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Army Medic Mike Linquata,
age 19 (1944)

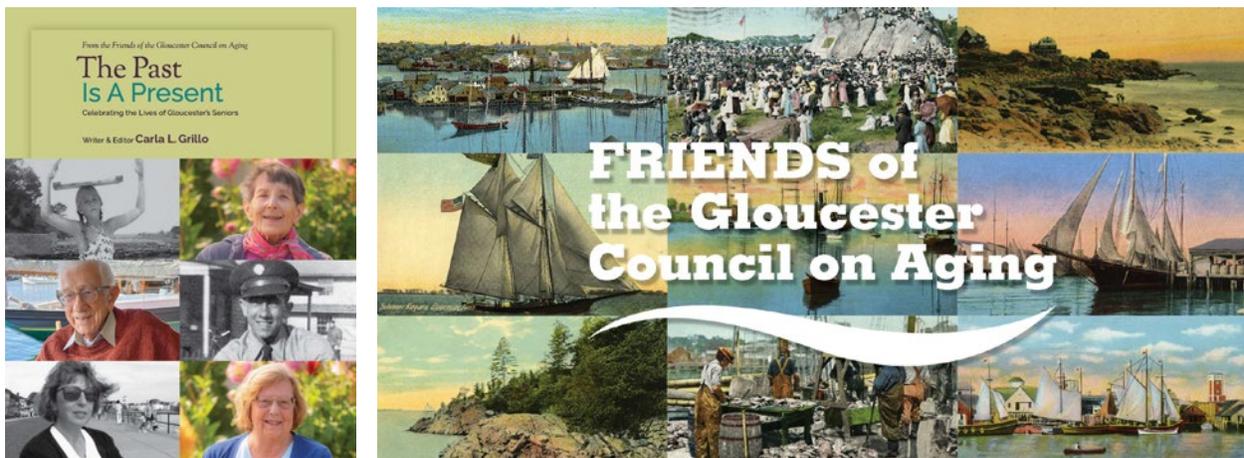
400 STORIES PROJECT

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Michael L. Linquata
Battle of the Bulge –
Prisoner of War
by Carla L. Grillo

FOREWORD

The following story is an excerpt from the full profile on Michael L. Linquata appearing in *The Past Is A Present*, a book by local author Carla L. Grillo highlighting the life stories of 28 women and men from Gloucester's diverse Senior community. Sponsored by the Friends of the Gloucester Council on Aging – and over five years in the making – *The Past Is A Present* features over 500 hours of oral histories tracing each Senior's unique personal background. Curated with hundreds of historical photographic images and contemporary portraits by local award-winning photographer Bill Sumner, the book is available online at www.pastisapresent.org and at The Bookstore of Gloucester, Dogtown Books, and the gift shops at Cape Ann Museum and The Gloucester House. 100% of sale proceeds benefit the Gloucester Senior community.



www.pastisapresent.org

Michael L. Linquata

Battle of the Bulge – Prisoner of War

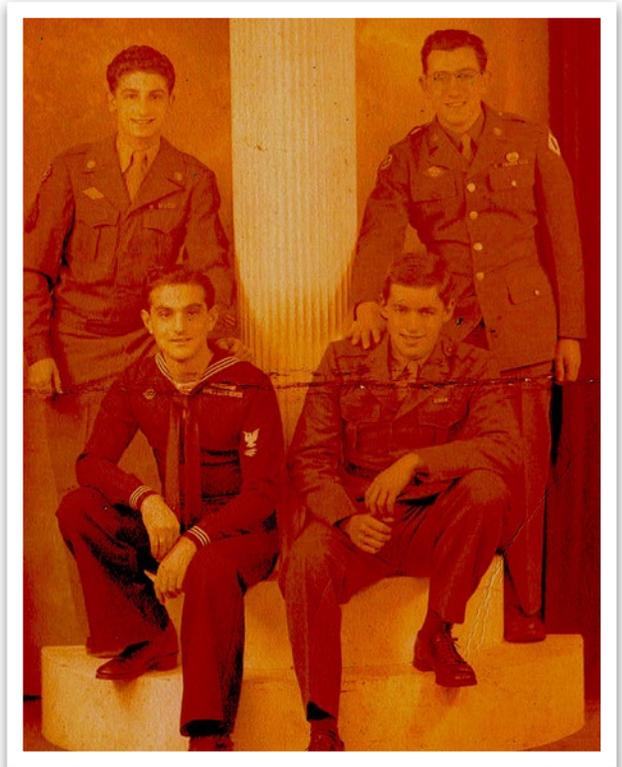
BY CARLA L. GRILLO

He was only 19 years old when he crossed the Atlantic in October 1944 on the *Queen Mary* (used as a troopship during WWII), departing from New York City and arriving five-and-a-half days later at Firth of Forth, Scotland. Gloucester native Mike Linquata, and 13,000 American troops, along with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, were aboard the ship. As Mike tells it, the troops were able to see Churchill disembark at Scotland, and when they all gave him a big cheer, “Winnie” turned around and saluted them with a “V” for Victory sign. This was the beginning of Mike’s profound 22-month WWII journey that left an indelible imprint on his life.



