

TRANSCRIPT FROM THE MARCH 2, 2009 CITY COUNCIL MEETING
PRESENTATION OF EXECUTIVE PROCLAMATION TO JACK VAN DER GEEST

MAYOR HANKS: "You know, one of the true joys is to recognize some outstanding citizens that we have here in Rapid City, and we have a special occasion tonight. And, it truly is a pleasure for me to give you an Executive Proclamation, Jack, and if I could read this for you."

Mayor Hanks then read the Executive Proclamation from the Mayor and City Council of Rapid City declaring March 3, 2009 as Jack van der Geest Day in Rapid City.

MAYOR HANKS: "Now, Jack, just so you know there is an awful lot of people that know your story around the state, and I will tell you with a little bit of effort from myself and Alderman Kooiker and other folks we also have someone who wants to recognize you."

Mayor Hanks then read the Executive Proclamation from the State of South Dakota from the Office of the Governor declaring March 3, 2009 Jack van der Geest Day in South Dakota.

MR. VAN DER GEEST: "It is not easy to lay still for one minute. You try to lay still for eleven hours in a pile of dead bodies. And, you have to remember what will go through your mind when you lay there and finally that I could be able to jump up. I didn't expect that after laying there for eleven hours, but I made it. There was just one German guard walking around the pile of dead bodies. I was able to jump up and kill that son of a gun. I took his uniform, and just at that time, a truck came and they said, I was in uniform, that 'Gehen sie nach Weimar?' In other words, 'Are you going to Wiemar?' Yep. They thought I was going to the girls and the beer and the booze, and I didn't mind that. So, yeah. So, I got at the camp gate. And, I was lucky I was the only one on board of that truck and was sitting only in front and of course in uniform. And, I took his rifle too. I made sure that I had a weapon with me. And, he looked at me, and he says, 'OK,' and I went out of camp. Then I came at the second gate. The same thing and I thought, 'Gosh, I never knew it was so easy to get out of a death camp.' But it was all my luck. When I came out, I came on a farmer's house and the farm woman at that time asked me, 'What can I do for you?' I said I am hungry, and I am lost. She said, 'Now, why don't you come in?' Later on when I talked to the family, I found out that this woman knew that I was an escapee of Buchenwald. And, she never said a word, because she laid her own life on the line because if the Gestapo would have found out that she would have helped me, eating and given a place, she would have been killed too. So just to show you, I don't hate all the German people just the Nazi's, and believe me, I took care of a lot of them. They cannot speak against me anymore. But, I have lived in all this time here in Rapid City. It is over 55 years now. It is a good time. It is a good place. When we look on the coast or say coming up now in New York, they can have it. They can have it also have it in California, and we're sitting here with 60, 70 degrees, and we just look up and like there is nothing going on. So, I love Rapid City, and the people in it. Thank you very much."

END OF TRANSCRIPT