



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Posthumously Honors World War II Veteran John Francis Nolan

CATHARINE YOUNG August 24, 2016

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SALAMANCA – World War II veteran Private John Francis Nolan, U.S. Army, was posthumously honored for his distinguished service to our nation.

During a ceremony at the family's home, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I – 57th District) presented Private Nolan's wife, Grace, daughter, Elizabeth, son, Charlie, and daughter-in-law,

Sherry, with his service ribbons and medals, in recognition of his wartime service.

“World War II was a turning point in our world’s history. Private Nolan, and the many other members of the Greatest Generation, gave everything to save the globe from tyranny. It is humbling to reflect upon his sacrifice, and to pay tribute by providing his family with these symbols of our nation’s appreciation,” said Senator Young.

“Private Nolan and all our veterans defend the values and beliefs we hold most dear, and they selflessly offer themselves out of love and loyalty to America. Private Nolan’s dedication to his community and his passion for service extended beyond his duties as a member of the U.S. Army, driving his professional career after his military service had ended. That passion shaped his whole life’s story and makes him a true hero,” Senator Young continued.

Elizabeth Young, Private Nolan’s daughter, said, “We would try to ask my father about what he did during the war, but he never wanted to share too many details. Regrettably, we never knew many of his heroic deeds. He was a tireless and dedicated father, and it is wonderful to have his service medals as a reminder of all that he accomplished.”

A 1941 graduate of Salamanca High School, at the age of 20, John F. Nolan was inducted into the U.S. Army on October 13, 1942. He reported for active duty fourteen days later.

After completing Chemical Warfare School at Camp Siebert, Alabama, Private Nolan was assigned to the U.S. Army Air Force as a ground crew member.

On March 23, 1944, Private Nolan shipped overseas to begin serving in the European Theater. Deployed to England with 9th Air Force, Private Nolan volunteered to transfer to the infantry and was assigned as a Chemical Warfare Man with the 78th Chemical Signal Company of Gen. George Patton’s Third Army, a mission that was critical to the success of

allied forces advancing in the European Theatre.

Originally intended to camouflage allied ship ports from enemy bombers, Chemical Signal Companies units used M-1 and M-2 chemical smoke generators to lay thick white clouds of artificial fog on the battlefield as smoke screens to protect advancing American military forces.

The 78th Chemical Signal Company was one of 12 similar units which employed smoke generators against enemy aircraft and ground forces as concealment during the landing on Omaha and Utah beaches, as well as during other tactical operations. Later in the war, they were again used to protect soldiers crossing the Roer River, following the Battle of the Bulge.

After three years and 23 days of active duty service, Private Nolan was demobilized at Fort Dix, New Jersey, on December 1, 1945. Private Nolan spent a total of one year, eight months and five days overseas engaged in European Theater combat operations.

Returning to Salamanca, he worked on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

He eventually took a position as a Water Treatment Technician and Truck Driver with the City of Salamanca Board of Public Utilities, where he retired after 23 years. During his time with the City of Salamanca, he also served as a volunteer Salamanca District Hospital ambulance driver for two decades, and as an usher for the Salamanca Theater.

A longtime volunteer for the Cattaraugus Community Action Soup Kitchen, Mr. Nolan had been recognized as the Agency's Volunteer of the Year.

He married Irish immigrant Grace O'Donnell in 1952, who survives. The couple had nine children, Bridget, John, Elizabeth, Charles, Mary, Teresa, Michael, Daniel, and Kevin, who died at birth, and numerous grandchildren.

Private Nolan died on November 10, 2001.

Recognizing Private Nolan's tremendous service, his family was presented with the Good Conduct Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four Bronze Service Star Devices, the World War II Victory Medal, an Honorable Service Lapel Button, and the New York State Medal For Merit. The family was also presented with the Cold War Commemorative Medal.