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American Legion Post 11-11
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Sgt. Fortunato Garcia
U.S. Army Infantry, WWII, Anzio Invasion Battle
Distinguished Service Cross
Part II of II

When last seen, Sgt. Garcia was advancing in the face of enemy machine gun fire, trying to find a safe route of withdrawal for the survivors of his company. Sgt. Garcia was listed as Missing in Action on Feb. 18, 1944. Later, his family learned of his imprisonment at Stalag 3b. in Furstenburg, Germany. We need to mention a few words of Imprisonment as a POW. There were many POW camps in Germany, more often than not; Russians would be in one camp while Americans would share a different POW camp.

Stalag was the short name for Stammlager or oflags. They were run by the Luftwaffe and were intended to house air force prisoners, although we know that many other soldiers were imprisoned there as well. Before being sent to a camp, a POW would be processed and interrogated. Under the terms of the Geneva Convention, soldiers were required to give only their name, rank and serial number, but German guards used severe means of extracting information. The POWs would then be transported by train to a POW camp. Camp layouts varied some sites with tents that held 400 prisoners, other camps with old wooden barracks to house prisoners. A German POW camp might hold as many as 5,000 POWs, Stalag 3b reportedly held 4,229 soldiers. Meals of the day would consist of a very thin soup, and dry bread. As one can imagine, numerous soldiers died from malnutrition, associated diseases or succumbed from lack of blankets in the winter. Heat was normally provided by a charcoal burning stove in the middle of the room.

Stalag 3b POW camp was liberated in April of 1945, after the war, Sgt. Garcia shared one story with his wife, which will be retold here. When German soldiers knew they were losing the war, they were given orders to terminate the leadership of the men; Sgt. Garcia was one of the leaders who was to be executed in short order. "Each noncom was given his papers and told to line up at an officer's post to be directed to a firing squad. When Sgt. Garcia got to the officer, the officer asked for the papers, put them in his pocket and was told to go back to the barracks" " He never learned why the officer did this but this is why he lived"

Other battlefield medals include a Silver Star, Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, although documentation has been lost for these awards. We do not need a host of medals to show the bravery of Sergeant Fortunato Garcia , the DSC presentation speaks for itself, we at Post 11-11 are honored to show our gratitude to this brave soldier , who displayed time after time a relentless determination of courage for his fellow man. Well done, Sergeant Fortunato Garcia, well done indeed.

An afterthought, WWII claimed the lives of 400,000 American Soldiers, serving from 1941 to 1945. Add the war in VietNam which claimed 58,286 lives, Korea claimed another 54,260 soldiers, adding up to a half million brave men and women who sacrificed their lives so we have the freedoms we enjoy today.

**Freedom is not Free, let us always remember our Armed Forces heroes.
Thank You, Sergeant Fortunato Garcia**

