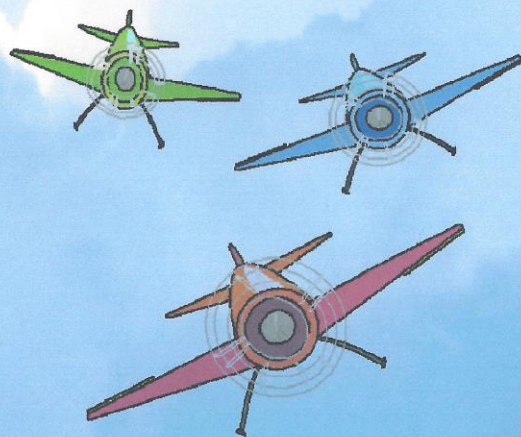


# *A Wing and a Prayer*

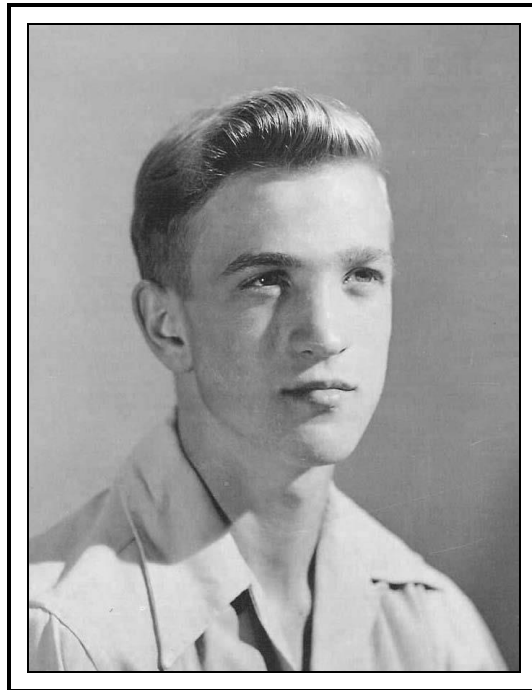
Paul Deeter's Dogfight with Death



Dr. Pamela Gerali

# *A Wing and a Prayer*

**Paul Deeter's Dogfight with Death**



**Paul Eugene Deeter, Age 17**

## A Note from the Author

When I attended nursing school, Dad asked me to write his story. He wanted to help those who had lost an arm and make sure that their doctors appropriately managed their care and rehabilitation. As a peer counselor, Dad had visited a man who had lost his hand just below the wrist. After a long and painful recovery involving many surgeries, he received a prosthesis that was long, cumbersome and not very functional. This man was so depressed and discouraged that he committed suicide.

Dad was convinced that if I published an article in a medical journal and used his case as a model for the appropriate treatment of amputees, others would be spared unnecessary trauma, disfigurement and possibly death. I didn't write about how Dad lost his arm and overcame his "handicap" back then, and today his medical care would be outdated with new technology and surgical advances. However, his story still begs to be told. His life is a testament to strength of character, resilience of the human spirit, the healing energy of laughter, and the power of faith and prayer.

Through Dad's stories, his down-home philosophy of life and his positive attributes are revealed. He is playful, pragmatic, passionate, and persistent. He is also the most creative person that I have had the privilege of knowing. Although he is not highly educated, he has excelled in the "school of hard knocks." He has always taught by example and encouraged others to live life to the fullest.

Dad, here are your stories, told in your own words from the tape that Ed Hildebran made years ago and from our childhood memories. Your real-life escapades and outrageous feats are far more amazing and exciting than any reality show.

May your delightful tales and zest for life continue to inspire family and friends as they read this chronicle. And may those who survive life-threatening experiences and face severe physical challenges find the courage to spread their wings and soar fearlessly as you have done every day of your life.

Your loving daughter,  
*Pamela*

Note: Paul left this earth on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 2008. The final chapter (page 32) was read as his Eulogy.

## **Get Help Only When You Need It**

It's taken an entire host of guardian angels to keep Paul alive for the past 77 years. Time and again he has beaten the odds and lived to tell about it. To say that he is lucky would not do justice to his faith and belief in an all-powerful God. If only luck were involved, he would have run out of it decades ago.

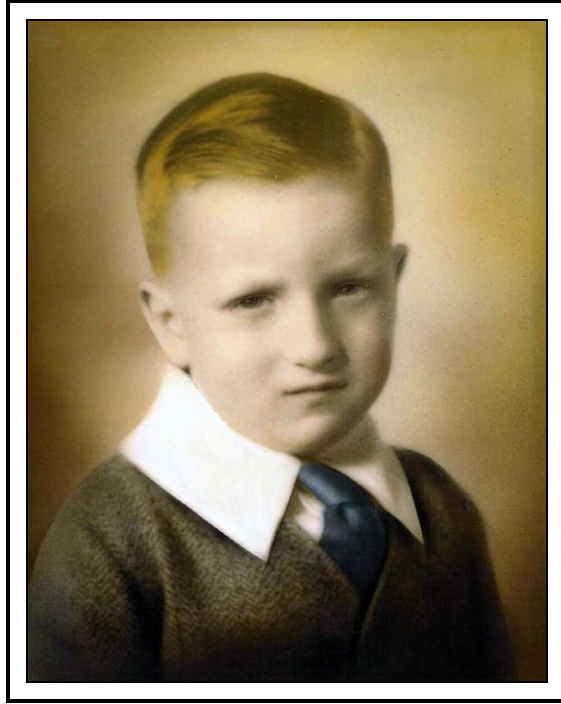
Whether we believe that guardian angels are actual beings or symbolic representations of higher intervention, some positive force has responded when Paul was in crisis. Intercessory prayers have been answered and Paul has been granted more lives than the proverbial cat.

To hear about Paul's close encounters with the other side is like watching a fast-action dogfight, a very familiar scene from his days as a model enthusiast. Paul and his flying buddies would tie streamers to the tail of their radio-controlled or control-line airplanes. When airborne, they chased each other's model planes and used their propellers to cut off the other flyers' streamers. Paul had the skill and timing required to out-manuever his challengers just like he eluded death time and again.

While Paul's extreme life experiences are almost beyond belief, they are too outrageous to have been the figment of his imagination. He lived most of his life on the edge and has the scars to prove it. Without his sense of humor and easy-going nature, his narration would sound more like a tragedy than a series of hilarious, albeit gory, vignettes.

Some wonder why Paul took so many risks, why he teased the grim reaper over and over. His narrow escapes may have been coincidental, but he was probably testing the limits. Maybe he was careless, hyperactive or even addicted to the adrenalin rush, but more than likely he was responding to his burning desire to be creative and live life to the fullest. While Paul's motives remain unknown, what is obvious is that his exploits did not go unnoticed. He attracted the attention of everyone who knew him and of those heavenly beings who worked overtime to keep him alive.

Paul was only five pounds when he was born on May 14, 1929, in his grandmother's home in Jackson Township, Pennsylvania. Although his birth was uneventful, the year he was born should have been a sign of what was to come. He and his friend Gene Boughner, who was born just two hours earlier, call themselves the "Crash of '29." In Paul's case, this title is highly appropriate and may have been a self-fulfilling prophesy.



**Paul at Age 5**

The first time Paul teased death he was six years old. He fell on an electric light bulb while playing along side the house and got a very long, deep cut on his left forearm. Fortunately (or not), the town doctor lived upstairs.

*My dad grabbed me and took me up to old Doc Spencer. He lived above us; actually I think he was a horse doctor. He looks at it and said, "Boy, that's pretty nasty." He rips off a piece of adhesive tape about two inches wide and just put it over the cut. And that was it. And he says, "Go on home and leave that on there for a couple of days and we will see how it does."*

*It got dirty you know, so my mother thought she'd better take a look at it. She hadn't seen my cut, see, and you can imagine how big it was on a six-year-old arm. It was pretty near clear across it. So she pulled the adhesive tape off and it was just rolling green with infection. She passed out and my dad, he couldn't do anything with it either. I forget who did come and clean it up and dress it. But it healed okay.*

This was the first time that Paul injured an arm. It was also the first time that Iva, Paul's mother, passed out after one of his many mishaps. Perhaps it was easier for her to escape into a peaceful state of unconsciousness than to face her son's mortality.

