

Correspondence Between Aerograph Editor, Steve Smith, and AGC W.S. McFarland's Granddaughter, Dr. Margaretha Vlahos

Editor's Note: The unexpected emails you are about to read were recently received by webmaster Gary Cox and me. They are from Dr. Margaretha Vlahos (granddaughter of AGC W.S. McFarland, USN (Ret) who served in the Pacific onboard USS Enterprise (CV-6) during WWII) and are the catalyst for the Biography and pictures that follow. I've been in discussion with Margaretha regarding her grandfather's actual date of advancement to AGC as well as his rank at retirement. Understandably, there is some uncertainty regarding that information because she does not have his service records. They have been requested and updates will be posted in a future edition of the Aerograph.

On behalf of all members, I'd like to extend our sincerest thanks to Dr. Vlahos for her amazing contribution to the history of the Naval Weather Service Association.

September 30, 2023

Hi there,

I was given these photos which include my Grandfather W.S. McFarland (1917-1999), who served in the U.S. Navy from 1934-1960 holding the rank of Chief Petty Officer. He was an Aerologist and Meteorologist and served on the USS Enterprise and the USS Oriskany. He was aboard the Enterprise during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Some of the locations he was stationed at include Florida, Hawaii, Trinidad and Morocco. After retiring from the Navy in 1960, he settled in Australia near Brisbane. I and my Aunt are in the process of trying to obtain my Grandad's military records for our family history.

Whilst conducting research I stumbled upon the 'Naval Weather Service Association' website and thought these images may be of interest, especially as I noticed that there are no class images prior to 1950 and the date of the class photo attached is 23 April 1948.

Feel free to use them as you wish.

Kind regards,
Dr. Margaretha Vlahos
(Née McFarland).

October 1, 2023

Dear Steven,

Thank you so much for reaching out and wanting to do a feature story on my Grandad in your magazine. I and my Aunt are so excited and are looking forward to seeing it!

I will send some more photos with any accompanying info which may be noted on the backs. You may get a few emails as there are too many to send in one email.

We are not sure whether the photo of my Grandad holding the weather balloon is on the deck of the Enterprise or the Oriskany as there is no info on the back. I am assuming it is the Enterprise. The shot was taken prior to his promotion to the rank of Chief Petty Officer which occurred when he served on the Oriskany.

I always wished that he would have shared more stories of his days in the Navy, but he was reluctant to talk about it. My Aunt told me a story that once he was on deck with a weather balloon and had to run for his life from a spray of bullets from an enemy attack. And he showed me a photo once of him in uniform meeting the actress Lana Turner on a beach. But they're the only two stories I know.

I know that he was onboard the Enterprise which was at sea when Pearl was attacked. I remember him saying he lost a lot of good mates and he didn't want to talk about it.

I will gather some more information and write a bit of a bio for you from what we know. We are trying to obtain his military records but that will take time. Legend has it, from a story I have been told, that he was a 'code breaker' who worked on cracking codes during the war after the attack on Pearl and prior to the battle of Midway. This is unconfirmed at this stage and perhaps it will be noted in his military records. I also heard that he was invited to the Pentagon for a dinner because he had cracked a significant code.

I will get back to you in a few days with the photos and a bio.

Kind regards,

Margaretha