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Final Edition

**Defense attacks 'con man' Levine; Star witness admits to ripping off charities, passing bribes, using drugs**

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Staff reporters

The man whose word must be trusted to bring down Gov. Blagojevich fund-raiser Tony Rezko was reduced to admitting Thursday he'd been a thief, a con man, a liar and a junkie who stole from the children of a dead relative.

In a dramatic first day of cross-examination, the defense pressed Stuart Levine, the chief prosecution witness in Rezko's corruption trial, to reveal a stunning spectrum of ugly truths about himself.

Pacing in the courtroom, Rezko defense lawyer Joseph Duffy unleashed a series of attacks on Levine's memory, integrity and morals.

"You would agree with me you are a con man, are you not?" Duffy asked.

Levine paused: "Yes, sir."

"You wouldn't try to pull a con on this jury, would you?" asked Duffy.

Levine was emphatic in his reply: "No, sir, I would not."

Duffy got Levine to confess specifics about ripping off charities, passing bribes and taking part in 15 years of drug binges at the Purple Hotel in Lincolnwood.

Levine has pleaded guilty to scheming with Rezko to coerce kickbacks and political contributions to the governor from firms seeking business from state boards Levine served on.

Duffy repeatedly tested Levine's memory, often tripping him up, leaving Levine to retract statements he'd made only moments earlier.

Levine, who was stoic in eight days of questioning by prosecutors, often shifted in his chair Thursday and took extended pauses before answering.

**‘Didn’t have enough…?’**

Duffy depicted Levine as a man who schemed for kickbacks even as he drove a Mercedes and a Porsche; who enjoyed multiple homes and whose net worth reached $70 million in 1998. Levine also racked up monthly credit-card bills as high as $20,000.

He amassed such luxuries without working a regular 9-to-5 job since 1976.

Instead, he lived off of the wealth of a relative and friend, Ted Tannebaum, a man whom Levine said he loved at one time. Tannebaum trusted Levine enough to put him in charge of his $100 million estate. Yet, when Tannebaum died, Levine took $2 million from it.

"The man who was generous to you for 25 years, you stole from his children, didn't you, Mr. Levine?" Duffy asked.

"Yes, sir," Levine replied.

"Didn't have enough, is that right?" Duffy asked.

He portrayed Levine as a compulsive liar who lied year after year on state ethics statements and on an application to the governor's office and a state hospital board.

Even after he agreed to cooperate with authorities in the Rezko investigation, Levine admitted, he lied to two FBI agents and a federal prosecutor.

"I lied in an attempt, stupidly, thinking I was smarter than the government," Levine said.

"If they hadn't caught you, you wouldn't have come clean?" Duffy said.

"Yes, sir," Levine agreed.

Duffy asked if Levine thought he'd ever have been reappointed to a state board if the truth had been about his drug use and deals.

Levine paused then said, "I don't know that, sir."

At that, Rezko broke into a smile.