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# Guardian Angels in Uniform – the story of Gino Farnetti Bragaglia

The friendship between Canada and Italy is well documented and many will be familiar with the role that Canadian soldiers played in liberating parts of Italy at the end of World War II. A new documentary, directed by Robert Curtin, shines a light on a group of Canadian soldiers who went above and beyond the call of duty to save the life of an orphaned child.



Photo courtesy of Combined Forces Production Collaborative

The film chronicles the incredible true story of a five-year-old boy named Gino who was abandoned and lost in the small rural village of Torrice, in the Province of Frosinone, until he was found by Canadian soldiers. The Canadians cared for the young boy until he was ultimately adopted by the Farneti family in 1945.

Gino was adopted by Antonio and Rina Farneti, with one 't.' When Gino was registered with his new identity in the early 1950s, his surname was mistakenly spelled as Farnetti. This discrepancy caused Gino some difficulties over the years.

The story was initially documented by the Wartime Friends Association in a 2012 Italian-language book titled *Il Bambino in Divisa*. Over the last several years, partners in Canada and Italy have collaborated to produce the English version of the book, as well as the film, *Gino: A Child of War*.

"Gino's story touches many Italian and European families," observes Tony Battista, who first met Gino in 2012 during his time as the Canadian Defence attaché to Italy.

“It reminds us of the terrible tragedies that their towns and villages were subjected to. It rekindles memories of occupation, fear and starvation. It also reminds us that these tragedies occurred not so long ago, and that we are in constant danger of forgetting that they really did happen, and sadly persist today,” Battista continues.

Now retired from the Canadian Armed Forces, Battista has worked tirelessly with film company Combined Forces Production Collaborative to make the documentary a reality.

“This is a story of dignity, respect and hope, born out of the ashes of war that has now come to light to be preserved for present and future generations. It is a reminder of the sacrifices that Canadian soldiers made in upholding the values of humility and compassion toward a fellow human being,” explains Battista.

Gino recently celebrated his 85th birthday. He will join Canadian and Italian dignitaries at the premiere screening of the film on July 1, 2023 in Torrice, Italy. He remains a grateful man and his greatest hope is that no child should have to suffer the consequences and trauma of war.

“Vi ringrazio per quello che fate e spero che le vostre testimonianze rimangano a lungo nel ricordo delle generazioni di oggi è di domani,” comments Farnetti Bragaglia.

Following the July 1st premiere, the production team is looking to secure screening dates in major cities across Canada.

To learn more about Gino’s story, please visit: [combinedforces.ca](https://combinedforces.ca).