tokyo to help with security of the U-2 Spy Plane.

Under emergency tasking, USS

Wasp was ordered to assist in the evacuation of the Dachen Islands in Operation Fallback during the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. Tens of thousands of civilians and servicemen of the Republic of China were evacuated and relocated to the Island of Formosa, now Taiwan. The squadron returned to NAS Alameda where Joe separated from active duty at Naval Station Treasure Island in September of 1955 as a Petty Officer Third Class (E-4). He remained in the Naval Reserves until 1959. Joe's awards include the Good Conduct Medal, United Nations Medal, Korean Service Medal with bronze star, National Defense Service Medal and Korean Presidential Unit Citation Medal. Upon separation from active duty, Joe return to Woodhaven NY and he married his high school girlfriend, Joanne Leopold. They had two children, Donald and Diane. Joe returned to work in Manhattan and attended night school at Pace College where he earned a degree in accounting and business management. He specialized in tax accounting and retired from General Telephone and Electric (GTE) in Stamford after 28 years as Director of State Taxes. Joe still lives in Stamford and is a life member of Springdale Post 9617, Veterans of Foreign Wars, where he has served as Adjutant and Officer of the Day.