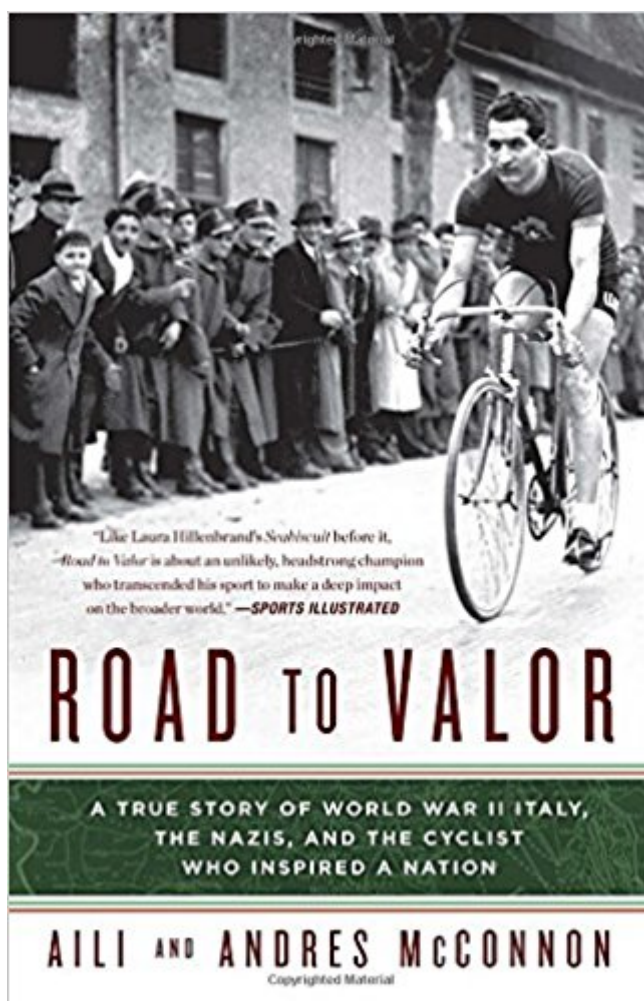


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# Road To Valor: A True Story Of WWII Italy, The Nazis, And The Cyclist Who Inspired A Nation



## Synopsis

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 who not only won the Tour de France twice but also holds the record for the longest time span between victories. In *Road to Valor*, Aili and Andres McConnon chronicle Bartali's journey, from an impoverished childhood in rural Tuscany to his first triumph at the 1938 Tour de France. As World War II ravaged Europe, Bartali undertook dangerous activities to help those being targeted in Italy, including sheltering a family of Jews and smuggling counterfeit identity documents in the frame of his bicycle. After the grueling wartime years, the chain-smoking, Chianti-loving, 34-year-old underdog came back to win the 1948 Tour de France, an exhilarating performance that helped unite his fractured homeland. Based on nearly ten years of research, *Road to Valor* is the first book ever written about Bartali in English and the only book written in any language to explore the full scope of Bartali's wartime work. An epic tale of courage, resilience, and redemption, it is the untold story of one of the greatest athletes of the twentieth century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Winner of the Canadian Jewish Book Award  
Winner of the Christopher Award  
Winner of the Mazzei Award  
"You do not have to follow cycling to relish Bartali's story....Like Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit* before it, *Road to Valor* is about an unlikely, headstrong champion who transcended his sport to make a deep impact on the broader

