

During World War II, the Purple Heart was awarded, in the name of the President of the United States, to the next of kin of any member of an Armed Force who was killed in combat. The Marsella Family has cherished John's Purple Heart for over sixty years.

Anna Maria Marsella was outside, in her front yard, when the telegram delivery boy arrived with news of her son's death. He asked if she was Mrs. Marsella and she said yes. He then abruptly stated, "Well, your son was killed."

Her screams were heard throughout the neighborhood and are still recalled by local residents. The priest at St. Vito's Church, several blocks away, was one of those who heard her cries of anguish. He rushed to her side and later pressured the U.S. government to notify the next of kin in person, preferably with the help of a chaplain. Before the war was over, this policy was implemented.