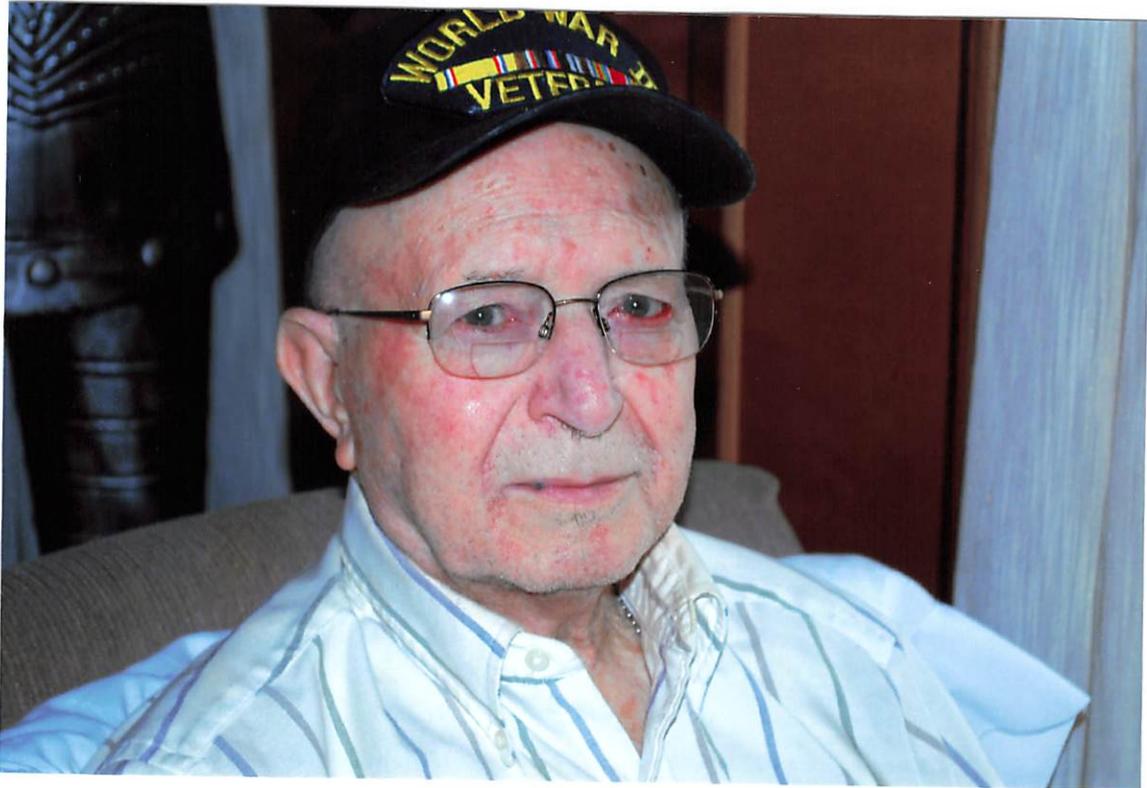


JOURNAL OF
VINCENT MENTO



FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

VINCENT MENTO

A JOURNAL WAS SUBMITTED
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF HAMMONTON

There is no tape or transcript.

MEDALS AWARDED TO VINCENT MENTO
DURING WORLD WAR II



Drafted May 2 1942 - Fort Dix

Journal of Vincent Mento

Arrived at Fort McClellan May 6, 1942

Departed Fort McClellan July 5, 1942

Drew Person passed a remark that, "Fort McClellan was the concentration camp of the U.S.A. Calvary were all rebels."