world. *“The McConnons have told the story of his [Bartali] great and greater victories powerfully and well.”* *Boston Globe* *“Gino Bartali was a hero....He was a cyclist who saved lives by riding throughout Italy during the second world war for a purpose higher than money or glory.”* *Bill Littlefield, NPR* *“This thoroughly documented biography is both inspiring and immensely enjoyable.”* *Publishers Weekly* *“[Road to Valor] tells a dramatic and moving story that is virtually unknown to most readers....An important addition to World War II biography and also to the history of twentieth-century cycling.”* *Booklist* *“Impeccably researched and thrillingly told....This is truly an amazing tale of a poor Tuscan boy who pedaled his way not only to sports immortality, but into true heroism.”* *The Globe and Mail* *“Thou shall not stand idly by” is a powerful Biblical command. In Aili and Andres McConnon’s book it offers a moving example of moral courage. A simple citizen and great athlete chose to oppose a cruel and racist political dictatorship by saving Jewish victims in Italy. Was it so hard to become a hero then? It was enough--enough to remain human. And yet.* *Elie Wiesel* *“The two Tours de France won by Bartali are more than mere entries in the record book of winners. The fact that they were won many years apart proves what an exceptional champion he really was. Above all, the war years separating these victories now reveal Gino to have been a true hero.”* *Christian Prudhomme, director of the Tour de France* *“Whether you are a Tour de France fan, a history buff, or looking for an entertaining way to learn about both, Road to Valor will have you turning the pages with more conviction and speed than Bartali could turn the pedals!”* *An engaging and mesmerizing read.”* *Craig Hummer, Tour de France broadcaster for NBC Sports* *“A gritty, scary story of endurance, Road to Valor traces one man’s harrowing journey from the resistance movement in Nazi-occupied Italy to a comeback triumph in the Tour de France—told with verve and an affecting appreciation of the human spirit.”* *Bruce Porter, New York Times bestselling author of* *Blow* *“This book is a magnificent ride through the uphill-downhill-uphill story of Gino Bartali. It inspires anyone who tenaciously holds to doing what is just, no matter how difficult, in the face of ignorance and terror. Bartali is a hero for all times.”* *Fred Plotkin, author of Italy for the Gourmet Traveler* *“Many cycling fans recognize the name Gino Bartali, and up until now most people only knew him for the races he won. But during some of the most tumultuous years of the twentieth century he leveraged his fame and risked his life for those being persecuted. With this complete look at Bartali’s life, his legacy as one of cycling’s greatest*

heroes grows even stronger. — Chris Carmichael, legendary coach and former Giro d'Italia and Tour de France racer — "Bartali is one of cycling's great icons, and this book adds another important dimension to this man's world. — Sir Paul Smith — "It is with genuine pleasure that I recommend to men and women of all ages and all religious and ethnic backgrounds *Road to Valor* by Aili and Andres McConnon. It recounts a true story that is marvelously exciting and inspiring as well. The heroism of so many Italians during World War II and afterwards is a tale that needs to be told, and the authors tell it masterfully. Their readers will be deeply touched by the courage of the hero of the book, Gino Bartali, and others who put their lives at risk to protect the innocent and defend both their faith and their commitment to democracy. — Edward Cardinal Egan, Archbishop Emeritus of New York — "At a time when so many sports figures have come to personify scandal and bad behavior, how refreshing it is to read the inspiring tale of Gino Bartali's life. The McConnons have drawn a portrait of the Italian cycling legend that uplifts the spirit, and reminds us of the many ways tenacity and faith can reshape the world. This lively book will ride off with your heart and cycle through your memory for years to come. — Raymond Arroyo, New York Times bestselling author and host of EWTN's *The World Over Live* Hardcover edition.

AILI McCONNON is an award-winning journalist based in New York. She has written for *BusinessWeek*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and *Sports Illustrated* and has appeared on ABC, CNN, and NPR. ANDRES McCONNON is a researcher, journalist, and award-winning author who has written for *Sports Illustrated*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *National Post*.

I read *Assisi Underground*, which was where I first heard of Gino Bartoli. I wanted to know his story. So I read *Road To Valor*. The book is superbly written. You know the outcome before you start reading it, and yet the book has you at the edge of your seat. It gives such excellent description of Italy at the time, economically and politically. And Bartoli, what a portrayal! I would recommend this for anyone who has an interest in bike racing, Italy, or WWII.

