# **Former Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards dies**

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Contact: Leo Honeycutt

**Baton Rouge (July 12)** – Former Governor Edwin Washington Edwards died peacefully Monday morning at his home in Gonzales with family and friends by his bedside. Louisiana’s only four-term governor expired of respiratory problems that had plagued him in recent years, doctors said. Edwards was less than a month short of his 94th birthday.

Last Monday, Edwards had placed himself in hospice care following a trip the day before by ambulance to nearby Our Lady of the Lake St. Elizabeth Hospital with complaints of pain in his right lung. Physicians took X-rays and a CAT scan of both lungs but said the tests revealed nothing.

In placing himself in hospice, the former governor explained he was saving others the trouble of his repeated trips to the hospital. “Since I have been in and out of hospitals in recent years with pneumonia and other respiratory problems, causing a lot of people a lot of trouble, I have decided to retain the services of qualified hospice doctors and nurses at my home.”

Family placed a hospital bed in his bedroom at the Edwards home in Pelican Point subdivision where he was administered 24-hour care. No intravenous tubes or heart monitor were used, only oxygen was administered. He had stopped eating two days earlier. The former governor stopped breathing at 7:00 this morning, surrounded by his wife Trina and son Eli, his hospice nurse Peggy Gautreau, and other close family and friends. Louisiana House Speaker Clay Schexnayder and his wife Phoebe were part of the small group holding vigil overnight.

Among Edwards’ last words were, “I have lived a good life, had better breaks than most, had some bad breaks, too, but that’s all part of it. I tried to help as many people as I could and I hope I did that, and I hope, if I did, that they will help others, too. I love Louisiana and I always will.”

Earlier in the week, the former governor commented, “I’ve made no bones that I have considered myself on borrowed time for 20 years and we each know that all this fun has to end at some point.” For him, that time was shortly after daybreak this morning.

His widow, Trina Scott Edwards, said, “He was so optimistic all the time. Nothing bothered him except bothering other people. It’s heartbreaking for me because I know he so wanted to make Eli’s 8th birthday party August 1.” Eli Wallace Edwards, 7-years-old, is the late governor’s fifth child. The Edwardses would’ve been married ten years on July 29.

Mrs. Edwards added, “His last words were to Eli. Eli told him every night, ‘I love you.’ And he told Eli, ‘I love you, too.’ Those were his last words.”

Edwin Edwards’ oldest child, Anna Edwards, said, “I am heartbroken at the loss of my father. He was a profound influence in my life and I will always miss him. His passing will create a huge void, but I sincerely thank everyone who expressed love and concern. He touched the lives of many fellow Louisianans and I know he will be remembered with great fondness.”

Son Stephen Edwards, who worked alongside his father in the Edwards Law Firm, said, “My dad never saw color and never turned his back on anyone in need. He helped all -especially me. He was an infallible pillar of strength but he kept a piece of tremendous pain for the rest of his life for the murder of his baby brother Nolan. Dad’s successes made him a legend but his losses made him human and his humanity made him easy to love. Louisiana has lost the love of its life. Goodbye Dad.”

“He was this generation’s Huey Long,” said Edwards biographer Leo Honeycutt who was also at the governor’s bedside. “He cared about people who didn’t have a voice and he stood up to those who did. He accomplished everything on the list of the Public Affairs Research Council within his first term, including defeating energy interests in 1974 when he changed the severance tax from 25-cents a barrel to 12.5% of value. That change made Louisiana the most cash-rich state in the nation at the time while New York City was going bankrupt.”

Speaker Schexnayder said, “It’s not every day you get to know someone who literally changed history. Governor Edwards was that person. We’ll never see someone like him again.”

Funeral arrangements are pending, according to the family, but will include lying in state in the rotunda at the Louisiana State Capitol for visitation by the public. The day has not been set.

Edwin Washington Edwards was Louisiana’s only four-term governor and one of only eleven such governors in U.S. history. He served from 1972 to 1980; 1984 to 1988; and 1992 to 1996. Born in Marksville in Avoyelles Parish on August 7, 1927, as the Great ’27 Flood receded, in 1944, Edwards joined the U.S. Navy when he was 17. He became a Navy pilot but, as his squadron was deploying to the Pacific, Japan surrendered, ending World War II. Edwards graduated from LSU Law School in 1949, served two terms as a Crowley City Councilman in Acadia Parish; one term in the Louisiana Senate as a floor leader for Governor John McKeithen; one term in Congress; and four terms as governor.

The Edwards family thanks everyone for their prayers and thoughts.

For press inquiries, contact family spokesperson Leo Honeycutt at (225) 278-3963. As arrangements for a state funeral are completed, updates will be issued.

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