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Ron Hallock of Corona, Calif., inspects military records belonging to World War II veteran Eugene J. Kruck, pictured at far left, on May 24. Hallock, a longtime collector of WWII memorabilia, recently purchased at a flea market a box of items belonging to Kruck, who died in 2002, that included Kruck's Navy uniform, an American flag, campaign medals, military records and family photos.

'I'm glad he finally gets to go home'

Waukesha veteran's military memorabilia uncovered in California

By Erik S. Hanley
Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — Frank and Barbara Kruck returned home May 27 from a Memorial Day parade — which this year was partly in honor of Frank's brother Clem, who was a World War II veteran — to a ringing phone.

Barbara answered and said she quickly had chills as the voice on the line informed her another World War II veteran brother-in-law's lost military memorabilia had been uncovered in a cardboard box at a flea market in California.

In addition, Ron Hallock, a collector of military memorabilia and the one who purchased the cardboard time capsule, told them that he wanted to return Eugene Kruck's possessions to his family when Hallock comes to Wisconsin on business July 2.

"I felt I owed it to him," Hallock said. After a pause, he added, "I'm glad he finally gets to go home."

Eugene was a Navy veteran of Pearl Harbor and other battles of World War II who retired in California and passed away in 2002 at 84 from diabetes.

His possessions were later lost, as his wife Beatrice had died before him and he had no children to claim them. The Krucks hypothesized that a friend of Eugene who had taken care of him while he was sick had kept the box, which somehow made its way to the market and then into Hallock's hands.

Hallock remembers seeing a small piece of fabric sticking out of the old box while he was browsing. He said he was pretty sure it was from a Navy jersey and offered the seller \$50. The man accepted his offer, which Hallock thought was just for the uniform. The seller handed him the whole box, however, which he later set in his garage at home and didn't look through for weeks.

'A treasure-trove of military history'

When he decided to fully go through what he'd bought, Hallock realized he'd purchased a man's entire military life. Inside was the complete service history of Eugene James Kruck. Everything from



Charles Auer/Freeman Staff

Frank Kruck and Barbara Kruck sit with photos of Frank's older brothers, Don, Eugene and Clem. A collector in California recently discovered a box with Eugene's military memorabilia.

medals, to papers, letters, and his burial flag was there.

"Wow, what a treasure-trove of military history. My heart was leaping," said Hallock.

Hallock also found the phone number of Eugene's brother Clem in the box. Unfortunately, Clem Kruck had died too, but his wife put Hallock in contact with Frank Kruck — Eugene's only surviving brother — and his wife Barbara.

Frank, who is a Korean War veteran, said the Kruck family is well known in Waukesha and that he and Barbara hope that the return of Eugene's things will bring the family and possibly community members closer together as they relive his life.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing the letters and pictures mostly. I'm hoping this brings up good memories of the past for all who knew the Krucks," said Barbara.

Frank and Barbara said they plan to share the contents of the box with anyone in the family who wants to take something. The Krucks also said they want Hallock to have anything he'd like to add to his collection, and plan on treating him to dinner and possibly a brief tour of Waukesha during his visit.

"He is a hero to us," said Barbara of Hallock.