

## Foreword to “The Flying, Fighting Weathermen of Patrol Wing Four”

By Michael Carrigan

The first chapter of this book begins with, "A crooked path leads to the U.S. Navy." So it did—as you will find as you read through this remarkable account of Paul E. Carrigan's experience in the Aleutian Islands during World War Two. Also, a set of unlikely, near-miraculous circumstances led to the publishing of this book.

In 1974, Tom Spitler, the station manager for Reeve Aleutian Airways on Adak Island, Alaska, found a letter at the airport written by Paul E. Carrigan to me, Michael Carrigan, one of his sons. I was working on a fishing boat based out of Adak. In the letter, dad recounted some of his wartime experiences on Adak. No one knows how the letter came to be at the Adak airport as I had never been there.

Mr. Spitler was a WWII Aleutian history buff, so dad's letter interested him. He held on to the letter for four years and, in 1978, contacted my father. After a long and lively correspondence concerning dad's war experiences, Tom persuaded dad to compile his memoirs.

Over the next 18 years of writing and researching, the memoir grew into a three volume manuscript. Around 1996, dad's computer crashed, and only a paper printout of the manuscript remained, along with a stack of floppy disks not compatible with any family computer.

Dad's deteriorating health and eventual death in 2001 caused the rough manuscript to sit neglected. My mother, Jean, eventually boxed up the manuscript and all the related research and sent it to dad's younger brother Ralph. Uncle Ralph was an ex-Navy man and spent the next ten years at his computer promoting the manuscript to veteran groups and making copies of it for those who wanted it, but failing to interest a publisher.

However, Ralph was successful in having the National Park Service in placing a scanned copy of the manuscript on their website. After Uncle Ralph died in 2017, the manuscript fell idle and lay dormant. It seemed that dad's book would never get published.

Meanwhile, a researcher and author named Ed Sawicki noticed the manuscript on the Park Service website in 2012 and read a few chapters, vowing to finish the rest later. Ed's work schedule delayed his return until 2019, when he noticed that the manuscript was no longer on the Park Service website. He contacted the agency and they sent him an electronic (scanned) copy.

Knowing little of the manuscript's prior history but convinced that the manuscript told a story that needed to be preserved, Ed lightly edited the rough manuscript and posted it on his website.

In 2021, Ralph's son stumbled upon Ed's website and notified me. I then contacted Ed. We compared notes and discovered that Ed only had a portion of the manuscript. I sent him the remainder. My brothers, Andy and Casey, and I met with Ed, and he agreed to publish the book. Along with mom's cousin, Sandie Deighton, and Andy's wife, Barbara, this became a family project involving weekly Zoom calls. Ed reported on progress and asked for our ideas and feedback.

There were many places along the "crooked path" where this priceless piece of history could have been lost forever. But there was always someone to find the ember and fan it to new life. Mom assured dad before he died, "When the time is right, the book will get published."

Her words were prophetic.

Michael Carrigan  
Stanwood, Washington  
April 6, 2022

## **Personal note of Jean Carrigan**

My husband of 57 years, Paul E. "The Black Irishman" Carrigan, had been researching and compiling his World War II memories which include 33 months in the Aleutian Islands.

Paul died on June 22, 2001. I am sorry to say that the manuscript went untouched these last several years due to his deteriorating health. In his memory, I have decided to publish his writings just as he left them.

Finishing this project could not have been accomplished without the encouragement and help of both Paul's brother, Ralph O. Carrigan, and my cousin, Sandie Deighton. Ralph arranged for copies of the manuscript to be printed and distributed to interested vets. Sandie was instrumental in getting the manuscript scanned to an editable format.

Also, Mary Hall, my friend from my nursing school days at Tacoma General Hospital, proof read Paul's writing numerous times in the early years back when he was using a typewriter.

Much of Paul's research was done in the libraries of the late James S. Russell, Admiral, USN (Retired) and the late Carl H. Amme, Captain USN (Retired).

These men were young pilots when Paul first flew with them in 1941, 1942, and 1943.

Jean Carrigan  
Tokeland, Washington  
August 11, 2001