## Grin and Bear It

Paul was a handsome, blond-haired, blue-eyed boy who never lost his charming good looks despite some disfiguring incidents. The pale white scar beneath his lower lip, a badge of honor from a ski accident, is a testament to Paul's down-home philosophy of life and his ability to grin and bear it! He was twelve years old when he had his first unpleasant encounter with barbed wire while skiing.



**Paul with his sister, Carol**

*I made a track one day and the sun shone and it froze. It really made it slick; that's the way I wanted it. I went up there and got on the skis. I came down the hill and there wasn't any place to go. Down at the bottom of the hill was a barbwire fence and man, it went right into a corner. There was just no place to go.*

*Then I came down to a place where the cattle had been walking and it was all rough and froze. I came off that edge of the road and I lit right on my face. I put my bottom lip in my teeth you know, knocked one tooth out and the rest of my lip I bit clear off. It knocked me out and I don't know how long I laid there.*

*Anyway, a guy found me and took me home. I was twelve years old and my sister, Carol was just about ready to be born. My lower lip was sticking straight out and my teeth were hanging out and when I drank water it would run right off my chin.*

*Dad grabbed me and took me in to old Doc Nordstrom and he just sewed her on. Never gave me a thing. Twenty-two stitches inside and out.*

One can only assume that the man who found Paul out cold on the ice was an angel in disguise. \

At age 15, a kick in the face by a horse shattered most of Paul's nose. Once again, someone must have been looking out for his well being; he could have sustained a severe head injury, lost an eye or worse.

*I was down at my friend's house and my old girlfriend was there. She had a pony. Another guy jumped on behind her, but the pony wouldn't move. I just walked up and was going to slap it on the rear end a little bit, but, boy it got me. It kicked my nose clear off. It put the bones right out in under my eye.*

*I was in the hospital that time for three or four days, but I seen horse hooves for a month. My nose was tore off way up in. I had eleven stitches way up inside. It abscessed. My face all swelled up and they took me to the doctor. My mother went with me. So Doc set me in the chair and cut a little hole there and took a stick, one of them swabs with no cotton on it, just stuck it in some kind of acid, stuck it up in there, clear up—I don't know how far—and squeezed on it and took all that stuff out of there.*

*It hurt a little at first, but then it didn't hurt too much. So I got down and got all ready to go home and went out in the waiting room, but no Mom. I said, "Where is my mother?" "She is in there on the cot." Here she passed out and they put her on the table.*

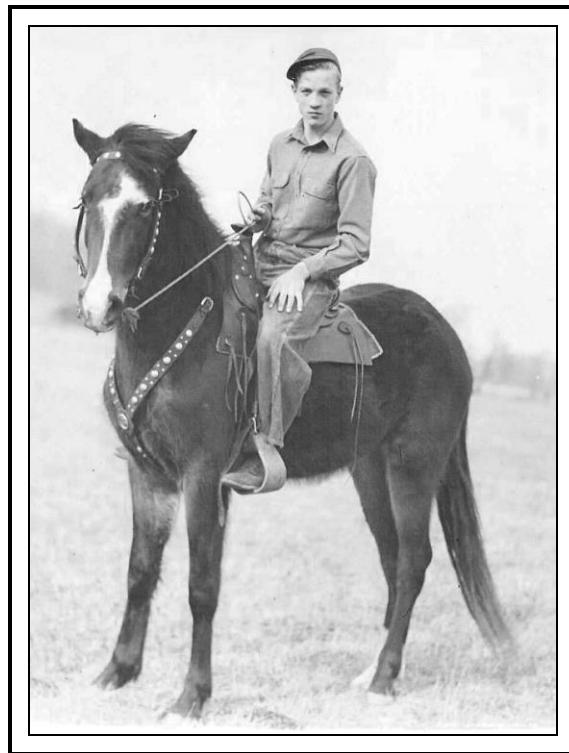
A year later, Paul had a second encounter with barbed wire. The memory of previous medical emergencies and their treatment were still fresh in his mind, so Paul hid his injury. He was determined to prevent his mother from seeing another gruesome sight and from fainting again.

*A bunch of us guys were running down this hill and jumping across a run. The rest of them had already jumped, and I thought I'd cross where it was wider. So I went down a little further, and when I was airborne, that was the first time*

*I saw the barbed wire stretched between two oak trees. I was in the air and couldn't stop.*

*The barbed wire took me right across my stomach. I lifted up my shirt and I had a four inch slice deeper than I wanted to see. I ran home holding my stomach together and put a piece of adhesive tape across the whole thing—just like old Doc Spencer did to my arm—and never told anybody.*

Paul's own horse nearly did him in when he was 17 years old. He was trapping and threw a raccoon over the back of the saddle of his skittish horse, Ginger. She reared up, knocking Paul out of the saddle. He hung onto Ginger's neck for as long as he could, and then dropped to the ground, only to be stepped on. This near miss, just a fraction of an inch from his spine, could have paralyzed Paul years before his first stroke.



**Paul, age 18 with Ginger**



## **Play Like There's No Tomorrow**

Paul has a passion for life and loved to “tinker” with anything that moved. The older he got, the more dangerous his toys were and the more extreme his experiences became. Although Paul didn't aspire to be Houdini, he did escape from the jaws of death many times while enjoying life. Rebellious and independent at 17 years of age, Paul nearly drowned after sneaking out for a boat ride with his friend, Byron Ray.

*I went up to Canadota Lake one day. I always had speedboats and my dad didn't allow me to run them on Sunday, so I'd take it to my neighbors and leave it with my friend. I'd go to visit him and we'd take it and go boat riding.*

*I had it up at Canadota Lake one Sunday and we had rode about all day and it was time to come home. So I said I'll take her out and turn her around so I can get her heading in the dock right.*

*So man, I took her about half way across the lake. There was a lot of sun in my eyes. I made a sharp turn and it was kind of sliding sideways, you know. What I didn't realize was there was another boat in front of me and he'd made a wake about two feet high and I went right into that baby sideways. I flipped her (my boat) right over on her back and I was underneath. No life preserver. I had both hands then.*

*A guy came out in a little boat and hooked on to me and pulled me upside down. I was sitting on top. I had a new pair of shoes and I lost one of them. My mother wanted to know where my shoe was, so I told her.*

When Paul was older, his father, Ike, used other means to encourage Paul to go to church. Once, Ike bought him a motor for his boat. The “bribe” must have worked, because Paul became a believer and followed in his father's footsteps to become Superintendent of the Sunday School for the Cooperstown Evangelistic Tabernacle. Paul still believes that his accident on Canadota Lake was God reminding him to keep the Sabbath holy. He also believes that he survived all of his close encounters because of divine intervention.

Whether on land or sea, danger followed Paul like a dark shadow. This was especially true when he was at the wheel of a vehicle.

*Car wrecks. I had car wrecks after car wrecks. From Cooperstown to the bridge below town, I think I counted up one day that I had six wrecks just in that little space there.*

*I was going down there one time in an old '38 Buick down by Ed Roger's farm. He had a place where you could go and get milk. Well, this lady was parked off the road on the right hand side and I thought she was getting milk; she had her door open. So I'm going down there, and I'm going around her. And boy, she pulled right out in front of me in a little Ford Coupe.*

*That big old '38 Buick caught the door and took the door off and the fender, and threw her glasses out on the road. I looked in the rear view mirror and that Ford looked like a top going around back there. She didn't get hurt. She got out of the car and picked up her glasses and put them on.*

Back then if Paul had to buy car insurance at today's rates, he most likely wouldn't have been able to afford to drive!

