



The Corporal Gildo T. Consolini Memorial Bridge

When you enter the town of Avon heading west from the base of Avon Mountain Road, you will pass over the Farmington River via the Gildo T. Consolini Memorial Bridge. You may wonder who was this man and why did he deserve the honor of having the bridge dedicated to his memory. Wonder no more for here is his inspiring story.

Gildo Trento Consolini was born in Avon on December 19, 1916, the son of Michael and Onesta Consolini. He lived on Old Farms Road and was educated at Towpath School in Avon and was graduated from Simsbury High School. He worked for the Department of Transportation as did his father. As a young man, he was very active in playing baseball in town and was a valued player. He loved baseball and developed lasting friendships through the sport.

In March, 1941 Gildo and two other Avon men, one a close friend, were drafted into the armed services. These men were sent to Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia for basic training for the infantry. They trained for 18 months and were eventually ordered to the West Coast. Gildo and his company arrived at Fort Ord, California on September 10, 1941. A short time later, Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese....the day that did 'live in infamy'*, December 7, 1941. Soon after, Gildo and his friend Raymond Zacchera from Avon, were shipped out on a troop transport ship on a three week voyage to Auckland, New Zealand. Their mission was to counter a possible enemy threat from the Japanese for control of the Guadalcanal. Troops were moved under the cover of darkness to the Russell Islands and then Rendova to dig in to defend the canal. The troops endured Japanese planes dropping bombs relentlessly and there were bullet strafing runs across the islands to limit troop movements. Their orders were to capture Bibolo Hill and take out the 'pill boxes' (hidden machine guns manned by the Japanese) that could pick off soldiers as they landed on the beach by landing craft. When Gildo Consolini and his friend Ray Zacchera, along with 192 other men advanced during enemy fire, a bomb shell landed 'less than 5 feet away killing his friend (Consolini) and spraying Zacchera's back with shrapnel and coral'. Ray Zacchera returned home plagued not only by a lifetime of pain from his injuries, but from the loss of his friend Gildo.

News of the death of 26 year old Gildo T. Consolini traveled quickly to Avon as well as of the wounding of his friend. The town was literally shell-shocked. He was the first man to die on a foreign field of battle. Hence, the bridge was named in his honor in September of 2010 as follows: Substitute House Bill No. 6540, Public Act No. 11-256 d by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly in Sec. 27 Bridge number 06521 on Route 44 in Avon shall be designated the "Corporal Gildo T. Consolini Memorial Bridge".

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #3272 in Avon is named in recognition of Gildo T. Consolini as well. Perhaps the next time you drive over the Gildo T. Consolini Memorial Bridge, you will utter a quiet thank you for his sacrifice and remember all those who have gone before, who serve now, and to those who will answer the call to duty whenever a threat arises in the future.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States