

Frank O'Beirne Biography



Frank O'Beirne - Class of 1921 - (1903 -Oct. 19, 1998) is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Vice Admiral Francis (Frank) O'Beirne (b. 1903), son of Edward, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, in 1926 and received his master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the University of Michigan. He served on the battleship USS Nevada and the aircraft carrier USS Lexington where he decided to become a Navy flier. He won his gold wings at the NAS Pensacola, Florida, in 1929, and was assigned to Fighting Squadron One based at San Diego, California. There he practiced three-plane aerobatics. A consequence was that he was one of a three-plane Army-Navy stunting team led by Colonel Charles Lindbergh that demonstrated formation aerobatics at the 1929 National Air Races, Cleveland, Ohio. He became a flight instructor at NAS Pensacola, Florida, then attended the Naval Postgraduate School at Annapolis, and in 1935 obtained his MS degree in aeronautical

engineering from the University of Michigan. Over the next three years he served successively on the battleships USS West Virginia and USS California as a naval aviator and then in the pre-commissioning crew of the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise. He flew fighters, dive bombers, observation float planes and flying boats during his active flying career. Frank then became a staff engineering officer at Coronado, California. In 1940 he was transferred to NAS Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as commanding officer of VP-22 which flew PBY (Catalina) flying boats. In late summer of 1941 he took two aircraft of his squadron on the first US Navy flight from Pearl Harbor to Australia and New Guinea. The purpose was to carry Army Air Force pilots to select sites for B-17 bomber bases in the little-known areas of the Dutch East Indies in the event of war with the Japanese, which in fact began about three months later. Frank's second in command on this mission was Lieut. Thomas Moorer who much later became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor destroyed six of the squadron's aircraft by bombing and strafing and seriously damaged the remainder. In less than a month the squadron was re-equipped with new aircraft from California and Frank took it to Darwin, Australia, and then to Java where it joined the aircraft of the Asiatic Fleet already there and three seaplane tenders. They moved about as the Japanese advanced, operating out of various small harbors in the Java/Celebes regions. After eleven of his twelve PBY's had been destroyed in combat or combat-related accidents, the lone survivor was able to reach Perth, Australia, in March 1942 where the squadron was disestablished. After a few months commanding a seaplane tender, the USS Childs, in the Indian Ocean, Frank became Naval Intelligence Officer on the staff of General Douglas MacArthur, at Brisbane. He was transferred to Washington in 1943 to become a member of the Joint War Plans Committee that planned the final assaults on Japan. In command of the escort carrier USS Breton, he helped support the preparations of Admirals Halsey and Spruance for those assaults before the atomic bombs eliminated the need for them. Between the end of World War II and his retirement in 1963 Frank, by then an Admiral, had some 14 assignments. Some were administrative. For two years he was Assistant Naval Attaché in London, then a Member of the Continental U.S. Defense Planning Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which included the Canada-U.S. Defense Planning Committee. As Director of Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff he was responsible for the planning and direction of joint exercises and operations and on occasion briefed the President of the United States concerning them. As Commander of Field Operations of the Armed Forces Special

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Weapons Project he was responsible for the accountability, storage, maintenance, shipment, and military testing of all U.S. nuclear weapons and the training of all military personnel in the handling of them...”

His military honors included the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star with Combat V and the Air Medal.