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## **SLAYER OF MD. BOY AT POOL IS RULED INSANE**

By Charles W. Hall  
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Thomas Andrew Coberly, who walked up to the edge of a back yard pool in Wheaton with a rifle last August and gunned down a 12-year-old boy swimming there, was ruled insane yesterday and ordered hospitalized indefinitely at a state mental hospital.

Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge John J. Mitchell, after hearing testimony from psychiatrists, ruled that Coberly, 33, of Gaithersburg, was not criminally responsible for the Aug. 14 slaying of Sean Kedrick Pharr of 17711 Larchmont Ter., Gaithersburg.

Assistant State's Attorney Barry Hamilton did not contest the motion to declare Coberly insane.

According to court testimony, Coberly said he had heard voices telling him to "shoot the little boy," as he killed the boy, who was a close neighborhood friend of Coberly's nephew.

Coberly was ordered confined at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital Center in Jessup, Md.

There is no minimum time that Coberly must be treated at Perkins, but Dr. S.W. Siebert, a staff psychiatrist at the hospital, testified that Coberly definitely would need long-term confinement.

Coberly has been hospitalized for schizophrenia intermittently since 1976, according to court records. Psychiatrists said he suffered chronically from hallucinations and heard voices that taunted him.

Sean Pharr was killed during a day trip to the pool at the home of Coberly's parents, at 13710 Marianna Dr. The boy went there with Coberly's 34-year-old brother Michael and the latter's 12-year-old son Jeff. Michael Coberly then left for his in-laws' home a half-mile away.

As the two boys swam in the above-ground pool, Thomas Coberly emerged from the house shortly before noon and, from a 30-foot distance, fired two shots into Sean's chest. According to testimony, Jeff Coberly leaped from the pool and ran to find his father.

Montgomery County police Detective James Beasley testified yesterday that Michael Coberly returned to find his brother still holding the rifle. "If you don't get out and leave me alone, I'll do the same to you," Coberly threatened his brother. Beasley said that Coberly showed little emotion after the killing.

Coberly, who was unemployed and receiving Social Security at the time of the killing, was first hospitalized in 1976, shortly after his marriage ended in divorce.

Three psychiatrists who evaluated Coberly said he was unable to understand the criminality of the slaying.

Dr. Ellen McDaniel, a psychiatrist from the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore, said Coberly, who is balding, heard voices that "made fun of him and his physical appearance" and that the voices commanded Coberly to take the Pharr boy's life.