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'RUPTURED DUCK' FLIES HOME TO FAYETTE

Uniontown, PA – A piece of Fayette County's military history has returned home just in time for Memorial Day, thanks to the power of social media.

Randall Huston, a 59-year-old veteran from St. Joseph, Mo., was browsing his local Disabled American Veterans Thrift Store when something unusual caught his eye.

"I wasn't looking for anything in particular. Sometimes lost things just seem to have a way of finding me," Huston said. "I never know what sort of strange occurrence is going to happen to me next."

Among the thrift store treasures was a metal grave marker bearing the "Ruptured Duck" insignia. More commonly seen in lapel pin form, the symbol was awarded to U.S. military members who were honorably discharged from service during World War II.

Designed by sculptor Anthony de Francisci, the Department of Defense awarded Ruptured Ducks between September 1939 and December 1946.

"They say the image of the eagle passing through a hoop is meant to symbolize the soldier transitioning back into civilian life," Huston said. "My father was a World War II vet, so when I saw this, I thought, 'Oh no. This doesn't belong here and it has to go back.'"

Huston, who served as a Navy jet mechanic from 1977-81, has spent the last 35 years as an assembly lineman for Johnson Controls. He took the Ruptured Duck home for \$2.25 and started researching its origins.

The grave marker Huston found bears multiple inscriptions: "Presented by the County Commissioners, Fayette, Pennsylvania," "1941 - 1945," "Harriet" and "NJS CAS."

"I knew immediately that what I found had been taken from where it belonged," he said. "If someone would take something off my father's grave, I would be furious."



In his research, Huston stumbled upon the new Fayette County Facebook page, which launched shortly before he brought the Ruptured Duck home.

“I guess the timing was just right,” he said. “There’s a little thing we call serendipity. I really feel this was meant to happen.”

After reaching out to the Fayette County PR Initiative team, the Ruptured Duck came flying home and into the waiting arms of Jim Shetler with the Pennsylvania State Association of Veterans.

Shetler is working to identify the grave marker’s rightful place, but will place it on an honorably discharged World War II veteran’s grave if necessary.

As for Huston, whose son is currently following in his military footsteps as a U.S. Army network administrator at Fort Knox, he’s just happy to help.

“I was so hopeful that it would get back to its home and thought that, if it does, I will have done my part for a fellow veteran,” he said. “Most ex-military have a sense of duty to not only their country but each other, and that’s not something you lose once you put that uniform away.”

The Fayette County PR Initiative will share updates on the Ruptured Duck’s journey in the future.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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