When we left we told the drill sergeant to pray that we don't meet over seas. If we do your getting a shot in the back. All of them ended up volunteering in the pacific theater. Before I left the Major told the group, "I'm going to show you how to take the rifle away from the enemy. He picked on me with the old 3 rifles with bayonets. I was only 90 lbs,; he grabbed my rifle by the bayonet and the scabber came off. There I was sticking him in the chest. I was going to kill him, but something said I'm going crazy, too. So I dropped the rifle. He picked it up and walked away without a word. When I arrived at Fort McClellan, I had a letter waiting for me. They wanted to know how my brother knew where I was going. They were going to have him investigated but never did. He had tipped the guard on the train so that's how he knew. We arrived at Herbert Smart Airport July 9, 1942. Then to Robbins Field in Macon, Georgia, across from camp was Camp Wheeler, an infantry camp. While there we were called out in formation and some girl walked up and down examining each squad. We wondered what she wanted. She was looking for the guy that got her pregnant. Sent word home I'd be in Fort DIX for the new year. We got there and restricted to camp without family visitation s. Left Fort DIX Jan, 13, 1943. While there one person remarked, " that S.O.B. Vinecent Mento made sergeant and I didn't." I wanted to kill him. They pulled me away from him when the major and lieutenant came over asking what happened.

My father always said the Italian girls were always angels. But when there they did not have any food so they do anything for rations. The locals hated me because I was in the Air Force. A large building was destroyed by the air force there. I said, "were you making planes for the Germans?"

"yes", they said.

"Well you should have been in it when it was bombed"

My brother Anthony, of the navy, sent a letter and said that he wanted to volunteer to come over seas to see me. I said I'd be glad to see him but I'd bust his head if he did. I saw my brother John at a port in Naples. He boarded a ship for the invasion of Anzio, he was in a mortar battalion. I visited Roger Larossa, a friend, at the 45th General Hospital where he worked. Met Vince Santoro. First we met on the 27th mobile march to see Nathan Brazil. Got there Sat 2 o'clock and left Sunday 12:30. April 21 John was wounded and arrived at hospital April 24. I went to see him everyday. I had left the mess hall on my way to my office and some second lieutenant stopped and chewed me out for not saluting him. I called Major up and he called the squadron Major. "He said to you Vince?"

"Yea"

They shipped him right out. As I was walking down from the mess hall I met a major from WW1 and asked him why was he here. He

said he volunteered and if you guys left the girls alone and more fighting the war would be over. Going back to my office some girl was on the phone but I did not know any girls. It was a nurse telling me about my brother. April 29 my father's second cousin who lived in Naples was looking for a job. I gave him one on a dump truck when Vesuvius was erupting. We used the cinders in the driveway at the depot. He walked away saying that he doesn't do that work, he cuts dyes for fait company. I kicked him out. The Major turned around to the Lieutenant and said " look he's firing his father's second cousin. When I was in Naples I sent for my father's brother living in Sicily. He said he had too much work on the farm. My father had told me that the land he had was no bigger than a kitchen table. So my father wrote to his brother a letter back. Later when I was home at my sister's home for dinner, my father's brother was there visiting. I was smoking a cigar and my sister-in-law said not to smoke near him he don't like it. I said then he could get the hell out of here. I sent money home every month from overseas. My mother saved it for my return.

I don't know if I'm coming back from overseas. Left on the USS Erickson, a transport ship. I looked all over for that guy who made that comment. But he was on another ship, lucky man. 3 days out, the ship blew an engine and the convoy left us. The ship rushed to catch up. The reason why we were so long at Fort DIX was the Germans had the port mined.

Arrived at Casablanca Jan. 25, 1943. I was sleeping on the ground when first sergeant ordered me to put on my dress uniform to see the president off. I said, "I am sleeping on the ground and he's leaving on Air force One, don't bother me." That's when they decided that we had to fight the Germans in Africa, Italy, and France. And the English were fighting in England. We left Casablanca in a freight train forty guys per car. We slept on our side and when one guy wanted to change over the whole car had to change. If we had to go to the toilet we had to bring paper and kick it off the side. Half way up the mountain the salvation army had coffee and donuts. The Red cross had taken an Opera House in Naples, a beautiful building. Go in there for coffee it was five cents. Met my brother John when he came overseas to Africa. We moved to the airport in Africa July 5, 1943. Left airport in Oran Sept. 16, 1943. Arrived in Algiers Sept. 17, 1943. Boarded ship Sept 23, 1943. Left Algiers Oct 2, 1943. Arrived at Malta Oct 6, 1943. Left Africa Oct 7, 1943. Arrived in Naples Oct 8, 1943. Landed in Oct 14, 1943. Visited Sorrento Oct. 25, 1943. Dec 1, I went to Forgia to attend chemical warfare school for 10 days, my first plane trip. Returned Dec 28. Anytime I got a letter from my brother in 2 days I told the Major tomorrow e go look for him. Went to see him in Venatro. We somehow went too far and ended up in the front lines, a bad thing. A scout up there stopped us and said, "where th hell you dumb air force guys going, turn