*Ellwood Mitchell and I, we both had '48 Chevy's. When I cut my arm off I got \$20 a week for four years. So Mr. Alshouse down there said, "You give me that and I'll give you a new car." So I did and he did. I got a '48 Chevy. It was two-toned gray with all the chrome on it. Mitchell had the same thing, same color, both the same.*

*One time I was coming out from Franklin and his mother and dad was going in and it was slippery down below town. I don't know who hit who, but we both hit, pretty near head on. And both cars had exactly the same damage. We took them to the same place and had them both fixed.*



**Twin 1948 Chevys**

Paul grew up in the country where hunting was a way of life. Not surprisingly, he had a few close calls in the woods. Once while hunting rabbits, he became the accidental target of another hunter and has enough buckshot in him to set off the security systems in most airports!



**Paul at 18 with his hand-made bow and arrows**

*I'll tell you about the time I got shot when I was hunting rabbits. I remember I was coming through the woods and there was a big brush pile there so I jumped up on the brush pile looking for a rabbit.*

*What I didn't know was that there were some other guys hunting, coming the other way, coming right towards me. They kicked up a rabbit and he ran right to the brush pile that I was standing on. So they let him (the rabbit) have it with a 12 guage shotgun. I was on top of the brush pile and I got most of the shot, straight in the face. It went right through my lower lip and shot my lower plate (false teeth) in two. Hit me in the leg and I thought sure my leg would go bad, but it hit in that big cord and it made my leg go numb. They were far enough away, probably 50 or 60 feet away. If he'd had a full choked gun, it would have hurt me a lot more. I got lead all over. I can push pieces of lead around on my ribs.*

## Play the Hand You Are Dealt

Paul does not gamble; in fact it is against his beliefs. But the common quote, “Play the hand that you are dealt,” reflects his views about acceptance. The fact that Paul actually lost a hand makes this sage advice even more appropriate.

To accept the loss of his hand may actually have been easier for Paul than his parents. His mother may have had a weak stomach, but what Iva went through with her son would tax a parent with the strongest of constitutions. Imagine receiving the news that your son lost his right hand in a sawmill accident. Added to this trauma was a knock at the door; Gene Boughner had her son’s severed hand in a cigar box and wanted to know what to do with it. Only Gene knows where Paul’s hand is buried.



Paul with his parents, Ike and Iva, and sister Carol

Imagine owning the sawmill where your son’s accident occurred. This must have caused Ike excruciating regret and guilt. Firm believers in God, Ike and Iva no doubt sought solace in their faith and prayed fervently for their son’s healing and protection.

*I wanted to go to the Navy, but Mom and Dad were reluctant to sign for me ‘cause I was their only boy. They were taking 19 year olds and I was 19 on the fourteenth of May. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, one week later, I got tangled up in a saw and cut my arm off.*

*The way that happened is in the morning it was kind of cool when you went to work, you know. So I had a Mackinaw shirt there and I just pulled it on and wouldn't bother to button it 'cause as soon as I got working it got warm. The sleeves weren't buttoned either. This saw I was working with was an edger saw and there were rolls over top of the saw so if you didn't get it cut just right, you could push (the boards) back (over the roll). The first time I cut it I missed by about a half an inch, so I just reached up on top to pull it back and when I did that, the shirt sleeve (caught) in under (the saw) and just—click—that quick. What I didn't know was that someone had taken the guards off to clean the sawdust out and they were still off. The saw wasn't too big, probably 30 inches, but they run a lot faster than a regular saw. Regular saws only run about 500 RPMs. This runs about 1500, so it was really singing. But if you are going to get cut, that's the way to do it.*

*All the men were there working and my cousin (Jim Deeter) was sawing. I was mad at him anyway; he came home and took my job. When he got out of the Army, Dad let him learn how to saw. Anyway, Jim grabbed my arm (to stop the bleeding) and we started for the car which was a quarter mile away. He didn't even shut the mill down. "Whoa!" I said, "Shut the mill down." I got my old red hanky out and got it wrapped around my arm and finally they got a knot in it and put a tourniquet on it, you know.*

*We had a slab road with sawdust on top of it which was pretty nice walking. I walked up to the car and got in. It was an old '34 Chevy, my cousin Norm Deeter's car. He was all nervous. I got in the back seat. My other cousin, Jim got a hold of my arm again and got a grip on it so it would quit bleeding. Man the road was muddy. Norm revs his car clear up pops the clutch and just dropped the whole bottom out of the transmission in the middle of the logging road. We were 17 miles from the hospital.*

*The log cutters were there—they had an old '35 Chevy—but they were clear at the other end of the woods. Of course their car was locked up and someone went and got them and they finally got back down (to where I was).*

*Now I'm setting there and I got to thinking of all the bad things I did and thought maybe I might die, so I threw the cigarettes out the window and couldn't roll up the window.*

*We got into Titusville and nobody had any idea where the hospital was. I remember we stopped and there was a lady standing on the corner. Someone asked her where the hospital was. She was Polish and she started rattling off in*

*Polish. We didn't know any more when we left than when we got there. But finally we got to the hospital and then they couldn't get my cousin off my arm. He had a death grip on my arm and they had to come out and pry him off. Of course when they got him off, I leaked (bled) a little more.*

*When I went into the hospital I was standing there, of course they had to sign me up. They wanted to know what insurance I had. This was 60 years ago. I'm standing there leaking on the floor so I took my foot and got a bucket and leaked in it until they got done with whatever they was doin'.*

*I remember my teeth were bad and I wanted them to pull my teeth while they were fixin' my arm. They said "No, you've been through enough." It never really hurt. It was numb when it happened, but by the time I got in the hospital and got everything done, I was ready for a shot.*



**Paul "lifting" a logging truck**

After Paul's stump healed he was fitted with a prosthesis. His hook is held in place by a fiberglass cast, connected with cords to a strap around his chest and a leather belt around his upper arm. When he extends his arm, the hook opens. Rubber bands at the base of the hook determine how strongly it grips.

Although Paul's hook has become his trademark, he was a little sensitive about it at first. The town bully used to embarrass him in front of the local gals by having Paul

pinch his finger. One day Paul brought this tormentor to his knees with a few extra rubber bands. So much for town bullies.

With children, Paul has always assumed the role of a good-natured cartoon character. He responds to their wide-eyed stares and curiosity with a friendly smile, and says, “I’m Captain Hook.” Then he extends his prosthesis and encourages them to touch it. Some bravely shake hands. Only the very courageous stick a finger in his open hook to experience the thrill of a gentle pinch. Free of fear and filled with trust, they embrace him as a friend forever.

Paul’s hook didn’t stop him from dating, marrying and raising a family. He met his wife, Patty, when she was in her early teens. They began dating when she was 16 and got married a couple of years after Paul lost his arm. They had five children—four girls and a boy.



**Patty and Paul with their first born daughter, Kit in 1951**

Raising four teenage daughters was no doubt a challenge, but Paul’s hook was quite handy. It was an effective tool for keeping his daughters’ beaus in line. When introduced for the first time, Paul would greet them with his metal hand extended just a little too high in the air to be considered a friendly gesture. He would look the boys straight in the eyes and say, “You’ll have her home by eleven, right?” “Sir, Yes, Sir.” Not many were willing to risk the wrath of the right hook.



## **You Can Always Build a Better Mouse Trap**

Although Paul lost his dominant hand, he was not handicapped. He compensated by dressing, writing and eating left handed and only need help with buttons and cutting meat. Instead of bemoaning his limitations, he turned them into a positive. For example, he designed a hook with a hammer for building houses and one that held a bow for hunting. Ingenious and imaginative, his list of innovations rival that of his near-death experiences. Some of his inventions, however, nearly led to his demise. In some instances, the same divine source that gave Paul his creativity had to protect him from the very things that he was inspired to build.

