

Trace cash to Gurney's own safe

Knight News Service

MIAMI — Thousands of dollars in unreported cash contributions from Florida FHA builders have been traced directly to a safe in the Washington office of Sen. Edward J. Gurney (D-Fla.), The Miami Herald has learned.

Kickbacks collected in Florida by Larry E. Williams, 29, were passed on in cash-filled envelopes to Gurney's then administrative assistant Jim Groot, 30. Groot placed the money in the safe in Gurney's inner office, federal agents have confirmed.

Gurney, Groot and former secretary Lois Elliott had access to the safe and the money kept there was used to pay office and travel expenses and for other purposes, sources said.

The transfer of large sums of cash from Williams to Groot to Gurney's safe continued for more than a year after FBI agents alerted Gurney in 1971 that Williams had been accused of attempting to "shake down" a Florida builder, sources said.

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Gurney Friday declined to comment on the new disclosures until the completion of the ongoing grand jury investigation. "At the appropriate time, I shall make public my own knowledge about these very serious allegations," he said.

Witnesses have told federal investigators conflicting accounts of how much of the more than \$300,000 was car-

ried to Washington and placed in Gurney's safe.

Figures have ranged from \$10,000 to more than \$100,000, but none of the prime participants has denied that a minimum of \$10,000 in cash was placed in the safe in Gurney's inner office in Washington.

The major proportion of the more than \$300,000 raised by Williams was deposited in three accounts and in a safety deposit box in the Commercial Bank of Winter Park for Gurney's use, sources said.

The three accounts were maintained to hide the unreported contributions collected for Gurney by Williams, a source said.