Private Mike Linquata, 1944

After an accelerated graduation in January 1944 (along with about 50 other senior boys from Gloucester High School), Mike was drafted and sent to Europe to serve in the Army’s 134th Infantry Regiment, where he was a Combat Medic in the 35th Infantry Division, Company D, 2nd Platoon. Despite being a Combat Medic, he had no combat training and was not allowed to carry firearms, even though he went to the front lines to care for wounded soldiers. He served in France, Germany and Belgium, where he soon found himself on the front lines in General Patton’s Battle of the Bulge. Mike’s war efforts during the Battle of the Bulge earned him four Bronze Stars (including one for valor), three battle stars, a Combat Medic’s badge and a Presidential Unit Citation for his 134th Infantry Regiment signed by General Eisenhower. In August



Army Medic Mike Linquata (back right) with his fellow Gloucester Armed Services buddies Joe Brancaleone (back left) and Nick Guarrasi (front left). Serviceman at front right, Mike only remembers his first name, Philip.



Mike's Battle of the Bulge Medals



Mike after receiving the French Legion of Honour Medal, August 2014

2014, he received the prestigious National Order of the Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honour) Medal – France's highest decoration for military and civil merits.

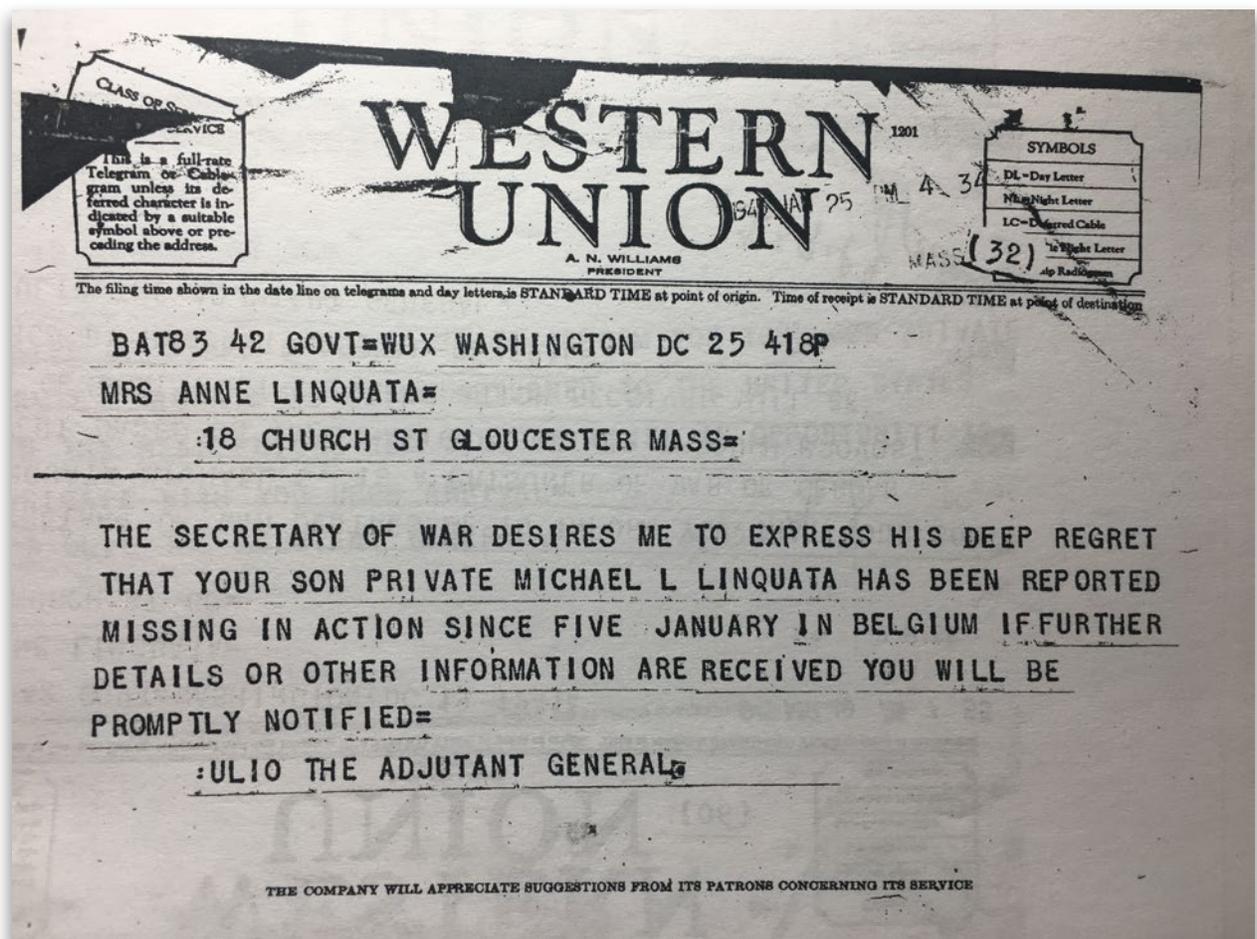
The following is from Mike's description of his Prisoner of War (POW) experience as an Army Combat Medic during the Battle of the Bulge:

In January 1945, while tending to 20 wounded men in the fields of Marvie, Belgium (about two miles SE of Bastogne) — after his unit had evacuated — Mike chose to surrender to German forces rather than risk losing his wounded comrades to mortar attacks and the frigid weather. As he walked up a steep hill to surrender to the German officers, Mike distinctly remembers having an "out-of-body experience." He recalls watching himself from above, observing every movement his body was making. "I was prepared for the worst-case scenario."

