

Ward James O'Brien



Colonel Ward J. O'Brien, USA (Ret.), of Sterling, VA, and formerly of Warrenton, VA, passed away on 16 November 2025 at INOVA Loudoun Medical Center in Lansdowne, VA, of a massive stroke. He was 88 years old.

Ward was born in Aurora, IL, on 4 September 1937 to Attorney William C. O'Brien and Dorothy Ward O'Brien. He graduated from Marmion Military Academy (1955), the U.S. Naval Academy (Class of 1960) and American University (1993). He spent 28 years in the Navy, achieving the rank of captain, then transferred to the Army to fly helicopters, retiring in 1997. He was a captain for United Airlines, and also produced a collection of 83 interview videos, which are archived in the Library of Congress called "American Valor," that honors U.S. veterans and their military history.

Survivors include his wife of 63 years, the former Barbara Ellen Rae, of Needham, MA; five children, Patricia O'Brien, Alicia O'Brien, Andrea Ingebretsen, William O'Brien and Kimberly O'Brien; four grandchildren, Rachel, Brian, Grace and Ari; a great grandson, Ethan; and his sister, Alberta "Betts" Clippinger of Nashville, TN.

March-April 2026 Shipmate