

Judge Mocks Defendant As Pupils Watch

11-9-71

By Maurine Beasley
Washington Post Staff Writer

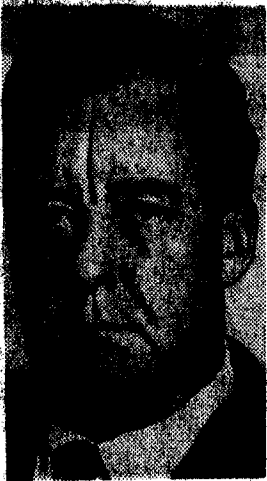
Superior Court Judge Edward A. Beard ridiculed a 22-year-old defendant for his lack of mathematical knowledge last month and compared him unfavorably with Montgomery County junior high school pupils seated in the courtroom.

"Let's find something out," Judge Beard told the defendant, William M. Butler, a Washington resident and a high school graduate, after a jury convicted him of possessing heroin, according to a transcript released yesterday.

"You got away from high school," said the judge. "What's the binomial theorem? You see those little kids sitting out there? (indicating the pupils from Montgomery County). They know what the binomial theorem is. See if you do. Do you?"

Butler began replying, "No—no. It's a theorem concern-

See BEARD, Ct. Col. 3



JUDGE EDWARD BEARD
... 'define an adverb'

Judge Mocks Defendant As Pupils Watch

BEARD, From C1

ing numbers . . . But—" when the judge interrupted, saying, "We'll stop there," the transcript shows.

The judge then told Butler to define "a simple one—the small figure '1' in mathematics," and went on to quiz him on his knowledge of English, asking him, "Who wrote the poem, 'Ozymandias'" and to "define an adverb."

When Butler was unable to answer correctly, Judge Beard said, "They gave you a high school diploma to get rid of you. You didn't learn anything in high school."

Judge Beard did not supply the correct answers, but according to reference works, "Ozymandias" is a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley; the binomial theorem is a mathematical theorem by which a binomial—a mathematical expression consisting of two terms connected by a plus or minus sign—may be raised to any power without performing the multiplications.

The transcript of the Oct. 19 proceeding was prepared after the Montgomery County pupils wrote a letter to The Washington Post complaining about the judge's treatment of Butler.

"We are appalled by the judge's treatment of the man after the verdict was decided," the pupils wrote in the letter. "No human being should be subject to such harassment. Is Judge Beard typical of the majority of District judges. If so, then the American people should be made aware of the actual situation."

The letter was signed by eight ninth-grade pupils from Leland Junior High School in Chevy Chase. The pupils said they went by themselves to Superior Court to observe criminal trials and by chance entered Judge Beard's courtroom.

The transcript shows the following exchange between Butler and Judge Beard after the judge asked, "What does the small figure '1' represent in mathematics"

Butler: "I guess that would be a one."

Judge Beard: "It wouldn't be a one. You're closer than you think but you've got to tell me more than just one. . . . It's the square root of minus one. Who wrote the poem, 'Ozymandias'?"

Butler: "I don't know."

Judge Beard: "I don't know what you were doing in high school. . . . Define an adverb. That's something a fifth-grader can do. Can you do it? What is it? What's an adverb?"

Butler offered an answer, but the judge said his attempt "sounds like a sloppy definition of a noun."

After more discussion the judge sentenced Butler, an apprentice housing inspector for the D.C. government, to probation on the drug convictions.

In a transcript of another proceeding made public last month, Beard was reported as giving an impromptu spelling test to a 17-year-old drug addict enrolled in a high school program at Federal City College. In that session, he demanded that the youth spell "cat."