



OFFICE OF ILLINOIS STATE TREASURER

MICHAEL W. FRERICHS

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CONTACT:

Eric Krol

312.814.1252

State Treasurer Michael Frerichs Returns Purple Heart To Daughter of Late World War II Marine

Operation Purple Heart Reunites Military Honors for a Record 12th Time

Video clips link 1 (Purple Heart return): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WSqtjDYb4o>

Video clips link 2 (Delbert Tuttle story): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Urjvn9yOiuY>

Video clips link 3 (vault, radio voiceover): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HO_QdgJwm8k

Ahead of Veterans Day, Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs announced he has returned a Purple Heart medal belonging to a late World War II Marine from Decatur to the veteran's daughter.

U.S. Marine Corps Private First-Class Delbert G. Tuttle earned the honor, along with the Silver Star, for wounds he suffered during the Battle of Saipan in the Pacific Theater on June 15, 1944.

"Private First Class Tuttle put aside his own wounds so that he could help his fellow combatants take a battleground that was key to ushering in the end of the Second World War," Frerichs said. "No matter the passage of time, his bravery and sacrifice shall never be forgotten, especially as we return this Purple Heart to his family."

Carolyn Peckham, Tuttle's daughter, accepted the Purple Heart from Frerichs during a small, private ceremony at the World War II Memorial outside the Decatur Civic Center on Oct. 29. Like many who served in the military and experienced battle, Tuttle never spoke about his service, Peckham said.

"My father loved my brother and I very, very much," Peckham said. "The war was very difficult for him. He carried it with him forever. But he was always there for us. He was very loving."

Frerichs gave Peckham the military award as part of [Operation Purple Heart](#), an unprecedented mission to return lost medals that are one of the most recognized and respected honors bestowed upon members of the U.S. armed forces. Treasurer Frerichs has returned 12 Purple Heart medals to soldiers or their families, more than any other administration in Illinois' history.

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“I can’t say enough about what a special thing this is for the Treasurer’s Office to go the extra mile to find the recipients of the Purple Hearts,” said State Rep. Sue Scherer of Decatur, who was part of the ceremony. “I can’t even imagine how touched Carolyn must be to actually have this Purple Heart back in her family’s possession.”

Mr. Tuttle was a member of F Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Division in the early days of the Battle of Saipan. Securing the island was the first objective of [Operation Forager](#), the campaign to occupy the Mariana Islands and put major Japanese cities within range of America’s B-29 bombers. Tuttle was near the front lines, delivering ammunition and directing the fire of tanks against the enemy. He initially was wounded in the right shoulder, but refused an order to leave the line, according to military records. The Silver Star is the third-highest military combat decoration earned for gallantry on the battlefield, especially during an intense confrontation.

A second wound during that day’s battle forced him to the rear. Tuttle also had shrapnel in both legs. Later, he was discharged as a result of his injuries on Nov. 2, 1945, and returned stateside with the rank of Corporal.

U.S. military secured Saipan nearly one month later, on July 9. U.S. forces suffered approximately 26,000 casualties, 5,000 of which were deaths. At least 23,000 Japanese troops perished.

Tuttle also fought in the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943 and the Battle of Okinawa in April 1945.

Tuttle was born in Tuscola, Illinois, on Oct. 6, 1919. When he returned from service, he briefly lived in the 4900 block of West Congress Parkway in Chicago, where he met his future wife, Lorraine Fellows. They married Dec. 31, 1950, and moved to Decatur, where he worked as a machinist for the A. W. Cash Company. He died April 16, 1972, in Forsyth, just north of Decatur, while battling lung cancer. He is buried at Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield.

Treasurer Frerichs launched Operation Purple Heart in November 2021, seeking the public’s help to return the medals, including the one that belonged to Mr. Tuttle. Each of the Purple Heart medals was inside a safe deposit box that a bank determined was abandoned after several years. By state law, the contents were turned over to the State Treasurer’s Office.

Purple Heart medals are among the most difficult items to return because neither the Armed Forces nor the federal government maintain a comprehensive list of awardees. Frerichs has successfully returned 12 Purple Hearts, and efforts are ongoing to return 10 more. A list of medals returned and waiting to be returned can be found at the Operation Purple Heart [website](#).

“These medals personify honor, sacrifice, and duty,” Frerichs said. “I am grateful we returned this Purple Heart, and we continue to seek the assistance of Illinois residents to help us return these medals to the loving care of their families.”

The State Treasurer’s Office is responsible for safeguarding unclaimed property until it can be returned to the owners or heirs no matter how long it takes. Other examples of unclaimed property include forgotten bank accounts, unpaid life insurance benefits and uncashed rebate checks.

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About the Illinois Treasurer

The Illinois State Treasurer's Office is a powerful economic engine that invests in people to drive prosperity, development and growth throughout the state. As State Treasurer, Michael Frerichs (FRAIR'iks) is the state's Chief Investment and Banking Officer and actively manages approximately \$60 billion. The investments help families pay for college and trade school; workers save for a dignified retirement; and local governments process bill payments more efficiently so they can pass along the savings to taxpayers. The office provides financial institutions money to loan to farmers, small business owners, and qualified individuals at below-market rates because better jobs create stronger communities. The office operates the state's largest consumer-protection initiative, the unclaimed property I-Cash program, which has returned a record-breaking \$2 billion since Frerichs was elected.

For more news about the State Treasurer's Office, please follow Treasurer Frerichs on Instagram at [ILTreasurer](#), [LinkedIn](#) and Facebook at [Invested in You – Treasurer Michael Frerichs](#). You can find our weekly newsletter [here](#).

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