

# Friend Says Gurney Knew Of Payments From Builders

MIAMI, Nov. 18 (AP)—Duke Crittenden, former chairman of the Florida Republican Party and a friend of Sen. Edward J. Gurney, says Gurney knew of plans to collect thousands of dollars from builders for a secret fund, according to the Miami Herald.

The newspaper also said that thousands of dollars contributed by builders to the fund were kept in a safe in the Washington office of Gurney, a Florida Republican and member of the Senate Watergate committee.

A former aide, Larry Williams, reportedly has agreed to plead guilty to two felony charges and testify for the government in a probe of Gurney's campaign finances. Williams reportedly collected more than \$300,000 in payments from builders who do business with the Federal Housing Administration.

The Herald said federal agents have confirmed that funds collected by Williams, were passed on in cash to Jim Groot, another former Gurney aide, who placed the money in a safe in Gurney's office.

The transfer of large sums of cash to Gurney's safe continued for a year after the FBI notified Gurney in 1971 that Williams had been accused of attempting to shake down an FHA builder, the Herald said.

The Herald said Groot refused to testify last week before a federal grand jury and had retained an attorney.

Gurney said Friday, "At the appropriate time, I shall make public my own knowledge of these very serious allegations." He has not been available for further comment.

The newspaper said Williams began working for Gurney in 1971 collecting money from FHA builders. He ended

his full-time employment in 1972 but continued as a part-time fund raiser through May of this year.

Gurney has said that he and his staff never received funds from Williams, never discussed fund raising with him and never authorized him to collect funds in Gurney's name.

But the Herald said Crittenden, whose association with

Williams also is under federal scrutiny, said he attended planning sessions in 1971 with Williams and Groot at which the fund-raising plans were first discussed and initiated.

Crittenden said that as far as he knew, all contributions were to have been reported as required by law. The Herald said estimates of cash transferred to Gurney's safe range from \$10,000 to \$100,000.