**Please note that the previous version of this release was from an earlier ceremony. The below release is the correct coverage of today’s wreath-laying ceremony in honor of Italy’s Armed Forces Day and National Day of Unity.**

Press Release

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November 4, 2022

Fort Drum Public Affairs

FORT DRUM, N.Y. (Nov. 4, 2022) -- Fort Drum community members gathered at the Prisoner of War (POW) Cemetery on Nov. 4 to place a wreath at the grave of an Italian soldier, in honor of Italy’s Armed Forces Day and National Day of Unity.

During the ceremony, Col. James Zacchino Jr., Fort Drum garrison commander, spoke about Pvt. Rino Carlutti, and Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Thomas McCort, Fort Drum garrison chaplain, led the group in prayer. Spc. Steven Vought, a bugler with the 10th Mountain Division Band, performed “Il Silenzio,” the Italian armed forces version of “Taps.”

The Fort Drum Cultural Resources team began placing a wreath at the grave site 10 years ago, until it became an official request from the Italian embassy, which provides the wreath for the ceremony.

“These graves are on Fort Drum, and so it is our responsibility to take care of them,” Zacchino said. “Just as it is equally important for us to honor these service members who died here, as we would want our Soldiers who died in other countries to be honored and remembered.”

Pvt. Rino Carlutti was born April 14, 1922, in S. Daniele del Friuli, Udine, to Giuseppina and Teodolinda Mengoli. Carlutti served in the Italian army, assigned to a logistics company during World War II. He was captured on May 11, 1943, in Tunisia. Carlutti joined scores of Italian POWs who were sent to an internment stockade at Pine Camp (now Fort Drum).

Carlutti, 22, was severely injured in an automobile accident and died Oct. 17, 1944, at Sampson Naval Hospital, near Seneca Lake. A second Italian soldier, Pvt. Renato Facchini, died June 27, 1944, in a drowning accident. Both soldiers were buried at the POW Cemetery, but Facchini was disinterred from the cemetery on Aug. 6, 1957, by family request, and returned to Italy.

Attempts were made in the early 1970s to locate relatives of Carlutti, through the Italian ambassador to the U.S. and Henry V. Cumoletti, a court stenographer at Camp Drum. Little else is known about Carlutti, but a history exists of the POW camp established here nearly 80 years ago.

POWs at Pine Camp

During World War II, the first permanent prisoner of war (POW) camp in New York was established at Pine Camp. It opened Sept. 20, 1943, to house 1,000 Italian POWs who came directly from the North African and Sicilian campaigns. The prisoners’ ages ranged from 18 to 56, with the senior-most ranking member being a 26-year-old sergeant major. They were said to have arrived suffering from illnesses such as dysentery, malaria and malnutrition – due to prolonged duty overseas.

The POWs were issued new clothing since their military uniforms were too light and tattered for the North Country climate.

In accordance with the Geneva Convention, prisoners earned 80 cents per day for labor – most of which was doled out in coupons redeemable at the camp store for personal items. They worked on farms and in lumber camps where they helped harvest crops and cut wood for companies who contracted their services through the War Department and the State of New York.

The Italian POWs replaced Soldiers who were employed with harvesting and processing crops in Northern and Western New York. According to a local newspaper report, 840 American Soldiers were assigned to canneries, and another 400 to farms. With the arrival of Italian POWs, the American Soldiers were recalled back to their camps for training.

The internment camp included 20 barracks buildings, four dining facilities, a canteen, recreation building and other administrative facilities.

By all accounts, the Italian POWs were treated well at Pine Camp. Their diet was less restrictive than they were used, and the Italian compound included a bakery where they enjoyed bread and pastries. A typical breakfast might include cream wheat, bacon, bread, milk and coffee. And for dinner, noodles in beef gravy, mashed potatoes, salad, bread and butter, baked beans and fruit.

In a New York Sun article from 1944, an American interpreter said: “There’s no rationing here. They get plenty of everything they never had before.” The article stated that the Italians were so amazed at first that they had butter that they ate it as dessert.

The Italians remained there for nearly a year until the War Department developed a voluntary training program called the Italian Service Units (ISU). Members of these units performed duties ranging from automobile maintenance and laundry to general engineering and logistical duties. Throughout late 1944 and 1945, several small ISU elements trained at Pine Camp before relocating throughout the U.S. – mostly to quartermaster and ordnance depots.

German POWs arrived in May 1944, and they were housed in a separate compound due to the high level of tension between the two nations.

Italian POWs received weekly liberty for supervised travel to Watertown, under guard, after Italy surrendered to the Allies on June 6, 1944. There were no riots or major escapes at Pine Camp, and the Italian POWs cooperated with their guards.

Between July and September 1944, the 143rd Italian Quartermaster Service Company trained at Pine Camp. The members of this unit spent most of their time fighting forest fires.

In May 1946, the last German POWs departed Pine Camp for repatriation to their homeland, and the camp was deactivated.

The POW Cemetery is located outside the cantonment area on Route 26, next to Sheepfold Cemetery. For more information, visit <https://fortdrum.isportsman.net/Cemeteries.aspx>.

An exhibit with the history of POWs at Pine Camp can be viewed at the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum, located in Bldg. 2509 on Col. Reade Road. For more information, call (315) 774-0391 or visit [www.facebook.com/FortDrumMuseum](http://www.facebook.com/FortDrumMuseum).

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Photo captions:

Col. James Zacchino Jr., Fort Drum garrison commander, and Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Thomas McCort, Fort Drum garrison chaplain, participates in the annual wreath-laying ceremony in honor of the sole Italian soldier buried at the Prisoner of War Cemetery on Route 26, just outside the cantonment area. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)

Spc. Steven Vought, a bugler with the 10th Mountain Division Band, performed “Il Silenzio,” the Italian armed forces version of “Taps” during the wreath-laying ceremony Nov. 4 at the grave of the Italian Soldier buried at the POW Cemetery. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)