



James Duane Koester (1922 – 1942)

James Koester was born in 1922 in Brawley, Imperial County, California. His parents were Lorenz and Thelma Koester and Lorenz was a radio salesman in Brawley in 1930. James graduated from Sweetwater High School in June, 1940 and he died on November 16, 1942 and is buried at the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery in San Diego, CA on November 20, 1942. He is buried at Plot OS Row A128.

His father was Lorenz C. Koester, a veteran of WWI and past commander of the American Legion post and a member of the Lions Club. He and his wife lived at 82 Fourth Avenue, Chula Vista. He was also the mayor of Chula Vista from April 1946 until April 1950, and was instrumental in the designation of Memorial Park. James was also survived by his two brothers, Richard, who is in the Army and David, who is a fourth grade pupil at the F Street school.

He is listed as a Second Lieutenant and assigned to the 329th F Group in the Army Air Corps. The 329th Fighter Group during 1942 was based at Glendale California and flew the P-38 Pursuit aircraft. In 2006, the City of Chula Vista and the McMillin Housing Development honored James Koester by having a street named in his honor in the Lomas Verdes subdivision.

The P-38 saw extensive service in North Africa, where the Germans called the aircraft the "Fork-Tailed Devil." On April 18, 1943, P-38 pilots from the 339th Fighter Squadron, using external tanks, flew from Guadalcanal to Bougainville and shot down Japanese Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto.



James Koester in 1940



P-38 Pursuit Aircraft