Paul's most visible accomplishment is Maple Lane Development. From 1954 until 1975, Paul built approximately 150 single family homes in Jackson Township, Pennsylvania on land that his father had purchased for the lumber. After the valley was cleared, Paul sold lots and built homes with his loyal team of carpenters, Barney, Dick and Jack Rough, and Paul Hunt. Paul's crew also included his brother-in-law Don Martin, and his son, Robin. Together, they build the subdivision, known as "Deeterville." In 1959, Paul finally convinced the city fathers that it was in the town's best interest to annex Maple Lane Development into Cooperstown.



**1973 Aerial View of Maple Lane Development, formerly known as "Deeterville"**

Although building homes can be potentially dangerous, Paul did not have any close encounters during the twenty plus years that he was in the business. However, years earlier, he nearly fell off the roof of a barn that he was painting. Somehow his feet got into the wet paint and he began to slide down the roof. Just before he fell 30 feet to the ground, someone got a ladder under him and he was spared from severe injury or sudden death.

An invention that has become a necessity today was the result of a joint venture with Theron Proper, one of the young men who flew model planes with Paul. They built a portable phone in the early '70s and sold it to Ma Bell for \$1,000. Imagine if they had seen into the future and knew the potential value of their creation. This was just one of many contraptions that Paul designed long before its time.

Also out of necessity, Paul also designed a light-weight snowplow for ATVs. These all-terrain vehicles were small and maneuverable, and could quickly remove snow and ice from roads, driveways, sidewalks and ponds. They were ideal for tight places that were not accessible to standard sized trucks and graders. Paul proved how effective his plow was one spring when Oil Creek backed up and filled Seneca Street in Oil City with ice during an early thaw. Normally, it would have taken weeks for the ice to melt, but the ATV plows cleared the area in a few hours.



**1959 Cadillac Pick-up with an ATV**

Paul also designed a roller bumper, a mowing attachment with a hammer flailer, and other implements for ATVs. He received patents for some of these items and manufactured and distributed them for a few years.

Soon after he designed the plow, Paul and a group of ATV enthusiast, including Bob Reed, Ralph Porterfield and Bob Barker, were clearing snow around Cooperstown

after a huge snowfall had blanketed the town. They worked (played) late into the night and when Paul came back to the shop, he fainted. He was rushed to the hospital where old Doc Beals, family doctor, said that he had a heart attack. That was December 16, 1972, Paul and Patty's twenty-second wedding anniversary. Fortunately, Paul quickly recovered from that brush with death and was able to continue building homes, airplanes and other unique things.

With a little ingenuity, Paul created a unique work vehicle. He needed to haul building supplies, and decided that his "truck" might as well have a smooth ride! So he built a pickup from an old Cadillac. With its big fins and exhaust pipes sticking up in the air behind the cab, it closely resembled a Bat Mobile. This was the first of three Cadillac pickups that Paul built.

While Cadillac pickups were effective for business purposes, Paul also used them for play. He had someone drive his pickup and tow him up into the air in his life-size, open-framed glider. He would start at the far end of the airstrip, release the tow rope when he was 50 or 60 feet in the air, and then glide to the other end of the runway. His children and some of the neighbor kids would stand behind him and hang onto his seat, getting a thrill of a lifetime. Their mothers' most likely didn't know about this risky ride, but fortunately, the guardian angels were on duty and no one was injured.

Since Paul liked to have fun, it is no surprise that he also designed toys. He converted his daughter's metal tricycle into the first big wheel; he turned the frame up-side-down and built a box for her to sit on. Pamela was four years old at the time and the year was 1957. The Big Wheel was not invented until 1969.

Paul built kayaks when he was younger and his family was smaller. He took his kids for rides in the creek behind their home. Years later, he built a larger flat-bottom boat with a fishing platform. It could hold the entire family. He also took the neighbor boys—Brian Burger, Dick and Ron Schreckengost, Dick and Byron Boughner, Jim Ritchey, Butch Deeter, and others—fishing for carp with bows and arrows.

Long before windsurfing was in fashion, Paul created a hand-held silk sail. He would put on his ice skates, hold onto the sail's wooden pole, and whisk a line of skaters back and forth across Sugar Lake when it was frozen.



**Paul's unique way of roasting hotdogs for the neighbor boys after a fishing trip  
(L to R: Paul, Butch Deeter, Dick Schreckengost and Dick Boughner)**

Paul could literally turn junk into something fun. One summer day, he took an old, flattened pair of water skis, fashioned "boots" from an old rubber tire and towed his kids around on the lake. An old piece of plywood tied with a rope to a dingy, became a boogie board. Paul entertained the entire neighborhood with his hand-made toys.

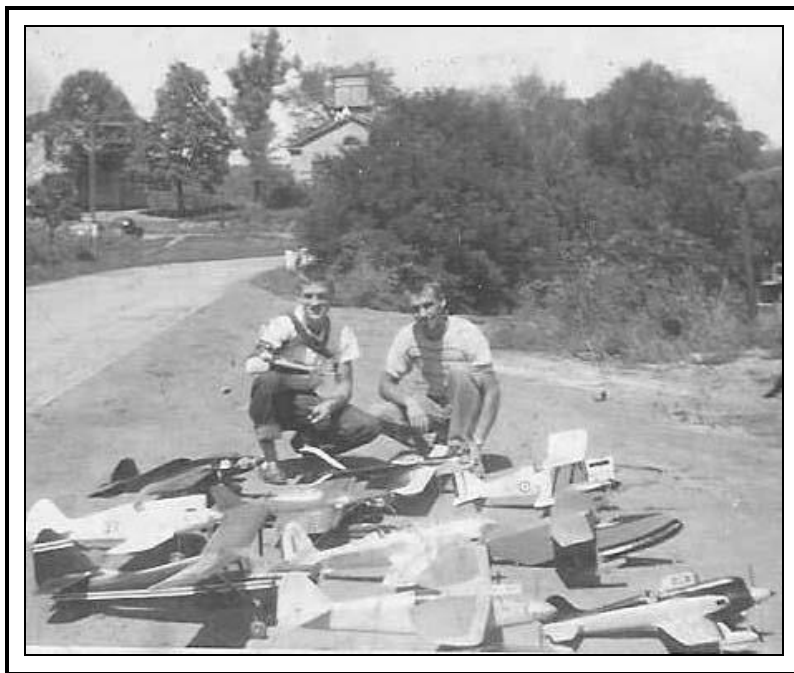


**Paul at play on his private lake after dumping his daughter Pamela in the water**

Another invention sent him flying, but not the way that Paul enjoys. Before solar power was in vogue, he built a solar collector from a recycled fuel tank. While doing some final welding, a panel exploded and knocked him across the shop. Don't ask! Just one more brush with death for this creative soul who should have exercised a little more caution.

## **Fly as High and as Far as You Can**

If his guardian angels were busy while he was on the ground, they were working overtime when Paul was in the air. He loved to fly and still loves airplanes. Inspired by Charles Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight, Paul began building models at an early age. When he was in the fifth grade, he took his model planes to school and his teacher would hang them from the ceiling. More interested in planes than schoolwork, Paul would daydream about owning a real airplane. That year he wrote an English composition about how he wanted to own a farm with an airport on it.



**Paul and Bob Reed with their model planes in 1954**

Before his vision came true, Paul lived his dream through models. He has designed and built countless control line and radio-controlled planes. He also owned and operated a model airplane shop and started a flying club. After his building business was well-established he started looking for some property to build an airstrip.

One day while driving out of the development where he and his family lived, he saw his future airstrip right in front of his eyes. The 50 acre farm across the street was for sale. Paul bought it in 1972 and transformed its cornfield and acres of brush into a sanctuary for bird-wanabees. Forty years after writing about his vision, Maple Cave Park became a reality.