I became interested in reading Gino Bartali's story after viewing "My Italian Secret". I am not disappointed. The writing is clear, concise, understandable and informative. I am discovering facts of a boy who grew up poor and became a man of distinction and valor. I'm learning facts about

cycling of which I was not aware. I am learning that Mr. Bartali was able to combine his athletics with a desire to make a difference. Throughout the reading, I do not have the impression that Mr. Bartali was looking for heroism; rather, I am impressed that a poor man with a generous nature looked toward improving the quality of his family's life and at the same time participate in a sport he loved from childhood. That he won the two Tours de France made him a hero in society; that he mindfully used his celebrity to quietly make a moral difference to a people who suffered and lost so much has made him a hero in humanitarianism. This is what I learned from "Road To Valor", a book I'm hard pressed to put down. This is not a sappy adulteration. Its authenticity and research is impressive and leaves this reader appreciative of the authors' work.

"Road to Valor" is an inspirational tale of Italian cycling legend Gino Bartali. From a small town upbringing outside of Florence to his unlikely rise as Tour de France champion in 1938, Bartali's legend is not about his victories against other riders but for his underground contributions during WWII to save lives. As WWII raged on in Europe, Bartali's best years of cycling competition were wiped away. However, instead of capturing the imagination of the public with his exploits in bike races, Bartali rode to save lives. With a plan concocted by a Roman Catholic priest, he began transporting forged documents in his bike frame between Florence and Assisi. These papers became new identities for Italian Jews, their papers for survival rather than transport to concentration camps outside of Italy. Bartali protected those around him through these years, not disclosing his frequent absences from home to even his wife as anything more than training. By the time WWII was over and cycling competitions began anew, Bartali's best days were behind him. However, his performance in 1948 is truly astounding. As Italy teeters on the brink of civil war, Bartali shocks his fellow racers with an epic ride through the Alps in what unimaginable weather conditions. By the time he is done conquering the mountains, he wins his second Tour de France in staggering fashion. To this day he holds the distinction for longest gap between Tour victories. In today's age of diet, conditioning and nutrition, Bartali's chain-smoking, red wine drinking will undoubtedly leave modern athletes shaking their heads a bit in disbelief --- I certainly wondered how he survived to even win the 1948 Tour. Bartali remained reticent to discuss anything he did in WWII and it is a remarkable bunch of research the McConnon's do to uncover the emotional heart and soul of this story. I'm grateful for their devotion to this man and his story. The world is quite lucky to know Gino Bartali beyond just a cycling record.

First, this book needs to be updated: joining many of the persons who are mentioned in the book,

Bartali was inducted into Yad Vashem's Righteous Among Nations a few days ago. Perhaps it was only his modesty and unwillingness to have his fame overshadow the efforts, and sufferings, of other less famous people that kept this from happening sooner. Second, the Kindle edition works better than many other Kindle books, in that the illustrations are meshed into the text just as they are in the print edition, and not placed at the end as happens in too many other Kindle books. Third, the Audible edition, though not advertised as such, syncs with the Kindle app for iPad and the Kindle edition. Many Audible editions too, though they are advertised as not doing so. Finally, this is a great read. While it leaves out the details of some of Bartali's last great races against Fausto Coppi, the focus is on Bartali the man, someone who did live up to the ideal of a sports hero who is a good person, who values family and righteous living above all, eschews drugs (unless cigarettes and copious amounts of espresso are drugs) and while voluble, in the end has a good sense of who he is and his place in the world. I will take one Bartali against every single player in the NFL, MLB and NBA combined. He got into sports as a way out of a life of poverty, but he never forgot who he was, where he came from, and his place in the world. In this well written, quick reading book, you will read about a rare person who did his duty not only to his sport, but to humanity.

A very gripping, detailed panorama of Italy before, during and after World War II. A period when the bicycle was central to life. ". . . in 1947 there were some 3.5 million bikes on the road in Italy and just 184,000 cars." De Sica's 1949 film "The Bicycle Thief" visually demonstrated that stealing a bike "was not just theft; it was an act of forced isolation that stripped a man of his livelihood and exiled him from the world." The book is the story of Gino Bartali, growing up outside of Florence in a one room house with his parents, his brother and his two sisters, and, with no help from the Mussolini government, becoming a national hero as a cyclist, winning the Tour de France twice, once in 1938, age 24, and again in 1948, age 34. The War, and Italian politics, limited his career. The War, however, gave him a chance to play a significant role in helping Italian Jews escape to the South where the Allied armies were in 1943.

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