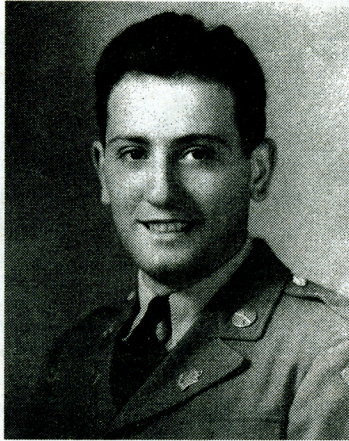


Revere honors Veteran William A. Lanza who was shot down over Nazi-occupied Italy and evaded capture during WWII

How would you like to have evaded capture in Nazi-occupied Italy during World War II thanks to two Italian partisan families risking their lives to help you, and yet be forbidden from telling anyone about it for the rest of your life? For over 60 years, Sgt. William (Willie) A. Lanza of Revere, Mass., remained silent until his nephew discovered that the certification he signed had been declassified, enabling him to break his silence.

For the next four years, nephew John W. Lanza, a native of Revere, bonded with his Uncle Willie on a book titled "Shot Down Over Italy." John also



**Sergeant
William A. Lanza**

traveled to Italy on behalf of his uncle to thank the Sarri and Becattini families. Partisan Ricca-

rdo Becattini responded, "See what Bush can do for me." After the book was published, John sent a copy to former President George W. Bush, who penned a letter noting that the book is "a wonderful tribute to Amerigo Sarri and Riccardo Becattini."

In 2008, Amerigo and Riccardo were presented with gold medals on Liberation Day in Italy, a high honor. Willie said, "It's about time." The apple didn't fall far from the tree as Amerigo's son, Maurizio, the coach of Napoli (Naples), was named the 2017 soccer coach of the year in Italy, also a high honor.

On May 26, 1944, Willie was the tail gunner in a B-25 Mitch-

ell bomber that was shot down not far from Florence. The pilot, Major William C. Hunter, a true hero of the war, was able to control the disabled aircraft so that his six-man crew could bail out before he went down with the plane. Two crew members were captured and spent the rest of the war in prison camps, and four others evaded capture with the help of partisans.

Willie and Staff Sergeant Alfred Todd, the waist gunner, were able to evade capture for two months with the help of the Sarri and Becattini families, who hid them in a cave in a forest outside the village of Vaggio, where German troops

were garrisoned and looking for them. They were liberated on July 27, 1944, by the British Eighth Army.

On Sunday, August 27, Revere will honor Willie with a memorial pole at the intersection of Ann Road and Malden Street. Willie moved to Revere in 1939, the same year that World War II began, and he lived in Revere for 73 years, 55 of them at 35 Ann Rd. He married his wife, Yola, after the war – at her suggestion on Veterans Day, November 11, 1945 – and they raised their three daughters – Patricia Fitzgerald, Susanne Tuttle and AnnMarie Lanza – in Revere.