**Paul flying a model airplane at an Air Show at Maple Cave Park**

The Deeter homestead with its private airport, five-acre lake, sled riding hill, trout pond, fishing stream, and natural spring, became a favorite destination for many neighborhood kids and adults. Paul and Patty share their beautiful property with the entire community, hosting at least three air shows each summer. On six days of the week they welcome anyone who respectfully uses the land and facilities for flying, fishing, hunting, sled riding and trail riding. Sundays, however, are sacred.

With his own runway, Paul was able to satisfy his longing to fly and in 1974, he bought his first “real” airplane, a 1947 Aeronca Champ. He took flying lessons in it from Richard Smith at the Franklin Airport. Soon after his first solo flight, Paul had his first near miss in a full-size airplane. He most likely was not alone in the cockpit; someone far more experienced must have been at the controls that day.

*It wasn't too long after I soloed that I wanted to fly over my own airstrip in Cooperstown. When I got into my airplane Richard said, “I know where you are going, but I don't want you to land there.” So I was flying around over top of my airport when the valve went through the piston and that little thing out*

*front (propeller) quit going around. I made the first and best landing that I ever made in my life on my runway.*

*Then I went up to the house and called Richard. I said, "I won't be back in tonight." "Why?" "Well, I decided to land here." "And why did you decide to land?" "Because the valve went through the piston." "Oh, Lord, man, are you all right?"*

*Richard had wanted to give me some side-wind instructions before I landed at my airport. You have to land differently when the wind is blowing in a different direction than the direction of the landing strip. But what do you do when you are circling over your airport and a valve goes through the piston? You land, of course.*

Paul was always surrounded by airplane enthusiasts—Bob Reed, Paul Sowles, Charlie and Chuckie Alsdorf, Andy Maitland, Morry Huth and his father, Pappy, and other flying fans. They worked on their models and real planes together and often flew in tandem to airports in the area.

*One time Morry wanted to take a little ride and I said, "I can't because I don't have any gas. The last time I landed, the motor quit." But he said we have enough to get to Titusville. So we took off. The way we could tell if we could buy gas at the airports was if a car was parked by the pump; if there was a car, someone would be there to pump gas. When we got to Titusville, we circled the field, but there was no car and no one to pump gas.*

*Morry pointed toward Seneca and took off in that direction. I really didn't want to go, but we flew to Seneca and there was no car there, either and no one to pump gas. So he pointed toward Franklin and kept going. I wanted to get some altitude, but every time I pointed the nose up, it would quit.*

*I made it to Franklin and when I got in a pattern to land, I looked up and here came the commuter plane. He was landing at the same time I was landing. They have the right of way, but I just dove right in front of him and headed for the gas pumps. Later, I went inside and talked to the commuter pilot. I said, "I am sorry that I cut in front of you, but I was out of gas." "Hey, that's all right. I saw you all the time."*

*Is it any wonder that me, Pappy and Morry were known as the "Polish Air Force?"*



With the help of family and friends, Paul built an experimental aircraft. It took 22 months to complete his KR2, a sleek, low-winger that cruised at 180 MPH. On October 23, 1976, Paul took his maiden flight in his handmade airplane.

*I was quite a bit nervous because I was only a student pilot testing out an experimental aircraft. I could have built the plane in one year, but I wanted to take my time on it, because I knew I was going to fly it. It was some thrill and the extra time and work paid off. I left from here and flew down to Franklin. When I got back, the adrenalin was flowing so that I couldn't shut up, sit down or stand up. If people could have heard me while I was up in the plane, they would have thought I was crazy.*

Paul took his plane to the Experimental Aircraft Association meet in Oshkosh, Wisconsin the next summer. On May 30, 1978, Paul went down in this plane and miraculously survived to tell his story.

*Quite a few years ago I built an airplane. I tested it myself right on this field here. One day I needed some stuff from Clarion so I just said, "Hey, I'll fly down and get it." So I jumped in the plane and took off and got down to Kossuth, "prit near" to Clarion and the canopy malfunctioned, came loose and blew off. I got down into Clarion and landed and got what I wanted and got a helmet like you wear on a motorcycle with a face mask. I took off figuring I would make it back home. But there was a vibration and when I got back to Kossuth the motor was working so hard that I had to run it wide open to keep it up. Then it quit. I was right over a big woods and I said, "Well, Good Lord, I've taken her as far as I can take her. It's up to you now."*

Paul always believed he had a divine copilot!



**Paul with his KR2 on the Maple Cave Airport in 1977**

*I had an instructor in Titusville, Glenn Whiting. He said, “Paul, if you ever lose the engine on this thing over the woods, don’t fly it into the woods; back it in.” Boy that hit me right then, so I just keep her going. It wouldn’t glide; too much drag. So I kept her going until I could feel the tree tops underneath the airplane. Then I just pulled her right straight up and she stood right on her tail and just backed right down into the woods. I wasn’t going but 20 miles an hour. Of course, I was still on top of the trees, but I went clear to the ground and never got hurt. I had three little marks on my chest, just looked like someone took their hand and scraped me over my chest.*

*I walked out of the woods to the Weaver farm and called my wife. She come and got me and was feeling bad that I wrecked the airplane. The next day we went down to get what was left. The plane was built out of Styrofoam, fiberglass and wood, and boy, we had pieces. We put it all in the back of my son, Robin’s van, all but the motor. It didn’t hurt the motor any.*

*Here is the strange thing. When I got to looking at the cockpit, what was left of it, the seatbelt was still fastened. How’d you suppose I got out of it? You tell me.*

No doubt Paul’s guardian angels intervened yet again, strategically placing a tree limb to catch him by the harness that holds his hook. Paul was lifted right out of the

seat and placed painlessly and effortlessly on *terra firma* as the plane disintegrated into a million pieces. Interesting that Paul's hook actually saved his life that day. "Coincidences" like these reinforced Paul's beliefs that there are no accidents and that while he may not understand why tragedies happen, God created the Universe to work in perfect order.

That fateful day is permanently etched in the minds and hearts of Paul's entire family. Rob drove to Clarion to loan his motorcycle helmet to his dad, then headed back to Cooperstown. When he arrived home, no one was there. Rob knew that Paul should have arrived by then, so he assumed something was wrong. Someone finally called and let Rob know that his dad had survived a crash and was in the hospital getting checked out. The next day, Rob took his van to help family and friends gather pieces of Paul's plane. Rob wishes that for once his father had made a conservative choice and had towed the plane home when the canopy came off.

Don Martin, Paul's brother-in-law, was laying carpet that day and ran out of tackstrip. That is why Paul flew to Clarion—to get building supplies. Paul said he would be right back, and when he didn't show up in a reasonable amount of time with the materials, Don went to see if Patty knew where he was. At that time, she was not aware that Paul had crashed.

Patty recalls being cool, calm and collected. After all, she had a lot of experience with Paul and his near misses. She married him "for better or worse, sickness and health, until..." No matter what happened, she was at Paul's side.

Victoria was home from college and answered the phone when Paul called with the news. She and Patty went to the hospital where Paul was being examined. Victoria was in a state of shock and hardly remembers driving to the ER.

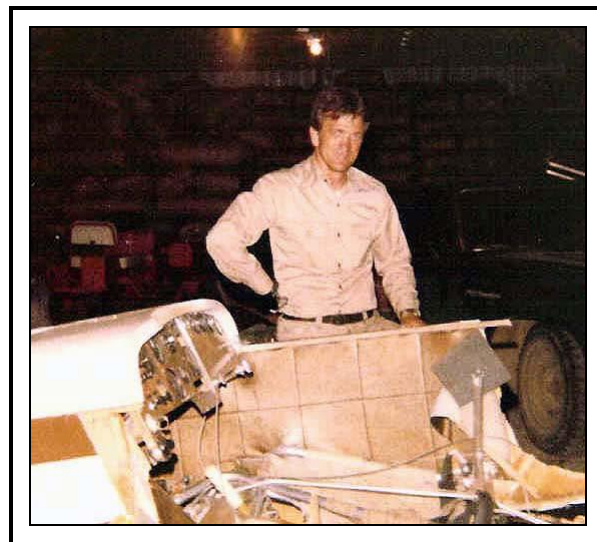
Kit was at home when her first husband, Ron, told her what happened. She immediately went to the hospital to be with her family. A comment made by the ER physician is permanently imprinted in her memory: "That lucky man. Nobody walks away from a plane crash." Kit also remembers going to the woods to help collect the pieces and bursting into tears at the unbelievable sight that awaited them. It looked as if the plane had disintegrated into a million pieces around Paul as it came down through the trees. Acid from the battery left holes in the new pair of jeans she wore that day.

