

1LT Louis Edward Moore

1909 – 1979

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND MILITARY SERVICE

Louis Moore was born in Lima, Ohio, the third child of John R. and Anna Moore, his older siblings being brother, Richard Harold, and sister Beatrice H. His schooling occurred in Lima at St. Johns and St. Rose and his connection to the military occurred at the Ohio National Guard (Co G. 148th Infantry, OHIO NG). In order to serve with his older brother, Richard, Louis disguised the actual year of his birth (1909) when he was actually 15. They were together until Richard left the service in 1928. This action encouraged Louis to transfer to active duty in the US Army; one assignment included his duty station in Panama in the 1930s, followed by his attendance at the US Army Armored School at Ft. Knox Kentucky.

The following descriptions were selected from this historic source: *History of the 1st Armored 'Old Ironsides' Division based on the booklet entitled The Story of the First Armored Division.* This 64-page booklet [was] published after the war for distribution to the soldiers and their families.

Fort Knox in 1940 was not unlike other army posts in the nation. There were a few minor differences--the high-crowned overseas cap was worn on the left side of the head, and the few experimental models of the quarter-ton truck that were then on the post were called "peeps" to distinguish them from the command car which had always been called a "jeep" by armored men.

To become expert with their newly-acquired tanks, half-tracks and guns, most of the division attended the Armored Force School at Knox. The students stood reveille at 4 a.m., sat at attention during class and at 4 p.m. then rushed to the nearest Post Exchange for a bottle of beer, which helped counteract the hot summer weather.

Everyday some unit attacked from the steel observation tower called 'O.P. Six' to capture some part of a 25-square mile patch of Kentucky brush and gullies. The troops made three-day road marches, scraped and polished their vehicles for Saturday morning inspections, sweated out the lines at the bus station and occasionally dropped by Benny's or Big Nell's, the most easily accessible civilian nightspots.

With more than a year's training behind them, the division left in September 1941, for three month's maneuvers in Louisiana. Living was tough, in some respects tougher than combat turned out to be. The weather was uniformly foul. The night driving was hard on the nerves and dangerous. How necessary the incessant practice was the men did not find out until they reached the plains of Tunisia a year later.

The day before Pearl Harbor, the division was back at Fort Knox. The beds seemed almost too soft for sleeping. The draftees, whom the regular army men had looked on as people only a step above the bugler, had proved themselves as soldiers in the maneuvers. They looked forward to discharges after their years' service. The regular army men expected furloughs.

But war and soldiering had become a serious business. Training took on a new intensity. The division was reorganized, and all tanks, both medium and light were put into two armored regiments, the 1st and 13th. A third armored field artillery battalion, the 91st, was formed, and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion was organized and attached to the division.

*A few months later, in March **1942**, the division was enroute to the **Fort Dix**, New Jersey, staging area under command of **Major-General Orlando Ward**. General Ward relieved **Major-General Bruce R. Magruder**, who had commanded the division since its organization.*

It was a "secret" move, but no surprise to the towns people of Washington Court House, Ohio, who had waited four days for the division to arrive. There were movies, food, hot water for shaving and a mammoth banner saying "Welcome First Armored Division" across the main street.

At Dix there were 36-hour passes to New York and motor parks jammed with division vehicles. Nobody knew when or where the division was going, but it was certain this would be no excursion. There would be fighting before long.

The trip was to Ireland, and the division landed in May and June. Training for the next few months was even more rigid and exacting than during the last months in the United States. The men were

mentally and physically at their best. The general feeling was one of impatience.

It was toward the end of the training period that Combat Command "B", with about one-half of the division's troops, was alerted to leave Ireland and prepare for an overseas trip to a shore where "... You'll get off fighting."

Source: <http://www.custermen.com/ItalyWW2/Units/FirstArmd.htm>

Now fully trained in tank warfare, Louis boarded a troop ship in the company of thousands of other young men sailing from the upper East Coast of the US bound for the African continent. It was in the Afrika Corps campaign that Louis performed brilliantly in several decisive battles as a tank command in the 1st Armored Division, earning him a Second Lieutenant's commission. It should be noted that tank commanders were men who displayed strong leadership abilities certainly compulsory when leading men into combat environments.

