

**Linwood Harold Schaeffer** interviewed October 17, 2007

PFC, US Army, October 1945 – February 1946

During WWII, Linwood worked as a Gang Leader at Bethlehem Steel #2 loading yard in Pottstown, a job he had begun as a 17 year old on New Year's Day in 1940. When he started, Bethlehem had just finished work on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and then switched over to military production as America headed toward war. Linwood didn't think that he would be drafted because his job was essential to war production and he had failed a military physical in Allentown due to a bad eye and had been classified 4F. So he continued at the loading yard where his job was to load ship parts onto railroad cars.



For some of the larger parts, Linwood had to use three gondola cars hooked together. The parts would be secured in the middle car and allowed to shift on the first and third cars as the train rounded curves. There were height restrictions and the railroad had a conductor come to inspect each load before it could be shipped. Linwood worked an eight hour shift and the plant operated around the clock. Sometimes, the Gang Leader on the next shift would call out sick and Linwood would have to work that shift as well. During the war, if someone didn't show up for work, the company sent a guard to the house to make sure you were really sick. For one year, 1943, Linwood worked every day of the year without a day off. During this time, he made 56 ½ cents an hour!

War on the Home Front...

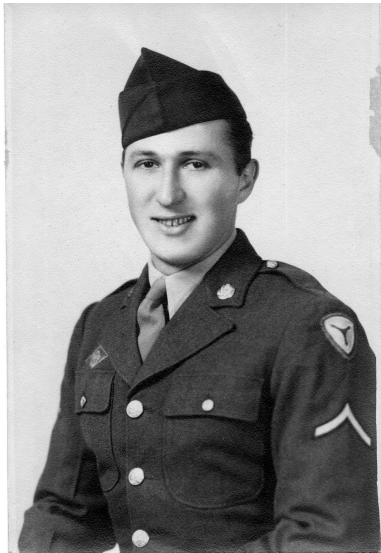
At that time, Linwood lived in Ringing Hill. The Civil Air Patrol would be up in a tower there every night monitoring air traffic. Every house had to be equipped with blackout shades and if the air raid siren went off, the houses had to pull the shades and make sure no light was showing on the outside. An Air Warden would walk through the streets and make sure everyone's house was dark. Also, there was rationing of sugar, gas and tires. Linwood was able to make his tires last longer by cutting the beads off of one set and putting casings over another.

At the end of the war, the Army was already letting soldiers with two children out of the service. At the end of October, 1945, however, Linwood received his draft papers. Since Linwood had been classified 4F and already had two children of his own, this didn't make sense to him, but he reported for duty anyway. There were a total of 43 men from Pottstown, all 4F, who had been called at the same time and they went as a group to Fort Meade, MD. Linwood was made the acting Sergeant which meant he carried the paperwork for the group. Along the way, in Philadelphia, they picked up another group of men heading to Fort Meade and Linwood also carried their paperwork. The Philadelphians were a rowdy bunch and Linwood was glad he didn't need to interact with them once they got on board.

At Fort Meade, they didn't do much, just fill out their own paperwork and receive their uniforms. The whole group was there for Induction and Separation services which meant processing the returning soldiers. They were at Fort Meade for about a week. For a few nights, Linwood drew the duty of keeping the barracks heater stoked. There wasn't any basic training at that time and some of the men

who were at Fort Meade didn't go through basic training for a year. There wasn't any training for Linwood before he was assigned to Fort Indiantown Gap, PA.

Linwood was assigned to the 1225<sup>th</sup> Command Service Group. His training for his new job consisted of being shown a desk and some forms and told that "this guy wants a discharge." At which a soldier would sit down at his desk and Linwood would fill out the forms. After having the forms filled out, the soldier would move on to another station in the process. Linwood didn't like this job. He wanted a physical job like he was use to at Bethlehem Steel. He asked to be assigned to pushing a wheelbarrow,



Linwood Schaeffer, February 28, 1946

anything to get him out and moving, but the request was turned down.

When he arrived at Indiantown Gap, it was very cold. If they set a coke on the foot locker, it would be frozen by morning. The schedule was to work four days and be off for three. Linwood would take the opportunity to go home to Pottstown during the off days. As a serviceman, he could ride the train for free, but he couldn't always catch the train so he would hitch hike. He recalls that one night he caught a ride with a coal truck driver and how he was on pins and needles on route 422 as the driver didn't slow down for anything.

Homecoming...

One night, Linwood was sleeping in his bunk and suddenly he felt someone shaking him awake. He looked up and it was his brother, Ken, who he hadn't seen in four years. Ken had served in General Omar Bradley's office in Europe and was now at Indiantown Gap for discharge. Linwood and Ken had a great time out on the town that night. Linwood's brother-in-law, Albert Pollack, was also discharged through Indiantown Gap.

Linwood had two other brothers who served in the Army, Ray who was in the force that occupied Germany and Walter who was on Okinawa and the occupation of Tokyo.

One day, Linwood and another fellow were walking across the grounds and two officers were walking toward them. Linwood had his tie tucked into his shirt because the ends were not even. The officer stopped him and re-tied it for him on the spot.

Linwood started the process of getting his discharge. His son had been born with a cleft palate and he was in and out of hospitals for the next five years. Linwood was needed to help at home. In order to apply for the hardship discharge, he had to get five or six people to write letters saying he was needed at home. A few days after he turned in the letters, his commander told him he was free to go.

Linwood went back to Bethlehem Steel where they told him they had broken someone else in on his job, and he no longer had one there. At the time, Firestone was hiring and he got a job there. This was fine with him as he was now able to work indoors. While his time in the Army was short, Linwood is proud of the contribution he made toward the war effort at Bethlehem Steel.