Pamela remembers learning about Paul's crash after she returned home from a trip out west. She and her first husband were driving cross country when the accident happened and didn't learn about the accident until they returned home. They spent

the night with her mother-in-law who broke the news at breakfast the next morning. When Pamela arrived at her folk's place later that day, Paul took her out to the pole barn and showed the pieces of his plane to her. She broke down and sobbed uncontrollably, knowing how close she came to losing her father.

When Melissa heard about Paul's accident, she was relieved, but not surprised. He had had so many close calls that this was nothing new. She never considered the possibility that one of his many, risky escapades might cause his death.

No one can recall how Iva, Paul's mother, responded to the news, but the accident happened on May 30<sup>th</sup>, her birthday. The fact that her son survived yet another brush with death was most likely the best present she received that year.



**Paul with some of the larger pieces of his plane**

## Pass It On

Paul and Patty have always shared their home, hearts and harvest with their family, their church, and the entire community. In fact, they are generous to a fault. They have always preferred to give rather than to receive and in some instances, they have done without so others could have.

Paul's love of airplanes was infectious and he shared it with everyone. Once he held a flying contest for the local children. For the one dollar entry fee, he gave each participant a kit for an airplane that was powered by a rubber band. They had to assemble their models and fly them in the competition. At the end of the event, Paul gave prizes for the longest flight time and greatest distance flown. Then he gave each boy his money back in the form of a shiny silver dollar.



**Paul hosting model plane event with neighborhood boys in the mid 1960's**

Paul also shared his love of flying with his children. Rob, a feather off the old wing, inherited his father's passion for airplanes and his creative talent. When Rob was about three years old, he began building tiny model planes from balsa wood; he cut the wood with razor blades, glued the pieces together and held them in place with straight pins, just like his dad. No wonder he was bored with dull crayons and scissors when he went to first grade. Rob has designed many models of his own and began taking flying lessons at an early age. He soloed when he was 16 years old. Rob's dream is to build a full size plane version of an airplane that he has designed

and to make kits available to other airplane enthusiasts. A model prototype of his unique airplane has already proven flight worthy.

Paul also built airplanes with his daughters. Victoria recalls building a small Piper Cub from a kit when she was in fourth grade. Paul guided her through the complex instructions, helping her to sand each wooden part and glue them together. After Victoria went to bed, Paul finished her project; he applied silk to the wings and painted her plane so she could take it to school and show her classmates the next day.

When Melissa was just two years old, she took to flying like a bird to the sky. She held onto the handle of a control-line airplane and flew it like a pro. This curly-headed toddler put on quite a show as she walked around in a big circle, laughing and waving at the crowd.

Kit, Melissa and Rob also inherited their father's aptitude for building. Rob makes his livelihood by applying and expanding on he learned while building homes with his father. Kit and Melissa have remodeled and finished their own homes, made furniture and landscaped their property. All the "Deeter Kids" got lots of practice working around their home and in the community.



**Grandchildren on the golf cart in front of Paul's terraced backyard**

Paul has passed on his legacy of creativity and interests to his grandchildren as well. Each one has their own unique talents; they also love to hunt, fish, and use their hands to build things. They are fortunate to have access to Paul's many tools, his workspace and his land.

As a mentor, Paul showed many of the neighborhood kids how to use and repair tools, how to operate and fix equipment, and how to build everything under the sun. He usually had a helper for every project, someone willing to assist and interested in learning from Paul's wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. Paul made a difference in the lives of many people. A letter from a friend and former neighbor, Rita Chalfant Joyce perfectly describes and gratefully recognizes all that Paul has done for the community and how special Cooperstown was because of his efforts.

The Cooperstown I Remember: 1958 -1964  
by Rita (Chalfant) Joyce

Following Cooperstown's Bicentennial celebration, I was given a copy of "Cooperstown, PA Through the years..." a book written about the history of the town. Having spent my childhood in Cooperstown I was surprised to find only one short reference to the part of town sometimes known as the Maple Lane Development. Had I been on the writing committee, I would have added the following:

Paul and Patty Deeter were instrumental in building an entire neighborhood where young couples could know the joy of owning beautiful, new homes and raising their children in an ideal setting. Having lived on Maple Lane Drive from age 2 to age 8, I remember the treasure of that brand new neighborhood as perhaps only a child could.

There was the pond Paul dug - a treasure for all seasons. We caught tadpoles in the spring and watched them grow into frogs. I remember finding a goose nest (complete with eggs and an angry mother goose) and exploring the spring above the pond. It was an underwater, emerald eden... an incredible sight that I will never forget... the stuff the grandest fantasies are built on.

We went fishing in the summer with our homemade poles and felt the warm mud squish between our toes. The neighborhood was full of children who could play outside from yard to yard all summer in safety. To this day, the sound of a model airplane engine sweeps me back to my childhood because of the Saturday mornings that I awoke to the hum of the planes and hurried outside to watch. I often joined other neighborhood children in Paul Deeter's airplane shop. I remember the smell of the glue and the thrill of him handing us the little gliders with the metal noses that we could put together and fly ourselves.

In the fall we watched the geese fly over the golden hills. I have a vivid memory of an evening when my family turned out the lights and gathered on the couch eating warm, buttered popcorn while we watched the stars come out through our living room window over the most brilliantly colored hills I have ever seen in my life. I remember distinctly how totally safe I felt that evening. Being young in that beautiful place taught me like no other lesson could that the Creator was good. And aren't we just a breath away from heaven when we walk through crisp autumn air and hear the sound of crunching leaves?

No one who was there could ever forget the town skating parties in the winter. There were bonfires and who needed a zambini when we had our own Paul Deeter to clear the ice with his tractor? I loved the winters with all the snow and the snowmen and snow forts. The sled riding hill (that is now overgrown) provided hours of fun. I remember the day that at the end of my last ride, the father of one of my friends took up the rope of my sled and pulled me the whole way down Crestview, across Maple Lane and delivered me to my mother at my own back door. Cooperstown was a winterwonderland... and it was Paul with his tractor that kept the driveways navigable.

I would like to express a heartfelt thanks to Paul Deeter. Anyone who has seen "It's a Wonderful Life" will know that we have our very own George Bailey among us. My parents were always very proud of the first home they owned and eventually settled into a house built in the same style (though my mother has never again had a built in oven with the cupboard above it that was perfect for keeping dinners warm - a feature she still misses!) I remember the excitement of each new house being built. Old and young alike would watch the progress and then the town would gather at the "open houses" to see the finished home before the new owners moved in. So thank you, Paul and Patty, for your tireless efforts over the years. You gave us an entire neighborhood in what is still one of the most beautiful spots in whole wide world - a neighborhood that we never would have had without the foresight and dedication of the Deeters.



## **Pick Yourself Up by the Boot Straps**

One of Paul's favorite poems reflects the perseverance and strength of character that has kept him going all these years.

*Somebody said that it couldn't be done  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That maybe it couldn't but he wouldn't be one  
That wouldn't say so 'til he tried  
So he buckled right in with a bit of a grin on his face  
If he worried, he hid it  
And he tackled the thing that couldn't be done  
And he did it*

Paul encouraged others to follow in his persistent footsteps. When he was the Sunday School Superintendent, he occasionally spoke about the quality that he calls "stickability." He once challenged the congregation to make a commitment to attend church, promising harmonicas for everyone who did not miss a Sunday that year. Twelve out of 100 faithful people had perfect attendance and received their reward. Paul commemorated the event with a harmonica solo and taught the winners how to play their new instruments.

