

Cecil Austen “Bo” Bolam

- John Duncan

Branch: Navy

Rank: Captain

Years of Service: 1932 - 1963

Locations of Service: World War II



Cecil Austen Bolam was Brewster’s first Eagle Scout. He rose through the ranks to command Brewster’s Troop One as their Senior Patrol Leader in 1930. He spent the summer before his senior year at the original Camp Read on Long-Pond in Mahopac, serving on legendary Scoutleader “Doc” Sowerby’s Staff.

Upon graduation from Brewster High School in 1932, he entered the ranks of the US Navy as Seaman Apprentice. Two year later, he secured an appointment as Midshipman to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. This 185 pound Cross Country and Track ace’s exploits were such that he is still listed on Navy’s All- Time Cross Country letterman roster.

Upon graduation and commissioning in 1938, Ensign Bolan began his career as a naval officer. In 1941, he qualified as a “lighter-than-air” dirigible pilot. His Combat career during World War II began by protecting the East Coast and North Atlantic on anti-sub patrols. He was then transferred to the Pacific serving as Gunnery Officer on the Light Cruiser Cleveland. During his tenure on the Cleveland, the ship supported numerous invasions, earning a Navy Unit Citation and 13 Battle Stars. In 1952, at the age of thirty-eight, he entered flight school at Pensacola FL, qualifying as a carrier based JET Pilot (during his career he logged 4000 hours as a pilot-700 at the controls of a Jet). Captain Bolam’s last two commands were the seaplane tender Currituck followed by command of the aircraft carrier Lake Champlain. The Champlain is well known as the recovery ship for the First manned Space Flight “Freedom 7”. She also participated in the blockade of Cuba and was the primary recovery ship for the “Gemini 5” Space Mission. Following duty on the staff of the Naval War College, Captain Bolam retired in 1963 due to ill health. Upon his death in 1966, he was buried with full military honors at Arlington Cemetery.

This Brewster Native, always proud of having come from the “Hub of the Harlem Valley,” left a legacy from Tenderfoot to Eagle Scout-Seaman Apprentice to Midshipmen-Ensign to Aircraft Carrier Captain- Dirigible to Jet Pilot.

As quoted in his Annapolis yearbook, “Bo” Bolam has given “his Podunk what podunks ask of their native sons.” He was a shining example of Brewster Determination and Pride.

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