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# Ervin, too, Was Plagued by

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Now it can be told.

According to official documents obtained by The Washington Post, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee, encountered the very same problem in his 1968 re-election campaign that plagued President Nixon in 1972—too much money.

The North Carolina senator, the documents reveal, has so much money he didn't know how to spend it all. He was fighting off contributors who wanted to give him more cash. He was giving away funds to other Democrats. He even made a pro rata refund to campaign donors, 20 cents on the dollar.

But Ervin still wound up with extra cash. Some folks wouldn't take their money back. So he sent the leftover money to a church, a nursing home, and a hospital.

Of course, campaigning in North Carolina is considera-

bly cheaper, especially if your name is Sam Ervin. The senator's election financing, even counting the left-over, came to a grand total of \$30,931.92.

No wonder his eyebrows wiggle when the Watergate witnesses talk about secret suitcases stuffed with hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Senator Ervin also did not shred the records after his 1968 campaign. Nor did he send his campaign treasurer on a long vacation abroad.

Instead, he filed lengthy reports with the proper authorities, the State of North Carolina and the Secretary of the Senate. The reports are available for inspection, if anyone cares that Mr. and Mrs. E. Russell Midkiff of Mount Airy, N.C., sent \$5, or that Harry Lee Orders of Glen Alpine, N.C., gave \$2 (and got 40 cents back, in postage stamps).

In fact, the Ervin campaign of 1968 may be a classic case of over-accounting, more information than the

law requires or anyone wants to know. But a careful reading of the Ervin reports reveals certain insights into how the successful politician operates. For instance:

Senator Ervin likes to start the day with a hearty breakfast. Such as \$2 at the Red Room of the Hotel Sir Walter in Raleigh, N.C., on Aug. 18, or \$2.69 at the Lake Drive Motel in Chicago on Aug. 27 (where Ervin was attending the Democratic National Convention).

But he prefers a light lunch. Like 50 cents at the Howard Johnson's in Winston-Salem on Aug. 17, hardly enough to buy a soda.

Ervin campaigns mostly by automobile, accompanied by his staff aide, Rufus Edmisten, as driver. They like to stop for gas at Stuckey's roadside stations (the ones that sell the famous pecan pralines). According to the documents, the senator and Edmisten often share the same lodgings at overnight

stops. The reports are not clear on this point, but, according to informed sources, they never had to share the same bed.

Senator Ervin, the documents also reveal, is a moderately big tipper, especially considering the spartan style of his campaign. A dollar to the bellboy at the Hotel Sir Walter, \$1.25 to the porter at the Charlotte Airport, \$2 at O'Hare in Chicago.

Lest anyone question his trip to Chicago for the convention, the senator added a footnote to explain those expenditures:

"Two of the contributors of amounts largely in excess of expenses incurred by the candidate in attending the Democratic National Convention expressly authorized the candidate to pay the cost of attending the convention out of their contributions."

Ervin had three opponents in the primary election that year and he re-

## Too Much Campaign Money...

ceived \$9,110 in contributions. That was a problem which was to plague him throughout the year—how to spend all that money. He concedes in his own report that he only managed to expend \$3,346.08 by the May 4 primary.

Still, the money rolled in for the fall general election. Ervin gave \$5,000 to the State Democratic Committee. He gave \$75 to the Drexel Community Fair and \$25 to the Young Democrats of Alexander County and \$250 to the Watauga County Democratic Executive Committee, as well as other organizations of local Democrats.

These expenditures, as Ervin explained in his lawyerly way, were "to aid in defraying the cost of printing campaign material, political advertising and other activities tending to promote election of the candidate."

Still, the surplus continued. He finished with con-

tributions of \$20,931.92 which he personally received. But he was unable to spend \$3,855.60 of it. Two campaign committees set up in his behalf, one for the eastern end of the state and the other for the west, each got \$5,000 from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee in Washington.

The Western Committee, according to an affidavit by its treasurer, Ben S. Whisnant from Ervin's home town of Morganton, managed to spend all its money.

The Eastern Committee, according to its treasurer, Jack Spain of Greenville, still had \$110.56 left on election day. So it sent the money back to Washington.

One reason Ervin had trouble spending money is that he did not buy 30 seconds of television time during the whole campaign. The Ervin strategy, it appears from the documents, was uncannily simple, he and Edmisten would drive down the road and, when-

ever they saw some voters, they would stop and chat.

In his own affidavit, however, Senator Ervin insisted that he did the best he could to expend the funds. The report says:

"Although affiant [that's Ervin] did not solicit any campaign contributions for use in his quest for renomination and re-election as a United States senator, and although he declined to accept many contributions tendered to him by supporters, various contributions were voluntarily made to him by persons sharing his political philosophy."

That left him with a post-election problem—what to do with the \$3,855.60 still on deposit at the Wachovia Bank and Trust Co. in Morganton.

Senator Ervin sent refund checks to 111 contributors. However, he could not locate one John B. Williams III, who was apparently an overseas serviceman who sent \$5. In addition, several

checks came back from the Post Office, marked "return to sender." Furthermore, six contributors refused their rebates.

Senator Ervin disposed of the money. Eight dollars to the First Presbyterian Church of Morganton, \$300 to the Cornelia Dixon Nursing Home of Wilmington, \$350 to Grace Hospital at Morganton.

His voluminous report does not describe everything about the campaign, however. It doesn't say, for instance, that the senator won the election with 69 per cent of the vote, defeating a Republican lawyer from Salisbury, N.C., named Bob Sommers.

The report also doesn't indicate the Ervin re-election committee spied on his opponent, but the senator's aide, Rufus Edmisten, assured a reporter that it did not.

"As a matter of fact," said Edmisten, "we never did know much about the fella."