

Hobbyist buys way into thick of past battles

By Garry Winter

That old German army helmet that has gathered dust since Grandpa brought it home from World War II could bring you some cash.

Jim Dryden was in Elgin Friday buying the World War II souvenirs that American GIs brought home from the war.

Dryden, a consultant to retail businesses, takes time on his business travels across the country to collect German and Japanese war relics.

"This is kind of a hobby I pursue in my spare time on extended trips," he said from a hotel room in Elgin where he set up shop Friday. His collection began 20 years ago when he received gifts of Japanese samurai swords and a German dagger from relatives who acquired them in World War II.

He has been buying war souvenirs ever since. They now take up 4½ rooms in his house in Hawthorn Woods, and he has more tucked away in safe deposit boxes. He is looking around Arlington Heights now for a place where he can open a museum to display his wartime memorabilia. During his day in Elgin, local residents brought Dryden two more samurai swords.

The weapons—one with a short blade called a tanto, and the other a long sword called a tana—were 400 and 500 years old, he said. Many Japanese soldiers carried these knives and swords through World War II, he says. Confiscated after the war, so many of these ancient weapons were taken home by American GIs that Japanese collec-

tors have offered to buy his collection, he said.

They are not for sale, he insists. Dryden will pay up to \$10,000 for an item that is worth the price, but he is neither selling nor trading what he acquires.

"The only thing I do is buy," says Dryden. He has neither the time nor the inclination to be a trader, he says.

Dryden's interests go not only to knives and swords. He also will buy World War II Japanese and German uniforms, helmets, hats and documents. He does not buy military firearms.

And he will buy German arti-

facts from World War I, but veterans of Korea and Vietnam must find someone else to buy their war mementos—he does not have room for them.

Nevertheless, there are an awful lot of mementos out there to be collected just from one war.

"All of the GIs brought home at least something," he says. They sent home duffel bags filled with all sorts of things taken from the defeated enemy. It was all officially allowed into the United States as "war booty."

Anyone who has wartime souvenirs to sell and missed Dryden's stopover may write to him at P.O. Box 308 Lake Zurich 60047.



Courier-News Photo by Scott Bevel

War relics collector Jim Dryden was in Elgin Friday looking for a few good mementos.