

Judge's Sentence: Work Off Your Guilt

By Charles de Mangin
Of The Herald Tribune Staff

COMMACK, L. I.

The judge and the defendants stood in a group next to the wire trash baskets and the judge, after the kind of little speech that judges make, said, "Sentence suspended."

The judge and the defendants were perspiring from their hard morning's work and all wore dusty work clothes. It did not look much like a court of law, but it was as District Court Judge Floyd Sarisohn pressed yesterday an unusual experiment in the treatment of people convicted of drunkenness.

DEBRIS

"I suggest you report to me at the Commack High School athletic field," Judge Sarisohn had said last week after finding four men guilty of public intoxication, an offense which can cost the culprit \$10 or six months in the county jail. Then he set their official sentencing date for July 3.

Yesterday the dusty field was littered with debris and the tattered remnants of carnival booths, left over from the annual Scholarship Fair of the Commack School District, which had been held Saturday.

The first of the four defendants showed up at 8 a. m. and promptly pitched in to start



Herald Tribune photo by TERENCE McCARTEN

COMMACK CLEAN-UP—District Judge Floyd Sarisohn and three "sentenced" helpers work on the ball field.

cleaning the place up. Judge Sarisohn and the others arrived at the appointed hour of 10. The Judge brought along a couple of friends and one of the four defendants—men who ranged in age from 16 to 42—brought along his father and a friend. The judge had arranged for a dump truck to be there.

Everyone went to work, jamming the Fair's debris into wire baskets, dumping it into the truck, raking the field.

By noon of a lovely sunny and breezy day they were done and the judge told his fellow workmen that in light of the public spirit they had demonstrated, he would suspend their sentences.

To a reporter who stopped by he explained later that he had investigated the four and found none of them to have records of major crime convictions or habitual drunkenness.

Judge Sarisohn began this

work-off-your-guilt program back when he was a Smith-town justice of the peace. He has been a district court judge since Jan. 1, 1964, and has continued the idea.

He looked at yesterday's well-swept field and at the departing workers—defendants and friends—(Judge Sarisohn asked that news accounts omit their names) and said with a grin that the performante had worked out "better than I expected."

There are those who regard this sort of thing as out of keeping with judicial propriety but that is not Judge Sarisohn's main concern. What worries him, he said, is that if he is to continue his work program, he needs offers of more work projects.

The idea is to do jobs that would not put regular workers out of work, he explained. If anyone has tasks that fill the need, he said, he hoped they would get in touch with him.