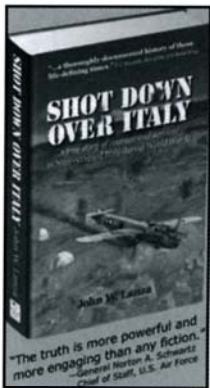


This excerpt appeared in the Summer 2010 issue of the *Men of the 57th*, the Official Journal of the Men and Women of the 57th Bomb Wing, 12th Air Force, United States Army Air Force in World War II.



The author, John Lanza, is the nephew of William A. Lanza, 446th, 321st; one of our members. John has managed to research the events in the book and document them in detail. He has visited Italy and interview former partisans who rescued his uncle.

Excerpt

“While Hunter had been successful in preventing the aircraft from rolling over, he was still struggling to regain control. His course had abruptly changed ninety degrees from northeast to southeast. He was losing altitude and was heading toward the mountains, lots of them. Realizing the extent of the problem, he gave the order for all crew members to abandon ship.

The plane was leaving the Arno River Valley and flying toward the Pratomagno Mountains, the Catenaia Alps (Alpe di Catenaia) beyond them, and the Luna Alps (Alpe della Luna) beyond them still, all part of the Apennines, the chain of mountains that run up the spine of the Italian peninsula. The three mountain ranges reached heights of 5,078, 4,639 and 4,770 feet, respectively. The aircraft's loss of altitude while heading toward these mountains put Major Hunter and his crew in a frightful situation.

Bill got the signal to bail from Todd. “Todd was on the interphone listening carefully for further instructions. When he looked at me and pointed to the escape hatch, it was time to go. The plane was diving and we had trouble opening the hatch. We were kicking it and, when the plane leveled off a bit [thanks to Hunter] the hatch gave way. You could see the patchwork on the ground below. I figure that we were at about 7,000 feet.”

“Major William Clark Hunter was the pilot of the B-B-25 bomber that was shot down over Italy. He made sure that his crew bailed out before his plane crashed into a mountain-side. He did not have a chance to save himself.”
John M. Lanza

