

Ervin's Too-Much-Money

By William Greider
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NOW IT can be told.

According to official documents obtained by the Washington Post, Senator 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, had 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 considerably cheaper, especially if

your name is Sam Ervin. The senator's election financing, even counting the leftovers, 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 state. The reports are available for inspection, if anyone cares to know 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), and so forth.

In fact, the Ervin campaign of 1968 may be a classic case of overaccounting — 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. One he ate at the Red Room of the Hotel Sir Walter in Raleigh, N.C., cost \$2, and he spent \$2.69 for breakfast at the Lake Drive Motel in Chicago in August, when he was attending the Democratic National Convention.

He prefers a light lunch.

Problem

One cost 50 cents at Howard Johnson's in Winston-Salem, 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 pecan pralines). According to the documents, the senator and Edmisten often share the same lodgings at overnight stops.

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 received \$9110 in contributions. He only managed to expend \$3346.08 by the May 4 primary.

Still, the money rolled in for the fall general election. Ervin gave \$5000 to the State Democratic Committee. He gave \$75 to the Drexel Community Fair, \$25 to the Young Democrats of Alexan-

der 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 contributions of \$20,931.92, which he personally received. But he was unable to spend \$3855.60 of it.

One reason Ervin had trouble spending money is that he did not buy any television time during the whole campaign.

That left him with a post-election problem — what to do with the \$3855.60 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.

Senator Ervin disposed of the money: \$8 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 Re-



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publican 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."
