Ray levels verbal attack at judge; Scholz sets hearing

RICHARD F. SCHOLZ JR.

By JIM CULLUMBER

Armed robbery suspect John Larry Ray verbally attacked Circuit Judge Richard F. Scholz Jr. during a court appearance in Adams County circuit court.

After the incident, Scholz decided there will be a hearing to determine if Ray, 47, is fit to stand trial on charges he robbed the Farmers Bank of Liberty on May 30.

Ray appeared before Scholz for arraignment, at which time Ray's fitness to stand trial was discussed.

Ray answered the fitness questions without incident, but when Scholz asked Ray about discussing his constitutional rights, Ray became belligerent, cursing the judge.

Assistant State's Attorney Jerry Brennan and public defender John Wooleyhan backed away as two Adams County sheriff's deputies moved in to restrain Ray.

However Scholz, remaining poised at the bench, told the deputies to allow Ray to continue.

Ray rambled from topic to topic, accusing the judge —as a representative of Adams County — of forcing Ray's sister to take shock treatments when she was 12 years old.

The Ray family is originally from northeastern Missouri and Quincy, with Ray's sister still living in the Quincy area.

Ray also complained of being locked in solitary confinement in the Adams County jail.

Scholz listened for a few minutes before announcing his decision to schedule a fitness hearing.

Although Scholz did not find Ray in contempt of court for the outburst, the judge told Ray he had lost his right to a speedy trial "based on your actions.

"Your right to a speedy trial, in the opinion of this court, is suspended," Scholz said, maintaining a firm voice.

Scholz said Ray could have the arraignment continued "when he is ready to answer to the court," adding that Ray's outburst was purposely allowed.

But as deputies led Ray out of the courtroom, Ray spoke out against Scholz's parentage. Scholz had deputies bring Ray before the bench, listened to the insults and ordered Ray returned to the jail.

The date for the fitness hearing has not been set.

During the questioning before the verbal attack, Ray politely answered the judge's about his personal history.

Ray said he had spent time at a Springfield (Mo.) medical center, a federal prison facility, and blackouts had occurred while in the federal prison in Marion, Ill.

He had been sentenced to prison for a 1970 bank robbery in St. Peters, Mo.

Ray has claimed since his arrest in June that the blackouts are a result of medication given to him in Marion for "experiments." He said he has had several blackouts while in jail here.

The judge specifically asked if Ray had been treated for mental illness, but Ray was unable to give a definite answer.

The Liberty bank was robbed of $15,000 on May 30, which sparked an intensive manhunt in Liberty and rural Adams County.

About $11,000 was recovered less than a week after the robbery when Liberty police forced a suspicious car to run into a tree. The driver fled, but the money was discovered nearby.

Ray was arrested June 23 near Alton. At that time he told arresting officers he was heading toward the Alton State Mental Hospital.

Ray had escaped from authorities in February when, as he was being transfered from the Springfield hospital to a halfway house in St. Louis, Ray apparently walked away from the group.

JOHN LARRY RAY