

Emmet O'Beirne Biography



Emmet O'Berne, - Class of 1925
- b. March 21, 1908 - d. July 17., 1990 From the EHS Yearbook, the Maroon: Took a General Course of study, "*A gentle beast, and of good conscience*" Spanish Club.

He was born in New Orleans. LA, but graduated along with his 4-year older brother (Frank) from Elgin High school.

He commanded the **USS YORKTOWN** and was the exec. officer of the heavy cruiser **USS SAN FRANCISCO** (received 17 battle stars, 2nd most) when it attacked a Japanese battleship in the battle off Savo Island 12-13 November, 1942 in the Solomons & was wounded in that action. He was the only surviving member of Admiral Dan Callaghan's staff on board the cruiser USS San Francisco during the Second Naval Battle of Guadalcanal, 14 November, 1942. A direct hit from a Japanese battleship on the cruiser's bridge killed the admiral and all his staff except O'Beirne. He was awarded the Navy (the Navy's third highest award for combat heroism and other distinguished services) cross for that battle in the Savo Islands. He was also awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the Government of the United States as Executive Officer of the **U.S.S. SANGAMON (CVE-26)**, in the Southwest Pacific area, from 19 October 1944 to 3 November 1944.

Emmet O'Beirne graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Class of 1930. He retired as a U.S. Navy Rear Admiral.

His obituary reads as follows:

Retired Rear Admiral O'Beirne dies at 82

Retired Navy Rear Adm. Emmet O'Beirne, a Coronado, CA resident for 18 years, died July 17, 1990 at the Coronado Convalescent Hospital. He was 82. O'Beirne, was born in New Orleans, LA, was the son of Edward John O'Beirne and his second wife, Mildred Lee (Harper) O'Beirne. O'Beirne parents moved to Elgin, IL when he was an infant. It was there he attended public schools and completed his high school in 1925 at Elgin High School. After a year at Severn School, a prep school in Maryland, O'Beirne entered the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. At Annapolis, he was on both the swimming and water polo teams. During his first class year, he was captain of the varsity water polo team and a midshipman company commander. Upon graduation from Annapolis in 1939, O'Beirne was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy. He completed flight training at Pensacola, Fla. and became a naval aviator in 1933. He then served in several aircraft squadrons and aircraft carriers, attended the Naval Postgraduate School and spent a graduate year at MIT where he earned a master's ; degree in aeronautical engineering. O'Beirne was executive officer ; of Patrol Squadron 21 based at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese

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attacked in 1941. A few months later, he flew to ; Australia with the squadron, but soon after his arrival, he was assigned as an aviation officer on the staff of Rear Adm. Callaghan, a cruise division commander, whose flagship was the **USS San Francisco**. During the battle of Guadalcanal, that cruiser came under heavy Japanese gunfire. Every person on the flag bridge and the admiral were killed except for O'Beirne. After a long hospitalization with severe wounds, O'Beirne returned to the Western Pacific as executive officer of the aircraft carrier USS Sangamon only to have it burned and almost sunk as the result of a Japanese kamikaze aircraft attack. After World War II, O'Beirne participated in the Korean War as commanding officer of another aircraft carrier, **USS Bairoko**, later, he commanded still another carrier, **USS Yorktown** and the Naval Air Station Pensacola. After promotion to rear admiral, he commanded Carrier Division 20 and the Field Command, Defense Atomic Support Agency in Albuquerque, New Mexico. On Dec. 1, 1964, he retired from active duty as a rear admiral. During his wartime service, O'Beirne received the Navy Cross, two Legion of Merits, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation and the World War II Korean and U.N. service medals plus numerous letters of commendation and Pacific campaign ribbons. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Janet O'Beirne, three children, William, Barton and Sharon, six grandchildren, five great grandchildren and a brother, Vice Adm. Frank O'Beirne of Arlington, Va. and a sister, Mildred Kueltnr of Oshkosh, Wis. Memorial services will be held Aug. 3 at 11 a.m. at Christ Episcopal Church in Coronado.

He is buried in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego, CA.



Awarded the following medals (left to right) - Navy Cross, 2 Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, WWII Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, and the United Nations Korea Medal