



Judging students' work, left to right: Stevan Dohanos, W. R. McCloskey, Harold Von Schmidt, Edwin Eberman, Al Parker, Austin Briggs, Robert Fawcett, Norman Rockwell, and Al Dorne, founder of the Schools.

24 lessons. Their first "convert" was Norman Rockwell, known wherever there are mailboxes or newsstands for his *Saturday Evening Post* covers.

"After that," says Dorne, "we were on our way. It was easy." Rounding out staff, they added Al Parker, Harold Von Schmidt, Steve Dohanos, Peter Helck, Austin Briggs, Robert Fawcett, Jon Whitcomb, Ben Stahl and the late John Atherton, since replaced by Dong Kingman. Each of them put up money out of their average annual incomes of \$75,000, and worked on completing the lessons.

Suburban Location Preferred

For location, they settled on Westport, Connecticut because most of them lived within driving distance and because the town already had a large proportion of influential art directors and editors, commuting to work in New York City.

The first School, in a dilapidated old mill complete with waterwheel, spiderwebs and cracks in the floor you could fish through, had its grand opening in September of 1948. To impress newspaper and magazine writers, Dorne dressed the Famous Artists up in paint-

smear overalls and set them to work vaguely but busily wielding brushes. As a clincher, he served bowls of potent punch. The resultant good publicity brought in the first student, a local waitress who reported in person a few days later and paid her tuition in quarters she got in tips.

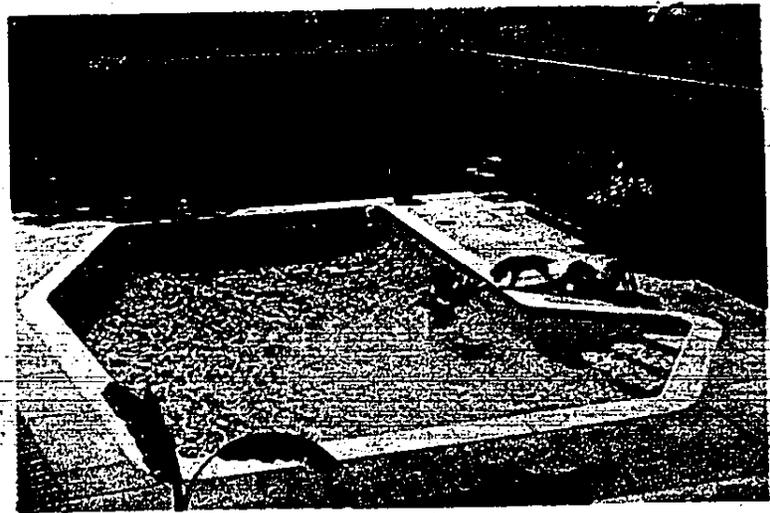
Another early student was a Georgia cracker who lived in a cabin that looked like a stage set for "Tobacco Road." The local agent of the School found him sitting on the front porch and asked, "Did you write in about studying art?" "Yep," said the man. "Foller me!" He took a shovel back of the house, dug up a tin can and peeled off bills for the full tuition. Dorne still doesn't know how he heard about the School, but he kept up with his lessons for a year and a half, then disappeared.

Success In First Year

During the first year, the student body grew to 1,000; more than the Famous Artists could teach in person. They hired a local artist named Alex Domonkos to work full time as instructor under an

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Before and after—the drawing of the Indian was done before Eric Ericson studied with Famous Artists, the drawing of the sailor was done afterward—and as a result of his training the student proceeded from his old job with the parts department of an auto company to become art director in a large Minneapolis advertising agency.



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