


Local 100-year-old World War II vet to take part in Super Bowl coin toss



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In this 2018 photo, retired Army Lt. Col. Samuel Lombardo, now 100 years old, talks about the American flag he and his fellow soldiers made during World War II. Lombardo is one of four 100-year-old World War II veterans participating in the official coin toss at Sunday's Super Bowl. [DAILY NEWS / FILE]

By [Jim Thompson](#)

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MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — Local centenarian Sam Lombardo will be one of four World War II veterans participating in the official coin toss for Sunday evening’s Super Bowl LIV, featuring the Kansas City Chiefs and the San Francisco 49ers in the National Football League championship game.

“As we culminate the NFL’s 100th season, we’re extremely proud to honor four World War II veterans celebrating 100 years of life,” NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said in a news release

from the league. “These four men deserve our gratitude for their tremendous contributions to the United States of America and we’re thrilled to recognize their service on the country’s largest stage.”

PHOTOS: Sam Lombardo in the Battle of the Bulge and the flag that was made

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II.

Lombardo, a retired Army lieutenant colonel, served in Korea and in Vietnam following his service in World War II.

A native of Italy, Lombardo came to the United States in 1929 with his mother and two sisters to join his father in Altoona, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in 1939 as a private in the 110th Infantry Regiment. Less than 3 years later, he was commissioned as an Army officer at Fort Benning, Georgia.

During World War II, Lombardo saw action in the Battle of the Bulge, Remagen Bridgehead, Ruhr Pocket, and Central European campaigns.

“Under combat conditions, Lombardo and his men made an American flag, with whatever materials could be secured such as pillowcases, curtains, and even a German surrender flag,” according to the NFL news release. “It took the men approximately two-and-a-half months to complete the flag, which was finished by the time the men reached the Danube River.”

Their flag was the first American flag to cross the Remagen Bridge during the war and it is now on display at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning.

Lombardo’s military decorations include the Silver Star and the Bronze Star.

The other 100-year-old veterans participating in Sunday evening’s coin toss are Army veteran Odón Sanchez Cardenas, a Texas native who had four brothers who also served in World War II.

Cardenas was deployed in 1944 to the European Theater of Operations, fighting in the Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe battles as part of the Third Army in France and Germany under the command of General George Patton.

He was held at POW camps near Dusseldorf, Germany, then moved to a POW camp near Limburg an der Lahn, Hessen, Germany. For his service, he was awarded an American Defense Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and a European African Middle Eastern Service Medal and three Bronze Stars.

Also participating in the coin toss is Charles McGee, who served in the Army Air Forces, and later in the Air Force, in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

A Cleveland native, McGee became a part of the Tuskegee Airmen and was stationed in Italy with the 302nd Fighter Squadron.

Also part of Sunday's coin toss is Sidney Walton of New York City, who enlisted in the Army in 1941 "with the express purpose of 'fighting Hitler' nine months before America entered WW II" according to the NFL news release.

Walton went on to fight in the CBI theater (China, Burma, India), 34th Infantry, 8th Division, and rose to the rank of corporal. After the war ended, he returned to the U.S., got married, and raised a family in San Diego where he worked for the government as a chemical engineer.