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Walter L. Robertson, 85: World War II veteran received the French Legion of Honor

By [Rick Badie](#)

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On Thursday, 13 World War II veterans from Alabama and Georgia received France's highest honor for their roles in the liberation of that country from Nazi occupation.

Atlanta native Walter L. Robertson was one of the recipients of the French Legion of Honor. He served on the USS O'Brien, a destroyer that participated in shore bombardment during the invasion of Normandy. He cherished his service in the Navy, his role and what he did for his country. He told everyone he came across about the honor.

"That whole [Legion of Honor] process takes a while, and when he found out he was going to get the medal, he was so elated," said Michael Robertson, a son from Atlanta. "I think he was just tired, so when he had his day on Thursday, he said, 'Alright, I'm good.' "

On Saturday, Walter L. Robertson died at his home in Tucker. He was 85. A memorial service will be held at noon Wednesday in the sanctuary of Decatur's Briarlake Baptist Church. The veteran's remains will be buried at sea, a tradition for sailors. Southcare Cremation Society and Memorial Centers in Alpharetta handled arrangements.

Mr. Robertson enlisted in the Navy after he graduated from Fulton High School. He served in the European and Pacific theaters and was part of the crew that shelled the French shore on D-Day. The USS O'Brien was twice hit by kamikaze firepower; the second one stripped Mr. Robertson of his fatigues and blew him into the ocean.

"Daddy didn't talk about Normandy for a long time," said a daughter, Wanda Robertson of Atlanta. "He always said that when he went into the ocean, the sea was red."

After the war, Mr. Robertson returned home and married Betty Perry Robertson, who became his wife of 63 years. He joined his father as a machinist with Southern Railroad. The late George Robertson was chief machinist at the Inman yard.

The sailor worked for Southern Railroad for several years, then opened two service stations. He later worked for E.K. Williams as an accounting counselor before starting his own firm, Walt Robertson & Son, now called Robertson Financial Group in Tucker. He worked right up to his demise.

"He was a true patriot and a perfect example of a godly, loving father," his son said.

Last week, the French Legion of Honor was presented to Mr. Robertson and the other veterans during a ceremony in Buckhead. Pascal Le Deunff, France's consul general in Atlanta, addressed each veteran individually and gave

details of their service. Then he pinned medals on their chests, according to an online article at www.airforcetimes.com.

"We will never be able to give enough praise for the heroism of those who fought for the liberation of France and Europe," he said. "You are, all of you, true heroes. You were there in France when hope began to disappear, but you never lost hope."

Additional survivors include his wife, Betty Perry Robertson of Tucker; brother and World War II veteran Clayton Robertson of Atlanta; and one grandchild.

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