

WORLD WAR II VETERAN WILL HARRIS

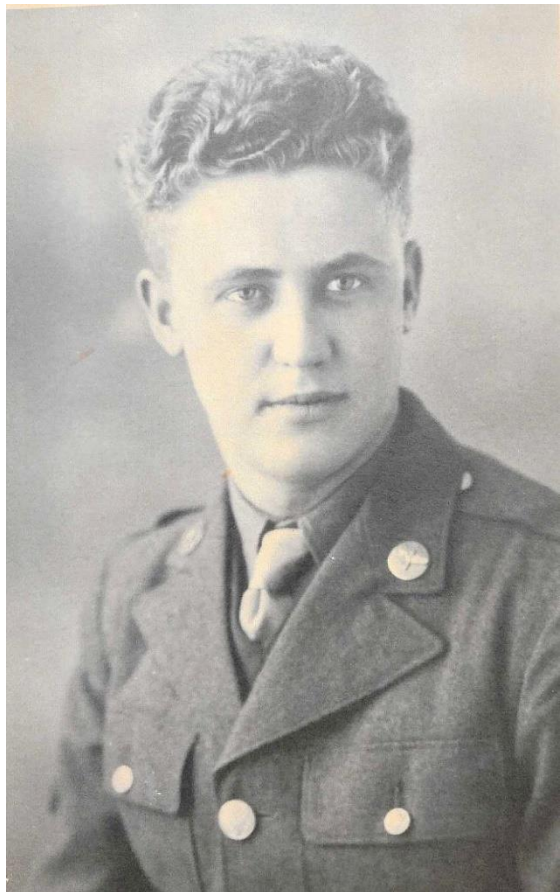
By Richard Long

With a probable draft call nearing, 18 year old Wilbur "Will" Harris decided to voluntarily enlist in the US Army Air Corp and left home for active duty in April, 1943. He was trained as an aircraft engine mechanic and sheet metal worker. Upon completing the Army Specialist Training Program in October of that year, Will boarded the Queen Mary for the six day trip to his assigned duty station, Rattlesden Air Base just outside London.

Among his duties at Rattlesden was assembly and inspection of hydraulic equipment where accuracy of .002 inch was standard, building chassis assembly for logging dollies, and repair general battle damage on returning planes, including but not limited to repair of wings, spars, engine parts, and fuselage. Will also inspected planes before missions to be certain of the plane's ability to respond to pilot commands. Missions to Berlin and other locations in Europe, with 8 to 10 bombs on board, often saw planes returning to base with substantial damage from anti aircraft missiles. Will worked on the team that fixed the damage and made the plane safe for its next mission.

Will remembers being in London during one of the air raids. He was staying in the back bedroom at the home of a friend when a bomb hit. It destroyed the front portion of the house but the back part was undamaged and no one was not hurt.

Will, thank you for your service.



Will Harris