At age 58, Paul had a stroke that left him paralyzed on the left side, the side with the hand. Picture him with a hook on the right arm and an immobile, useless hand on the left. When his prosthesis is off between bedtime and his morning shower, he is virtually helpless.

Paul and Patty believe that if he had received appropriate medical care, he may not have had that first stroke, at least not that day. When Patty took Paul to the hospital, he could not move his arm or leg. Slowly his symptoms subsided and he was diagnosed with a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA). Although Patty told the nurses that he was still having symptoms, Paul was discharged the next morning without seeing a doctor. Paul had no health insurance at the time. They also put in a Heparin Lock, but did not give him any medication to help prevent further blood clots. A few years earlier when Paul had a TIA, he was hospitalized for several days as they ran numerous tests and made sure that he was stabilized; he had insurance at that time.

That fateful morning of April 7, 1988, Paul and Patty made the ten mile drive home, and soon after they arrived, he had a full-blown stroke. They turned around and went back to the hospital. This time, the damage was permanent. Paul spent three weeks in rehab where he learned to walk with a crutch secured to his right arm, the one with the hook. Later, he was fitted with a brace on his left foot to prevent foot drop. To walk, Paul must lean far to the right, twists his hips and swing his left leg forward. His weakness and unsteady gait make him prone to falls. Although Patty is very attentive and rarely leaves him alone, Paul has landed on what is left of his nose quite a few times.



**Paul and Patty on his 70th Birthday, May 14, 1999**

Paul has always lived by the “pick yourself up by the bootstraps” philosophy of life, but being paralyzed did take some of the lift from his wings. He was frustrated by his severe physical challenges; when he couldn’t do what he wanted to do, his anger erupted. He resented the fact that he had to rely so heavily on his wife and others, but he had no choice. Slowly, he accepted his limitations, and with determination, he adapted. He discovered new ways to express his boundless creativity. The terrace behind Paul and Patty’s home is an example of how he combined perseverance with ingenuity. With his tractor and large pair of tongs, Paul landscaped his back yard. He created a masterpiece of cascading terraces from old foundation rocks—one rock at a time, layer after layer, row after row.

Not even a stroke could keep Paul from doing what he loved, and with a little help and the right equipment, he was even able to hunt. Since he couldn’t close one eye to sight in his rifle, his daughter, Kit, a seamstress, fashioned an eye patch that Paul could flip up and down. His son-in-law, Glenn, setup a swivel hunting stool in a

clearing near a deer run on Paul's property. With his gun in the rack, Paul was able to pull the trigger with his hook. In position, he waited for a deer.

*I wasn't waiting very long when this big buck came up and I shot it. It stood right up on its hind feet, fell down and laid there. So I took my gun out of the rack, not remembering that I couldn't shoot without something to hold the gun. I stumbled down to the deer and when I got there he was just laying there. He turned his head, opened his eyes and looked at me. Then he jumped up and took off. I was helpless to shoot. That scared me. That one got away.*

Later that season Paul did get a deer. His only disappointment was that he hit it in the hind quarter and ruined a few good steaks.

You might think that Paul couldn't get into too much trouble after his stroke, especially with Patty keeping a close eye on him. But NO! Paul nearly froze to death while running errands one winter evening. On the way home he stopped to visit his daughter, Kit. A freezing rain had turned her road into a sheet of ice and Paul's car slid into a telephone pole about a quarter of a mile from her property line. By the time he made his way to Kit's front door, Paul was out of breath and chilled to the bone. He didn't have a coat on because he couldn't put it on by himself. As he staggered up the road, his pants slid down, exposing some very tender flesh to the brutal elements. With one paralyzed hand and a hook, he couldn't pull his pants up either! The fact that Paul was able to walk that far on ice without falling is a miracle. His heavenly protectors were no doubt walking with him that night as he used every ounce of energy and determination to get in out of the cold.

Although Paul was paralyzed, for years he was able to mow the 20 acres of grass on his property. And not surprisingly, he had more than one mishap on a tractor. The lake that Paul built on his property nearly became a watery grave on two occasions. The first time he accidentally backed into the lake when he was grading the bank. He got a little too close and his tractor rolled into the water. Picture Paul submerged up to his chest, eyes wide as saucers, "safely" secured by a seatbelt that he couldn't release with his hook. His friend, Ralph Porterfield, towed him out that time. Fortunately, it was a dry spell and the lake was a little lower than normal. Maybe Paul's guardian angels were behind the drought that summer.



**Paul hauling wood with his tractor**

A few years ago, Paul nearly went into the lake a second time when his mower tire got caught on the dock. It spun him around and down the bank. He had to hang on for dear life until his daughter, Melissa came to the rescue. She left her client in the middle of a haircut, got her father's old Leland tractor and hooked the mower to it with a chain. As Melissa started to pull him out, the tractor did a wheelie and almost flipped over. Paul guided her through the tricky process and Melissa was able to pull him to safety. Every time she sees the old Leland, she pats it and thanks it and her father's guardian angels for saving his life that day.

Once after mowing, Paul didn't return to the house as soon as he was expected. Patty went to the barn where he parked the tractor to make sure that he was okay. Paul had fallen while getting down from the tractor and landed on top of the gang mower. It took Patty a half an hour to get him off the tractor and back on his feet.

Paul can no longer drive a car or tractor, but he takes his golf cart up to Melissa's house nearly every afternoon for a cappuccino. Once a month she gives him a haircut while he sits in his cart sipping coffee.

Paul has had at least three more strokes, another heart attack and nearly died from pneumonia. Each medical incident was another narrow escape from death, and each episode stole a little more of his function. Now his "good" leg is weakened and his ability to move around is severely limited. Yet, Paul has never given up. When someone comes to visit, his eyes light up. It doesn't take much prodding to get him to launch into a tale of how he defied death or how he designed some gadget or gismo when the opportunity was presented. The fire in his belly still smolders but his voice is weaker and his creative expressions are limited to mental gymnastics and story telling.

Why is Paul still hanging on? Tenacity. He is just too stubborn to give up. Occasionally Paul's eyes glass over and, although his ailing body is present, his spirit seems to soar away. Perhaps he is flying around with those heavenly beings who have been his constant companions all these years.

Will St. Peter let Paul in the next time he crash lands at the Pearly Gates?

Only heaven knows.



**Paul receiving a draft of this book on Father's Day, June 18, 2006**

## **Epilogue – Eulogy** **Gettin’ There**

On Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 2008 Paul took his final flight and landed gently in the arms of God. This soft landing was a huge departure from his extreme life. He learned early on that if you weren’t hovering on the edge or living outside the box, you were taking up too much space and limiting your potential. Unless you tried, and maybe failed, you could never succeed.

Paul’s life was a circuitous flight, one filled with challenging loops, barrel rolls and bumpy landings. He spent many years testing the limits, ascending the thermals and teasing death. He mocked mortality, knowing that life is eternal. More times than we can recall, Paul buzzed the Pearly Gates, only to be waived off by the Celestial Control Tower. He didn’t mind when told to make yet another circle because he genuinely loved life.

No matter how limited he became physically or how small his world appeared, Paul embraced every moment. Less than two weeks before his passing, when the inevitable loomed overhead as large as the Spruce Goose, Paul was content to stay put. When asked if he was ready to be with Jesus, he replied, “I like it here!” That doesn’t mean he wasn’t ready to go, Paul just enjoyed living. Who wouldn’t savor all the attention and affection he received from his harem of loving, devoted caregivers—his wife, sister, daughters, and the Hospice staff!

