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Part I of II*

Sergeant Fortunato Garcia
MIA/POW
Company E, 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division
U.S. Army- The Anzio Invasion, WWII

This month, we have the privilege and honor to salute one of our own Heroes, Sgt. Fortunato Garcia. The Anzio invasion began at 0200 on January 22, 1944, completely surprising the Germans. This was one of the many battles leading to the liberation of Rome, Italy. The four months of the Anzio campaign was very costly to the Allies, who suffered 29,200 combat casualties, 4,400 killed and 18,000 wounded. The initial Anzio operation was code named Operation Shingle, eventually leading to other major allied thrusts known as Operation Buffalo and Operation Turtle.

It was at the Anzio invasion that Sgt. Garcia demonstrated intrepid actions of bravery, zealous devotion to duty; and an unwavering determination to save his unit. Let us all read the following citation from the President of the United States for the Distinguished Service Cross to Sgt. Garcia. The Distinguished Service Cross is the nation's second highest award for bravery in battle.

"Distinguished Service Cross"

"For extraordinary heroism in action from 16 to 22 February 1944, near ** Italy. During a period of heavy fighting, Sergeant Garcia's company was under attack by enemy forces. During the day of 16 February all communication wires leading to the platoons were destroyed. At nightfall, Sergeant Garcia, acting without orders, immediately proceeded to repair the broken wire. With enemy infantry closing in from both front and rear; he spent two hours repairing his lines while exposed to heavy rifle fire from both friendly and hostile troops. Because of the danger involved, he refused to take any assistants and completed the job alone. Two nights later, when communications were temporarily out, Sergeant Garcia voluntarily moved alone through approximately six hundred yards of enemy infested territory to warn the battalion command post of an approaching German foot column. Arriving at the command post a few minutes before the enemy, he gave warning of the attack which was successfully repulsed. On the next four nights, Sergeant Garcia maintained radio and wire contact with the battalion command post. In addition to his communications duties he supervised and led ration carrying parties nightly and one occasion led the only successful ration party of the night when other groups were turned back by withering enemy fire. On one occasion enemy tanks reached a point within twenty-five yards of his company's command post and continued to fire point blank until knocked out of action. Under direct tank, machine gun and rifle fire, Sergeant Garcia remained at this post to operate the company radio, relaying valuable information to battalion headquarters. During the period of the attack, Sergeant Garcia made at least twelve trips into enemy territory under heavy fire, in the interests of his company. When last seen, he was advancing in the face of intense enemy machine gun fire attempting to find a safe route of withdrawal for the handful of men left in his company. Sergeant Garcia's heroic and determined action saved his company from annihilation, was an inspiration to his fellow soldiers and reflects the finest traditions of the American Soldier."**

Next month, "Missing in Action and a Prisoner of War"

