

With flag ceremony, vets pass on respect

For once, the veterans of America's wars weren't fighting each other. There were no displays of temperament over who took part in wars this country won and who was involved in wars that were lost or who was welcomed home with parades when their wars ended and who wasn't.

This time, on the Fourth of July in Philadelphia, with the city so deep in hock it couldn't afford to stage an Independence Day parade, the veterans were all together.

They threw their own parade. They raised the money themselves, holding out cans for coin tosses at Veterans Stadium and at the lines of cars waiting to pay tolls at the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge and at shopping malls and wherever else they could.

"We still owe the float guy \$20,000," Bob McMahon, a Vietnam vet who organized the parade along with Cliff Jeffries, adjutant of the United Veterans Council in Philadelphia, was saying last night. "And we still owe money to the production people."

There's a leftover bill of \$55,000 from a parade that was staged at a cost of \$200,000, small change compared to the millions spent on military parades in New York and Washington that welcomed home the veterans from the Persian Gulf War.

Philadelphia's Independence Day parade also welcomed home the servicemen of Desert Storm, but there were major differences from such parades in other cities.

the roars of approval from the public for the veterans of Desert Storm, who had scored what the older vets considered to be America's easiest victory.

The flag-passing ceremony on the night of July Fourth was meant to start healing wounds suffered after our wars were over.

From a platform in front of Independence Hall, McMahon introduced Vietnam vet Rich Gresco,

the winner of the Navy Cross and two Purple Hearts, and Marine pilot Capt. Craig Berryman, who was a prisoner of war in the Middle East after being shot down over Kuwait City.

Gresco passed an American flag and a POW-MIA flag to Berryman. The idea was that Berryman would accept the responsibility to honor veterans of future wars and not

forget those who were still missing.

Gresco and Berryman were then to salute and shake hands. But they suddenly realized the passing of such a responsibility was more personal than that.

They stepped outside of ceremony to embrace each other.

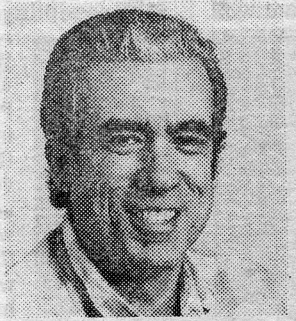
Darla Madison, whose son was killed in the Middle East in a Scud attack, accepted flags from Marie Gardner, whose son was killed in Vietnam. The mothers cried together.

Sitting on the platform as witnesses were Morris Hunter, who is 95 years old and a veteran of World War I; Nate Sokoloff, a World War II vet; and Bob McGovern, a Korean vet. They also were introduced by McMahon.

If you promised to help underwrite Thursday's Welcome Home Parade extravaganza, be prepared Monday to honor your commitment.

"We'll be counting funds in hand, as well as personally contacting people who have pledged money," said parade coordinator Bob McMahon.

This week's parade was funded largely by donations during fundraising efforts by veterans' groups. But the \$200,000 parade is still between \$50,000 and \$55,000 short, McMahon said.



by **LARRY McMULLEN**

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About \$20,000 is owed land company which floats, including the balloon bearing a giant straddling red, white and blue patriot missiles, he said.

On July 11, McMahon and representatives from the Vietnam Veterans Multi-Services Center, 1302 Sansom St., will be conducting activities, and, possibly, a July 4th parade for

As late as Wednesday the floats' arrival were because of the cash shortage, he said. But after the parade, the Welcome Home Committee organized the parade with more than 500 calls for pledges, he said.

A payment of \$30,000 from the Maryland company, and the balance is