

'Blank Checks From Hughes'

Washington

An agent for billionaire Howard Hughes gave a number of signed blank checks to the Nixon re-election campaign a few days before the April 7, 1972, reporting deadline, a secretary testified in a civil suit deposition made public yesterday.

Sally Harmony, formerly a secretary to G. Gordon Liddy, said she could not remember the amounts that were filled in but that the checks were made out to the Finance Committee for the Re-election of the President or some subsidiary committees.

However, the Hughes associate who signed the checks said they were 17 in number and totaled \$50,000.

An earlier Hughes contribution of \$100,000 given to Nixon intimate Charles G. (Bebe) Rebozo has been the source of much controversy.

Rebozo said that the later returned the 100,000, made in two cash payments, to Hughes.

Miss Harmony gave the deposition in a multi-million-dollar civil suit filed by the Democratic National Committee as the result of the Watergate break-in. Her testimony, given last April 27, was unsealed yesterday.

The portion of the deposition had been sealed because it did not relate to post-Watergate developments covered by the civil suit. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch obtained information about what the deposition contained and asked the judge in the case to release it.

U.S. District Judge Charles R. Richey said he unsealed the deposition after obtaining agreement from all attorneys in the case and from the office of the special Watergate prosecutor.

"I know one time a contributor brought some signed

blank checks to Mr. Liddy and I filled them out," Miss Harmony said in the deposition. "That is what I did with a few checks like that. I put the amounts in."

At the time of the Watergate break-in, June 17, 1972, Liddy was general counsel for the finance committee. He later was one of seven men convicted of burglary, conspiracy and wiretapping in the Democratic headquarters break-in and was sentenced to a minimum of six years, eight months in prison.

"Do you know who the contributor was who gave you the blank checks?" Miss Harmony was asked by Maurice Dunie, attorney for the Democrats.

A. Yes.

Q. Who was that?

A. The check was signed by Bob Bennett, but it was not his money, no.

Q. Do you know whose money it was?

A. Howard Hughes' money.

Q. Did Mr. Liddy tell you how much to fill in that check for?

A. Yes.

Q. How much?

A. There were several checks.

Q. Can you give us the amounts?

A. I don't remember what they were.

Robert Bennett is a Washington public relationsman who handled Hughes' interests. His firm, the Robert H. Mullen Co., had employed E. Howard Hunt, who



SALLY HARMONY
Watergate deposition

later pleaded guilty to Watergate break-in charges and was sentenced to 2½ years in prison.

Bennett told a reporter last night that Miss Harmony made 16 checks for \$3000 apiece to various subsidiary campaign committees on April 7, 1972, and that he himself had written a 17th check for \$2000 to make the total donation an even \$50,000.

Bennett said he agreed to have Liddy's secretary fill out the 16 blank checks since Liddy had told him the law required that the checks clear the banks that day.

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