

## Alfred Louis Zanoni

First Lieutenant Alfred L. Zanoni (1919-1944) was born and raised in Raritan New Jersey in the home adjacent to the family shoe store at 62 West Somerset Street. As a boy, Alfred developed a keen interest in the emerging science of aviation that eventually led him to earn a private pilot license. Upon receiving his engineering degree and ROTC 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Commission from Lehigh University, he promptly enrolled in the US Army Infantry in May 1942. Transferring to the Army Air Corps that July, he won his wings at Ellington Field, Texas in February 1943. Shortly thereafter he was sent overseas after undergoing operational training in Greenville, South Carolina and a promotion.



All of the WWII missions he flew as Pilot in Command of a Mitchell B-25 medium bomber succeeded in advancing the goals of the South Pacific campaign against the Japanese. He participated in Operation Cartwheel bombing raids in Rabaul New Guinea and other territories occupied by the Japanese. Perhaps his squadron's greatest achievement was destroying 60 enemy aircraft in a Pearl Harbor style surprise attack. Returning to his base in the Solomon Islands, he dropped out of formation to escort a crippled B-25 home. The bomb bay of his aircraft was struck by Japanese fire, badly twisting the racks holding the bombs, but somehow failing to ignite his own payload. On a subsequent mission, his plane was so riddled with bullet holes that one wing was almost torn from the fuselage. For his courage under fire, he was awarded the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

On March 20, 1944, Lt. Zanoni was returning to his base from New Zealand as a passenger aboard a Navy transport. The plane encountered dangerous weather conditions and ran low on fuel before it could locate the airstrip. Blinded, it crashed into a mountainside in poor visibility, killing all those aboard. In his memory the following year, Lt. Zanoni's sister Irma Z. D'Alessio baptized her second son *Alfred*, who as a West Windsor resident has proudly incised a star on this monument as an enduring salute to the valor of his uncle.