

Fields of Honor Memorial

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Fields of Honor
Foundation



Personal info

Full name

LAWLER, Francis Donald "Donny"

Date of birth

28 April 1924

Age

20

Place of birth

**Philadelphia, Philadelphia County,
Pennsylvania**

Hometown

Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Military service

Service number

33587565

Rank

Private First Class

Unit

**H Company,
2nd Battalion,
2nd Infantry Regiment,
5th Infantry Division**

Awards

Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster

Death & Grave

Status

Killed in Action

Date of death

11 April 1945

Cemetery

American War Cemetery Margraten

Plot	Row	Grave
I	2	19

Immediate family

Members

Thomas J. Lawler (father)

Grace B. Lawler (mother)

James Lawler (brother)

Marie Lawler (sister)

Anthony Lawler (brother)

Paul Lawler (brother)

Rita Lawler (sister)

Grace B. Lawler (sister)

Joan Lawler (sister)

William Lawler (brother)

Elizabeth "Bess" Lawler (sister)

More information

Pfc Francis D. Lawler graduated from Northeast High School in 1942.

He enlisted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on 25 February 1943.

Pfc Lawler was wounded in Germany and recovered in a hospital in France in October 1944. For this wound he was awarded the Purple Heart Medal a first time.

Interview with John Purtell, nephew of Francis Lawler, conducted on 2 October 2020 by Annabel Winterberg:

Lawler had 9 siblings, there were 5 girls and 5 boys in total. Francis was the youngest sibling in the family. He was called Donny, because his middle name was Donald. Lawler was described by his siblings as being a happy-go-lucky individual and a cherished member of the family. The Lawler family was very patriotic. Lawler's parents, Thomas J. Lawler and Grace B. Lawler, were both immigrants. One was from Scotland and one was from Ireland. They instilled in their children the idea that America was the greatest country in the world. When World War II started, the family was filled with patriotic fervor. All five of the Lawler boys chose to enlist and fight in the war. The oldest brother Jim, was in the Air Force in Japan. His plane was shot down and he spent the rest of the war in a Japanese POW Camp, which was a very traumatic experience for him. Another brother, Anthony Lawler, served as a crew chief in Italy. A family anecdote details how he was dared by some of his fellow service members to fly a plane at night. He took the plane up in the air and it ended up getting shot down by the Italians. As a result, Anthony spent considerable time in an Italian POW Camp. Francis was especially interested in fighting in the war after watching all his older brothers enlist. His family believes that he actually lied about how old he was (though not by much), so that he could enlist early and fight. During the war Lawler served in the 2nd infantry regiment, the 5th infantry division, called the Red Devils, and the 2nd battalion H company. He fought in a number of major battles, including the Battle of the Bulge. He was wounded by an artillery shell in September of 1944, but recovered and was able to return to service. Then, on April 11 1945 Lawler was killed. His family believes it was because he stepped on a landmine or a grenade. On May 7th Lawler's mother, Grace Lawler, received a letter from Secretary of State Harry L. Stimson, about Lawler's Purple Heart. Grace had a choice to bring Lawler's body home or leave him in Europe. She ultimately chose to let him lie in Margraten because they "felt it best that he remain where he fell to honor that place and that cause." The choice was also connected to John McCrae's 1915 poem, In Flanders Fields. John's mother talked about how the family wanted Lawler to stay "in Flanders Field." Overall, Donny's loss had a big impact on his family. John often heard growing up that he reminded his mother of his uncle. For John, his uncle's memory is a key motivator for him to care about democracy in America and work to make it better.

Photos



Source of information: Peter Schouteten, Annabel Winterberg, www.abmc.gov, www.wwiimemorial.com, www.archives.gov - WWII Enlistment Record, www.ancestry.com - U.S., Headstone and Interment Record / Veteran Compensation Application File / 1930 Census

Photo source: www.findagrave.com - Des Philippet