

# Promoter Hits Snags On P.O.W. Vacations

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SAN DIEGO, Feb. 11—Roger Chapin, who has raised more than \$4.5-million in public donations over the last five years to demonstrate the American people's "heartfelt affection" for their fighting men, is encountering rough going in his latest enterprise: to give every homecoming prisoner of war a free vacation in Acapulco, Hawaii, the Virgin Islands or some other lush vacation spot.

The White House, the Department of Defense and the State Department have all refused to endorse or lend any encouragement to his plan for what he calls "a magnificent outpouring of America's goodwill and esteem" toward the liberated war captives.

Industry has been slow to respond and even slower to provide the "seed" money that



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Roger Chapin

Mr. Chapin's organization, Welcome Home P.O.W.'s, Inc., needs to begin a nationwide appeal for at least \$2-million in the public donations to pay for the P.O.W. vacations.

## Senators Withdraw

Senators John V. Tunney and Alan Cranston, Democrats of California, and Robert J. Dole, Republican of Kansas, are among several members of his board of advisers who, in recent days, have asked him to remove their names from his organization's stationery.

His chief consultant on prisoner of war matters and a co-founder of Welcome Home P.O.W.'s, Inc., is Lieut. Comdr. Robert Frishman of the Navy, who spent nearly two years in a North Vietnamese prison cell. Commander Frishman was prohibited by his Navy superiors from participating in a news conference held by Mr. Chapin and his colleagues late last week.

But the most telling blow came earlier in the week from the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, many of whose members would be entitled to share in the free vacations provided by Welcome Home P.O.W.'s.

The league's chairman, Mrs. Phyllis E. Galanti, announced that the organization was "unalterably opposed" to the idea because it is "not in the best interests of the returning P.O.W.'s and their families."

## Points to Missing Men

"We are fearful that it could serve to undermine the interests of the men who are still missing," she said, echoing a concern that had been expressed previously to Mr. Chapin on his visits to the White House and Pentagon officials who are striving to obtain a fuller accounting of Americans missing in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Chapin says, "The league does not express the feelings of all the P.O.W. families or even of all its own members."

In meetings with business leaders over the past six months Mr. Chapin has asked them to pay for 20 million "Welcome Home P.O.W." buttons and 20 million bumper stickers to be distributed from among the public, and to meet the cost of national television and radio spots and coupon-carrying newspaper advertisements appealing to the public's generosity.

He has already spent over \$75,000, including \$50,000 from an unsecured loan from the

United States National Bank here and \$15,000 borrowed from one of his earlier fund-raising campaigns.

Associated with Welcome Home P.O.W.'s, as they have been with Mr. Chapin's earlier fund-raising enterprises, are several of San Diego's most prominent business and civic leaders such as George A. Scott, president of Walker-Scott department stores.

Mr. Scott said the free vacations were only secondary to the main objective of the project, which "will be a healing process for all the American people who have been so divided in their opinions about this war."

Since Roger Chapin, 41 years old, gave up promoting franchises for Heavenly Donuts five years ago and turned to fund-raising, he has collected upward of \$4.5-million from more than 300,000 Americans to send gift packages to American battlefront troops in Vietnam and hobby and craft kits to hospitalized veterans here at home.

His severest critics have never suggested that there is the least taint of fraud connected with his activities.

Nevertheless, for every dollar he has received in response to 15 million direct mail appeals, less than 50 cents has been spent on the gifts and hobby packs and their shipment. The bulk of the money goes for direct-mail solicitation, promotion and administrative costs. His own audits show that in some cases more has been spent on direct mail alone than on the contents of the packages.

## Over \$3-Million

Donors contributed an average of \$5.40 and a grand total of \$3,156,074 over a 33-month period before the Vietnam Gift Pac program was suspended after shipment of about 600,000 packs. The program was ended in December, 1971, because of the pullback of American troops from battlefront positions in Vietnam. The cost of each package's contents was about \$2.43, although Mr. Chapin prefers to speak of a "fair retail value" of \$9.42.

Mr. Chapin draws a \$2,000-a-month salary from Help Hospitalized Veterans, but nothing yet from Welcome Home P.O.W.'s.

The fund-raising costs for his two earlier projects ran from 35 to 38 per cent, a figure that his critics call excessive but that Mr. Chapin insists is reasonable and in line with other reputable charities that depend primarily on direct mail solicitation.

Mr. Chapin, who operates Help Hospitalized Veterans from a barnlike building in downtown San Diego, attributes much of his troubles to a highly critical, six-page report on his operations issued Jan. 3 by the National Information Bureau in New York, which evaluates philanthropic and charity fund appeals for many large businesses.

## High Costs Cited

The report criticized the high fund-raising costs of Vietnam Gift Pac and Help Hospitalized Veterans and said, "This does not engender confidence in Welcome Home P.O.W.'s sense of responsibility." The report, asserting that the free vacations would "accentuate interference with the private lives of the returning P.O.W.'s," advised the businessmen to ignore Mr. Chapin's appeals.

Mrs. Helen O'Rourke, manager of solicitations for the Council of Better Business Bureaus in Washington, said Mr. Chapin had been slow to provide details of his financing methods for a report on his activities that the council is preparing.

"His fund-raising costs of around 38 per cent seem excessive and the fact cannot be overlooked that only 47.3 per cent of the money collected for Help Hospitalized Veterans actually went for the hobby kits," she said.

Mr. Chapin has been prohibited from soliciting contributions in North Carolina because his fund-raising costs exceed 15 per cent. A cease-and-desist order issued against him by the Los Angeles Social Service Department last July 7 for lack of a permit for charitable soliciting remains in effect there.