As these battles were decided in favor of the Allied forces, Moore was reassigned to the European war zones, and with his new rank of 1LT, participated in the Invasion of Italy before being captured north on Rome in Northwest Grosseto, Italy, on 27 August 1944. The town was the site of an important German airfield, rail yards and was also heavily bombed.

CAPTURED

No specific details are known about 1LT Moore's capture on 23 June 1944, but many after-action reports on both sides of the Italian campaign have recorded that POWs were sequestered at gun point and forced by German captors into train cars called "40 and 8" (built in WWI to accommodate 40 men and 8 horses) which were often overcrowded with insufficient food, water or supplies for the trip north into Germany. American POWs also reported that they spent several months being shuttled from one POW camp to another. Torture was not used during interrogations but lack of proper foods and hygiene facilities caused hardships among all who endured these conditions.

ARRIVAL AT OFLAG 64

On the morning of 27 August 1944, 1Lt Moore and other POWs who accompanied him arrived via the rail cars, were unloaded, and marched through the town of Schubin (German name: Altburgund) to the gates of Oflag 64. The camp was surrounded by impressive stands of barbed wire with fully armed guard towers, a large stone building and six barracks. After each man was welcomed by other POW Americans who anxiously awaited “news of the outside world” and processed through the vetting process, he was then assigned to a 7’ by 10’ cubicle with other officers and slept in a double-tiered wooden bunk equipped with straw mattress and bedding. Louis might have known some of the other POWs having served in both Africa and Italy.

Red Cross boxes, alternate food supplies, piercing cold weather conditions and mail from home were the main discussion topics as the men sought to fill their time with crafts, sports and other camp events, including college level courses. Thanks to radios, known as “The Bird”, secretly smuggled into the camp, the Kriegies (German name for POWs) were kept apprised of the war by regular BBC broadcasts. Kriegies were also entertained by a very popular newspaper entitled *The Oflag 64 Item* written and published by the POW staff. Its witty pages were the mainstay for newsy items around camp—every issue eagerly awaited—many copies were kept long after the war.

Most Kriegies would agree later that both the American S.A.O. (Senior American Officer) and the German camp commander were equal in their treatment and maintained a military posture. Thus, order and humane treatment were usually evident throughout Oflag 64. The men were constantly reminded that although they were in captivity, they were still American fighting men and as officers, proper military dress and decorum were expected. These actions assisted greatly in establishing and maintaining morale.

The European war ended nine months later, but the POWs at Oflag 64 were to be tested almost beyond their endurance in January 1945 by a trek, known as The Long March, through the snows and ice during the worst winter recorded in many years. With the Russian armies encroaching closer toward the camp each day, Kriegies were only given one day to prepare. Out the front gate with Oberst Schneider as leader, they joined the throngs of travelers and refugees fleeing the advance. Icy roads, sub zero temperatures and long day marches with nights spent in cold barns and watery soups made the march a memory they longed to forget. Some escapes were successful, with the remaining POWs and guards adopting a tolerant, a semi-friendly attitude toward one another.

1LT Moore’s official record states that he was freed at Luckenwalde and returned to the states.

WELCOME HOME SOLDIER

On one of the happiest days of his life, Louis saw his first son, Thomas, for the first time since his deployment. Family records state that between 1945 and 1956 when he retired, one of his assignments had been with a ROTC Detachment at Roosevelt High School in Honolulu, Hawaii. Upon retirement as a Major he, his wife, Leona, and his family took up residence in Findlay, Ohio. Now seeking civilian employment, he was employed for a period of time by the Cooper Tire and Rubber Company.

Louis Edward Moore died in 1979 and is buried beside his wife, Leona, in Maple Grove Cemetery in Findlay.

For his valued service to the United States of America, even in confinement, 1LT Louis Edward Moore received the World War II POW Medal.

