"How It Started"

Forward

That title may well mean any number of things but in this particular case it deals with the army career of one Staff-Sargant Nicholas Orlando of Long Island, New York.

This book was started a few days after the liberation of four thousand American prisoners of war by the American third and seventh armies. Nicholas Orlando or yours truly was one of those prisoners. It was the happiest day of my life when I was made a free man again on May 2nd. nineteen hundred and fourty five. By the time I reach the United States again (two to four weeks) this book should be fairly well finished with a very happy ending. Hope you find it as interesting reading as I had in writing it.

Nicholas Orlando.

JANUARY 21, 1943

Chapter I
Induction

It was on January 21, 1943 when I came into the armed forces of the United States. It was a very cold and cloudy day as I remember it now. Two hours after I left home I reported to Camp Upton on Long Island. There I was processed and nine days later, January 30 I was shipped out to a basic training center at Atlantic City, New Jersey. Most of the time while at Camp Upton I worked in the Processing Building, processing fellows, which only a few days before I had gone through the same thing. I called home every other night by telephone to let them know everything was going well with me. A lot of my home town buddies were with me most of the time I was there. The train ride to Atlantic City took eight hours.

JANUARY 30, 1943

Basic Training

Arrived at Atlantic City, New Jersey on January 30, 1943 for my basic training. Quarters in a very good hotel, namely the Claridge. It was a lot better than I had expected and I knew it couldn't be too bad. We were guaranteed for seven days to get us into the swing of things before we were allowed out of the hotel. The training was not too bad. I enjoyed it and graduated on February 28th 1943. We stood an inspection after our training and the platoon I was in got an excellent superior rating, the best there'd it. We also took pictures, my sister and several of the other girls back home visited some of my friends who were also there. Did some sight seeing and took pictures. Also telephoned home quite frequently.

MARCH 3, 1943

Armament School.

The day after graduating from my basic training I was shipped out to Armament school at Buckley Field Denver, Colorado. I rode on a troop train for three days and three nights. To me then, home was a long way off and I had no idea when I would get there again. For the first eight days there I had K.P. It was a pretty good racket after you got to know a few tricks. At Buckley I studied fifty calibre, thirty calibre machine guns chiefly, with a little of electricity mixed in. We were allowed to town every night and received one day off a week. Jack Marlatte and Jim Hammons were still with me. We completed half our schooling there and shipped out to Lowry Field two just a few miles away. Weather was beautiful the last two weeks in March.

APRIL 5, 1943

Armament School Cont.

Arrived at Lowry Field II a few hours after slipping out from Buckley. There I studied 37 m.m, 20 m.m and the whole business of bombs. That is types, fuzes, charges, loading and releasing. It was a very interesting course. Jack and Jim still with me. Took pictures which turned out very good. Oh yes, we had eight more days of K.P. The weather kept on being good and we were all brown as potatoes. Visited Denver quite frequently and to me it rates with New York City. It has everything. It was there I learned the news of Frankie Mazzeo and August Olivieri being killed in North Africa. A chance to get home was on my mind throughout most my schooling. Graduated on the 29th of May and received diploma. Jack and Jim still with me.

MAY 30, 1943

Replacement Center

Arrived at Salt Lake City, Utah on June 1st, 1943. It was there you are placed with some kind of an outfit that needed you. Went through another processing and received overseas equipment. There for ten days. Seen Micky Rooney. Visited Salt Lake City and seen the Mormons. Stood in lights most of the time and really toned up. Jim and Jack still with me. Looks like we're going to be separated though. Expect a furlough at next base. Shipped out on the ninth of June. Jack, Jim and myself went on different routes after being together for five months. Shipped out of Salt Lake on June 7 and arrived at Rapid City Army Air Base on the 10th of June.

July 21, 1943

Air Base (Gunnery School).

At Ephrata we went through a gunnery course which lasted about ten days. It was sufficient for the job we had to do. It was very hot and dusty through the months of July and August. Aside from going to school there for ten days we did absolutely nothing but eat, sleep, shower daily and play baseball. Took some pictures with my new buddy Louis Beska. We visited Spokane and the Grand Coulee Dam where we also took pictures. It was or less like a vacation. Really got a tan there too. I didn't do any flying there lucky for me. One fellow fell out of a plane and another plane hit a mountain. I was assigned to a crew on August 30, 1943 and shipped out for further training the next day. I didn't have very much time to get acquainted with my crew members. That was only temporary though.

September 1, 1943

Air Base (Training)

Arrived back at Rapid City Army Air Base on September 3rd to take ourselves training. It was my pleasant time on this base. Training here lasted until Oct. 20, 1943. Assigned to B-17 as a ball turret operator. I had a small bunch of boys on my crew. Received an eleven day furlough from September 23 to October 3, 1943. Had a pargeant before my furlough (SEPT. 15/43). Training went along smooth as scheduled. Had a good look at Mt. Rushmore, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Des Moines from the air. Found out that were going to Europe by boat. Met John Bergen from home who had just completed the training I was about to take. Shipped out on October 23, 1943 to Scott Field, Illinois which was an Air Corp. staging area.

October 26, 1943

Staging Area

Arrived at Scott Field on the 26th of October 1943. Here we were to be checked to see that we had everything we needed before we go overseas. Completed physicals and mentals had to be taken. Got a pass to St. Louis. Took some picture of new members and myself. Ate very good and had a wonderful time while there. Shipped out ten days later to P.O.E. at N.Y.

P.O.E.

Arrived in New York (Camp Shanks) P.O.E. on November 1, 1943. Again we were checked and given anything we needed or wanted. I was all set and managed to get home twice. Ate very good at P.X. "Boogie Woogie" was my favorite song at the time. Seen Joe Birdd there. Got on boat on Nov. 11, 1943 Exactly 25 years after the first war was over. The boat was a British middle class luxury liner named "H.M. Andes".