

The Medalist



UPI Telephoto

An anti-war veteran tossed his Vietnam medals over a barricade at the Capitol.

Veterans Fling Their Medals Back

United Press

Washington

Hundreds of shouting Vietnam veterans flung their campaign medals — “symbols of shame and dishumanity” — toward the Capitol yesterday.

ribbons up toward the Capitol building about 350 feet above them.

MEDALS

Hurled over the barricade were Silver Stars, Bronze Stars, Army commendation medals, Purple Hearts, Vietnam service medals, discharge papers, the Vietnamese Cross for Gallantry and broken toy rifles and toy machine guns used during the past five days of demonstrations.

Clenched fists and shouts of “Right on!” rose from the tanks of their comrades as the veterans tossed their decorations.

“Here’s my merit badge for murder,” yelled one. “Nixon’s going to burn in hell for the murders he’s doing” . . . “We looked for leadership and found closed doors and closed minds,” they shouted.

DELLUMS

Newly elected Representative Ron Dellums (Dem-Calif.) walked up in uniform and threw in another Marine’s ribbons. “I used to be in the United States Marine Corps,” Dellums said. “They can have them back.” He was given a good conduct medal by one demonstrator.

Former Sergeant Gayle Olsen sounded “Taps” and then broke down as he said, “Let’s pray there will be no more.”

Some demonstrators hob-
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It was the final protest event of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, whose 1000 demonstrators came here five days ago. Several early arrivals for today’s massive peace march were onlookers as the veterans demonstrated at the West Front of the Capitol.

One by one, 730 veterans and some of their supporters stood behind a six-foot-high wire fence erected for today’s demonstrations and hurled medals and campaign

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bled to the fence on crutches, others walked up with empty sleeves. One man threw in his life membership certificate in the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Another ripped up his honorable discharge from the Army. "I do not think it is honorable," he said.

STATEMENT

At the start of the ceremony, a demonstration leader read a statement over loudspeakers saying the veterans returned to Washington to tell "a story of Vietnamese people whose nation was torn by an army not concerned with human lives but with body counts."

He said the medals won in Vietnam were being returned "to the people responsible."

"We now strip ourselves of these medals ... we cast them away as symbols of shame and dishumanity," he said to noisy applause.

As the demonstrators made their way up toward the barricade about halfway to the West Front entrance of the Capitol, martial patriotic music could be heard from the East Front on the other side.

It was the Thornridge High School band of Dolton, Ill., playing on the steps of the House side of the Capitol at the invitation of Representative Edward J. Derwinski (Rep-Ill.).