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LIVING FLAG

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Having just celebrated Veterans Day, we reflect on the great sacrifices men and women have given for our country. We also acknowledge our heroes, both living and dead, and remember contributions, both large and small, to the causes of Americanism.

It was in August 1967, 40 years ago, that two local seamen were part of a stirring tribute to our nation. They were: James L. Grabowski, U.S. Navy, and Lawrence M. Szatkowski, U.S. Navy, who both participated in forming a huge living flag of 9,500 sailors.

The sailors, all from the Great Lakes Naval Training Center, wore crisp summer-white uniforms over which some donned red and blue plastic capes to make up the appro-

priate stripes and star field.

Much effort was involved in the tribute. In addition to two four-hour practice formations at Great Lakes, the performance required the men to rise at last an hour early, to prepare for spit-and-polish inspections, to assemble for a train ride to downtown Chicago, and a bus ride from the terminal to Soldiers' Field. They had to stand in another practice formation for an hour before the gates were opened to admit some 52,000 spectators at noon — and finally to stand at attention for three hours before the formation at last disbanded.

The ceremony, billed as a Mid-American Salute to the Flag, also was marked by booming 105mm army howitzers, rousing music by the Great Lakes band, selections by the center's Bluejacket Choir, a drill demonstration, speeches

and prayers for peace.

The "living flag" ceremony duplicated a similar formation staged at Great Lakes in 1917.