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Former Alabama Governor John Patterson dies at 99



John Patterson served as Alabama attorney general from 1955 to 1959, and governor of Alabama from 1959 to 1963. ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Brian Lyman Montgomery Advertiser | USA TODAY NETWORK

John Patterson, whose eight years at the summit of power in Alabama began with resistance to organized crime and ended with battles against the Civil Rights Movement, died on Friday evening. He was 99. • Patterson's wife, Tina Patterson, confirmed his death on Saturday afternoon. A list of survivors was not immediately available.

Launched into public life by personal tragedy, Patterson made a rapid ascent in Alabama politics after his father Albert was assassinated in 1954 because of his anti-gambling campaigning. Having never stood for office before, John Patterson became attorney general at 33 and governor at 37. Handsome, opportunistic and wily, Patterson proved an effective politician. He fought loan sharking in the state, and secured funding for schools and roads.

Much of Patterson's success came from playing to white Alabama's worst racial attitudes. At the height of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956, Patterson secured an injunction against the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Alabama, a move that led to a years-long

court fight and crippled the organization in the state.

Two years later, as a candidate for governor, Patterson solicited the help of a Klansman to win the Democratic nomination for governor over George Wallace. As the state's chief executive, Patterson continued his attacks on civil rights activists, expelling students from Alabama State University for engaging in a sit-in and assisting in the prosecution of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. on trumped-up tax charges.

In 1961, as the Freedom Riders made their way through the state, Patterson denounced the activists as "rabble-rousers" and at one point refused to guarantee their safety. As white mobs beat the peaceful protestors in two of Alabama's biggest cities, Patterson re-

fused to take calls from President John F. Kennedy seeking a resolution to the violence.

"We don't need your marshals," he told a representative of the Kennedy administration in front of several reporters. "We don't want them, and we didn't ask for them. And still the federal government sends them here to help put down a disturbance which it helped create."

King later condemned Patterson's rhetoric, saying it encouraged the rioters.

"Ultimate responsibility since the Freedom Riders first entered Alabama must be placed at the doorstep of the governor of the state," he said. "His

See PATTERSON, Page 2A

Killed on D-Day, buried in Normandy

Strangers spent years searching for man's kin

Brian Broom Mississippi Clarion Ledger
USA TODAY NETWORK

He was a country boy who was raised in rural Covich County. At the age of 22, he was killed on Utah Beach on D-Day — June 6, 1944.

For a combined 27 years, two men who have never met — one from Texas and the other from Alabama — searched for living relatives of Pfc. Elbert M. Beasley Jr. after coming across his grave marker in Normandy, France.


"I was awed, I really was," said Sherry Dennis of Columbia, Miss., Beasley's half-sister, when she recently learned of the second search. "I was so overwhelmed. I don't know how to describe it. My son said, 'Mother, God doesn't want that boy to be forgotten.'"

Dennis wasn't quite 2 months old when her brother died, so her own memories of him are tied to a small black-and-white photograph.

See D-DAY, Page 4A

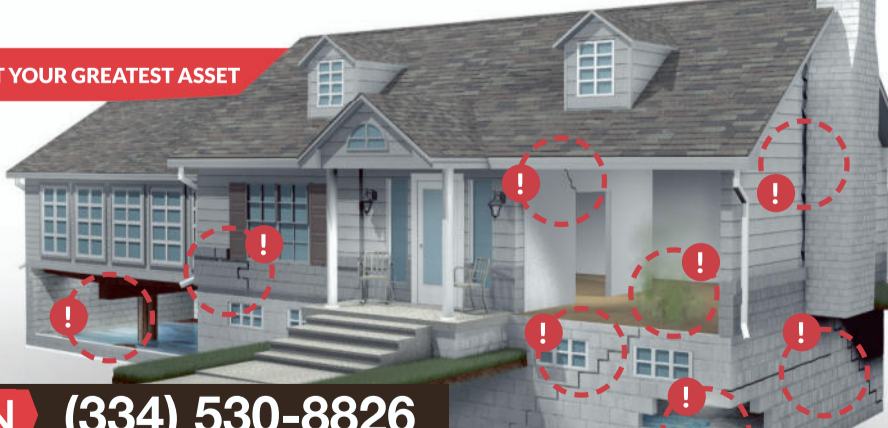


Tom Borcher, of Huntsville, holds a photo of Mississippi soldier Pfc. Elbert M. Beasley Jr.'s grave. Beasley was killed on D-Day in France. Borcher carried the photo to the dedication ceremony of the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C., in 2014 to represent all U.S. soldiers killed in the Normandy landing on June 6, 1944. PROVIDED



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Obituary

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Weather

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Mostly cloudy, t-storm.
Forecast, 8C

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