



12th Armored Division



Crossing the Rhine at Worms, Germany

Curtis Lamar Koch
Technician 5/C U.S. Army
4 September 1943 – 21 April 1946

Curtis was born on 1 May 1925 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where his family lived and where he attended Washington Elementary School. He graduated from Allen High School in 1943, and attended Baum Art School in Allentown for four years while in high school. After high school Curtis was employed by General Electric Company in Allentown as a Clerk until he enlisted as a Private in the Army on 4 September 1943 at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Curtis had an Art Scholarship to Syracuse University, but chose instead to join the Army. He was first ordered to Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, for two months basic training and then to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, for training as a Ground Aircraft Observer, responsible for setting up and operating observation posts in forward areas to observe and report the approach of and direct fire on enemy aircraft. Curtis was then assigned to the 572nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalion, and on 29 September 1944 left for overseas. He arrived in Europe on 10 October 1944. The 572nd was assigned to and met up with the 12th Armored (“Hellcats”) Division near Auffay, France. They remained attached to the 12th Armored Division throughout its combat operations in Europe; initially at “Bloody Herrlisheim” and the “Colmar Pocket,” on the west side of the Rhine River. On 17 March 1945, the 12th Division was transferred from the Seventh Army to the Third Army, and stormed across Germany from Trier to the Rhine River, capturing over 7,000 Nazis and numerous weapons and supplies. They crossed the Rhine on 28 March 1945 on two pontoon bridges near Worms and continued a relentless attack, capturing Dinkensbuhl, Wurzburg, Schweifurt, Kitzingen, Neustadt, and Ansbach before crossing the Danube River at Dillingen. At the end of April 1945, the Division began liberating Nazi death camps at Hurlag, Landsberg and Dachau. They entered Kufstein, Austria, on 3 May 1945, and two days later were relieved from the front lines. After that they performed security duties until returning home after the war. Curtis left Europe on 8 April 1946 and arrived in the States on 16 April 1946. He was discharged at Indiantown Gap, on 21 April 1946. Curtis was awarded the American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. After his discharge, Curtis returned to Allentown to work for General Electric Company and Black and Decker Manufacturing Company until the plant closed in 1985. He also continued his art studies by attending Baum School of Art in Allentown for eight years, and used his artistic talents to design and trim unusual window displays for Judd’s Men’s Store, H. Leh & Company, Orr’s Department Store, and other stores in Allentown. Curtis married **Jean Esther Ochs** (born 10 September 1927) on 10 September 1949 in Allentown. He and Jean initially lived in Allentown, and in 1974 moved to Lower Macungie Township, Pennsylvania, where they settled. They raised four children: **Brenda Jayne**, **Anita Dee**, **Susan Laurie**, and **Curtis Lamar II**. Curtis was a one-time Steward and Treasurer for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (Post 9264) in Macungie, Pennsylvania, where he served on the Post’s Honor Guard. He loved to watch sports, especially wrestling and football, and he enjoyed beautifying his home and property. Curtis died on 25 April 2003 at the Lehigh Valley Hospice in Allentown and is buried in the cemetery at St. Peter’s Union Church in Upper Milford Township, where he and Jean were members. Curtis’s parents were **Claude Irwin Koch** (30 March 1895 – 29 June 1983) and **Beulah Mary Burkhardt** (20 May 1894 – 20 September 1977).