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## Edwards Admits Having Affair

### Former Senator Says He's Not the Father of Mistress's Child

By Pete Yost The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former presidential candidate John Edwards, who won nationwide praise and sympathy as he campaigned side by side with his cancer-stricken wife, Elizabeth, admitted in shame Friday that he had an affair with a woman who produced videos as he prepared to launch his campaign.

Acknowledging a sex scandal he had dismissed as "tabloid trash" only last month, Edwards said he had told his wife and family long ago, but "I had hoped that it would never become public."

He denied fathering a daughter, born to the woman with whom he had the affair, and offered to be tested to prove it. A former Edwards campaign staff member professes to be the father.

The former North Carolina senator, who was the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2004, confessed to ABC News that he had lied repeatedly about the affair with Rielle Hunter, then 42. Hunter's daughter, Frances Quinn Hunter, was born on Feb. 27 this year, and no father's name is given on the birth certificate filed in California.

In a statement provided to The Associated Press, Elizabeth Edwards confirmed that her husband had confessed the extramarital affair to her in 2006 but that after a "long and painful process" she was now standing by him.

After the story broke Friday, Edwards released a statement that said, "In 2006, I made a serious error in judgment and conducted myself in a way that was disloyal to my family and to my core beliefs. I recognized my mistake, and I told my wife that I had a liaison with another woman, and I asked for her forgiveness. Although I was honest in every painful detail with my family, I did not tell the public.

"I was and am ashamed of my conduct and choices," he said. "With my family, I took responsibility for my actions in 2006, and today I take full responsibility publicly."

Edwards declared his presidential candidacy in December 2006. His wife campaigned enthusiastically with him and by herself in the months that followed. She announced in March 2007 that her cancer, formerly in remission, had returned and there apparently was no cure.

She and her husband said it was important for the campaign to continue.

Edwards dropped out midway through this year's primaries after it became apparent he could not keep up with front-runners Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton. He recently endorsed Obama and has been mentioned as a possible running mate.

Speaking to reporters Friday in Honolulu, Obama praised Edwards as a "great champion of working people" during the campaign and said the couple indicated they would probably not attend the Democratic National Convention in Denver later this month.

"This is a difficult and painful time to them," Obama said. "And I think they need to work through that process of healing. My sense is that that's going to be their top priority."

In his statement, he said, "It is inadequate to say to the people who believed in me that I am sorry, as it is inadequate to say to the people who love me that I am sorry."

"In the course of several campaigns, I started to believe that I was special and became increasingly egocentric and narcissistic. If you want to beat me up feel free. You cannot beat me up more than I have already beaten up myself. I have been stripped bare and will now work with everything I have to help my family and others who need my help."

In her statement Friday, Elizabeth Edwards said it wasn't easy to find out about the extramarital affair in 2006. She called the affair a "terrible mistake" but said the healing process was "oddly made somewhat easier" after her diagnosis of breast cancer in March 2007.

"This was our private matter, and I frankly wanted it to be private because as painful as it was, I did not want to have to play it out on a public stage as well," she said. "Because of a recent string of hurtful and absurd lies in a tabloid publication, because of a picture falsely suggesting that John was spending time with a child it wrongly alleged he had fathered outside our marriage, our private matter could no longer be wholly private."

Mrs. Edwards said her family has been through a lot and pleaded for privacy.

"I am proud of the courage John showed by his honesty in the face of shame," she said. "I ask that the public, who expressed concern about the harm John's conduct has done to us, think also about the real harm that the present voyeurism does and give me and my family the privacy we need at this time."

The National Enquirer first reported on the affair in October 2007, in the run-up to the Democratic primaries, and Edwards denied it.

"The story is false," he told reporters then. "It's completely untrue, ridiculous." He professed his love for his wife, who had an incurable form of cancer, saying, "I've been in love with the same woman for 30-plus years and as anybody who's been around us knows, she's an extraordinary human being, warm, loving, beautiful, sexy and as good a person as I have ever known. So the story's just false."

Last month, the Enquirer carried another story — the blaring headline referred to an Edwards "love child" — stating that its reporters had accosted Edwards in a Los Angeles hotel where he had met with Hunter after her child's birth. Edwards called it "tabloid trash," but he generally avoided reporters' inquiries, as did his former top aides.

He said in his statement Friday he had "used the fact that the story contained many falsities to deny it," and he called that "being 99 percent honest."

In an interview which aired on ABC News' "Nightline" Friday night, Edwards described the affair as being "over for a long time." He declined to give specifics, saying his family was "entitled to every detail" but no one else.

Edwards acknowledged his wife was “mad, she was angry — furious would be a good way to describe it” when he told her about the affair but that he had asked her not to appear with him during Friday’s interview even though she forgave him. That’s because “she should not be involved in protecting me from whatever the consequences of this are,” he said.

### **In his own words**

#### **The text of John Edwards’ statement on his affair:**

In 2006, I made a serious error in judgment and conducted myself in a way that was disloyal to my family and to my core beliefs. I recognized my mistake and I told my wife that I had a liaison with another woman, and I asked for her forgiveness. Although I was honest in every painful detail with my family, I did not tell the public. When a supermarket tabloid told a version of the story, I used the fact that the story contained many falsities to deny it. But being 99 percent honest is no longer enough.

I was and am ashamed of my conduct and choices, and I had hoped that it would never become public. With my family, I took responsibility for my actions in 2006 and today I take full responsibility publicly. But that misconduct took place for a short period in 2006. It ended then. I am and have been willing to take any test necessary to establish the fact that I am not the father of any baby, and I am truly hopeful that a test will be done so this fact can be definitively established. I only know that the apparent father has said publicly that he is the father of the baby. I also have not been engaged in any activity of any description that requested, agreed to or supported payments of any kind to the woman or to the apparent father of the baby.

It is inadequate to say to the people who believed in me that I am sorry, as it is inadequate to say to the people who love me that I am sorry. In the course of several campaigns, I started to believe that I was special and became increasingly egocentric and narcissistic. If you want to beat me up — feel free. You cannot beat me up more than I have already beaten up myself. I have been stripped bare and will now work with everything I have to help my family and others who need my help.

I have given a complete interview on this matter and having done so, will have nothing more to say.

#### **— The Associated Press In his own words**

Read Edwards’ statement on the affair **A4**

### **New Mexico response**

Patricia Madrid, Edwards’ biggest N.M. backer, calls his infidelity a “great tragedy” **A7**





**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** Former Sen. John Edwards admitted having an extramarital affair but denied fathering the woman's child.



**THE ASSOCIATED PRESS** Rielle Hunter was paid \$100,000 in a four-month span to direct Web videos for John Edwards' presidential campaign.

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