



Associated Press

**Edward J. Gurney waiting for an elevator after arrival at court in Tampa, Fla., for trial yesterday.**

**NYTimes**  
**TRIAL OF GURNEY**  
**OPENS IN FLORIDA**  
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**Selection of Jury Starts in Bribery-Conspiracy Case**

**By MARTIN WALDRON**

Special to The New York Times

TAMPA, Fla., Feb. 24—Former Senator Edward J. Gurney of Florida walked into United States District Court here today to open his trial on charges of bribery and conspiracy.

Jury selection proceeded slowly during the day while Mr. Gurney fidgeted in a chair.

The 61-year-old former Republican Senator was almost hidden in the mass of attorneys and co-defendants who crammed around tables in front of the judge's bench. There were four co-defendants, nine defense attorneys and five prosecutors in the courtroom today, and Judge Ben Krentzman, who is trying the case, said that four more lawyers would join the defense team.

Mr. Gurney, who was indicted last July 10 while serving on the Senate Watergate committee, did not seek re-election after many Florida Republican leaders turned against him. He said that he intended to spend his time trying to clear his name.

In the courtroom today, he kept a sharp eye on prospective jurors, who shuffled raincoats and umbrellas during the hours of preliminary questioning.

**Judge Puts Questions**

Judge Krentzman took over the questioning in an effort to speed jury selection, but the panel may not be seated before Wednesday. The judge said that the trial might last three months.

"It is obvious that it will take some time," he said. "Forecasting the length of a trial is an art, not a science."

There are 11 counts against Mr. Gurney and the four co-defendants. Forty-five other men were named in the indictment as co-conspirators, but were not charged.

Basically, the charge against Mr. Gurney is that he urged officials of the Department of Housing and Urban Development not to insure construction loans for builders in Florida without his approval, and that he then extorted money from the builders.

The Government has alleged that Mr. Gurney's aides collected more than \$300,000 from builders in this fashion over three years beginning in 1970.

**Former Aide to Testify**

The man named by prosecutors as the major money collector for Mr. Gurney, Larry E. Williams, pleaded guilty last year. He is scheduled to testify against his former employer during the trial.

Two one-time Republican leaders in Florida, George Anderson, a Winter Park banker who was state treasurer of the party, and Earl M. Crittenden of Orlando, who was state chairman, were to have been tried as co-conspirators with Mr. Gurney and the others, but their trials have been severed, and prosecutors indicated that both men would testify for the Government.

The men now on trial with Mr. Gurney are two of his former assistants, James L. Groot and Joseph Bastien, and two housing officials, Ralph N. Koontz of Jacksonville and Wayne Swiger of Tampa.

The Government investigation of Mr. Gurney began in 1973 after The Miami Herald published a series of articles saying that certain builders were getting favored treatment from the housing departments, and that money was being collected from them for Mr. Gurney.

Mr. Gurney, who pleaded not guilty, as did his four co-defendants, said at that time that he was unaware that any money had been collected for him and denied that any had been used in the operation of his office in Washington and Orlando or for his own personal expenses.