

# THEY SERVED IN SILENCE



## The Sacrifice of a Cryptologic Hero SGT Joseph M. Nolan, USA

Joseph Michael Nolan was born into an Irish Catholic family in Waterbury, Connecticut. According to his family, from his earliest days, young Joe (or Joey, as they called him) had exhibited an insatiable thirst to engage and influence the world around him. To those who knew him, there was little doubt that he was insightful and intelligent beyond his years. But scholarly pursuits were only a part of young Joe Nolan's life. Despite his less than massive frame, Joe also spent a great deal of time playing defensive tackle for the Wolcott High School Eagles near his hometown.

The fall of 1995 found him at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. St. Joe's is a Jesuit institution that revels in the idea that those with great gifts have an obligation to live their lives not only for themselves, but also for the "greater glory of God." Many expected Joe to follow in the footsteps of many of his fellow classmates by pursuing a career in the civilian world, but he had other ideas. Although educated in the Jesuit tradition, he was also part of another legacy – that of service to his country in time of war. Joe's great-grandfather had served in WWI, his grandfather had served in the Navy during WWII, and his father was a Marine in Vietnam. In 1999, Joe joined the long line of Nolans who had answered the call to the colors when he enlisted in the United States Army. His interest in, and aptitude for, foreign languages would lead to his being chosen to attend a highly selective, 63-week course in Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California.

He would finish fourth in a class of eighteen. His training at Monterey began in the early summer of 2001. By late fall, the world had changed forever for Joe Nolan and for America.

Joe was assigned to the 312th Intelligence Battalion of the 1st Cavalry Division. The fall of 2003 found him in Baghdad. In early November 2004, he was sent to Fallujah to provide critical-language and cryptologic support to coalition troops in the area. Cryptologists must be versatile and skilled in the areas of language, technology, and mathematics. In time of war, these skills must be made available to those closest to the battle's fray. SGT Nolan





excelled in this kind of environment. Sometimes he was a translator. On other occasions, he was involved in moving critical information to those in harm's way. But in whatever capacity he served, his work was crucial in helping to save the lives of soldiers and civilians alike.

Life in the military is one of constant service and sacrifice.

Sometimes those who wear the uniform of our nation are called upon not only to endure hardship, but also to make the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom. On 18 November 2004,

SGT Nolan lost his life when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle. Joe

Nolan died never knowing that his sacrifice, and the sacrifices of thousands like him, had

brought the possibility of freedom and liberty to a land that had known torture and fear for decades.

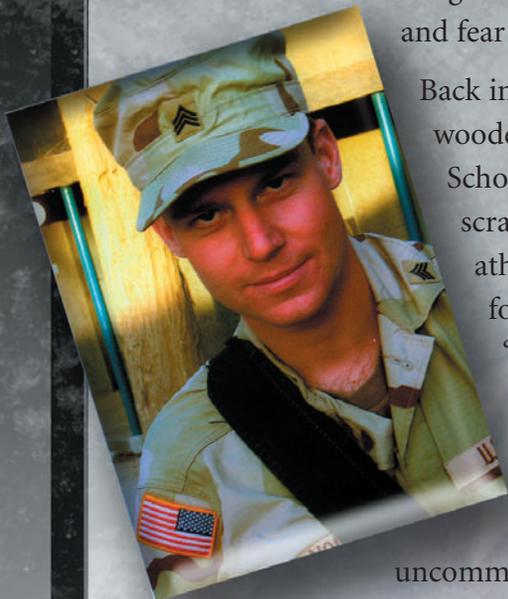
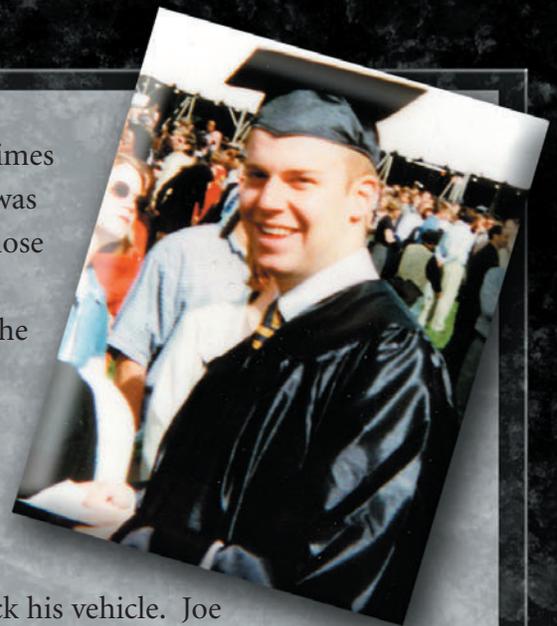
Back in Connecticut, the *Waterbury Republican-American* reported that a wooden placard greeted cars pulling into the parking lot at Wolcott High School for the annual Thanksgiving morning football game. The hastily scrawled message simply said: *Game Canceled*. That morning, Wolcott's athletic director and head football coach, Joe Monroe, remembered his former player as someone who really just wanted to be part of the team.

"He wasn't a standout. He wasn't a name or a face that a lot of people would remember, but he was the kind of kid who would do absolutely anything you asked him to do." Coach Monroe's words were meant to honor the late SGT Nolan, but in a larger sense, he was also describing the uncanny ability of common Americans to overcome

uncommon challenges no matter what the cost. Let us hope that as our nation

embarks on yet another long twilight struggle, we will always have Americans such as

Joseph Michael Nolan to help us preserve freedom and liberty for generations to come.



*Sergeant Joseph Michael Nolan*

*United States Army*

*10 March 1977 - 18 November 2004*

Photos courtesy of the Nolan Family

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