

# Two surprised 'skinnies' on GOP list of 'fat cats'

By Bill Arthur  
Knight News Service

CHARLOTTE (N.C.) For Mrs. Juanita Cooper and Mrs. Gloria Smith, a couple of bank tellers who live in South Carolina and who merely voted for Richard Nixon in 1972, the mystifying VIP treatment started in earnest last December.

First, each was startled to receive unexpected letters from Nixon on embossed White House stationery, saying he was "deeply grateful" for their help.

Then, to their increasing puzzlement, they each received gold-colored paperweights and pen holders with the presidential seal — gifts from the President.

The barrage of White House attention didn't stop there, either. There were more letters, Christmas cards from President Nixon and Vice President Agnew and engraved special invitations to the January inauguration, including the formal ball. And there was a sculptured plastic star with the presidential seal resting on a small wood stand and bearing a plaque that read: "With deep appreciation Richard Nixon November 1972."

Mrs. Cooper, a 50 year old bank teller in Greenville, and Mrs. Smith, a 37 year old teller in Greenwood, hadn't contributed a cent to Nixon's campaign or even rang doorbells to help his reelection. Their less-than-\$10,000-a-year salaries made them unlikely prospects for Nixon fund-raisers.

Nevertheless, throughout most of the year, the women were treated as though they had contributed big bundles of money. And their names were turned up on the Republicans' "fat-cat" list, a roster of big donors that includes Henry Ford III, J. Paul Getty, Howard Hughes and Bob Hope.

Until she was told, neither woman could figure out why she had been the object of so much attention by the President of the United States.

As bank tellers, both women happened to sign cashier's checks for honest-to-goodness donors to the President's campaign. Such a check carries only the name of the recipient of the money and of the teller issuing it.

When the campaign checks — one for \$15,000 signed by Mrs. Cooper and one for \$18,000 signed by Mrs. Smith — arrived at the Committee for the Re-election of the President, someone mistakenly listed the

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names of the women as donors and put them on the big-contributor list.

According to Common Cause, the Washington-based "citizens' lobby," Mrs. Cooper, who works for Citizens & Southern National Bank, had been credited with the contribution of E.S. McKissick of Greenville, president of Alice Manufacturing Co., a textile firm in Easley, S.C. Mrs. Smith, who works for South Carolina National Bank, was credited with the contribution of the Self family of Greenwood, Common Cause said. James Self is president of Greenwood Mills.

The unexpected attention from the White House has been a source of amusement for both women.

Juanita Cooper brought her star to the bank to show her doubting colleagues. "They oohed and aahed and wanted it and didn't believe it," she says.

A card, personally signed by Nixon, came with the plastic star and read: "This replica comes to you with my special appreciation for your help and support in the 1972 campaign and with every good wish for the years ahead."

Actually, confides Mrs. Smith, "the star didn't impress me too much, but I enjoy the pen."

Mrs. Smith tried to give away the star to her daughter and her husband. "His people are Democrats and they didn't want it."

Mrs. Cooper muses that she would have gone to the Nixon inauguration if she hadn't discovered that the prices at hotels were geared to the bulging wallets of wealthy GOP donors — not to her teller's salary.

Not everything the women received was a gift. There were invitations to \$800-a-plate dinners and invita-

tions to buy \$150 commemorative plates.

And after the Watergate scandal broke, Mrs. Cooper got a letter expressing hope she would continue to support the President and asking her to pledge contributions of \$1000, \$3000 or "other."

"We just looked at them and laughed," she said. "At one time I thought I should be nice and send them a dollar."

Mrs. Cooper is not sure now what to think of Nixon. Of Watergate, she says: "I just tune it out anymore. I can't tell if he's guilty or not guilty."

Mrs. Smith declines to discuss politics. She just smiles and says, "I want my \$18,000 back."



Mrs. Juanita Cooper and some of her mementos from the President