around, your in enemy territory. Stay on the road because the fields are mined. We did so with haste. Oct 9 boarded ship and arrived at Layhorn Oct 13 1943 and went to Pisa and climbed the Leaning Tower. From Pisa I went to Joia to chop up old B-17s with 100 hrs or more flight time. I was there when the war ended. 5 of us drank four quarts of Italian gin. I was drunk for a week. The Major wanted to make a speech. I said, "I'm going back to sleep and the 1st sergeant didn't blame me. Then they came out with a point system. Seventy five points would get you home. I had more than that. I waited at a staging area for three months for the boat home. The stevedores could not for on strike during the war but did so after the war. When I got home the Red Cross girl was on a sail boat playing music with milk and donuts. I said, "I did not want any of that."

"Why not?", she said. You haven't been there long."

"Only thirty-four months and I'm going to a bar."

Went to Fort DIX and got discharged Nov 5 1945. They offered another stripe to stay in, I said keep it. The only time I got hugged from my parents was when I left and when i came home, but i Loved them . I got home New Years 1945 and married Jan. 26, 1946. My girlfriend waited three and half years for me sending a letter everyday.

Thank-you
Vincent Mento

Journal of Vincent Mento

Drafted May 2, 1942 - Fort Dix.

Arrived at Fort McClellan May 6, 1942.

Left Fort McClellan July 5, 1942.

Drew Pearson passed remark that Fort McClellan was the concentration camp of the USA.

Arrived at Herbert Smart July 6, 1942.

Left Herbert Smart September 19, 1942.

Made Cpl. Dec. 15, 1942.

Left Robins Field Dec. 19, 1942.

Sent word home. I would be in Fort Dix for New Years.

Arrived at Fort Dix Dec. 31, 1942.

Restricted to camp. Couldn't get out and wouldn't let the family in to see us.

Left Fort Dix Jan. 13, 1943.

Three days out at sea, ship blew an engine. Left us there alone until it was fixed.

Stayed so long at Fort Dix because the Germans had mined the port, and we had to wait until they cleared it.

Arrived at Casa Blanca Jan. 25, 1943.

Made Sgt. Jan. 30, 1943.

When I made Sgt. another guy called me a SOB. I wanted to kill him, but they took me away from him. He was supposed to be on the same boat with

me. When the Major and Lt. Came to ask me what happened, I told them nobody calls me that and I would get him. When we got on our ship I looked all over for him and couldn't find him. They had put him on another ship. If I would have found him he would have a long way to swim.

Left Casa Blanca Jan. 25, 1943 on a freight train. Forty guys per boxcar. We had to sleep side by side. If one guy turned over we all had to turn over. When we reached the top of this mountain the Salvation Army was there with Coffee and doughnuts. We never received that type of treatment from the Red Cross. When I got coffee from the Red Cross I had to pay for it.

Arrived in ORAN Feb. 6 at the foundry. I met John when he came over seas in Africa in May.

We moved to an airport in Africa July 5, 1943.

Left the airport in Oran Sept. 16, 1943.

Arrived at Algiers Sept. 17.

Boarded ship Sept. 23, 1943. Left Algiers Oct. 2, 1943.

Arrived at Malta Oct. 6, 1943. Left Malta Oct. 7, 1943.

Arrived at Naples Oct. 8, 1943.

Landed Oct. 14, 1943.

I visited Sorrento Oct. 25, 1943.

Dec. 1st went to Foggia to attend C.W. School for 10 days.

My first plane trip Dec. 19.

Returned from Foggia Dec. 28.

