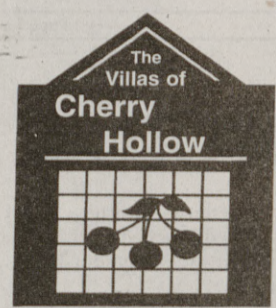


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## Former governor denies extortion

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Testifying without his usual what-me-worry swagger, former Gov. Edwin Edwards denied Tuesday that he took payoffs for Louisiana casino licenses and said one of his accusers turned on him because the government put the pressure on.

The 72-year-old silver-haired Edwards displayed little of his wisecracking Cajun wit but was relaxed and confident as he took the stand in his federal racketeering trial, which began Jan. 10.

The high-rolling gambler and ladies' man wore a necktie emblazoned with the names of all 64 Louisiana parishes and answered questions from defense attorney Daniel Small with a serious attitude.

Edwards began with a terse denial that he ever exerted any illegal influence over the state's gambling boards.

"Did you do anything to corrupt the gaming board?" Small asked.

"Absolutely not," Edwards answered.

"Did you do anything to corrupt the gaming commission?"

"Absolutely not."

He then launched into his life story — rural childhood, growing up in a house without electricity or indoor plumbing, college interrupted by the Navy during World War II, then graduation from law school.

He began a point-by-point rebuttal of charges that he

and his six co-defendants carried out a series of extortion schemes involving the licensing of riverboat casinos.

Edwards focused on former Treasure Chest Casino owner Robert Guidry. Guidry claimed he paid \$1.5 million to Edwards, once dropping money off at his home,

*"With tears in his eyes, he said he couldn't take the pressure any more and was going to make a deal."*

— Edwin Edwards  
former Louisiana governor

other times delivering the payoffs by way of Edwards' son Stephen or their friend Andrew Martin.

"I never got a cent from Mr. Guidry. My son never got a cent from Mr. Guidry. As far as I know, Mr. Martin never got a cent from Mr. Guidry," Edwards said.

Guidry, Edwards said, was a close friend of his on him while under pressure from federal prosecutors. Edwards said that seven days before Guidry pleaded in 1998, Guidry called and arranged a meeting at a court shopping mall.

"With tears in his eyes, he said he couldn't take the pressure any more and was going to make a deal," Edwards said.

"I told him to tell them anything as long as it was the truth," Edwards continued. "He said, 'I can, but they want me to say something bad about you.' Life is too short and eternity too long. Something like that."

It was the second time Edwards found himself the witness stand in his own defense.

A 1985 federal trial stemming from health investment deals ended in a hung jury. Edwards was acquitted in a retrial in 1986.

By his own count, Edwards has been the subject of almost two dozen state or federal investigations going back to his days as a congressman in the 1970s, '80s and '90s.

On Tuesday, he testified that people have invoked his name without his permission to gain an advantage. It is "a problem that has haunted me since I was first elected governor," Edwards said.

## Dying girl's cries reach peacekeepers

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Helpless to save her, NATO peacekeepers and townspeople watched from the edge of a minefield as a dying 11-year-old girl waved and pleaded for hours to be rescued.

Ema Alic and two other youngsters died Monday after venturing into the minefield on the outskirts of the capital, the latest casualties of the Bosnian war that ended five years ago.

"For two hours, the girl was showing signs of life, waved with her little hand and called for help. Then she went quiet," said eyewitness Nenad Krestalica, 67, who was still visibly upset Tuesday.

His wife, Stana, said she was gardening when she heard the explosion.

"We all started running. We heard a child's voice screaming for help," she said. "We called the police and they came, but nobody could approach the children."

Police identified the other dead children as Goran Bisevcic, 12, and Haris Balicevac, 12.

As the rescue team carried the bodies of the children from the minefield, Ema's father broke into tears, turned around and told his wife: "It's our child," other witnesses recalled. The woman fainted.

The presence of the minefield was well-known, and signs warned of danger, residents said. Still, the field was not taped off, apparently because of lack of money.

Dozens of people are killed and injured every month in explosions of some of the millions of land mines strewn across Bosnia. Minefields render large areas along the former front line unusable.

