

**CLOSEUP**

# Museum gives life to hobby

At 47, James Dryden is too young to remember World War II. Yet he has been fascinated by its history ever since he was a boy. And within a few months, he hopes to share his passion with the general public.

The Hawthorn Woods resident is planning to open a non-profit museum dedicated to exhibiting World War II memorabilia. The Midwest Military Museum, as it will be called, will house pieces from Dryden's own vast collection. In all, Dryden said, he has about 100,000 pieces.

"Twenty years ago, I started collecting," Dryden said. "It's gotten to the point where it's overwhelming."

Hence the museum.

Dryden now is searching for a site in the Northwest suburbs and hopes to move in by summer. Items sure to be showcased include helmets, uniforms, badges and a huge collection of ancient Japanese samurai swords brought back by World War II veterans.

The swords, in fact, are what got Dryden turned on to the era. His uncle gave him a sword he'd gotten during the war. And over the years, Dryden branched out. His prized piece now is Adolph



**James Dryden**

Hitler's silver service, taken by a U.S. serviceman from the Nazi leader's mountain retreat.

"It's the most pizzazzy piece I own," Dryden said.

His hobby is a time-consuming and expensive one. Dryden, a financial analyst for retailers, is always trying to buy new pieces. His downfall, he said, is that he never sells what he collects.

Dryden said he hopes the museum exposes others to what is perhaps America's most popular, fascinating war.

"My purpose is to school and to educate — especially the generation after me," Dryden said. "Too little, frankly, is discussed in school today."

Anyone wanting further information about the museum or World War II memorabilia can contact Dryden at 438-3191.

—Lisa Friedman Miner