He remained a POW in two different detention camps for three months during the brutal German winter – the temperature consistently below freezing for over a month, Europe's coldest winter in 40 years. After arriving with an estimated 1,000 POWs at the Bad Orb, Stalag 9B POW camp (he remained there for 42 days), Mike was sent to a large detention room that housed 300 POWs. Sanitary conditions were toxic – there was only one sink for the 300 men and a hole in the center of the floor for a toilet. "I wore the same clothes for three months. There were no facilities to wash them. I was allowed one shower the entire time. Lice crawled around

us throughout the night as we slept on the floor." Food provisions were inhuman – a cup of watered-down coffee for breakfast, "putrid" potato soup for lunch and a slice of stale German black bread for supper.

The Germans provided no medical care; Mike and another medic were the only source of medical aid. He learned there was a "Massachusetts Club" upon arrival at Bad Orb, and he befriended a severely ill boy from Lanesville who died a few days later from malnutrition. "I remember thinking at the time that he was one of the lucky ones." The Army notified Mike's parents, Leo and Anne (Favaloro) Linquata, he was "Missing in Action," a status he retained for the 88 days of his captivity. He still has the original Western Union Telegram addressed to his mother:



"Missing In Action" telegram, January 1945

When he was liberated, on April 2, 1945, Mike had lost more than 50 pounds, about one third of his total body weight. A month later, an emaciated yet grateful Private Mike Linquata received a hero's welcome in his hometown of Gloucester.

In November 2002, the town of Lutremage, Belgium, dedicated a plaque to General Patton and American soldiers to commemorate their heroism in liberating Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. Mike and his wife, Lillian, were invited to Belgium to participate in the ceremonies, with Mike giving a moving speech to the hundreds of soldiers and dignitaries in attendance. He ended his address with the following: "As a free people, we know that freedom has a price. It does not come cheaply. We must be forever vigilant. We must not get too complacent, or we will lose our freedom. You well know history can repeat itself. Be careful that it does not."



Mike Linquata (left), Howard Cole, and Earl Gray at plaque dedication ceremony in Lutremage, Belgium, 2002



PHOTO: BILL SUMNER

Mike at the Gloucester House, October 2020

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Esteemed World War II veteran and native Gloucester son Michael Linquata passed away on March 6, 2022, at 96 years old, just two weeks after the passing of his beloved wife Lillian (Ciulla) Linquata at 90 years old. They had recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

After Lucy Sheehan (retired Executive Director of the Gloucester Council on Aging) graciously provided the initial introduction, I was honored to interview Mike Linquata on three separate occasions (covering over twelve hours) in August 2018 as part of *The Past Is A Present* project. He was 93 years old at the time – still “sharp as a tack” and thrilled to be regaling me with his stories about the Battle of the Bulge, youthful endeavors, and family history, interspersed with anecdotes on Sicilian culture and calamari. He became a dear friend over the past few years, and I miss our discussions immensely.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the Linquata family: Lenny, Dottie, Anne, and Mike Jr. were so helpful in providing clarifications, family photographs, and documents, including delivering packages of material to my front doorstep in the middle of Covid-19. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I am also grateful to award-winning local photographer Bill Sumner who took the contemporary photograph of Mike during a photo shoot with the Linquata family at the Gloucester House in October 2020. Bill contributed his time and professional talent to creating the beautiful portraits of the 28 Seniors profiled in *The Past Is A Present*.

FRIENDS OF THE GLOUCESTER COUNCIL ON AGING

The Friends of the Gloucester Council on Aging is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1988. We are currently celebrating our 34th anniversary in our mission of working collaboratively with the Gloucester Council on Aging

and the Rose Baker Senior Center by providing financial assistance and technical expertise for programs and services benefiting the broader Gloucester Senior community. For more information about the Friends, including a sample of projects funded and supported by the Friends since its founding, please visit: www.friendsofthegcoa.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carla L. Grillo is the creator, author, and editor of *The Past Is A Present* project – celebrating the incredible lives of 28 Seniors from Gloucester’s Senior community, affectionately referred to as “The Gloucester 28”! Over five years (2017–2022) in the making, more than 500 hours of oral histories were chronicled for *The Past Is A Present*.



PHOTO: BILL SUMNER

Carla Grillo with Mike Linquata at The Gloucester House, October 2020