

Purple Heart finds way back home

The tattered, but intact, Purple Heart medal of Albert A. Van Bergen is now at home with its rightful owner.

PHOTO BY RACHEL BLOOD




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Bob Van Bergen is elated to have the memento of his grandfather's sacrifice returned.

Prestigious war medal reunited with Shakopee man after 49 years

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Albert A. Van Bergen lost a leg to a German sniper in the battle for the Argonne Forest in World War I, one of the biggest and bloodiest battles of the war. For his service, he was awarded the prestigious Purple Heart medal.

The fate of that medal, earned by blood and sacrifice, spanned the decades. It was stolen, then discovered in a garbage dump, before dedicated volunteers recently returned it to the loving hands of Van Bergen's grandson, Bob.

Vietnam veteran Bob Van Bergen, of Shakopee, had last seen the medal in 1972. Back then, he had been out of Vietnam for less than a year and was living with his father, World War II veteran Richard Vernon Van Bergen, and his third wife and two children.

When Richard died in July 1972, his wife presented Bob with the medals from his father's and grandfather's military service.

Bob combined them with his own medals, locking them in the glove box of his 1968 Mustang at his father's funeral.

Wayne Ingebritson, at left, who found the Purple Heart, gave it to Jen Moeller, at right, in Faribault on July 6.

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