Maj. Valerio, Lt. Abbots, and I went to see John at Venafro. We had passed him and ended up at the front lines. There was a scout out there, and he stopped us and asked where we were going. He gave us hell because we

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were at the front lines with no rifles or helmets he called us dumb Air Force guys.

Seen John at port of Naples Jan. 19.

Jan. 20 seen John at the port ready to board ship for invasion of Anzio.

Mar. 13 visited Roger LoRosa at 45th General Hospital where he worked.

Mar. 25 met Vince Santora for the first time overseas.

Mar. 25 Nathan and Roger came to see me.

First we met in 27 mobile. March took a trip to Foggia by jeep to see Nathan. Got there on Saturday about 2 o'clock. Left Sunday 12:30.

April 21 John got wounded. Arrived at 21st General Hospital on the 24th. Called me up at 12 o'clock. I went right down to see him.

Went to see him everyday.

April 26 they took the cast off his leg.

April 30 Nathan came to see me. He was leaving for the States on May 1st. We both went to see John at the hospital.

9pm, April 29 met pop's 2nd cousin Angie Mento May 1st. Met pop's 1st cousin Louie May 6th.

Removed all bandages from John by June 15. John was discharged from the hospital about the 18th. He was sent back to his outfit Aug. 20th.

John called from 7th Replacement Depot. I went to see him that night. Out again on the 23rd and told him so long, I was leaving for southern France, Marseilles.

Boarded ship Aug. 24. Arrived at Tolaa on the 29th.

Arrived at Marseilles on Sept. 7.

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Oct. 9 boarded LST 285 and arrived at Leghorn Oct. 13.

Unloaded ship at Leghorn and went to Pisa to setup.

Nov. 9 went to see John at Cerino, an MP outfit. He spent the night with me at Pisa. I brought him back the next morning.

Dec. 25 spent Christmas Day with John.

From Pisa I went to Goia where we chopped-up airplanes with over 100 hours of flying time. I was there when the war ended. I got so drunk. Five of us drank 4qts. of gin. I was drunk for a week.

First Sgt. called us out that the Maj. wanted to make a speech. I said the hell with you and the Maj., I'm going back to bed. He said he didn't blame me.

They then came out with the point system. Seventy-five points would get you home. I had more than that. I waited in the staging area for 3 months because the steamador went on strike when the war was over and wouldn't unhook the ship.

When I did get home the Red Cross girls were there with milk and doughnuts. I didn't want any. One of them said, since I didn't want any milk and doughnuts, "I can see you weren't over there long." I said, "No, only 34 months." She would have liked to fall over.

I went to the bar and drank whiskey.

I went to Fort Dix and got discharged Nov.5, 1945. They offered me another stripe to stay in. I told them to keep the stripe and went home.

The only time I was ever hugged from my mother and father was when I left and when I came home.

