

How County Officer Finds Check Artists

W. C. Romaine Has
Excellent System

(Continued from Page One)

check was in the same handwriting as the signature on the check's face. The other attorney objected to the question, asserting that the witness was not qualified to give an answer.

Judge G. F. Skipworth, now retired, was presiding. He agreed the witness was not qualified and then stated: "But I'm looking at someone who is."

This someone was Romaine. A moment later the deputy was qualified as an expert by the judge and allowed to testify. This was the first time Romaine had been officially recognized by a court as a handwriting expert. He has been so recognized ever since.

90 'IDENTIFICATIONS'

Romaine said bad check passers rely on many types of trickery. Some of the professionals, he said, print their own check blanks, use fictitious names, fake their identification, and set up non-existent firms which supposedly issue the checks.

One smooth operator, who was finally arrested by the FBI recently in Texas, used at least 90 different identification cards, Romaine said.

Here is the way the man operated in Eugene: He deposited five fake checks totaling \$1,750 in a local bank and received a receipt. He then took the receipt to another window and drew out a smaller amount on the strength of his apparent bank account.

Romaine recalled another case of a woman who was arrested in Springfield recently on a bad check charge. She used 38 different forms of identification, but she was tripped up by the flash system and the fact that local merchants had a good description of her.

FAKING AN ILLNESS

When the woman realized that she had been spotted, she dashed out of the Springfield store and disappeared. But the only place she could have entered was a nearby dentist's office. Police officers searched the office and found a woman lying on a davenport, apparently ill. The trick didn't work, however. An officer said, "You can quit putting on the act now." The woman meekly admitted she had passed a string of bad checks in many states.

Of the many ways check artists obtain false identification, one of the most novel in Romaine's experience was used by an 18-year-old Lane County youth during World War II.

Romaine said the youth registered for the draft with a local board, not once but five times, using a different name on each occasion. With five different identification cards, the youth then passed a long string of bad checks before he was finally caught.

WHAT FORGERY IS

There are many types of check crimes, the deputy explained. Forgery is a crime in which a person writes someone else's name or a fictitious name on a check and cashes it. Knowingly uttering and publishing a forged bank check is a crime in which a person cashes a check he himself did not forge but knows that the check has been forged by another. Obtaining money by false pretenses means a person cashes a check when he has no bank account.

Drawing a check on insufficient funds, of course, means that the person's account won't cover the amount of the check. Forgery by endorsement means that a person has illegally endorsed a check.

Romaine pointed out that intent must be proved before a bad check passer can be convicted. There are many times, the deputy said, when a person innocently overdraws his account or makes some innocent mistake in writing a check.

"We can't prosecute on checks post-dated or on checks that are given to a person to hold for 30 days before cashing," Romaine said.

A post-dated check, Romaine said, doesn't mean that the check writer has represented, at the time he wrote the check, that he has that amount of money in the bank at that time. For this reason, there can be no prosecution, the deputy declared.

SOME DON'T CARE

What continues to amaze Romaine is the number of bad check writers who will forge a check but will use their correct name and address. "We have had many bad checks that lead us right to the writer. It is hard to explain why they leave such a marked trail, but then, most bad check passers are hard to explain."

In many cases of this type, Romaine said, the writers apparently don't care whether they are identified. They just want some quick money so they can leave and go to some other location. How can people protect themselves against check artists? The best way, Romaine said, is to know your endorser. Another way is to demand proper identification, such as a driver's license.

Reds Pose a Threat To Berlin Barges

BERLIN (AP)—The Communists Saturday raised a long range threat of a Berlin blockade in reprisal for West German rearmament by refusing to renegotiate an expiring agreement on Western barge traffic to this city.

The agreement with the Russians on the use of waterways through the Soviet zone, which carry 20 per cent of West Berlin's supplies, expired at midnight.

Soviet authorities notified the British high commission that the matter had been referred to East German authorities. The barge traffic, mostly in coal from the Ruhr to West Berlin, was normal, at least for the time being.

But Western authorities agreed that if the Communists wanted to seize upon the issue at a time when they were fighting the Western plans to rearm West Germany, they could cause trouble.

They admitted that the Communists now had a pretext to cut off the barge traffic at any time. The Red also have sounded several threats recently to put a squeeze on West Berlin in other ways if the rearmament project went through.

The Communist rejection of attempts to renegotiate the barge agreement could be an attempt to force the Western powers to negotiate with the East German government, which they do not recognize.

They even concede that the Reds could raise the same demand on the Western use of the trunk highway and air corridors through the Soviet zone.

However, Western quarters hoped the repeated warnings by such high officials as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles against any renewal of the big blockade of Berlin would deter the Communists.

enacted the administration's flexible price support program.

FOREIGN TRADE—Mr. Eisenhower has a good chance of winning approval this year of his request for powers to cut tariffs as much as 5 per cent annually in a three-year renewal of the reciprocal trade program. Most Democrats are on his side.

LABOR—The administration will renew its request for amendments to the Taft-Hartley law and will ask that the national minimum wage for 24,000,000 workers in interstate commerce be raised from 75 to 90 cents an hour.

HOW IT LOOKS

Here is the way some of the issues are shaping up:

NATIONAL DEFENSE—Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.), prospective chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said his committee will undertake an early and thorough review of presidential plans to trim 403,000 men from the armed forces by mid-1956 and set up a reserves system.

FOREIGN POLICY—The Senate is expected to ratify mutual defense treaties affecting South-east Asia and Formosa and admitting a rearmament Western Germany to NATO. But congress may balk at an impending request for more than \$3,000,000,000 in foreign aid for fiscal 1956.

BUDGET—Although administration spokesmen have abandoned hope for a balanced budget in fiscal 1956, starting July 1, 1955, Rep. Clarence Cannon (D-Mo.), new chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said he is "anxious to cooperate" to achieve that result.

AGRICULTURE—Most Democrats still favor rigid, 90 per cent farm price supports on basic crops, despite their defeat last year when the GOP Congress

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Once again top Alligator quality at this low price.
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Made from "front quarter" leather. Linings are quilted. Available in dark cordovan. Available in either straight or knit bottom and sleeves.

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This is a real special, zipper fly, sanforized and pre-shrunk. This will take care of his scuffing about . . . buy him 2 pair.

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These shirts are by California Ranch Wear and Levi. The very latest in western style. Buy two at clearance prices.

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Smart looking suede jackets. Available in charcoal, navy and champagne. Knit collar.

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Wear these cords for dress or for work . . . they never wear out. Buy two pair at these clearance prices. Your choice of sage gray and forest green.

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The Outdoor Store

716 WILLAMETTE

COME AS YOU ARE . . . DON'T DRESS UP

Portland Streets 'Deserted' After '55's Quiet Entry

PORTLAND (AP)—The city was seemingly deserted Saturday as business closed down for the start of the new year after a moderately sedate beginning.

New Year's Eve crowds on the streets here were smaller than usual—although noisy—and one club employee said people didn't seem to have "New Year's spirit."

County police set up three check points at which all cars were halted and inquiry made as to the state of the drivers. The general condition seemed good.

Geiger Counter Used In Dish Washing Tests

BAYONNE, N.J. (AP)—The Navy is using Geiger counters to "prospect" for dirt on dishes.

In a laboratory experiment here, Navy technicians mix radioactive isotopes with food placed on Navy dishes and trays and run them through various dishwashing machines, soaps, detergents and water temperatures.



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