

*Sgt Louis C. Mazza - Airplane Gunner*

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Sgt Louis C. Mazza, serial number 12204199, served in the 416th Bomb Group during WWII. The 416th Bomb group was divided into four bomb squadrons. Mr. Mazza was a gunner who flew 10 missions in the 671 BS from May 19, 1944 until June 6th, the day his plane, 43-10164 was shot down. His pilot, Lt. Ronald Wipperman, was taken POW and the second gunner SSgt Henry S. Ahrens perished with the plane.

Sgt Mazza's mother, Maddalen, was notified by a Western Union telegram that her son was listed as MIA. At home in Westfield, New Jersey, she was anxiously awaiting word on her son's situation. Weeks of worry turned into months before she finally was able to track down the pilot Wipperman's family. She learned that the plane's left engine had caught fire after being hit by flak. Wipperman "Whip" tried to put out the flame by turning off the gas and diving, hoping to blow out the flame. The attempt was unsuccessful, the flame was growing. He was forced to radio back to his gunners Mazza and Ahrens to get prepared to parachute out of the failing plane. Lt. Wipperman pulled up vertically, leveling the plane, jettisoned the canopy and jumped, clearing the tail. Wipperman made it safely to the ground and was taken POW. The fate of the gunners was still unknown.

After learning the good news that Lt. Wipperman was alive and in a POW camp, Mrs. Mazza had hopes that her son was also alive. On Dec. 16, 1944 she typed the following letter below to Brigadier General Samuel E. Anderson, commanding general of the 9th Air Force.

The letter she wrote:

Dear Samuel E. Anderson,

I am writing to you concerning my son Sgt. Louis Mazza #12,204,199 who is missing in action since June, 6. The reason I'm writing this letter is I have found through information that the pilot of the plane in which my son was on is a prisoner of war in Germany. Now the serial number of this boy I do not have, but his name is 2nd Lt. Ronald A. Wipperman. His address is 155 First Street, North Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

Now do you think you could possibly contact this boy since he is a prisoner of war, about my son. Please if this could possibly be done let me know. I'm thanking you in advance.

Mrs. Maddalen Mazza

P.S. This fellow 2nd Lt. Ronald A. Wipperman was in the crew with my son and his A.P.O. was the same as my son 140.

Louis C. Mazza was not in a POW camp and was later determined to be deceased under Public Law 490 and designated "FOD" finding of death.

Mrs. Mazza was sadly added to the Gold Star Mothers' list.