

Oldest Honor Medal Winner Lives Quietly in San Clemente

By KEN INOUYE

SAN CLEMENTE (UPI) —

The trail from a remote outpost in the Philippines across the Pacific Ocean to the shores of San Clemente spans 61 years for one of the nation's oldest living Medal of Honor winners.

Now a mellow 84, scholarly Col. Allen J. Greer is almost a disinterested spectator of a civilization which uses words like nuclear radiation, anti-missile missiles and Cape Canaveral in daily parlance.

While Astronauts explore earth's newest and oldest frontier — space — Greer walks around his neighborhood and occasionally has a beer. His was another era but a rich one.

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A VETERAN of the Army for 42 years, Greer began his career in 1898 in the 4th Tennessee Volunteer Infantry. His Memphis graduating class joined the Vols as a unit.

On July 2, 1901, Greer found himself near Majada in the Philippines, armed with a pistol and alone — except for an insurgent outpost manned by men fully geared for battle.

The Medal of Honor Citation reads:

"Greer charged alone an insurgent outpost with his pistol, killing one, wounding two and capturing three insurgents with their rifles and equipment," and was decorated with the nation's highest military honor "for most distinguished gallantry in ac-

tion beyond the call of duty."

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THROUGHOUT his career, Greer always thirsted for knowledge. He was graduated from the University of Tennessee, received a law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1907 and was awarded a masters degree in history from UCLA in 1938.

He has served in Cuba under Capt. Cordell Hull, who later became Secretary of State for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt; in Mexico in 1916 with Gen. John J. (Black Jack) Pershing, who was assigned to capture the notorious bandit, Francisco Villa.

Greer rose to the rank of Colonel in 1927 when he transferred from the infantry to the artillery. While later serving under Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Greer promoted the use of the 105 mm cannons over the 75 mms by writing an article which drew the support of his commander-in-chief.

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"I KNEW I was right or I would not have written the article," he told MacArthur.

The 42-year veteran retired in 1940 but resumed his interest in the Army by serving as a military news analyst for the Buffalo (New York) Evening News. He covered action in Europe and Japan during World War II and also wrote on the first atom tests in the Bikini Atolls.

Greer now lives with his son and daughter-in-law, the

Allen J. Greer Jr. The son is a First Sergeant in the Marines at nearby Camp Pendleton. When asked why he joined the Marines instead of the Army, he said, "Did you ever try to live up to be a hero's son?"

Although he ranks as one of the senior residents here, Greer doesn't mingle too much with the oldsters.

"They're too old for me," he says.