



George Mann

July 8, 1924 - July 23, 2012

George Edward Mann, 88, died peacefully at Veterans' Memorial Center in Birmingham, Alabama yesterday, July 23, 2012.

George was born in Decatur, Alabama on July 8, 1924, to Arthur Christopher Mann and Bessie Vance Cook Mann. He had two older brothers, Louis and Fred. The three boys grew up helping their father run his butcher shop and grocery store, and endured the Great Depression in an active and hardworking household that generated many life experiences and entertaining stories.

George joined the U.S. Army as an 18-year-old man in the midst of World War II. Serving in the infantry in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, George fought with Company B of the 15th Infantry in the 3rd Division of the U.S. Army in the battles of Monte Cassino and Anzio during the brutal winter of 1943-44, participating in the amphibious landing on Anzio Beach in January 1944. Preparing for the push to Rome one day following an address to the troops by General Patton and Lt. General Eisenhower, George's unit captured a German railroad gun, nicknamed Big Bertha, that had a shooting range of 80 miles and had been causing many Allied losses. That day, George got caught in an artillery field and was injured, and then was shot by a German sniper. George was dragged to safety by his fellow soldiers. Following an honorable discharge and the award of the Purple Heart, George returned to his native

Decatur. His two brothers served the U.S. Army stateside during the war.

George married Imelda Ozbolt, of Eva, in 1945. After a short stay in Detroit, where George worked at a Pontiac assembly plant, they returned to Decatur and built a house next to George's parents' house on Grant Street in Decatur, on land formerly used by his father to grow corn to sell in the grocery store. In 1969 George and Imelda bought land near Imelda's family in Falkville, built a house and developed a farm. Over the years George stocked his pond with fish and raised cattle, goats and mules, and Imelda grew a large garden that produced more vegetables, fruit and pecans than she could give away. Imelda worked for decades as a bank teller in Decatur, and George spent 26 years working in men's retail clothing at Parisian in Decatur.

Following his retirement, George spent years working to preserve the memory of those who have served their country in World War II and other conflicts. George led a number of local chapters of veterans' organizations in Cullman County, and he personally designed and raised most of the public and private funding for the Purple Heart Memorial at John Sparkman Park in Hartselle. In 2004, George was honored as one of many World War II veterans at the dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. In December 2009, at a dedication ceremony for a memorial park at Sportsman's Lake Park in Cullman that he had worked hard to make possible, George was very surprised to learn that the park was being dedicated in his honor as the George E. Mann Veterans Memorial Park.

George spent many years visiting area schools to talk with schoolchildren about the Greatest Generation and those that followed, and the role they played in World War II and the subsequent conflicts in which the United States has been involved. In 2004, at the age of 80, he returned to Decatur High School to be awarded his high school diploma.

He is survived on the Mann side of the family by his brother Fred, Fred's wife Claudine and their daughter Linda, Louis and Maggie's children Karen and Chris, and four great nieces, Hannah, Katherine, Elizabeth and Sarah. He is survived on the Ozbolt side of the family by Imelda's siblings Annie Marie, Drucilla, Wennell and Irmaline, and their many children and grandchildren and those of Imelda's late brothers Joe and Edward.

George was preceded in death by his parents, his wife Imelda, his brother Louis, and Louis's wife Margreat (Maggie).

Visitation will be Tuesday, July 24, 2012 at Cullman Heritage Funeral Home from 6-8pm. Services will be held on Wednesday, July 25, at 1:00 p.m. in the Chapel. Burial will be at Gum Pond Primitive Baptist Church Cemetery. Bro. Ray Lathem and Col. Ken Brown will officiate.