VINCENT MENTO



MENTO, VINCENT - son of Benedetto and Domenica (Giordano) Mento passed away peacefully on July 24, lying nose to nose with his daughter and with his caretaker by his side. Vince passed after a fulfilled day of attention from his children and grandchildren. A World War II veteran, serving as staff sergeant in the 38th Air Depot Group of the Army Air Corps; he served in the North Africa, Sicily & Italy, and the Southern France campaigns. He entered the army in May 1942 and was deployed overseas in January 1943 where he served until the war was over, returning to his beloved country in November 1945. He saw duty in Casa Blanca, Oran, Algiers, Malta, Naples, Sorrento, Foggia, Venafro, Marseilles, Tolaa, Pisa, Leghorn, and Goia. When the war ended and it was time to come home, Dad told the story of how he was delayed from returning for three months, living in a tent in Italy, because the stevedores went on strike and would not unload the ship. He told us the only two times he got a hug from his parents was when he left for war and when he came home from war. Dad did not talk about his WWII tour until late in life with one exception. He spoke often how his love, Mom, waited three years for him and how she wrote him every day. Of course Mom dreaded this day coming when neither she nor he would be around, so she destroyed every one of those letters. Dad married Mom, Mary Rose Amadeo, on January 26, 1946. They bought a home in Hammonton and lived their life happily in that same home for almost 59 years. Vince was predeceased by his wife, who passed in 2004. Now joined again with her, he is telling the angels how she has waited over five years for him. Vince was a sewing machine operator, a Foreman and a Manager for Hammonton Park Clothes, also known as Kessler Manufacturing in Hammonton and Atlantic City. We always marveled at how nice his co-workers and employees were to him and at the gifts and edible goodies they bestowed on him at Christmas time. He worked there for over thirty years, retiring at the young age of sixty-two. He once got his daughter a summer job there and she lasted two weeks. He was from the "Grea Generation", characterized as "the grea generation any society has ever produced". Toward the end of his career there, Dad could not wait to retire; regularly counting down the years and months. Following retirement, he worked part time for Carnesale Funeral Home. Dad enjoyed his Mondays and patriotic holidays at the VFW Post 1026 in Hammonton. He enjoyed the camaraderie, the patriotism, the dinners, and the story swapping. Being the son of a farmer, he enjoyed farming his small plot of land every spring and summer, planting impatiens for his wife, and swapping more stories with the neighbors. As one special neighbor tells it "we did not need any other fertilizer." Most of all Dad enjoyed his family, his home, and his quiet and non-complicated life. He liked staying home; always in a rush when out so he can get back home. He was also the driver of the family, and the father that drove his kids with their friends to movies and dances, to roller skate and the mall, and to other friends' homes. After retirement, Dad got to spend more time with his grandchildren which brought him much joy. He was always there for them and they were always there for him. He so enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren. Dad loved to share his knowledge of farming with them and sharing stories of growing up on the farm. He also enjoyed giving them orders. Dad was never sick and told everyone who would listen that the secret to his health and longevity was a shot of whiskey before his feet hit the ground. Every day at the crack of dawn for at least fifty years he had a shot of whiskey. During his first and only hospital stay at the age of ninety-one, the doctors even became convinced and ordered him a shot of whiskey while at the hospital and subsequent rehab facility. He was a man who did not leave the house for work in the morning without first giving his wife a kiss goodbye. He was a man who picked the first rose of summer every year and gave it to his wife, and later to his daughter. He had a little step to his walk and usually whistled as he walked from the front of the house to the back of the house. Vince came from a family of eight. He had four brothers and three sisters. He was the last surviving brother. His brothers Anthony (Nein), John, Joe, and Sam all passed before him. He is survived by two sisters, Josephine Domenico who always told him "you are still so handsome" and his sister Lillian Tassone. His sister Marie Costa passed years before him. Vince is survived by his son Vincent B, and his daughter Maria and her husband Bill Tate. Bill was like another son to him, taking care of his wants and needs. Vince is also survived by the apples of his eye, his three grandchildren and their wives: Jason (Donna Lee), Jim (Cathy Chappine) and Jonathan; and his great-grandchildren Heather, Brittany and Jackson Lee. He loved his grandkids and great-grandkids and enjoyed their many visits and companionship. Vince is predeceased by his wife Mary, his second born child Domenica, his daughter-in-law Lynda, many friends from his generation, and his second daughter-in-law Nancy. Dad cherished his family, his home, his country and flag, and his religion, praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary daily. For these reasons he fought so hard to stick around. He was given three months and he gave us fourteen. A bit of the world according to Vince will carry on with us. We will always be your son, your grandson, your great-grandchildren, and daddy's little girl. We will remember what you taught us and will love, cherish and think of you every day. Today, your flag flies half mast. A viewing for Vince Mento will take place Thursday evening from 7pm to 9pm at Carnesale Funeral Home, 202 S. Third St., Hammonton, and again on Friday morning at 9:30am. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated 10:30am at St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Parrish in St. Joseph's RC Church, N. Third St., Hammonton. Burial will follow in Greenmount Cemetery. Donations can be made to VFW Post 1026, 390 S. Egg Harbor Road, Hammonton, NJ 08037. (www.carnesalefuneralhome.com) "Ring once when you get home."

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