



Curtis Lee Brown

March 7, 1925 — July 14, 2026

El Paso, TX

Curtis L. Brown was born on March 7, 1925, in the small lumber town Dierks, Arkansas. His father, Curtis worked in the saw mill and his mother, Hazel was a stay-at-home mom to his three sisters, Lois, Gladys, Idella and brother Arthur. At an early age he learned how to hunt, fish, and play baseball. His favorite subject in school was math. He was graduated from Texarkana High School. When he became 18-years-old his mother insisted that he would become an undertaker. To avoid that decree he enlisted into the U.S. Army in 1943 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

In 1960 Curtis made history by being commissioned by the U.S. Congress as the first African American to be promoted to the prestigious rank of Command Sergeant Major. His first assignment was to the largest air defense unit in the U.S. Army; the Missile and Artillery Brigade that covered three states, Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana. In 1961 he was selected by The Pentagon to be the Intelligence Sgt. Major of the 8th Army Air Defense Command in Korea and then to the 38th Artillery Missile Brigade.

In 1965 he was stationed in Kaiserslautern, Germany and attended night school in Heidelberg, Germany majoring in Math. During his distinguished career he commanded and was responsible for more than 10,000 men at one time while at the 94th Air and Missile Command and served as the confidant and advisor to 2-senior officers. He also served in the Microwave Signal Unit, and the Intelligence and Transportation Battalion during the Berlin Airlift. Command Sgt. Major Brown helped shape future Army leaders by writing lesson plans for the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy in El Paso Texas.

Curtis loved the Lord, baseball and music. He tried out for the Chicago Cubs in 1949 and made the team but wanted a career as a soldier and reenlisted in the Army. “I told the manager of the Cubs that I just wanted to see if I could make the team—I really wanted to be a soldier.” He played against Ernie Banks who at the time was with the 510 Tank Battalion in Germany. Listening to the sounds of BB King, Frank Sinatra and Etta James brought him joy. His favorite scripture was Psalm 23. He was a faithful member of Shiloh Baptist Church for more than 50-years.

After more than 32-years of dedicated service to the U.S. Army he retired in 1975 and began a second career at Casa Ford where he served as a salesman and later General Sales Manager for more than 30-years. After retirement from Ford, he continued to live a full life fishing, hunting, gardening, making his famous peach and pear preserves, serving his community and studying the U.S. Constitution. He prided himself in memorizing every word.

At 99-years old he worked on the mayoral campaign for El Paso Mayor Renard Johnson. He also served as a steadfast member of many organizations in El Paso including the El Paso Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a lifetime member of the McCall Neighborhood Center 50/50 Club, Sunset Lodge #76 PHA M.W.P.H.G.L., Oro Temple #9 A.E.A.O.N.M.S., and American Legion Post #832. He was a Bronze Legacy Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2451 and Honorary Member of the National Association of Buffalo Soldiers and Troopers Motorcycle Club, an Honorary member of the Henry O. Flipper Chapter-National African American Gun Association, McCall Neighbor Center 50/50Club Lifetime Member, and Rio Grande Consistory #24, Scottish Rite Masonry.

His family was his foundation and heartbeat of his life. He was a loving and devoted husband to the love his life wife Doris. They were married for 67-years. His children made his heart sing.