He may not have been highly educated, but Paul knew more and accomplished more than most. And he didn’t hesitate to share what he mastered in the “school of hard knocks.” His humorous aphorisms rival those of Yogi Berra. We call Paul’s proverbs “Deeterisms.” Here are a few examples.

- *Go ahead and back up.* Paul did everything backward and upside down. When he told you to flip a rock, he wanted it to be rotated!
- *It’s the people you know and the books you read.* Of course, Paul didn’t read much, and when he did, he had to read backwards because he couldn’t turn pages with his hook! Believe it or not, his kids often flip through magazines backwards.

- *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.* Paul knew you needed the right products to create something special.

- *Keep a stiff upper lip.* Paul had no tolerance for self-pity.

Soon after Paul's first stroke, Kit was helping him to clear rock from a pipe that brought water into the pond. Paul stumbled down the bank of the creek to help and fell face-first into the water. Kit dragged him up on the bank, drove him to the house and washed the blood from his face. With a catch in her voice, she had to feed him a taste of his own medicine. "When you stop bleeding and quit feeling sorry for yourself, we've got work to do." That was the painful moment when Kit realized things would never be the same. She was no longer Paul's assistant, but would have to take the lead; their roles were forever reversed.

No matter how much damage he sustained or how much function he lost from his many strokes, Paul's sense of humor never wavered. Even in his final days, he would whisper a wisecrack or do something comical that had us in stitches.

About a month before he died, Hospice considered suspending Paul's care as they thought his condition was stable. A couple days before he was to be evaluated, Melissa was having coffee with him – something she did nearly every day. She said, "Dad, you know the Medical Director from Hospice is coming to evaluate you this weekend and they may stop your care. So you'll have to make sure you look really sick." Paul tipped his head to the side and stuck out his tongue like a dead deer. Melissa and Patty nearly fell of their chairs laughing. That night Paul had another stroke and Hospice continued his care as long as he was with us.

Paul loved to have a good time; he was the perfect partner for Patty who was more serious and had a strong work ethic. Paul made sure that his kids and every child in the neighborhood had fun, too. He provided the land, facilities and equipment for us to fly planes, sled ride, ice skate, deer hunt, play football, and just have good, clean fun. Victoria fondly recalls bundling up in snowmobile suits and boots, and riding through the woods and across the fields with Paul in an ATV, to track deer and chase a few scared rabbits. Paul showed everyone how to live more joyfully and how important it is to balance work and play. Cooperstown would not be such a wonderful place to live without the sled riding hill and the woods for hunting.

Paul's creativity and imagination were unlimited. He tapped into that higher realm where ideas flow direct from the Divine. He was truly inspired and inspired others to do more and do it better. Robin learned how to build houses while working with Paul and his crew. He remembers asking his father for feedback on his work. Paul usually said, "Gettin' there." Robin is now a master carpenter and cabinet maker. No doubt

he tried harder and became a perfectionist in his field because Paul encouraged him to achieve excellence. At the same time, Paul knew that life was not just about achieving exceptional results. He knew from experience that life is not about the destination or the outcome; it is about the journey.

Pamela recalls a similar Deeterism, “That’ll do.” Like Rob, she assumed Paul meant that she was not living up to her potential and renewed her determination to excel in her career and life work. Now she understands what Paul was truly saying. With a different inflection, she knows he meant it was fine. This shift in perception can help all of us to release unrealistic expectations and perfectionism to become more content doing our best in every moment.

Paul is probably most well known for his term, “Stickability.” It was his life motto, and kept him going after he lost his hand and after he became paralyzed. His favorite poem (see page 29) reflects this quality and helped him to live fully one day at a time.

No doubt “Stickability” also kept Patty going during the past 20+ years that she cared for Paul. She may have quoted “for better or for worse” as her reason she stood faithfully by his side, but everyone knows better. Her strength, endurance and determination are truly gifts of grace that sustained her and Paul all these years. What an amazing woman!

One creature almost got the best of Paul – a cardinal – and for this reason, one rested at his feet in his coffin. Paul and Patty had sun-blocking film on their front windows and when the birds saw their reflection, they assumed a rival had invaded their territory. They would fly threateningly at their image, over and over. Paul found the incessant beat of their beaks hitting the window to be very annoying. Nothing seemed to deter them. But just when it seemed the cardinal would get the best of Paul, he came up with a plan; they strung fishing line back and forth across the deck and the birds could not reach the window. Once again, Paul’s ingenuity overcame adversity. He taught by example that every flap of the wings is an opportunity to learn and grow.

To say the last year of Paul’s life was challenging, is putting it mildly. Fortunately, challenges bring great rewards and everything happens for a reason. Patty learned she had strength and stamina that exceeded her wildest imagination. She also learned to be a gracious receiver to balance her generous giving. Carol deepened her connection with her older brother as she sat with him while Patty ran errands. We all learned the power of patience, how to forgive, and how to let go.



Paul, no doubt, learned the most. He spent many hours deepening his connection with God and preparing for his final flight.

- Since he lost his short term memory, Paul learned how to live in the moment, how to be present.
- Since he could no longer see, he learned how to listen and the value of silence.
- Without the capacity to move on his own accord, Paul discovered the gift of stillness.
- As he surrendered everything that he was and did on this earthly plane to God, he was able to express his true loving essence. He learned to fly with blind faith and grace.

Paul was not just an occasional pilot and airplane enthusiast. He didn't just fly, but flew with attitude! Attitude, combined with power creates performance. And Paul certainly performed well throughout his life, no matter what obstacles he faced. No doubt when he finally got there and taxied through the Pearly Gates after a perfect landing, he heard the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."

We can picture Paul leading a squadron of guardian angels, watching out for us every moment of every day. When we hear or see a plane fly overhead, we will be reminded of his love for his family, his commitment to the church, and his dedication to creating a beautiful community.



**Paul with his Parents, Iva and Ike, November, 1939**

## Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Ed Hildebran, a friend of the family, for having the foresight to tape Paul's stories. Many of the stories that were recorded are included in this book *verbatim*. A CD of this tape is available.

Thanks to family and friends for sharing pictures and memories of your experiences with Paul.

Thanks to Rita Joyce for so eloquently describing her childhood memories in "Deeterville."

Thank you to Jim Gerali, Patty Deeter, and Roberta Moore for reviewing and editing the text.



**Patty and Paul on their 50th Anniversary, December 16, 2000, with their children,  
Robin, Melissa, Victoria, Pamela and Kathleen**

## Obituary

**Paul E Deeter** - (May 14, 1942 - November 27, 2008)

Paul E. Deeter, 79, of 2047 Donation Hill Road, Cooperstown, died at 10:51 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 27, 2008, at his residence. Born May 14, 1929, in Jackson Township, he was the son of the late Clarence O. Deeter and Iva M. Overmoyer.



Mr. Deeter was a self-employed builder and contractor for Maple Lane Development, often known as "Deeterville." He was a dedicated church member and loving father.

Mr. Deeter was a model airplane enthusiast who built an experimental aircraft which he piloted, and he also was an inventor with a number of patents, having built many cars, trucks, boats and recreation items.

He was married Dec. 16, 1950, to Patricia A. Dykins, who survives. In addition to his wife, Mr. Deeter is survived by five children, Kathleen "Kit" Martin and her husband, Glenn, of Meadville, Pamela Gerali and her husband, James, of Naples, Fla., Victoria Orr of Cooperstown, Melissa Incorvia of Cooperstown and Robin Deeter of Hobe Sound, Fla.; 13 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; and a sister, Carol Martin and her husband, Don, of Cooperstown.

Mr. Deeter was preceded in death by his parents. Friends may call from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. Monday at the Robert W. Gardinier Funeral Home in Franklin.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday in the Cooperstown Evangelistic Tabernacle with the Rev. Mark Fultz of the church officiating. Interment will be in Cooperstown Cemetery. Memorials may be made to Cooperstown Evangelistic Tabernacle, the Cooperstown Public Library or the VNA Hospice of Venango County.

