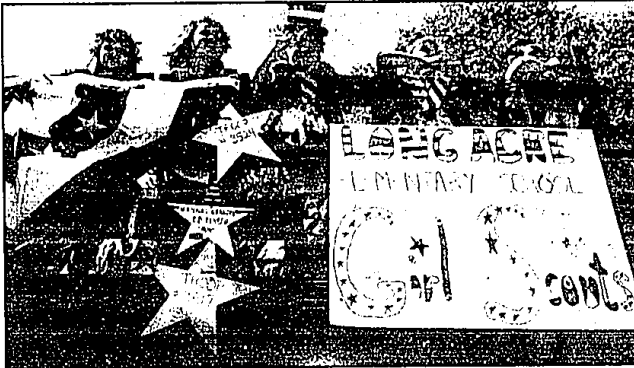




In step: North Farmington High's marching band passes through downtown.



Proud troopers: Members of Girl Scout Troop 3817, from Longacre Elementary School, show off their parade float.



Band fans: Curt Underwood and son Ethan watch the Farmington High School marching band pass by.

**Tributes:** Right, veterans sound a 21-rifle salute. Below left, Helen Robertson places a wreath honoring fallen soldiers from the war in Vietnam. Her son, Roy Kenneth Williams Jr., a 1967 Farmington High School graduate, was killed in action in 1969.



## Parade from page A1

ing one laid by Helen Robertson, whose son Roy Kenneth Williams Jr. was killed in action in Vietnam. In April, Robertson made public her crusade to have soldiers from that war recognized.

Though Robertson's request caused some controversy, she believes her persistence paid off. "It was a big relief and an honor," she said after laying the wreath. "I'm very thankful and grateful."

Ken's widow, siblings and other family members attended the event, as did Emily Strange, whose work as a "Donut Dolly" for the American Red Cross led to a close friendship with the

Farmington native.

"I'm thrilled the Korean veterans have had their day. They deserve it," Strange said. "But I am grateful they allowed them to lay the wreath for Kenny. It meant a lot to me, and I know it meant a lot to his parents."

Strange knew Williams the three months he served in Vietnam and was among the last of his friends to speak with him the night before he died.

She said she'd have talked longer had she known what was coming the following day.

Through a connection with another of Williams' friends, Strange found his family, with whom she has struck up a long-

distance friendship.

Strange lives in Wisconsin; they are Commerce Township residents.

"It's been very healing to know each other and talk," Robertson said of her friendship with Strange. "I feel I've found a lot about the lost part of Ken's life those last three months."

Representing the Vietnam Veterans of America, Cmdr. Frank Church also expressed gratitude for allowing them to join in the Memorial Day tribute.

"To all of the Korean veterans, and those from all the other wars, I just want to say, 'Welcome home,'" Church said.



Aftermath: Memorial Day organizer Wally Christensen (left) and Vietnam vet Frank Church speak after the conclusion of the ceremony.



Waiting to watch: Lisa and Olivia Durocher of Farmington Hills watch for the beginning of the parade.

Staff photos by Bill Brosier

## Medal from page A1

what his citation, signed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, says:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with Company F, Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), in action against enemy aggressor forces in Korea on 17 August 1952 ... Private First Class Simanek exhibited a high degree of courage and resolute spirit of self-sacrifice in protecting the lives of his fellow Marines ... Determined to save his comrades when a hostile grenade was hurled into their midst, he unhesitatingly threw himself on the deadly missile, absorbing the shattering violence of the exploding charge in his own body and shielding his fellow Marines from serious injury or death."

When asked why he received the Medal of Honor, Simanek's

answer seemed a little more low-key.

"They gave it to me basically for covering a hand grenade."

Serving with the U.S. Marine Corps, Simanek was a 21-year-old corpsman when his unit was ambushed while trying to get to an outpost. He was among six soldiers who went to higher ground.

"I was trying to direct tank fire to knock out the positions the Chinese held, while firing my .45 pistol," Simanek explained. "They kept throwing grenades at us."

Two landed at Simanek's feet. He was able to kick one away, but didn't think he had time to do the same thing with the second.

Without a thought in his head but to protect others around him, Simanek fell on the explosive.

"It was desperation," he said simply. "I was trying to relieve a bad situation."

Simanek took most of the blast with his hip and was badly injured. When they finally thought they'd knocked out the Chinese assault, two of his buddies tried to get him down to safety. Then they were hit by enemy fire and wounded even more badly.

Left with no choice, Simanek crawled downhill to a rescue unit. That was in August, 1952. In October of the following year, he received his commendation.

According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, the nation's highest military award is bestowed for "uncommon valor" to men and women in the armed forces who have engaged in combat against an armed enemy.

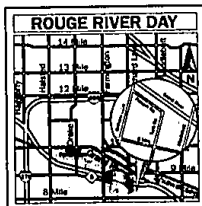
Since 1963, the year the first award was made, more than 3,410 recipients have been awarded medals of honor. As of April 1999, only 167 were still living; Simanek is one of two who are Michigan residents.

will be handled by city employees.

Work will begin shortly after 8:30 a.m., when registration begins at a staging area in the southwest corner of Tuck and Folsom roads on the Botsford Continuing Health Center property. The area is east of Orchard Lake Road and north of Eight Mile in Farmington Hills.

The cleanup will continue until around 11:30 a.m., when lunch will be served to participants.

For more information or to volunteer, call Barrett at (248) 473-9521.



clothes and hard-soled boots; long-sleeved shirts and long pants are recommended. Heavy equipment, such as chainsaws,

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