

Artist goes where cameras can't—courtrooms

By BARBARA UNDERWOOD

Courtroom artist Bill Lignante could have been in Las Vegas Thursday, sketching scenes from the court action surrounding Howard Hughes' will, but he was in Birmingham instead.

Lignante was the fourth speaker of Birmingham's Town Hall's 24th season. The Hughes case was the first job he had turned down in 10 years, but he did not want to break his Town Hall commitment on 24-hour notice.

He recalled many of his experiences and showed slides of drawings he has done at trials that have become household words during the last decade—Sirhan, Calley, Manson, Davis, Hearst and others.

Because his work often is shown in evening news broadcasts across the country, he must work rapidly and often complete a one or more drawings while traveling between the courtroom and a broadcasting studio.

His worst experience was "drawing

The defense attorney called Soupy Sales as a witness to testify that pie throwing is not such a bad thing.

in the front seat of a car with a correspondent who was writing his story in his head."

ACCORDING TO Lignante's wife, his mother says he has been drawing since he was three years old. He studied at the Pratt Institute in New York City, did layout designing for 14 years and has been a courtroom illustrator for 10 years.

Lignante also drew the Ozark Ike comic strip from 1961-66 and the Phantom from 1961-68.

He does his sketches on a regular 14 by 17-inch drawing pad and starts with blue pencil because it does not photograph. He uses black felt tip pens over the blue and fills in with colored magic markers.

He starts a courtroom sketch with the person's face after studying the person's actions for a few minutes to pick up habits or peculiarities and often finishes a sketch from memory.

He recalled one assignment in which he gave his sketches to a motorcycle messenger to take to the airport. When he reached his home, he called to see if the sketches had arrived at the airport.

"YOU'LL NEVER believe what happened," he said. The cylinder containing the sketches was given to a passenger with a boarding pass who took them with the understanding that he would be met by someone in Chicago who would take them.

Before the plane took off, the passenger told the pilot someone had given him a bomb. The pilot took the cylinder, threw it out the cockpit window and it was never seen again.

The security surrounding a major trial can become a "dull, boring routine in a long trial," Lignante said. He often looks for the light side of a trial in his sketches because the trials themselves are "so weighty."

He told of a case he refers to as the "pie in the face case." An enlisted Navy man threw a pie in an officer's face and was being courtmartialled.

"The defense attorney called Soupy Sales as a witness to testify that pie throwing is not so bad a thing," Lignante said. "But he said the Navy man made one mistake. He threw a chocolate cream pie, and it stains like hell."

The sailor was sentenced to six months in the brig and received a dishonorable discharge.

THE MANSON trial affected him the most, Lignante said.

"But he said the Navy man made one mistake. He threw a chocolate cream pie, and it stains like hell."

"It had all the ingredients that ever could have been conceived by a creative writer—and then some."

The trial lasted for nine months, and Lignante was in court every day. He said it was fascinating and he felt privileged to cover it.

The parents and other family members of defendants are good drawing material and often are pathetic, he said.

A sidelight of the Manson trial that Lignante does not remember reading in news accounts concerned three of Manson's family who often appeared in court wearing robes that had been brought to them by persons outside.

The three often were known to be high on something, but no one could determine what. The capes had been dipped in LSD, which was not detected

when they had dried. They would suck on the robes and release the LSD.

THE TRIAL of Lynette (Squeaky) Fromme was one of the best from an artist's point of view, he said, and the Hearst trial was one of the toughest.

The trial lasted for 39 days, and Lignante's sketches were on the television 36 days.

A ban on photographers in courtrooms dates back to the Bruno Hauptmann trial following the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's baby son, Lignante said.

Florida recently began a one-year experiment allowing cameras in courtrooms under certain circumstances, but Lignante doubts that it will change anything.

"And if Florida goes, the rest of the country may not follow," he said.

Audio-visuals aid nursing students



Sue Melekian of Franklin and Julie Jagitsch of Southfield work independently in the self-paced Health Instructional Center at Madonna College.

Sue Melekian of Franklin and Julie Jagitsch of Southfield are two nursing students at Madonna College who are proceeding at their own pace in their studies.

Both seniors are finding new audio-visual learning devices, recently installed in the College Health Instructional Center, useful tools to review for final exams and to prepare for state boards which they face in June.

The Health Instruction Center, being developed through a federal grant of more than \$234,612 awarded for three years, allows Madonna students to work independently on instructional units prepared on filmstrips, slides and cassette recordings.

Mrs. Patricia Vint, who has master's degrees in media and educational administration, is director of the center. She coordinates the work of approximately 20 persons in the preparation or purchase of audio-visual materials.

The center is housed in three rooms adapted to use a variety of equipment. The Cordless Room contains more than 60 pieces of equipment. It's broadcasting system serves as a viewing room for filmstrips and slides.

Up to 16 students can view four different instructional programs simulta-

neously without disturbing each other. Under the terms of the grant, the instructors first determine if there are tapes commercially produced on the subject they are looking for. In most cases there are. When they are not, the faculty and Mrs. Vint work closely with Madonna's own television studio to make audio-visual tapes, transparencies and slides.

The Carrel Room provides 24 study carrels with headphones, equipped for mobile cassette player-records or television receivers. The carrels are designed for using tapes and films together.

The third room serves as the Center's library and houses more than 100,000 pieces of material for modules. The modules outline the course of study, tapes and films to be used for reading assignments.

Adjacent to the center is a demonstration laboratory, designed and equipped to serve as a mini-hospital. Here nursing, emergency medical technicians and allied health students, learn, and are tested on basic patient procedures prior to assignments in hospitals, clinics, laboratories and emergency medical teams.

The center is open 75 hours each week.

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