

Nemeth, Frank

Discharged Veteran of World War II Likes New Job Making Shells to Help Buddies Abroad

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Ask Frank Nemeth how he likes his job as inspector on the 16-inch shell line in No. 17 Machine Shop of the Bethlehem, Pa., plant, Bethlehem Steel Company, and watch the gleam of satisfaction light his eyes as he replies:

"How do I like it? Say, when I think what each one of these big babies does when it hits where 'Jerry' is, I could kiss it!"

Frank has a right to his satisfaction, too, for he has served two hitches with Uncle Sam's Army, the first with the Coast Artillery on Corregidor — "The Rock" — at the entrance to Manila Bay, that hallowed spot where MacArthur's men fought to the last bitter moment against the treacherous Jap, and where they now have avenged every drop of blood shed in that first gallant, hopeless struggle. He entered the Army on December 15, 1937 and was honorably discharged at the end of his first three year enlistment December 7, 1940 with the rank of private first class—"That was a swell rating then, and believe me, you had to work for it!" Frank declared—just one year before the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines.

On January 5, 1942, Frank re-enlisted, this time in the Air Force, and, after an intensive course of training which took him to most of the States of the Union, went overseas in May, 1943, with a technical sergeant's rating as tail gunner on a B-24 bomber.

"I was the eyes of the ship," he said. "Part of my job was to check the bomb hits of the second plane ahead of ours. That was quite a job at 25,000 feet."

He was based at Bengazi, North Africa, and from there flew on missions that included the invasion of

Sicily, the first bombing of Rome, the bombings of Foggia, Messina and Naples in Italy, and the first great raid on the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. "That was the raid that knocked Italy out of the war," Frank explained. "It crippled their fuel supply so effectively that they had to give up."

"Did the Italians put up a pretty stiff fight for a while?" he was asked.

"Wouldn't you, if someone were stomping through your back yard, destroying your property? Sure, most of them fought . . . until they knew the jig was up," Frank replied.

It was coming home from the Ploesti raid that he "got his." The plane was hit over the target area and the bombardier killed when flak blew off the nose of the ship. Homeward bound, the engines conked out one by one until the pilot had to "sit down" in the "drink" (the Mediterranean). The ship crash-landed at 140 to 150 miles an hour and Nemeth went right through the floor, the impact was so great. That's how he got the knee injury that kept him hospitalized for ten months after he got back to the States. It still bothers him, but not enough to keep him from showing up on the job every day.

The pilot and co-pilot were pinned in their compartment, unable to get out, and the rest of the crew were unable to free them. "It's a terrible thing to see your buddies die before your eyes like rats in a trap, and not be able to do anything about it," Frank said simply, recalling those two brave comrades.

"We swam two miles to the Turkish coast and were rescued and interned . . . but don't ask me how we got home." He returned to the United States on December 7, 1943, after three months in Turkey.

Twenty-five years of age, Frank was born in Bethlehem, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sandor Nemeth, 328 Pierce Street, and educated here. He has a brother, Alex, 31, who may shortly enter the service, and a sister, Mary, a sophomore in Liberty High School, who wants to be a nurse. He is unmarried.

One ambition occupies Frank Nemeth now, and that is to keep the 16-inchers rolling out to the runs that hurl them with their death-dealing contents at the enemy, be he Jap or German.

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