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No way for heroes to be remembered

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The greatest shame in the lingering debate between several Leominster city councilors -- most notably Council President John Dombrowski -- and Mayor Dean **Mazzarella** regarding his administration of Community Development Block Grants is that the names of **Mario** and Edward Cavaioli had to be brought up. The brothers grew up with their siblings and parents in a tiny three-bedroom home at 72 Carter St. in Leominster.

Like so many others of their generation, they got the call to serve in World War II. They left Leominster vibrant young men in the prime of their lives, and they came home broken by war.

Some could argue that they died in that war, that they gave their lives for Leominster and their country even though they returned standing on their own two feet.

For the remainder of their lives, they lived as recluses in their childhood home. **Mario** never worked, and Edward eventually worked for decades at Polaroid until one day he simply retired, never bothering to sign up for a pension. He said others needed it more than he did.

After their parents died, they were looked after by two nieces and their next-door neighbor, **Mazzarella**, who used to shovel snow for them as a young boy and promised **Mario** that he would never let him be taken from the home.

Mazzarella, of course, would grow up to become the city's chief executive. In 2007, after Edward had died and **Mario**, now in his 80s, lived alone, he fell in his home, where he lay for days before being discovered. **Mario** cried as they carried him to the ambulance.

Mazzarella moved quickly to get **Mario**, who never signed up for Medicare, back into his home. He got his neighbor to apply for a Community Development Block Grant that would pay for the necessary repairs to the home so he could return safely. The CDBG loan was for about \$25,000. After **Mario** died in his home in June at 84, his nieces didn't want the expenses related to the home. They deeded their interest in the home to **Mazzarella**. **Mario's** estate is yet to be settled, and a title search suggested there could be more than one claim to the property. **Mazzarella** says if he does take ownership of the home, he will make sure the \$25,000 loan will be paid back.

It's easy to see why critics of the mayor would question his actions related to CDBG. He is, after all, the city's chief executive, and is ultimate overseer of the program. It's just as easy to see why supporters of the mayor would think that what the mayor did was noble -- he made a promise as a young child to take care of his neighbor, and he kept it. We agree with the mayor's supporters in this case, and we believe he would help any resident of Leominster in a similar situation the same way -- beloved neighbor or not.

What we should all agree on is this: **Mario** and Edward Cavaioli are forgotten heroes of World War II. How shameful it is, then, if we remember them only for this controversy. How shameful it is.

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