

Karen Feld's Capital Connections By Karen Feld

While Rich Little was in town entertaining at the Chiefs of Police National Drug Free Alliance Dinner at the Ramada Renaissance the other evening, one old-timer remembered when Little first began sounding off for causes. The comic's stunts at one Friar's Roast, taking more than four times his allotted four minutes and causing several comedians to be bumped, wasn't the first time he refused to get off stage.

In the late sixties, during the height of the Vietnam War, he was the \$750-a-week opening act at the legendary Copa Cabana in New York. Little, a Canadian, went on stage and blasted the United States for being in Nam. That, of course was an unpopular position at the time. One ex-Marine, the late Frank Farrell, blasted Little; a so-called foreigner, for knocking U.S. policy, in his column in the World Telegram and Sun.

As a result, the Copa was flooded with protest calls (from the American legion and other folks), and picketers marched against Little's engagement there. Copa owner Jules Podell summoned the club's press agent, Sy Presten, and asked him to go to Little's dressing room and cut the Vietnam routine from his act.

"Tell Podell to go to h---," Little told the flack. When Little went on stage that evening and began his Vietnam blast, Podell had the mike lowered and lowered. Little continued until Podell finally shut off the mike. But Little wouldn't be deterred. Neither would Podell, who ordered all the lights shut off. Finally, Rich stormed off the stage, and his engagement was terminated.