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Road To Valor: A True Story Of WWII Italy, The Nazis, And The Cyclist Who Inspired A Nation

ROAD TO VALOR



A TRUE STORY OF WORLD WAR II ITALY,
THE NAZIS, AND THE CYCLIST
WHO INSPIRED A NATION

AILI AND ANDRES MCCONNON



Synopsis

Road to Valor is the inspiring, against-the-odds story of Gino Bartali, the cyclist who made the greatest comeback in Tour de France history and secretly aided the Italian resistance during World War II. Gino Bartali is best known as an Italian cycling legend: the man who not only won the Tour de France twice, but also holds the record for the longest time span between victories. During the ten years that separated his hard-won triumphs, his actions, both on and off the racecourse, ensured him a permanent place in Italian hearts and minds. In Road to Valor, Aili and Andres McConnon chronicle Bartali's journey, starting in impoverished rural Tuscany where a scrawny, mischievous boy painstakingly saves his money to buy a bicycle and before long, is racking up wins throughout the country. At the age of 24, he stuns the world by winning the Tour de France and becomes an international sports icon. But Mussolini's Fascists try to hijack his victory for propaganda purposes, derailing Bartali's career, and as the Nazis occupy Italy, Bartali undertakes secret and dangerous activities to help those being targeted. He shelters a family of Jews in an apartment he financed with his cycling winnings and is able to smuggle counterfeit identity documents hidden in his bicycle past Fascist and Nazi checkpoints because the soldiers recognize him as a national hero in training. After the grueling wartime years, Bartali fights to rebuild his career as Italy emerges from the rubble. In 1948, the stakes are raised when midway through the Tour de France, an assassination attempt in Rome sparks nationwide political protests and riots. Despite numerous setbacks and a legendary snowstorm in the Alps, the chain-smoking, Chianti-loving, 34-year-old underdog comes back and wins the most difficult endurance competition on earth. Bartali's inspiring performance helps unite his fractured homeland and restore pride and spirit to a country still reeling from war and despair. Set in Italy and France against the turbulent backdrop of an unforgiving sport and threatening politics, Road to Valor is the breathtaking account of one man's unsung heroism and his resilience in the face of adversity. Based on nearly ten years of research in Italy, France, and Israel, including interviews with Bartali's family, former teammates, a Holocaust survivor Bartali saved, and many others, Road to Valor is the first book ever written about Bartali in English and the only book written in any language to fully explore the scope of Bartali's wartime work. An epic tale of courage, comeback, and redemption, it is the untold story of one of the greatest athletes of the twentieth century.

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Customer Reviews

I had not heard of Gino Bartali before reading this book, I do not follow the Tour de France and know very little about the sport. I read this because I always enjoy books about WWII and I really enjoyed this one. I usually read historical fiction and was concerned that this book might be a boring but Bartali is a larger than life character that was so fascinating to read about that I was not bored once through the entire book. The authors do a great job of beginning the story with Bartali's struggles in his early years and really showing his passion for bicycles. They also wrote about the importance of bicycles in Italy during this time in general and how many of the population used them for their main form of transportation. I love reading books about Italy and this book gave me a whole new look at the country. I usually read about the countryside and the food, in this one I read about the poor neighborhoods and what bicycle races meant to so many people in the country. The actual races that are discussed were fun to read about. I had no idea that the races were as long and dangerous as they were described in the book, it made for an exciting read. I have so much more appreciation for the strength and endurance of the racers in this sport. There is lots of information about the politics in Italy during this time. Since I do read a lot of WWII books I did know some of the things talked about but I got a much more in depth idea of the different political problems facing the country. Mussolini is discussed often, he would hinder Bartali a few times in his quest for winning races. The parts about Italy during the war are at times heartbreaking, the people suffered too much.

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