

REGARDING ALABAMA VETERAN HARRY VANDECAR:

"My name is Russell Holcomb and I owe my life to an old friend, Harry Vandecar. It was 1944 and D-Day was in full swing. Harry and I had arrived at Normandy 16 days after the invasion had begun. Upon arrival in France we didn't really know each other very well, but, as the campaign waged on, we became close friends. Looking back, it seems people just grow to know each other better in situations that involve so much death and destruction. We were both assigned to the 12th Infantry of the Fourth Division and we fought together as we marched through France, Belgium and Germany.

"On November 10, I was kneeling behind a tree, firing my M-1, when a Nazi bullet hit me in the right arm and went through to my side. Harry treated the wounds and walked me down the hill to wait for the stretcher crew. All the while shells were landing all around us. Because I was already hurt, Harry lay down next to me to protect me from further harm. He could've run to a safer spot and gotten out of the firing line, but he stayed put to protect me. Two dud shells landed near us and didn't go off, but when a third hit close to us it exploded, taking Harry up and over me. He landed 30 feet away and died instantly. The feeling that you owe your life to someone who gave theirs is hard to explain. I do know this, though, Harry Vandecar not only gave his life for his country, he gave his life for me, too."