

COMMANDER PRESTON R. BELCHER  
UNITED STATES NAVY

Preston Randolph Belcher was born in Parkersburg, West Virginia, on May 24, 1910, son of Colton G. and Mabel (Rolfe) Belcher. He attended Blue Island (Illinois) High School and the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School, prior to his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, from the State of Illinois in 1929. He resigned on April 13, 1931 and entered Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, which he attended for one semester.

In 1932 he was hired by the West Chicago (Illinois) Park Board as a Junior Engineer, and for two years, 1933-1935, was employed by the Century of Progress, Chicago, Illinois. He next had a position with the Equitable Life Insurance Society, which he held until November 1935, when he was appointed an Aviation Cadet in the U. S. Naval Reserve. He was commissioned Ensign, USNR, on July 24, 1939 and subsequently progressed in rank to that of Commander to date from November 1, 1945. He transferred from the Naval Reserve to the U. S. Navy on July 18, 1947.

Upon receiving his appointment in 1935, he reported for flight training at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Florida designated Naval Aviator on January 14, 1937, he joined the USS CHESTER to serve with Scouting Squadron ONE HUNDRED EIGHT (later redesignated Cruiser Scouting Squadron FIVE), from March 1937 until January 17, 1940, when he was relieved of all active duty. He was Program Director in the Educational Department and a pilot at Douglass Aircraft Corporation until April 1941, when he was ordered to return to active Naval Service.


For a year he was a Flight Instructor at the Naval Air Reserve Base, Long Beach, California, and in April 1942 joined Air Transport Squadron TWO at the Naval Air Station, Alameda, California. In April 1943 he transferred to Air Transport Squadron FOUR based at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Terminal Island, California, where he remained until August 1946, and in November reported as operations Officer on the staff of Commander Naval Air Transport Service, Oakland, California.

During the period November 1946 until June 1947 he was Administrator for the Naval Air Reserve Training Program, Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., after which he served as Assistant Chief Staff Officer on the staff of Commander Naval Air Transport Service, Atlantic Wing. He had instruction at the Naval School, Naval Justice, Naval Station, Port Hueneme, California. Between January and November 1950 he was a student at the General Line School, Monterey, California, followed by an assignment afloat as Executive Officer of the USS DUXBURY BAY.



Detached from the DUXBURY BAY in September 1952, he reported the next month for instruction at the Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. He remained there for duty on the staff from November 1952 until September 1954, when he became Commanding Officer of the U. S. Naval Air Facility, Naha, Okinawa. In July 1956 he was ordered to duty in the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department, Washington, D. C.

Commander Belcher has the American Defense Service Medal, Fleet Clasp; the American Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; and the National Defense Service Medal.



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