

IN SAN FRANCISCO
Representing Torrance Unified School District at the 25th annual conference of the California Association of School Librarians in San Francisco this weekend are Lucille M. Brown, Mary S. Long, Ruth G. Pearson, and Lynn J. Shidler.

...Let's Go

By LARRY MACARAY

With the new rising interest in art there seems to be a renewed activity in the highly profitable job of forgery. The word "forgery" has to be used with the greatest of care, because the intent is all-important. Forgeries are copies of works of art made for fraudulent purposes. Fakes are genuine works which have been altered in character, or added to, for the purpose of enhancing the value.

However, in all the history of the art-market, it has never been so difficult as it is now — and never so lucrative. With x-rays, new chemical solutions, carbon-tests and the like — the task of forging is becoming more specialized than ever before. The auctions in London and New York clearly indicate that absolutely nothing else in the world has appreciated more in dollars and cents value than good paintings.

Some of the most noted forgers in recent history have been such accomplished artists as Van Meegeren, whose Vermeers and de Hooghs were good enough to fool museums and experienced private collectors. The art dealer, Otto Wacker, began his "career" right after world war I in Berlin. His forgeries of Van Gogh's paintings finally ended in 1932 when he was subsequently tried and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Even Michelangelo tried his hand at it by faking a small antique statue and burying it for a time to produce some sort of decay.

VAN MEEGEREN was so successful at his "art" that books have been written about his accomplishments — movies have been made showing him at work, at his trial, and in general, explaining how he went about creating new Vermeers. He was

playing for high stakes so every phase of his work had to be painstakingly correct.

He purchased old and relatively worthless paintings for his work. These already had numerous cracks which arose from the shrinkage and movement of the paint. Then he removed much of the old paint-layer with a solution of soda and a hard brush, altered though he had to leave enough to provide a foundation for the new cracks.

Pigments suspended in oil appear to dry quickly, but actually it may take as long as fifty years to harden completely. So, when the point of a needle is brushed across a heavily pigmented area on a painting — new paint will cause the needle to slide over it easily. Van Meegeren solved this problem by using a vehicle made of a resin dissolved in alcohol, to which he added synthetic lilac oil. This paint, when subjected to the heat of his oven at about 100 degrees Centigrade, seemed to have hardened for centuries.

VAN GOGH'S paintings have been the target of many forgers. Otto Wacker opened a gallery in Berlin in 1927 with a large number of Van Goghs that had been offered for sale by an anonymous nobleman. At this particular time, his paintings were just beginning to realize high prices. The fact that Van Gogh sold practically nothing during his lifetime indicated that most of his work had been disposed of after his death. The circumstances of some of these sales must have been extremely unusual.

On the surface, one would suppose that a Van Gogh could actually be easily forged. The brush strokes of heavy pigment — much of the time without any detail — could mislead even a paint-

er of average talent to think that such a forgery could be possible. Such is not the case. A Van Gogh under x-ray remains an entirely recognizable Van Gogh, even though it may be difficult to ascertain the subject matter. The structure of his paintings are built up according to a coherent plan. Van Gogh applied his pigment heavily, taking it direct from the tube. To imitate this heavy texture, Wacker built up his paintings with layers of stucco and painted over them. No wonder he got caught! Signatures are commonly forged and added, often in-

conspicuously, leaving the buyer to find it for himself and then rejoice in this wonderful "discovery" that seems to greater confirm the authenticity. Unsigned paintings are often a problem. If a signature is added later — it must be placed over the final varnish and therefore is easily detected. If the signature is "engraved" into the dry paint layer, this too, is easily detectable by ultraviolet light. All in all, science is really creating havoc with the "big-time" forgers these days — but it still won't stop frustrated artists from creating forgeries.

Three Set Free Throw Marks Here

Three Torrance area youngsters have been named winners in the VV Free-Throw Contest sponsored by Kendom Motors, Volkswagen dealership in Harbor City.

Winners include Mike Jordan, Larry Mitchell, and Mike Fagan.

More than 25 youngsters participated in the local contest, designed to give them an opportunity to "Beat Jerry West." West, a Los Angeles Lakers star, earlier established a free-throw record for the contest.

The three winners will compete in semi-finals, to be held

next Friday at the Los Angeles Sports Arena during the Lakers-Detroit Pistons basketball game. They will compete with other Southern California winners.

Finals will be held in San Francisco Warriors-Lakers game March 19. Semi-final winners and their parents will travel to San Francisco with the Lakers.

Young Jordan, competing in the 8-to-11-year-old bracket, scored seven goals in the best of 10 competition. Mitchell, entered in the 12-to-14-year-old class, and Fagan, 15- to 17-year old class, each scored

five goals. West had scored eight of ten free throws.

Nine finalists will be named in Friday's competition.

DISTRICT AGENT

Appointment of Mike Brucoleri of 1826 St. Andrews Place as a district agent in the South Bay district agency of the Prudential Insurance Co., has been announced by Douglas M. Tinsler, district manager.

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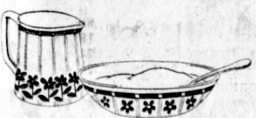
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