

Jungle War Veteran Returns To 'Civvies'



(Bethlehem Steel Photo)

Earl M. Green, veteran of 38 months of service with the U. S. Army Aviation Engineers in the South Pacific and employe of Bethlehem Steel Company on military leave of absence until mid-May is shown here atop of the steel framework of a structure going up within the Bethlehem plant as he resumed his job as rigger in the construction department. Green found the handling of the familiar spud wrench quite like old times.

G-I Back From War Returns To Steel Job

Earl Green First Steel Worker Discharged Under Point System Reports for Work at Local Plant

Green, Earl M.

One hundred sixteen military credits spelled just two things to Technical Corporal Earl M. Green, 23-year-old veteran of 38 months in the Pacific theatre of war—discharge from the Army and his old job of rigger with Bethlehem Steel Company.

To Bethlehem Steel, Earl Green's discharge and his return to work meant that he is the first former employe back on the job at Bethlehem plant as a result of the Army's point system.

He had just concluded a 30-day furlough spent with his wife, LaRue, son, Glenn Lynn, aged 3½, and parents, Mr. and Mrs. John E. W. Green, 111 West 27th Street, Northampton, and was at Ft. Dix, N. J. awaiting assignment to overseas duty. Instead, however, of sailing orders, his Honorable Discharge papers were handed to him.

That was May 14. On the 15th he was home in Northampton; on the 16th he came to Bethlehem Steel for his old job; and on the 17th, in working duds, he reported to his old boss, W. S. "Bill" More, superintendent of labor and construction, ready to work.

"There's a war still to be won," he remarked quietly. "Lots of my buddies are still out there . . . fighting . . . and maybe some of them dying."

That, in part, explains his haste to get back on the job.

But there are other reasons, too. Two of them are a young wife, a former Leighton girl, LaRue Smith, and the boy, Glenn, born just before he went overseas.

Green entered the service July 3, 1941, before Pearl Harbor. He was called up two weeks later and spent the interim at his job with Bethlehem. After the usual orientation, he was sent to Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., then to March Field, Califor-

nia, where he learned to be an equipment driver. He embarked from Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, sailing January 12, 1942, for Australia.

The men in the outfit went ashore at Melbourne on February 2, and were taken by rail and truck convoy to Darwin, where, on the 28th, they experienced their first bombing raid by Jap planes. At Darwin they rushed airstrips to completion and in April pushed off for Port Moresby in New Guinea.

Sixteen months later the outfit got its first "break" and spent three weeks in Sydney, resting and enjoying the comforts of civilization.

Back in the jungles, they were successively at Oro Bay, Buna, Lae, Saidor, Biak and finally at Leyte. At each place they followed the invading troops ashore with bulldozers and other equipment, landing while the beachhead was still under fire and air attack, carving out airstrips from jungle and sand and coral, dodging bombs and bullets, pushing on, backing up the troops with everything they had.

From Lae they built the road into the Markham Valley, scene of the famous parachute landing that caught the Jap from behind during the New Guinea campaign. Green ran into one of the parachuters who made that jump as he was enroute home for his furlough.

Mostly the natives in these areas were friendly enough, for the Japs treated them as slaves, starved and beat them, overworked them and left them to die. They were glad to see the Yanks, Green said, and worked willingly. Many of them are Christians, wearing silver crosses about their necks. Some speak English, although not very well.

The outfit embarked at Biak October 13, 1944 . . . a Friday . . . "some of the men said 'it's our unlucky day' . . . and were not told of their destination until they were within 100 miles of Leyte, in the Philippine archipelago.

Troops went ashore on Leyte October 20 and Green and his bulldozer "hit the beach" on the 22nd. From then until February 6, 1945, he labored in constructing airstrips, runways and roads.

February 6 was a great day, for it was then he was told to get ready for the jaunt home. He flew by plane to Tacloban, Palau, Biak and Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea. March 9, after 14 days at sea, he landed at San Francisco, one of 2,000 troops aboard the ship.

His outfit, the 808th Engineer Aviation Battalion, built 17 airstrips in the 38 months Green was with it, and was awarded the Presidential Unit citation for outstanding work. It was a "lucky" outfit, Green said, for only two or three men were wounded in all that time in spite of the fact that they worked under enemy attack and often were forced to "hit the dirt" in their foxholes when Jap planes strafed airfields and roads.

"You just got used to it," he said. "No one really was afraid; sort of took it as a matter of course. When the planes left you just went back to work. It was everyday stuff." Nevertheless, he is glad to be back without a scratch; he wasn't even nicked.

Green won the Good Conduct Medal and wears the Distinguished Unit badge, the American Defense Service Medal for service prior to Pearl Harbor, and the Asiatic-Pacific ribbon with four bronze stars for four campaigns.

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