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My grandfather, Lou Reginato grew up in Northern Italy, specifically in the small town of Paderno del Grappa. Paderno is a very unknown town but what is famous for is being at the base of the mountain known as Monte Grappa. Monte Grappa is one of the tallest mountains in the Venetian Alps standing 1,755 meters or 5,823 meters tall. This was the location of the Three Battle of Monte Grappa between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. This was one of the largest lesser known battles of World War I and my grandfather's parents grew up in a small town at the base of it.

Although originally being part of the Triple Alliance, Italy faced its greatest defeats at the hands of the Austro-Hungarians. In 1915, Italy had signed the Treaty of London with Britain which offered Italy large section of the Adriatic Sea region, specifically the areas known as Tyrol, Dalmatia and Istria, which are areas along the Mediterranean in present day Croatia. The Italian Commander in Chief was Luigi Cadorna main strategy was offensive attacks. Italy focused mainly on pushing into Austrian territory but by 1917 they had only gotten 10 miles inside their territory. Then in August of 1917, the German officer Paul von Hindenburg sent German forces to help the Austrians and on October 24th, 1917 the German and Austrian Forces launched a counterattack on the Italians which became known as the Battle of Caporetto. This was Italy's most devastating battle in World War I.

On the first day of the battle the German and Austrian forces had advanced 25 kilometers into Italian territory. This battle lasted a total of 18 days and at the end of this battle, 40,000

soldiers were killed or wounded and 280,000 captured and around 350,000 deserted. In the face of the terrible defeat Commander Cadorna was forced to resign and then was replaced by General Armando Diaz. From that point forward, Italy's war strategy turned from offensive to defensive to be able to survive the remainder of the war. Italy was at their last defense at Monte Grappa.

The Battle of Monte Grappa first began on November 11th 1917 and lasted until October 28, 1918 very close to the end of World War I. After being driven back to Monte Grappa after an overwhelming defeat, the Italian Forces under the command of General Armando Diaz, focused mainly on creating an impenetrable fortress on top and around the mountain specifically around the river Piave. There were miles and miles of tunnels dug throughout the Italian alps, those of which my grandfather would always explore in his youth. The extra fortification helped them drive off the Austrian forces during the first Battle of Monte Grappa which lasted until December 23, 1917. The Austrians then launched their final offensive operation of World War I in the Second Battle of Monte Grappa during the beginning and into the summer of 1918.

Hope of victory was slim for the Italian Forces because tens of thousands of them were sent to France to help Italy's ally. By March of 1918 the Austrian forces has continued to advance and had taken Monte Fontanasecca, Monte Pertica and Monte Tomba which were all mountains north and northwest of the central Monte Grappa. Although hurting from an Allied Naval blockade creating a shortage in food, the Austrian Forces were high in spirit and launched their final offenses known as "Operation Avalanche, Radetzky, and Olbrecht". Luckily Italian troops were now equipped with the new "box-type respirator" gas mask which was able to combat the 100,000 Austrian gas shells used in these operations. Eventually with the help from

one British and French division as well as an American regiment, the Italian Forces were victorious in driving the Austrian forces out of Italy and ended the Battle of Monte Grappa.

My great grandfather was only 8 years old when the Battle of Monte Grappa happened. Although he did not remember much, he did clearly remember the hearing the cannons that the Austrian forces would fire at the Italians. He remembers when one of the shells hit the bell tower at the center of the town, leaving a large chunk out of the side of it. Although his memory when recalling that time is very faint he believes the war made his parents more aware of the kinds of destruction and horrors the world could bring. They wanted him to pursue a career that he wanted to so that he was able to enjoy what he did later in life. Thus his parents encouraged a good education for him and worked hard to make sure he was able to attend the schools he wanted and pursue a career he wanted. From a long line of small town farmers, he ended up studying engineering and became a very talented mechanic. This skill later helped him survive the next World War when he was captured by the German soldiers and was able to work on German cars and machines in Berlin Germany.

World War I started a long tradition in my family which emphasized the importance of education. My great grandfather was fortunate enough to have parents who worked hard to provide him a good education because of the horrors they had witnessed during the Battle of Monte Grappa. He then did the same for my grandfather by letting him go to a engineering boarding school and once he could not afford it anymore, the entire family immigrated to America in search for better education and more opportunity. My grandfather did the same with my mother and uncles and now my parents are doing the same for myself and my sisters.

My grandfather immigrated to America when he was 16 but before that he has vivid memories of Paderno del Grappa and Monte Grappa. He remembers visiting the Monte Grappa

War Memorial located near the summit of Monte Grappa. However what he remembers the most of was how he and his friends would climb all the way up the mountain with bikes and speed down the winding path all the way back home to Paderno. Like his father he would explore all the sprawling tunnels throughout Monte Grappa. He remembers how there were often people who got lost within the tunnels and were not found for days if they were found at all. My grandfather was a smart man however and would only venture down into the tunnels if he could still see the light from where he entered. How he put it was that in a way he thought exploring the tunnels fueled his curious nature that he would carry with him his entire life. Still to this day the tunnels exist and my grandfather hopes to visit his hometown

Although World War I began over 100 years ago, there are still traditions in my family that were sparked because of the War to End All Wars. Hearing the cannons fire and knowing of the horrors of the war made my family search to seek better opportunities in their own hometown and eventually in the United States.

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