

MR. B. ANECDOTE

The eleventh grade French teacher at Gratz was Mr. B. (he taught the second half of French III). He was a native Frenchman, and nobody could ever forget either this fact about him or, indeed, the man himself. Mr. B. was only about five feet four inches tall. He always dressed impeccably in three-piece suits, and he was "bald as a billiard ball", as the saying goes. However, he sported an extremely long brown beard, which always continued to shock everyone, especially in contrast to his shining bald head and to the fact that nobody save for extremely elderly patriarchs of Jewish families wore beards in those days.

Mr. B. spoke English with such a heavy French accent that few were able to understand him. He spouted such expressions as "I of-FERRED' eet to heem, but he RE'-fust me!" and "The man was a LOO'-tenant!" (Meaning "I offered it to him but he refused me" and "The man was a lieutenant.")

Every so often, when some student would show confusion, Mr. B. would spit out, "EET EES THEES! EET EES THEES!" (Meaning "It is this! It is this!")

He persisted, throughout the year, in calling roll every day at the onset of class, and this caused no end of confusion. One girl from the 11A class had been permitted to take advanced French and was somewhat younger and less experienced than the others in the class. Her last name was Fine, and she suffered the most from this confusion. Every day when Mr. B. got to her name, he would scream out, "MEES FEEN!" She was never able to recognize her name, and she never answered. Thus, absence after absence was recorded for her, until a month and a half later she was suddenly called to the Office to account for why she had been cutting French class.

"I never cut!" she protested. "I'm there every day."

"No you're not!" the attendance officer responded. "You're marked absent every day this term!"

She produced several test papers from the French class, all with the grade of A.

"Well, go back to class," the attendance officer replied, puzzled, "and don't do it again!"

This continued for the rest of the semester.