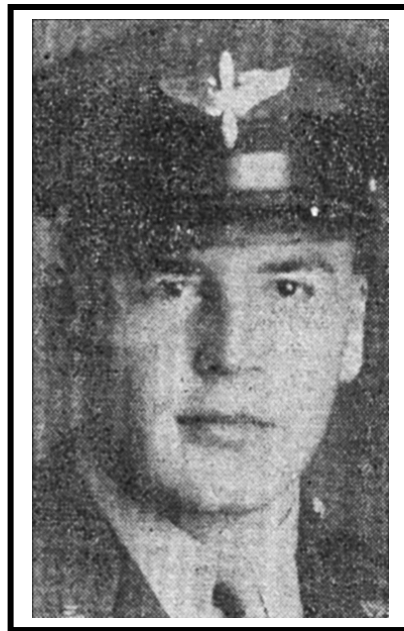




B-17 "Flying Fortress"



Inside Stalag Luft 1
POW Camp – 1945



Willis Richard Moon
First Lieutenant U.S. Army Air Corps
16 Apr 1942 - 1945



Willis Richard "Dick" Moon was born on 14 Aug 1922 in New York. His father is not known. Sometime after 1930 he was living at Rolling Acres, Macungie R#1, in Lower Macungie Township, Pennsylvania, with his mother, **Mary M. (McKee) Pitz** (born 1901), wife of **John F. Pitz** (4 August 1898 – 4 June 1973), who had moved there from New York. Dick graduated from Allentown High School in 1940 and, after working for two years as a salesman, he enlisted in the Army on 16 April 1942 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He underwent flight training in the Army Air Corps in Hawaii, Idaho, and Kelly Air Force Base in Texas, and was awarded a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant along with his wings as a B-17 "Flying Fortress" Pilot on 24 May 1943. He left the States in July 1943 for England for a period of training with a bomber group prior to performing bombing missions in support of Operation Torch, the Allied North African Campaign that had begun on 8 November 1942. After French Morocco and Algeria were secured by the Allies, Dick's bomber group relocated to North Africa from where he flew bombing missions against the Germans in Tunisia and Italy. On 14 August 1943, he was awarded the Air Medal by General "Jimmy" Doolittle for bringing back his B-47 safely to base with 47 holes in the side of the aircraft from German flak, and for completing more than 100 hours of flight under heavy bombardment. He was promoted to 1st Lieutenant at the same time. Subsequently, while based in Italy, he flew bombing missions over Europe. On 2 November 1943, while flying over Austria on his 34th combat mission, German flak knocked out two of his aircraft's four engines at an altitude of 20,000 feet. He attempted to maneuver his aircraft toward the Swiss border, but was rapidly losing altitude and ordered his crew to bail out. As Dick was exiting through the bomb bay hatch the aircraft exploded, wounding him as the blast threw him from the aircraft. He was one of four crewmembers out of ten who were able to bail out safely. Two days later, he was taken prisoner by the Germans and ultimately taken to Stalag Luft 1 Prison Camp at Barth in northeast Germany by the Baltic Sea. He was imprisoned there for about 18 months before the Soviet First Ukrainian Army liberated the prison camp on 28 April 1945. While in prison, he and the other prisoners received very little food from the Germans; Dick credited the American Red Cross food packages provided to the prisoners for preventing them from starving to death. The war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945. Dick returned home during August 1945 for discharge with a 60-day furlough. While home on furlough, Dick became engaged to **Barbara Deyo Mosser**, whom he later married. They had a son, **Richard Joseph Moon**. Dick earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart Medal, Air Medal with eight Oak Leaf Clusters, Prisoner of War Medal, European/African/Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with four bronze battle stars, World War II Victory Medal, and two Presidential Unit Citations. Dick died in February 1969.