

# Collector of war souvenirs says we shouldn't forget

By JOHN ENIGL

Some of our most interesting stories come to us from part-time residents.

This one came to the attention of Editor Jon Gast last week and it concerns a special interest of Illinois resident Jim Dryden. Jim and his wife live in a condominium at the Sister Bay Resort and Yacht Club while they're in the county.

An Advocate ad placed by Jim says, "Nazi and Japanese war souvenirs wanted by licensed private collector. All types. Will pay \$50 to \$10,000 cash. Call 834-2817 through Friday, June 9. (Actually, the Drydens and their two children will be here until Saturday morning, and after that he can be contacted at 438-3191.)



JIM DRYDEN

Naturally, some of the people on the Advocate staff wondered what kind of person would collect this kind of item, and what special kinds of items he was collecting. So this writer called Jim at his Sister Bay condominium on Saturday night and caught him at home, just about 10 minutes after he and his family had arrived from Illinois. Arrangements were made to talk to Jim Sunday afternoon.

First of all, let it be said that Jim Dryden definitely does not look at war, World War II or any other war, as a glamorous affair. Our own Joe Martinson or any other American Legion, VFW, or Amvets member can tell you it is not.

Jim Dryden says, "There should never be another war, but we should never forget what it was like to be in one."

Dryden is president of J. F. Dryden and Associates, the offices of which are located in Lake Zurich, Ill. His company furnishes consultants that aid retail businesses in solving the problems connected with credit and personal check sales.

Jim, as do many other people in the world of work, enjoys collecting as a hobby that gives him a totally different experience from that which he encounters on the job.

One of the collectibles he is looking for, for example, are the samurai swords and daggers used by the Japanese military, especially during World War II.

The samurai were a feudal class that existed in Japan for centuries, a sort of military class consisting of gentry or lesser nobility. Although the prominence of that group ended with the end of Japan's feudal system in 1867, many of the Japanese military men of World War II had hereditary roots there. Many of them continued on the custom of carrying two delicately made ceremonial swords.

Jim points out that rarely has one of the swords and daggers he has collected, and is seeking to buy here in Door County, ever been used to kill, or even fight, another person.

(A recently published book brings out the findings of a study done around the time of World War II that showed that only 15% of the soldiers who could have shot or otherwise killed an enemy soldier did so. That, the researchers said, was because people are brought up to believe that killing is wrong.)

Dryden points out that the weapons he is seeking to buy, in the case of Japanese samurai swords and daggers, and German daggers, are works of art, largely ceremonial in nature, and of little use in fighting.

Exceptions, he says, are knives with serrated teeth used by German soldiers to cut open tents, for example, if a soldier had to exit one in the middle of the night, or if he had to fend for himself and use his knife to construct a shelter for survival.

Dryden admires the artistry and metallurgical skills involved in making the Japanese samurai swords. Japan was practically cut off from the rest of the world until the mid-19th century, when Perry made arrangements with the ruling class of Japan to open up the country for trade. Therefore, nearly all research in the development of metals for, and the design of, Japanese swords and daggers was done by Japanese craftsmen, without using the technology of the outside world.

German military items, on the other hand, are a result of centuries spent in developing the technology to make weapons in Germany, with the use of technology learned from other countries either by purchase of patents, espionage or capture of enemy equipment.

Dryden says he's aware of the time and material that the manufacturing of these largely ceremonial items took away from the German and Japanese war effort.

In addition to swords and daggers, he's interested in adding to his collection of German and Japanese military uniforms and clothing.

"The officers had their uniforms made of the finest cloth, and their uniforms were hand-tailored," says Jim, and that may have resulted in the common soldier having to make do with inferior military clothing.

One thing the Germans developed is the "Great Coat."

"That was a good development on their part," Dryden says, "because they were really warm."

Any pictures you see of Germans standing around on the winter-time Russian front shows them in their great coats.

Jim says the Germans did many things wrong, including fragmenting their war efforts into too many sectors, such as rocket development and atomic bomb research, and continuing to make some of the memorabilia items he's seeking.

Those include medals. The Germans had a medal for nearly everything, and the people had been trained to place a large stock in receiving medals from young on, when the children were in the Hitler Youth movement.

"In the medals I've collected," Jim says, "you can see that the quality of the metals used in making them decreased as Hitler came close to defeat, and they began to run out of raw materials."

He says this reduction in quality appeared in almost all products manufactured by the Germans and Japanese toward the end of the year. Also, he says, items manufactured by these countries right after 1945, when the war ended, have little value as memorabilia because of their poor quality. That again, he says, is due to the shortage of quality raw materials in those countries when the war ended.

(Many German cameras brought back by G.I.s after the war were equipped, not with high-grade Zeiss lenses, but by crude imitations.)

Dryden collects war souvenirs despite the fact that he's never been in the military himself, but he feels that the lessons of war, and the waste of men and material, are too quickly forgotten. The items he collects are examples of how the talents of a nation can be turned into military uses, which the artisans, rightly or wrongly, believed would help their country pursue a "just" cause.

Jim Dryden feels that any of the German and Japanese war souvenirs he is seeking to buy are probably not going to be saved by the generations who follow the soldiers who brought them back to Door County.

These souvenirs, in many cases, were distributed by Allied officers to their men after they were turned in by surrendering enemy soldiers. Some were purchased, for example, in Germany, from German soldiers who were sick of war, and who may have needed the money to buy food.

However, Dryden says, many of these souvenirs were dumped by soldiers and sailors who got tired of carrying them.

Dryden assures anyone who wishes to sell the items he is seeking that the collectibles will from then on be cared for properly and protected from deterioration. When and if he decides to sell them, they will go to other collectors. He may eventually turn his collection over to a museum.

For those who would never sell their mementos of World War II, or other wars, another part-time resident of Door County has an alternative. Cedarburg's Bob Costa, who, with Arnold Tanck and others are planning to build a military history museum north of Egg Harbor, is asking people to place military items on display after the museum is built. A contract will be written so that those loaning items will be assured of their return after a stated period of time.

Meanwhile, this week, those desiring to dispose of German and Japanese swords and daggers, uniforms and medals can contact Dryden at the number given at the beginning of this article, and in his advertisement. He will try to state a price range over the telephone, but says he must see the article to give a firm offer.