

LAWYER GUILTY OF INCOME TAX EVASION

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Detroit attorney W. **Otis Culpepper**, a leading defender of drug and murder suspects, was convicted Thursday of three counts of income tax evasion.

Culpepper, 39, who waived a jury trial, was found guilty by U.S. District Court Judge Avern Cohn of evading payment of \$10,295 in income taxes for the years 1978 and 1980 and evading taxes on income of \$76,244 for the years 1982 and 1983.

He was found not guilty on one other count of income tax evasion and one count of conspiracy to defraud the government.

"The court is fully aware of the consequences of its findings and the traumatic and tragic effect it will have on the defendant," Cohn said in his ruling. "What must be kept in mind is that the tax system is a voluntary system."

Culpepper faces up to five years' imprisonment on each count and could be fined \$210,000. He was released on bond Thursday, pending his sentencing, and also was suspended from practicing law by the Attorney Grievance Commission.

Noting that **Culpepper** was particularly successful in his field beginning in 1979, Cohn said the attorney made a conscious effort to hide his rising income by making false statements to IRS agents and by hiding his assets under other people's names.

Culpepper and his attorney, Hugh Davis, would not comment after the ruling, except to say that Cohn's decision will be appealed.

Davis previously said his client was indicted mainly because he refused the government's attempt to "squeeze" him for information in an FBI investigation of possible corruption in Recorder's Court.

"They have independent beliefs about Recorder's Court and by indicting him on other unrelated things, they wanted to squeeze him and have him help them because of his wide knowledge," Davis said in a previous interview. "This is not aimed at collecting taxes."

Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Foran said he believes "justice was done."

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