

3D SON MISSING, PARENTS LEARN; ALL SINCE D-DAY

First It Was the Nilands' Eldest Boy, Edward; Then Their Second, Preston—and Now Robert

"The secretary of war desires me to express his deep regret that your son . . . has been reported missing in action . . ."

Three times within the past month that telegram was delivered to Mr. and Mrs. Michael I. Niland of 145 West Elmwood Park, Tonawanda.

First, on the afternoon of June 6, D-Day, they received the telegram with the name of their eldest boy, Tech. Sgt. Edward F., 31, radio operator and gunner in the Air Force. It reported he had been missing since May 20 in the Burma campaign. Just that D-Day morning Mrs. Niland thought happily that at least one of her sons was out of range of the invasion holocaust, knowing that the other three who had been waiting impatiently in England were at that very moment "taking a crack at the Germans."

Youngest Boy Safe

Then, on June 21, the telegram bore the news that Preston T., 29, a lieutenant in the Infantry's amphibious forces, had been missing in France since June 7.

On Thursday of this week, Mrs. Niland, with tear-filled eyes, saw the words "Robert J., 25, a sergeant in the paratroops . . . missing since D-Day in the Battle of France."

But fears for her youngest, Frederick W., 24, also a sergeant in the paratroops, were dispelled when she received a letter from him that same afternoon telling her that "Dad's Spanish-American War stories will have to take a back seat when I get home." She smiled; at least he was safe.

The four soldiers have two sisters, Miss Clarissa M. Niland of Tonawanda and Mrs. Lee J. Hartman, who is in Florida with her husband, a pharmacist's mate in the Navy.

"Look at the Sullivans"

"My boys were always good friends," Mrs. Niland remarked this morning. "They were very rarely separated."

"No, they didn't enter the same branch of the service," she explained. "I wouldn't approve of that idea—why, look at the Sullivans . . ."

And thinking of those five Navy boys who lost their lives when their cruiser was sunk, she was able to overlook the Nilands for a moment.

Mrs. Niland's boys have been in the Army a long time. Preston and Bob, who had been in the South Pacific and Italian campaigns, respectively, were in before Pearl Harbor and the other two went in shortly afterward.

Tonawanda High Graduates

All the boys had gone to Canisius College after being graduated from Tonawanda High School, except Preston, who attended the University of Buffalo.

Just last December, Preston, or Pete, as the family called him, became engaged to Dorothy Frey of Youngstown, O. Two years before Bob had asked Veronica Kelly, a Tonawanda girl, to marry him after the war.

Both Mr. Niland, who is a superintendent at the Buffalo Steel Company, and his wife feel that the boys are alive and are probably prisoners of war because, as they explained, "if they were dead, their bodies would have been found before this."