



Robert S. Zemcik, Army; Staff Sergeant

Zemcik served his country in World War II from 1944 to 1948. He enlisted first in the United States Merchant Marines (November 3, 1944 at age 18) when he received his 1st draft notice. Zemcik went to boot camp at Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, N.Y. In basic training he took many tests for placement aboard ship. Approximately December 10, 1944 Zemcik graduated from basic training and was one of three men called out of their platoon of sailors and sent to Gallups Island, Boston, Massachusetts for Radio School.

Zemcik trained to be a Morse Code Radio Officer aboard a merchant ship. The island was seven miles out in Boston Harbor past U.S. submarines and nets that protected U.S. harbors and the small island like this one, which had heavy coastal guns defending Boston Harbor too.

Zemcik and the others reached the island only by a ferry boat, all summer and winter. He spent seven months there before graduating as a commissioned warrant officer radio operator. Zemcik was sent to Seattle, Washington to board the ship S.S. Chelsea Victory in August, which was being loaded with Army war supplies for all the islands the U.S. had invaded. The ship sailed out to the Pacific alone at night, with no lights and no convoy. Zemcik stated:

The only fear was being torpedoed or struck by a Japanese bomber.

Troop transports and cargo supply ships were also targets both in Europe and Pacific. That trip took eight months before returning to San Francisco, California.

Zemcik received his honorable service union book, his pay check and left for home in Detroit, Michigan where he was born.

For personal reasons Zemcik never went back to being a sailor.

In August 1946 Zemcik received his 2nd Draft notice. He enlisted at once in the U.S. Army as a Buck Private. He took basic in Fort Sheraton, Illinois and Fort Dix, New Jersey. Then he was shipped out to Camp Stoneman, Oakland, California. He boarded the troop ship 'Admiral, William L. Capps'. The ship sailed to South Korea 6,000 miles away with 5,000 men aboard. They landed at Inchon and were trucked at night to Fort on the 38th parallel in Chunchon, South Korea to become Army occupation for 12 months. Zemcik received his rank fast to Staff Sergeant due to experience in the Merchant Marines.

Zemcik:

My officer/radio school kept me out of the major part of the battles and war. One of the lucky ones.

*Like Seaman Daniel A. Kelly said –
'Thank God for Uncle Harry'*

He had to make a horrible decision to be the first nation to drop an atomic bomb, two actually, before Japan gave up.

The invasion of Japan was planned for November 1945. Japan surrendered September 2, 1945. No news ever reached sailors or soldiers during time of war quickly. But when it did there was much celebration of life not death and Home. Zemcik returned with 5,000 troops on the troop ship 'General H.B. Freeman' on December 24, 1947. He received his honorable discharge on January 8, 1948 from U.S. Army at Camp Stoneman, California. Zemcik took the train back to Detroit, Michigan where a party awaited him at home.

Upon settling back home in 1948 Zemcik started working for his Father's business. He went to college taking night courses and in 1950 met his future wife, Eleanor. They married May 3, 1952 and had three daughters, one son, nine grandchildren and nine great grandchildren – all well and happy.