

A Soquel Woman's Plea For Help

PETITION

TO: THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTH VIETNAM:

There is no issue upon which we, as citizens of the United States and as human beings, are more united than our concern for the welfare of our men whom you hold captive. On June 28, 1957, you signed the Geneva Conventions which embody the morality of world citizenship with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war.

The men you now detain can pose no threat to you. These men did not wish to leave home and fight but have done their duty to their country, just as you require of your citizens. There are presently 1,095 men unaccounted for and presumed to be in your hands.

We are asking that you live up to the obligations you assumed upon signing the Geneva Conventions by:

1. Releasing the names, addresses and state of health of every man held in your camps.
2. Repatriating or removing to a neutral country all sick and wounded prisoners.
3. Permitting the Red Cross or some other international humanitarian organization to monitor the prison camps and help minister to the needs of the captives.
4. Allowing prisoners to send and receive mail, including shipments of food, clothing, medical supplies and educational and recreational materials.

A Soquel mother of two children is spearheading a Santa Cruz County campaign to flood the North Vietnamese peace negotiators with petitions asking information about prisoners of war.

Lorraine W. Smith, 4398 Ranchero Drive, Soquel, a member of the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, is asking local citizens to sign the accompanying petition that will be forwarded to Lt. Gov. Ed Reinecke.

Reinecke has declared this week as "Remember our Prisoners of War" week in California.

Mrs. Smith, a 1957 graduate of Santa Cruz High School, has not heard anything of her husband, Air Force Major Warren P. Smith Jr., since he was shot down over Laos in 1966.

Said Mrs. Smith:

"Four and a half years ago in March, my husband, Major Warren P. Smith Jr., pilot, U.S.A.F., said good-bye to me and our two children, Karl and Karen, and departed for the Far East where he joined his squadron of forward air controllers in Nakkon Phanom, Thailand. Three months later, on June 22, 1966, while on a mission over Laos, my husband was shot down. Another pilot saw his plane crash into a small clearing. Within 45 minutes heli-

copters attempted a rescue but had to forfeit the operation because of intense enemy ground fire.

"I have never heard anything concerning my husband since that day. Therefore, we do not know whether he is dead or alive. My situation is not unique though: no wife or relative of any of our missing men in South Vietnam or Laos have ever heard from their loved ones, even though we have sent many letters and packages in hopes they would receive them.

"The past four and a half years have been difficult ones for his parents, our children, his only brother and for me. Recently, Warren's father passed away not knowing what had become of his son. It seems like indecision has been our biggest battle — not knowing one way or the other. But our faith in God and country has made the difference in our lives and has lifted us above utter anguish and hopelessness.

"After years of silence and patience we families decided to speak out and seek public support for the release of our men and humane treatment during their internment. Many of these men have been prisoners of war or missing in action for six years. Recently we formed an organization called National League of Families of American Prisoners in Southeast Asia for this purpose.

"Over 1600 Americans are missing in action or are prisoners of North Vietnamese, Viet Cong and Pathet Lao. North Vietnam signed the Geneva Convention June 28, 1957, but refuses to accord American prisoners of war even the most basic requirements:

- "1. They refuse to release the names of prisoners.
- "2. They refuse to permit impartial inspection of prisoner facilities.

"3. They refuse to release sick and wounded prisoners.

"4. They refuse to permit prisoners to communicate with their families and each other.

"We are not involved in the debate on whether we should or should not be at war in Southeast Asia, nor were our husbands. As military men they did not make foreign policy. Their job was to implement it. Ours is an appeal for human rights, a call for compassion.

"We ask for compassion for men over there, some of whom we know are suffering from extreme privation. We ask for compassion for the parents of those men, many of them aged. We ask also for compassion for our children; many of our young children have never seen or cannot remember their fathers.

"We confidently believe United States and world public



Major Warren Smith Jr.

opinion is our strongest weapon and that petitions and letters of concern will create tremendous pressure on the enemy. People around the world have responded to our plea, and here in the U.S. the response is overwhelming. This is one issue on which the American people stand united.

"These men have fought for our freedom and, in the process, lost their own. It is our firm belief that it is now our turn to fight for them and their freedom.

"I urge you to take action now and join the thousands of deeply concerned patriotic Americans and allies in this program. I urge you to pray daily for these men and their families. Imagine yourself and your family in this situation and let your conscience be your guide."

Santa Cruz County residents wishing to do so may sign the petition with their names and addresses and send it to Mrs. Lorraine W. Smith, 4398 Ranchero Drive, Soquel.

City Government Week Kickoff Dinner

Grunsky Hails Selfless Public Servants

By BRUCE McPHERSON
Sentinel Staff Writer

in local home rule," Grunsky in accomplishments of the city said, adding that having dedi- in recent years including a new open house and a display of city equipment (on Church