

# 'Superflag' to greet torch

By Bob Shemelgian

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Betsy Ross has a place in history as the first American flag maker.

But the honor for creating the biggest American flag?

That goes to Ski Demski, whose 500-foot-long, 250-foot-wide behemoth of red, white and blue will fly over the side of the Hoover Dam at noon Wednesday during a "Welcome to Nevada" celebration for the Olympic torchbearers.

"They're going to hoist it on cables from the top of the roof of the power plant to the top of the dam," said Demski, 66, who makes his home in Long Beach, Calif., along with no fewer than a dozen parrots, macaws and cockatoos.

"I've got one of my macaws

staying with me at the motel in Boulder City while we wait for the celebration Wednesday," Demski said. "His name is Peppy. I call him my Polish eagle."

Demski started work on the world's largest flag in 1992 in order to get it into the Guinness Book of World Records.

"The only time it was unfurled was on Flag Day 1993 at the Washington Monument. That was to get it into the record book," said Demski, who explained that 500 people held onto the edges of the flag so it wouldn't touch the ground.

Ironically, Ross' famous Grand Union flag, which was raised at Somerville, Mass., as the flag of the Continental Army on Jan. 1, 1776, and Demski's "superflag," as he calls it, were constructed in Pennsylvania.

Ross, a seamstress, lived and worked in Philadelphia, and Demski hired a small manufacturer in Pottstown, Pa., to make his "superflag."

Demski's flag weighs 3,000 pounds and contains 60,000 miles of thread.

When Demski heard that the Olympic torchbearers were going to be honored Wednesday at Hoover Dam, he thought it would be an appropriate place to fly his huge banner.

Since 1983, Demski has made other superflags, although not as big as his latest creation.

One of them, which measures 160 feet by 300 feet, flies every year at the Holiday Bowl in San Diego and the Fiesta Bowl in Phoenix.

"I just try to outdo myself," Demski said.