

Family buys heirloom

PURPLE HEART, From 1A

the Purple Heart on the Internet — complete with Roy Marin's name engraved — Mater was able to purchase the instant family heirloom for \$1,400.

Collector Tom Lane of Chicago said some artifacts will fetch as much as \$5,000 if they were awarded for historically significant events, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor. Lane added that he was "absolutely 100 percent" certain that Marin's decoration was authentic.

Artifacts reach dealers

Military artifacts typically wind up on the dealer circuit, he said, when they are carelessly discarded by relatives who either do not appreciate the significance or who want to cash in on the monetary value.

"It's sad that these things happen," he said. "Some people have no sense of history."

Mater realized the significance of the Purple Heart right away — and the importance of bringing it back to Wisconsin. Born one year after World War II ended, Mater, 59, was named for his heroic uncle, whose full name was Roy Kenneth Marin.

Mater and his sister, Kathleen Navarre of Wauwatosa, are gratified in knowing how much the lost military honor would have meant to their family. Both grew up hearing frequent tales about "Uncle Roy" from their mother, Florence, and her five other brothers, all now deceased.

"They never had any closure; it was obvious when you talked to them," Navarre, 52, said. "They went to great lengths to keep Roy's memory alive."

In 2000, the family conducted a special memorial service for Roy Marin and his brother Fritz Marin, who served in the Navy, too, and was tormented by the memory of turning down a chance to tour his younger brother's submarine shortly before its final voyage.

"I wish now I had gone



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROY MARIN FAMILY

Roy Marin was 21 when he was killed in the South Pacific near World War II's end. The Milwaukee native was posthumously awarded a Purple Heart, which his family recently bought from a Chicago collector.

aboard," Fritz Marin wrote later in a letter home, "and had allowed Roy to show me how proud he was to be a submariner."

Enlisted at 17

Just 17 years old when he enlisted, Roy Marin survived many battles before he and 83 other crew members aboard the USS Bullhead were lost. The sub was destroyed by enemy aircraft in the South Pacific on Aug. 6, 1945, the same day Hiroshima was bombed, triggering a chain of events that would lead to Japan's surrender and the end of the war.

Back in Wisconsin, family members wondered about Roy Marin's fate for months before the Navy finally reported that he was missing and presumed dead.

When an author in 1947 published a book about the USS Bullhead, family members spotted a photograph inside that appeared to show Roy aboard the ill-fated submarine. The book's title: "Overdue and Presumed Lost."

Aptly, the same phrase could have applied to Marin's Purple Heart for more than a half-century. The family had sometimes wondered about commendations for their fallen brother, but nobody knew such a distinguished honor existed until it turned up on the Internet.

Lane, who has been collecting military artifacts as a hobby since the 1960s, said he spent \$1,800 to purchase the medal

from a dealer on the East Coast eight or nine years ago. That dealer could not recall where or when he obtained the artifact.

After hearing from Marin's family in Wisconsin, the Chicago collector asked only the cost of acquiring another Purple Heart for his collection, which turned out to be \$1,400.

Lane said he has been contacted before by family members wanting to know about their loved ones' medals. But this was the first time he was asked to reunite a medal with descendants of the recipient.

During a memorable rendezvous with Mater this spring at a freeway rest stop near Chicago, Lane handed over the Purple Heart and asked many questions about Roy Marin's background.

"It was pretty amazing," the collector said. "To put a face to a name is really impressive."

With the Purple Heart now back in Wisconsin, Mater plans to take good care of the artifact and make sure it stays in the family once and for all.

Gloria Marin, who married Roy's brother Robert, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who died last year, said the recovered Purple Heart provides "almost a spiritual connection" to the family's proud military past.

She suspects, however, that Roy's sister, Florence, would find the experience bittersweet.

"It sort of like finalizes it," Gloria Marin said. "It would upset her all over again."