

## John Odell Talbott, Jr.

Born: October 13, 1923  
Hometown: Bellefonte, PA  
Class: 1944  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: June 1, 1943 / 36-53N, 76W  
Date / Place of burial: June 1, 1943 / Lost at Sea –  
36-53N, 76W  
Age: 19



John O. Talbott signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the *SS John Morgan* on May 19, 1943 at Philadelphia, PA, a few days after the ship was delivered from its builder, Bethlehem-Fairfield Shipyard in Baltimore, MD. He was joined by Cadet-Midshipman Benjamin H. Wilkinson who signed on as Engine Cadet. After loading a cargo of 5,000 tons of high explosives bound for the Persian Gulf the ship, with a crew of forty-one plus twenty-eight Armed Guard Sailors, sailed for Hampton Roads to join its convoy.

At about 0400, on June 1, 1943 the *John Morgan* was about 20 miles off Cape Henry maneuvering with other ships to form up into their assigned positions in the convoy. As part of the maneuvering, the tanker *SS Montana* was crossing the *John Morgan's* bow from starboard to port, apparently intending to pass port-to-port. According to survivors, during the maneuver the *John Morgan* veered to the left, hitting the *Montana* on the port bow. The *Montana's* petroleum cargo burst into flames and quickly spread to the *John Morgan*. Within minutes the fire detonated the *SS John Morgan's* cargo of explosives, disintegrating the ship and killing all but three of the men aboard, including Cadet-Midshipmen John Talbott and Benjamin Wilkinson.

Cadet-Midshipman John O. Talbott was posthumously awarded the Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

John O. "Jack" Talbott was the only son and youngest child of John O. Talbott, Sr. and Margaret C. Talbott. Jack's big sister Virginia, was ten years older. According to the 1930 Census, John, Sr. was an accountant for a railroad. In 1933 the family moved to Bellefonte, PA when John Sr. was offered a position with the Bellefonte Central Railway, which ran between Bellefonte and State College, PA. Jack attended High School in Bellefonte and apparently planned to attend nearby Pennsylvania State College before the outbreak of World War II changed his direction to Kings Point.