

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE



## The Story of a Cryptologic Hero CTM3 Matthew J. O'Bryant, USN

*Duty is not an uncommon thing, gentlemen. Men are performing it in the ordinary walks of life all around us all the time, and they are making great sacrifices to perform it. What gives men like these peculiar distinction is not merely that they did their duty, but that their duty had nothing to do with them or their own personal and peculiar interests. They did not give their lives for themselves. They gave their lives for us, because we called upon them as a Nation to perform an unexpected duty. That is the way in which men grow distinguished, and that is the only way, by serving somebody else than themselves.*

*President Woodrow Wilson at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, May 11, 1914*

From its inception, the United States Navy has been tasked by its leaders to project power and show the flag beyond our nation's shores. In order to accomplish this task, throughout time, the Navy has utilized a wide range of ships, aircraft, and weapons to guard the sea lanes, engage aggressors, and protect our nation's vital interests.

But while the ships and equipment of the Sea Service are critical to the mission, in the end, the success of the U.S. Navy has been and always will be dependent on the dedicated men and women who have pledged their lives and fortunes to protecting freedom, both on land and on the high seas. CTM3 Matthew J. O'Bryant was just such a person.

Matthew J. O'Bryant was born on the 10th of May 1986 and raised in Theodore, Alabama, near the port city of Mobile. He attended the local high school where he joined the Junior ROTC and worked a variety of part-time jobs to help save money for college. After graduation he began to build a life for himself and his high school sweetheart, Bridget. He would subsequently enroll in the Art Institute of Atlanta, and he and Bridget would eventually be married in July of 2006.

In March of 2007, he enlisted in the Navy to learn new skills and pay off his student loans. In doing so, Matthew joined his brother and two cousins serving in the largest of America's Sea Service. After bootcamp and initial technical training, he was assigned to Navy Information Operations Command Maryland at Fort Meade, Maryland. From the time he enlisted until the moment that he made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of his country, Petty Officer O'Bryant was a proud and dedicated member of the United States Navy. CAPT Richard Bodziak, NIOC Maryland's Commanding Officer noted that "He was exactly the kind of Sailor we want in the Navy."





While he was a skilled Sailor, Matthew was most adept at the installation, configuration, diagnosis, and repair of cryptologic information systems. As the “Shield of the Republic,” the Navy must develop and utilize a wide range of state of the art technologies to protect our nation. Matthew’s efforts as a cryptologic technician not only enabled his fellow cryptologists to gain knowledge and forewarning of a wide variety of threats but also gave them the ability to protect the Navy’s own critical information. During his time in this vital field, Matthew developed a reputation for innovation, creativity, and dedication in his work.

For over two centuries young Americans have joined the Navy to gain experience and increase their knowledge of the greater world. In peacetime, military cryptologists routinely perform their vital work in safe, secure surroundings. However, in times of war and armed conflict, cryptologists, and those who support their efforts, must carry out their work on the front lines. In such times, these brave men and women must, to quote John Paul Jones, “go in harm’s way” to perform their duties. It was in the performance of these critical duties that Petty Officer O’Bryant lost his life.



Matthew O’Bryant, in his day and time, accomplished many things. But he will be remembered most for his devotion to his family and his service to the nation. Because of his dedication and sacrifice, both the United States Navy and the American nation will continue to be, as Harry S. Truman once noted, “invincible weapons of liberty.”

*We are expected to put the utmost energy of every power that we have into the service of our fellow-men, never sparing ourselves, not condescending to think of what is going to happen to ourselves, but ready, if need be, to go to the utter length of complete self-sacrifice.*

*Woodrow Wilson*



**CTM3 Matthew J. O’Bryant**  
**10 May 1986 - 20 September 2008**



Photos courtesy of the O’Bryant family

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