

Justin Hartwig

Some of you know I usually post about my Grandpa Hartwig today. He spent 27 months in German prison camp during WWII.

We say thank you. Have a good Veteran's Day, everyone.

(Btw, my Aunt Diane Conroy helped track down the missing portion of this article. Thanks!)

[From the Mitchell County (Iowa) Press, August 9, 1945]

NEWSPAPER CLIPPING --TELLS OF AGONY OF INTENSE HUNGER IN NAZI PRISON CAMP

Sgt. Vern Hartwig, 30, home from German prison camps where he was a prisoner for two years, knows what it is to be hungry, and he intends to have enough food on his table, every meal, for the rest of his life.

"I've seen men claw through the fences of the compound to dig out grasses and weeds that might be cooked. I've known the awful pangs of hunger at night, the kind that drives away sleep.

"Now when I get home there will always be enough food on the table," says Sgt. Hartwig, who was among the first to be sent to camp under the selective service.

Sgt. Hartwig, among the first group of American prisoners to reach Naples, was with a group captured at Faid Pass in North Africa. "The Italians threw rotten tomatoes, rocks and clumps of dirt at the prisoners, wounding many of them.

"In ten days we had our first British Red Cross parcel; it was wonderful.

"The men were so hungry that each of us had to tie the food on our bodies to keep away the thieves. I can truthfully say that I wouldn't have been here if it hadn't been for the Red Cross. My weight fell from 196 to 154 pounds and when the Red Cross parcels came for a 14 month straight period, I regained my original weight.

The Russians had no such parcels and they died. They were so thin, we saw them walking about with hollows under the shoulder blades and back of their hips so large that a man's fist could be placed under them. When they went into the cold showers, often the cold water killed them.

Sgt. Hartwig left the United States Feb. 12, 1943, was liberated May 3, 1945, and arrived in the States July 5, 1945.