



29th Infantry Division



116th Infantry Regiment

John Arthur Kester
Private First Class U.S. Army
9 December 1941 – 29 August 1945

John was born on 19 June 1915 in Catasauqua, Pennsylvania, where he attended grades 1–6. After grade school and prior to enlisting in the Army, John worked as a Truck Driver. He was drafted into the Army, and was inducted as a Private on 9 December 1941 at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. On 27 September 1942, after basic and advanced training as an Aid Man and Surgical Technician, John was assigned to the Medical Detachment, 116th Infantry Regiment, 29th Infantry (“Blue and Gray”) Division. The Division underwent training in Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas and Fort Blanding, Florida. They then went to Camp Kilmer for overseas, departing from New York on the troop ship *Queen Mary*. They arrived in Scotland on 3 October 1942. From there they went to Tidworth Barracks in southern England and to the Devon-Cornwall Peninsula to train for landing at Normandy, France. On 6 June 1944, they landed at Omaha Beach, and for the next five weeks pushed forward to St. Lo and on to Vire in late July 1944. They then moved to Brest to lay siege and capture a submarine base there from 24 August to 18 September 1944. Six days later they moved by train across France and Belgium to Holland near the German border. During the rest of the war, they fought into western Germany, keeping up pressure to free other units for the counterattack and defeat of the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge. Then in the spring of 1945, they broke through the German line, capturing a number of cities and thousands of prisoners, with München-Gladbach falling to the Division on 1 March 1945. Subsequently, they assisted in mopping up resistance in Germany’s industrial heartland in the Ruhr Valley. On 11 April 1945, John returned to the States, where he was assigned to the Atlantic City, New Jersey, Hospital to recuperate from injuries that he received earlier while in France. On 5 May 1945, while on convalescence leave from Atlantic City, John married **Mae Alice Leibensperger** (born 7 May 1923) in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania. He returned to Atlantic City on 3 June 1945, and was later released and transferred to Camp Pickett, Virginia, to which Mae accompanied him. On 29 August 1945, John was discharged at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, and returned to live with Mae in East Texas, Pennsylvania. He then worked, successively, as a Truck Driver in Allentown, Pennsylvania, for Hill Metal & Roofing Company, Hertz Supply Company, and Modern Transfer Company. John and Mae had two daughters, **Judith Ann** and **Roxanne Louise**. John died on 6 February 1990 in Lehigh Valley Hospital, Cedar Crest, and is buried in the Salem Evangelical United Brethren Cemetery at the west end of East Texas. John’s parents were **John Harrison Kester** (19 April 1881 – 1955) and **Ida Hattie Hoffman** (1885 – 1962). John’s brothers, **David J.** and **Harry A.**, also served in the Army during World War II.



Troop Ship *Queen Mary*