



**Richard
Van Dyke**
Army Air Corps

Richard Van Dyke

Dec 13, 1925 -

BIRTHPLACE: West Plains, MO

SOLDIER DETAILS

DIVISION: Army Air Corps, Special unit USO

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

Richard "Dick" Van Dyke was born 12/13/1925 in West Plains, MO. His family moved to Dansille, IL where he attended Danville High School. In 1944 he left school intending to join the US Army Air Forces for pilot training. He was denied enlistment several times for being underweight. He stood 6-foot-1 and only weighed 135 pounds. The recruiting officer told him he'd have to gain 6 pounds in he wanted to enlist. Dick was determined and left the office, got his hands on a bunch of bananas. He ate them all and drank as much water as he could handle and returned to the recruiting office. His belly was distended but he just barely made weight. Van Dyke known for his TV and film career stated, "Cowardice got me into showbiz." As hard as it was for him to get into the army, he had a change of heart when he was assigned a tail gunner in a B-24 Liberator. At that time 69 B-24s were shot down in one day over Berlin. Van Dyke loved his country but certain death wasn't the way to express it. He heard an officer mention that airmen with special talents could be given non-combat roles. He could sing as well as tap dance and soon he was entertaining troops overseas. Van Dyke is know for his role in the "The Dick Van Dyke Show" among other TV shows and films. Courtesy coffeordie.com/dick-van-dyke-wwII