

Gurney's Lawyer Says Senator Was 'Conned' by a Former Aide

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TAMPA, Fla., July 24 — A lawyer for former Senator Edward J. Gurney told a trial jury today that Larry E. Williams, a fund raiser from Orlando, "simply conned Senator Gurney, just like he conned everybody else."

The lawyer, C. Harris Dittmar, asked the jury to acquit Mr. Gurney of seven felony charges stemming from a campaign fund-raising operation, arguing that the prosecution's case against his client was based on the "outright fabrications" of Mr. Williams.

"Find him [Mr. Gurney] naïve, if you must, but don't find him guilty," Mr. Dittmar pleaded.

"The bedrock question is whether you will accept the testimony of Larry Williams over the word of Senator Gurney," Mr. Dittmar said in his closing argument at the five-month-old trial in United States District Court of Mr. Gurney and three co-defendants.

Mr. Williams, 30 years old, was on the witness stand for 12 days in April and May as the prosecution's chief witness. The witness, a convicted felon who has served a prison term, testified that from 1971 through 1973 he raised almost \$400,000 for Mr. Gurney from builders seeking favored treatment from Federal housing agencies.

Mr. Gurney, 61, a Florida Republican who was a member of the Senate Watergate Committee, testified in his own defense that Mr. Williams had been a volunteer aide and had raised the money without his

knowledge. Mr. Gurney, who did not seek re-election last year, is charged with conspiracy, bribery, unlawful compensation and making false statements to a grand jury.

Mr. Dittmar charged that Mr. Williams had lied about Mr. Gurney to work out a "deal" with Federal investigators, knowing that "his ticket out of trouble was to implicate some big game." "He is amoral, unable to tell the truth," Mr. Dittmar said of Mr. Williams.

Mr. Dittmar, who is from Jacksonville, told the jury in an address that lasted five and a half hours over most of two court days, that Mr. Gurney had led "a life of honor" and "enjoys a good reputation for honesty and integrity, a good reputation for truth and veracity."

Mr. Dittmar said that Mr. Gurney "didn't know what was going on" in the fund raising operation because he had been busy with "the people's business in Washington" and could not investigate "hints" that he had received about Mr. Williams's alleged dishonesty.

"If everyone of the 100 Senators spent their time trying to keep their skirts clean, the business of the country would come to a halt," Mr. Dittmar said.