Residents gathered around the minefield after the explosion Monday, followed by Italian members of the NATO-led peacekeeping force, but they could only watch the tragedy a few hundred yards away.

Although the experts worked quickly once on the scene, more than 2 1/2 hours elapsed between the time a demining team was notified and the time it reached the victims. By then, all three children were dead.

"It didn't take us more than half an hour to demine a small path to get to the children," said Zoran Gagula, one of the deminers. "We skipped standard procedures, risked our lives, and still, by the time we got to the children, they were dead."

Standard demining procedures are slow, with experts sometimes taking as much as an hour per square yard to minimize risk, prodding each inch of terrain for explosive devices.

NATO experts arrived after a team from Norwegian People's Aid and therefore let that squad do the demining, said a NATO spokesperson, Maj. Paul Hubbard.

## Philosopher remembered

Novelist, dramatist and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, leader of the French existentialist movement died April 15, 1980. He was 75 years old. A key figure among French intellectuals for over 40 years, his funeral drew nearly 80,000 mourners.

### His life

1929	1938	1939	1943	1971
Majors in philosophy at the Ecole Normale Superieure where he meets Simone de Beauvoir, his lifelong companion.	Publishes his first novel, "Nausea."	Drafted to serve in World War II; becomes a German prisoner of war in 1940 and is repatriated the following year.	His first play, "The Flies," is produced in Paris. It carries a message of freedom in the face of tyranny. He escapes Nazi censors.	Publishes first two volumes of his four-volume biography of Gustave Flaubert called "The Family Idiot."

### Some of his works

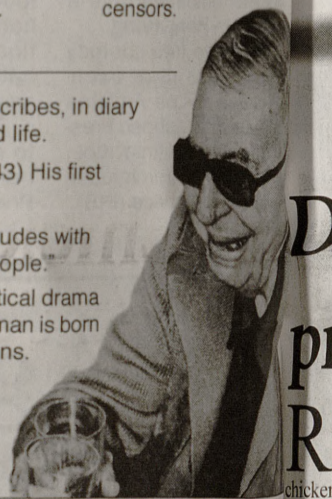
"Nausea" (1938) The novel describes, in diary form, the hero's repulsion toward life.

"Being and Nothingness" (1943) His first major philosophical work.

"No Exit" (1945) The play concludes with the famous line: "Hell is other people."

"The Dirty Hands" (1948) A political drama with the existential message that man is born free and responsible for his actions.

Always controversial, Sartre declined the 1964 Nobel prize in literature.



Sources: Britannica.com; GaleNet; Wilson Biographies; compiled from AP wire reports

### News in Brief

#### Three bodies found on Detroit railroad

DETROIT (AP) — Three women were found dead along railroad tracks, but police say they weren't sure whether the deaths are related.

All three bodies were found Monday, but the women did not die at the same time, Police Chief Benny Napoleon said. One was partially undressed and had stockings tied around the neck.

"Now whether they were put here, whether they were brought

here, whether this is where they actually died, I don't know at this point," Napoleon said.

#### Spain exposes illegal passport-selling ring

MADRID, Spain (AP) — Police have uncovered a crime ring whose members sold bogus passports and offered diplomatic privileges from a nonexistent country, authorities said Tuesday.

More than 60 people used an Internet page to advertise passports from Sealand — described on the

Web as a principality based on an abandoned military platform off the coast of England, authorities said.

The passports went for \$5,780, said Civil Guard spokesperson Fernando Jimenez. The group claims on its Website to have sold 160,000 of them since September 1998.

#### Former comedian found guilty of rape

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A former "Star Search" comedian accused of several sexual assaults at college campuses throughout the

Midwest was found guilty Tuesday of the rape of a student here.

Vincent Horace Champ, 33, Los Angeles was found guilty of raping a woman at Union College, a small Seventh-day Adventist school in Lincoln, in February 1997.

Sentencing was scheduled June 6. Champ faces up to 10 years in prison.

His lawyer, Assistant Lancaster County Public Defender Stephen Elliott, referred all questions to Lancaster County Attorney Lacy, who was not in his office Tuesday evening.

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— JOEL SIEGEL, WABC-TV

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