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'92 Columbus Jubilee Is Mired in Problems

By JEFF GERTH, Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 17— The Presidential commission coordinating the international celebration of the 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage to the New World is mired in problems, including the loss of major corporate aid and a Congressional inquiry into its finances and the activities of its chairman.

The chairman, John N. Goudie, a Republican fund-raiser in Miami, said today that he was submitting his resignation from the unsalaried post. He denied any wrongdoing. "It's time for me to bow out," he said, and added that the commission needed "some favorable publicity."

The five-year-old commission is \$600,000 in arrears on an agreement with Spain, which has built replicas of Columbus's three ships and is planning to have them follow the path he took to America, then tour American ports. The commission cannot pay Spain because Texaco Inc., a principal sponsor of the celebration, has raised questions about the planned voyage and stopped its donations. **Publicity and Other Problems**

Both Mr. Goudie and Texaco officials say there is a complicated contractual dispute over the financial and managerial arrangements for the tour.

The 45-year-old Mr. Goudie (pronounced GOW-dee) has been chairman since President Ronald Reagan appointed him in 1985. There has been no word from the White House on whether the resignation has been accepted or when it might take effect.

Mr. Goudie said he was resigning because publicity over the Texaco matter, among other problems, was jeopardizing a possible multimillion-dollar pledge from another major sponsor, the Chrysler Corporation, for other quincentenary activities. The problems were reported earlier this month in Special Events Report, a newsletter for people involved in public celebrations like the Columbus jubilee.

Mr. Goudie said that when he received a letter from Chrysler today involving the pledge, he decided to send his letter of resignation to President Bush. He would not say what was in Chrysler's letter; a Chrysler spokesman said he knew of discussions within the company about the matter but added that he was unaware of such a letter.

A House Post Office and Civil Service subcommittee with jurisdiction over the celebration has been looking at whether contracts awarded by the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission have been properly let. Some of the arrangements under scrutiny involve friends of Mr. Goudie, according both to him and to documents involving commission business. Because the commission is largely financed through private donations, it is not bound by Federal regulations on competitive bidding.

The Congressional panel, whose chairman is Thomas C. Sawyer, an Ohio Democrat, plans to hold hearings next year after an audit of the quincentenary commission by the General Accounting Office, according to a committee aide.

Mr. Goudie's financial problems are intertwined with his Miami real estate business, his role as a Republican fund-raiser and his chairmanship of the Columbus celebration.

In August, a Miami judge cited him for contempt for willfully disobeying a court order to produce documents involving his finances. Court records show numerous financial judgments against him. And in one of those cases, involving a judgment against him by a Miami savings and loan, court records and his own deposition show that he made two admissions: that a 1988 loan application contained inaccurate financial information, and that as of September 1988 he had failed to file Federal income tax returns in 1986 and 1987. Raised Money for Martinez

Earlier this year, Mr. Goudie raised money for the failed re-election effort of Gov. Bob Martinez, the Florida Republican whom Mr. Bush nominated this month to succeed William J. Bennett as Director of National Drug Control Policy.

Mr. Goudie said in an interview last week that he had asked for campaign contributions from some people doing business with the Columbus quincentenary commission.

These efforts came at the same time he was trying unsuccessfully to get the Florida Real Estate Commission to reconsider its 1989 revocation of his real estate license. His license was revoked for misappropriating escrow funds, according to Florida state documents.

The real estate commission found that the misappropriations in Mr. Goudie's company escrow account included \$10,000 in donations to the Florida Republican Party in 1988. Mr. Goudie said he had properly used the account for his business.

In interviews, Mr. Goudie attributed many of his problems to inattention to his business because of his travels for the Columbus commission.

In the hodgepodge of local and international celebrations planned for the 500th anniversary in 1992, the potential revenues from businesses approved by the commission involve tens of millions of dollars. T-Shirts and Souvenirs

One beneficiary is the Christopher Columbus Licensing Group Inc. of Miami and New York, which in 1989 received a contract that will enable it to keep 85 percent of all commission-related sales on items like T-shirts and souvenirs. Last October, replying to questions by the House subcommittee about commission business dealings, Mr. Goudie said the Columbus licensing group "was the only one to offer an up-front cash donation to the commission, in addition to a royalty on future sales."

According to an affidavit in a lawsuit in a dispute among principals of the company, a Miami consultant whom Mr. Goudie calls a longtime friend received checks from the licensing group totaling \$35,000.

The consultant, Manuel Gonzalez, is not a shareholder or officer of the Columbus licensing group, according to documents and company officials, but he was involved in discussions about company business.

In an interview, Mr. Gonzalez denied any involvement in company affairs. When asked in a second interview about company documents with his name on them, he said, "I have no further comment."

Another close business associate of Mr. Goudie's heads the company that owns the commission's official magazine, Five Hundred, according to records and Mr. Goudie.

Mr. Goudie said that while some of the commission's licensing and publishing arrangements involved friends of his, they were "aboveboard" and proper because he had no financial interest in the businesses. Leeway From Congress

The 30-member quincentenary commission, which has a small paid staff in Washington, includes business leaders, politicians, academics and some Cabinet officials, like the Secretaries of State and Commerce. It receives about \$200,000 a year from Congress.

The commissioners do not receive a salary but are reimbursed for travel expenses. Mr. Goudie says he saw the commission as an advancement of the Bush Administration's goal to increase private involvement in public causes. In 1987 Congress allowed the commission greater leeway to raise private donations. The commission's reliance on private funds and its quasi-official status mean that it is not subject to a number of Federal rules and laws covering ethics, disclosure and contracting, making oversight of its activities more difficult.

The commission's biggest contract is with Texaco, which pledged \$5 million over five years to sponsor the tour of the the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria.

Photo: John N. Goudie, whose commission is under scrutiny. (Michael Geissinger for The New York Times)