

Guilty Plea by Ex-Gurney Aide

Tampa, Fla.

Former Florida Republican party chairman Earl M. (Duke) Crittenden pleaded guilty yesterday of taking part in a fund-raising conspiracy in which, prosecutors charge, former GOP Senator Edward Gurney and four others participated.

Under a plea-bargaining arrangement, Crittenden, Gurney's campaign manager in 1968, pleaded guilty to a reduced misdemeanor charge. He faces a maximum sentence of six months or \$1000 fine.

Sentencing will not be imposed until the Gurney trial is concluded, the agreement states.

Gurney, ex-aides James Groot and Joseph Bastien, and former federal housing officials K. Wayne Swiger

and Ralph Koontz are charged with conspiring to build a \$233,000 slush fund from illicit contributions from builders seeking Gurney's influence in federal housing projects and mortgage loans.

Crittenden stood before U.S. District Judge Ben Krentzman and admitted that he was part of a conspiracy to raise campaign funds. He said he attended a January, 1971, meeting at Gurney's home in which the hiring of Larry Williams as a Gurney fund-raiser was discussed.

Crittenden, charged in the original indictment as a co-conspirator, had his trial severed after he agreed to cooperate with the government.

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