

**Lawrence Joseph Bucco**  
**March 18, 1918-August 9, 2000**

Lawrence (Elario) Bucco was born at home in the Oak Shades section of Matawan Township (now Aberdeen) on March 18, 1918. He was the fourth child of Victoria and Rocco Bucco. Larry had an older sister, Dominica, born in 1913; an older brother Felice (Phillip), born in 1915; and a still-born sister born in 1917.

Little is known of his formative years, however, we do know he attended Matawan Grammar School and was an excellent student. Larry was a member of Matawan High School's Class of 1936 but after his freshman year, he decided to drop out and go to work. One of his teachers visited Victoria to plead with her to not allow this because she could see a great deal of potential in Larry. But his mind was made up and Victoria couldn't change it.

Larry was experiencing the first stirrings of responsibility and service that would shape the rest of his life. By the time he had finished his freshman year at Matawan, Victoria and Rocco's family had grown to 11 children. The Great Depression was entrenched in American society and Larry felt an obligation, at his tender age, to help his parents with his eight younger siblings. So he went to work.

His first job was at the Matawan Barrel Factory, across from his home on Harrison Avenue. His pay was only a few dollars a week, but it helped. After about a year, he moved to the Monmouth Stamping Company, another nearby business that made lampshades for the U.S. Navy. Sometime during his later teens, Larry and a few other Matawan boys joined the Civilian Conservation Corp, Company 259, out of Freehold, N.J. Larry hoped to see the western states of Montana or Colorado but he and his buddies were sent to Upstate New York where they ended up planting trees.

As he grew into his 20s, Larry became involved in several Matawan softball leagues. Called "athletic clubs," these groups of young men played on what they called the "San Lupo Field" because it was the site of the annual San Lupo Festival. The field was at the far end of Harrison Avenue. Larry was a member of the Matawan Park Athletic Club where he served as secretary;

the Mauro's Baseball Club where he was both secretary and treasurer; and the Mauro Athletic Club where he was also secretary and treasurer.

After Dec. 7, 1941, Larry knew it was only a matter of time before he received his "Greetings" from the U.S. War Office. He was drafted in 1943 and trained at Fort Benning, Georgia. During this time, he made quick friends with an Italian boy from Brooklyn named John Scarpa. During one furlough, he went home with John to Brooklyn and met John's younger sister, Ann. They began writing to one another and soon wanted to become engaged. Ann's mother had agreed, but on the night Larry was supposed to take Ann out to dinner and officially propose, Mrs. Scarpa changed her mind and said NO! When Larry picked Ann up that evening he could see immediately something was wrong. He asked and she told him about her mother's change of mind. Larry, while never hot-headed but still with Sicilian blood in his veins, passionately suggested to Ann they should simply elope. Ann, a very demure and obedient daughter, uncharacteristically agreed! That night, with just the clothes on their backs, Larry and Ann took a train to Columbus, Georgia, and were married two days later on Feb. 12, 1944. They lived with two other couples in a small house near Fort Benning until Larry shipped out for England. He traveled on the Queen Mary and landed on Omaha beach, three weeks after D-Day in late June 1944.

Sgt. Lawrence Bucco fought on the front lines in Northern France, Holland and Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge with the Seventh Armored Division, which had been transferred from Gen. Patton's Third Army to Gen. Montgomery's British Second Army. The winter of 1944-45 was bitter and long and after many close calls with bullets and tanks, Larry ended up with no feeling in his feet. They were frozen. Because he couldn't walk very well, he had a difficult time keeping up with his platoon as they headed away from the front lines after replacements had arrived. Soon he was alone on the road. He eventually couldn't take one more step so he leaned up against a tree understanding that to sit or lie down would mean certain death. After about two hours, an American Jeep came down the road and its driver saw Larry waving his arms with the last of his strength. After ensuring that Larry was an American soldier, the officer in the Jeep had to lift Larry bodily into the back because Larry was in such bad shape. This unnamed officer saved his life.

After leaving the front lines on that day, Jan. 29, 1945, Larry was transferred to England where he spent six weeks in the hospital. He was then sent to Marseilles, France, where he was when the war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945. Larry didn't make it back to the States until December 1945.

Ann had spent the war in Brooklyn with her parents after Larry was shipped out where they welcomed her with open arms. When he returned, they lived in a small apartment on the top floor of the house her parents owned. Larry took the Civil Service test, passed with flying colors and was offered a job with the U.S. Post Office, a very sought after and prized position at the time. Larry worked at the Post Office for a few years while he and Ann had two children. But Larry wasn't a city boy, he didn't like all the concrete and the soot in the air. He missed his parents, his close-knit family and his life-long friends. Larry wanted to return to Matawan. Ann liked Matawan, having visited during the war, and so the small family bought a house at 52 Main Street, Matawan, and moved in the Spring of 1950.

After holding several jobs and attending night school to receive his high school GED, in 1956 Larry found his place in the purchasing department of International Flavors and Fragrances in Union Beach. He was transferred to the New York office of IFF in 1968, and worked there for 10 years. In 1978, he returned to Union Beach where he was named Plant Purchasing Agent until his retirement in 1981. Larry was the only one in his entire department without a college degree.

His retirement didn't last very long, however, Larry was soon given the task of opening the first N.J. Department of Motor Vehicles station in Matawan. He had to oversee purchase of the land, construction of the building, and the hiring and supervision of staff.

Somehow, Larry found time to be active in Matawan politics. He served as Municipal Chairman of the Matawan Republican Party and won a seat on the Matawan Town Council in the mid-1960s. While on the Council, Larry was chair of the Police Committee and served on the Planning Board.

Larry also played an instrumental role in the founding of Matawan's Italian American Club and was its president in 1967-68. In addition, he was a volunteer fireman with M.E. Haley Hose. Today, his children sponsor the Lawrence J. and Ann L. Bucco Award for Community Volunteerism, a

scholarship offered most years in Larry and Ann's honor to a deserving senior at Matawan Regional High School.

Larry and Ann spent some of their retirement in Florida but never severed their ties with Matawan. They returned every fall to their house in Green and White Village hosting Christmas festivities and family gatherings. They spent one Christmas in Vail, Colorado, with their daughter where they saw former President Gerald Ford light the town Christmas Tree.

Larry passed away unexpectedly from a stroke on Aug. 9, 2000. He and Ann, who passed on Feb. 1, 2015, rest in St. Joseph's Cemetery.