



B17 Flying Fortress



B-24 Liberator

Samuel Harry Kuhns
Flight Officer US Army Air Corps
6 December 1940 – 18 September 1945

Samuel was born on 26 July 1919 in Kuhnsville, Pennsylvania. After his father died, his family moved to Wescosville, Pennsylvania, in Lower Macungie Township where he attended grade school. He then attended Allentown Preparatory School, graduating in 1938, and went to work for Mack Trucks in Allentown, Pennsylvania, until enlisting in the Army Air Corps. He was inducted into the Army as an Airman in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on 6 December 1940. He was trained as a Bombardier and was assigned to the 307th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 13th Air Force, after its activation in 1942. On 15 April 1942, the 307th began operations as a B-17 “Flying Fortress” unit at Geiger Field, Washington, patrolling the northwestern United States and Alaskan coasts to guard against invasion. Five months later, their B-17s were replaced with B-24 “Liberators.” The unit was then transferred to Sioux City, Iowa, for a three-week training period, after which they relocated to Hamilton Field, California, for further deployment to Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands. Crew members, including Samuel, were transported to Hawaii in an old Norwegian freighter. Upon arrival at Oahu, they began search and patrol missions over the surrounding area to avert any naval attack against the islands. On 27 December 1942, the 307th deployed from Oahu to Midway Island, from where they staged an attack against the Japanese fortress on Wake Island. After blasting 90 percent of the stronghold, all aircraft returned safely. In February 1943, they relocated to Guadalcanal. From there they attacked Japanese airfields and shipping installations in the Southwest Pacific. In March 1943, Japanese planes blasted the airfield on Guadalcanal, causing the greatest number of 307th casualties during the war. On 11 November 1943, the 307th pounded enemy ships at Rabaul in New Guinea, leaving the port in complete ruin. Through the remainder of 1943 and until September 1944, the 307th continued to bomb Japanese forces at Yap, Truk, and Palau islands. Just after the Palau bombing, Samuel returned to the States to be discharged as a Master Sergeant and to receive an appointment as Flight Officer on 17 October 1944 at Avon Park, Florida. He remained at Avon Park where he trained B-17 crews for air-to-ground bombing until September 1945. He was discharged as a Flight Officer on 18 September 1945 at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. In addition to the World War II Victory Medal and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign and American Defense Service Medals, Samuel personally received the Air Medal (w/3 Oak Leaf Clusters) and the Distinguished Flying Cross (w/1 Oak Leaf Cluster). He returned home and married **Naomi Rachel Diefenderfer** (19 April 1921 – 20 June 1999) on 28 April 1945 at St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Trexlertown, Pennsylvania. He worked for Mack Trucks until 1947, when he became owner and operator of Kuhns Sunoco Service Station in Wescosville until 1958. In 1960 he went to work for Western Electric Company in Allentown until he retired in 1984. Samuel and Naomi had two children: **Keith David** and **Kay Diane**. Samuel died on 8 April 1995 at Lehigh Valley Hospital in Salisbury Township, Pennsylvania. Samuel’s parents were **Harry Samuel Kuhns** (11 August 1884 – 2 May 1926) and **Katie Elvina Bortz** (27 January 1887 – 6 June 1949). Samuel’s brother, **Robert Frederick Kuhns**, served in the Navy during World War II.