

# Catanese tells investigators he followed advice on Corvette

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rounding his red coupe. His sworn statement was released Monday.

Coleman faces a felony charge of official misconduct for arranging to give Catanese \$42,000 for the Corvette — despite red flags from foundation and university administrators, a lawyer and one of the foundation's board members, according to their statements. The gift was channeled through a decorating firm then working on the FAU presidential house, cloaked as a consulting fee for Catanese's wife, Sara.

The foundation, a tax-exempt charity that supports the university, isn't supposed to use its money for any noncharitable purpose.

Stephen and Rita Lloyd, two interior designers whose com-

pany became a funnel for the gift money, struck a deal with prosecutors to avoid charges.

Catanese is not facing charges. The former president has said he didn't know the gift wasn't proper and has returned the money.

He told investigators he accepted a plan to route the money to his wife as a consulting fee, even though she hadn't thought of her efforts as work for hire and was uncomfortable with the idea of being paid.

Catanese "thought it was an unusual way of doing it," he told investigators. But, he said, Coleman told him lawyers had approved the plan as a way of avoiding questions from the Internal Revenue Service.

Also, he told investigators, he had watched the foundation's decision-making board approve the idea at a meeting, although informally and over some objection.

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HERBERT GIMELSTOB  
FOUNDATION CHAIRMAN

"In my mind, this had been discussed. It was considered appropriate [and] legitimate," Catanese told investigators.

But Coleman's lawyer and the foundation chairman disputed Catanese's account.

Catanese named foundation Chairman Herbert Gimelstob as one of the donors to his farewell gift, showing investigators a thank-you note he said was sent in return. But Gimelstob insists he never contributed to the gift, got the letter or was even approached about the present.

Nor did the decision-making group approve it, he said.

"I'm really annoyed that someone who I respect and has a 'Dr.' in front of his name would say that it's all right to do something like [accept a gift disguised as a payment] and then try to throw it all on Carla," Gimelstob said. ". . . [It's] very self-serving."

The foundation chairman at the time, Howard Guggenheim, also has said he knew nothing about the gift, although statements from Catanese and one

of Coleman's deputies identified him as a contributor. Guggenheim couldn't be reached Monday.

Coleman's lawyer, Kenneth Lipman, has said she thought she had foundation leaders' approval, because at least some of them knew about the plan.

He wouldn't give details but suggested Monday that Coleman never reassured Catanese with claims of lawyer approval.

"One would do very well not to take anything Dr. Catanese says about this case unquestioningly," Lipman said.

Catanese's lawyer, Richard Lubin, responded: "He was advised as he says he was advised. . . . Dr. Catanese didn't believe that he was doing anything improper — nor would he, ever."

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