



# Road to Valour: A True Story of World War II Italy, the Nazis, and the Cyclist Who Inspired a Nation

*Aili McConnon, Andres McConnon*

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*Road to Valour* is the inspiring, against-the-odds story of Gino Bartali, the cyclist who made the greatest comeback in Tour de France history and, between his Tour victories, 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 Valour*, 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 smuggles 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 Valour* 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 Valour* 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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