

Author Bio



Photo: [Cheryl Gerber](#)

Elisa M. Speranza is the granddaughter of Irish and Italian immigrants, raised Catholic, and educated by nuns. She's been a writer and book nerd all her life. Her first paid job was in the children's room of her town's public library, and she was a journalist early in her career, before spending thirty-plus years in the water and critical infrastructure business. Her first novel, *The Italian Prisoner*, was a finalist in the William Faulkner-William Wisdom Creative Writing Competition for a novel-in-progress in 2019.

Many years ago, Ms. Speranza heard a friend's story about his parents: an Italian prisoner of war and a French Quarter Sicilian woman who met during World War II in New Orleans. Fascinated by this hidden chapter in history, she became determined to find out more. In the course of her investigation, she connected with scholars, researchers, and others who've been piecing together the little-known stories of some of the 51,000 Italian POWs held in the US from 1943-1945, 1,000 of whom were held at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. Working with Sal Serio, Curator of the American Italian Library, and Linda DiMarzio Massicot, the daughter of one of the Jackson Barracks POWs, Ms. Speranza started a treasure hunt for information, artifacts, and people. Together, they identified ten local families who had descended from the Jackson Barracks POWs and the local Sicilian-American women they met and married.

A native Bostonian and die-hard member of Red Sox Nation, Ms. Speranza is an alumna of Boston College and Harvard's Kennedy School. She lives with Jon Kardon in New Orleans and Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.

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