

# Ex-Gurney Aide Enters Guilty Plea

TAMPA, Fla.—James L. Groot, the man former Sen. Edward J. Gurney (R-Fla.) once said "would lay down his life for me," pleaded guilty yesterday to conspiring to create an illegal political slush fund for Gurney and agreed to testify against him if called.

Groot, who was Gurney's top administrative assistant for nearly three years and handled his stocks, stood about five feet from his former boss as he entered the plea, worked out during lengthy closed court sessions.

Gurney, Groot and three others were brought to trial on charges of peddling favors in exchange for political contributions from Florida builders and land developers.

Gurney is charged with conspiracy, bribery, soliciting unlawful gratuities and four counts of making false statements to a grand jury.

Groot had been charged with conspiracy, bribery, soliciting unlawful gratuities and receiving unlawful compensation. He faced a maximum of 24 years in prison if convicted.

The agreement provided that Groot plead guilty to the conspiracy charge, which carries a maximum of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine, with his trial on the other three felonies to be severed and the charges to be dismissed after Gurney's trial.