

►► The Zorachs ◄◄

By ARTHUR STRAWN

THE Zorachs furnish one of those rare examples of a household in which both husband and wife are artists. They still live in the house where they first began housekeeping eighteen years ago. It is a little red brick house, of the type once so characteristic of Greenwich Village, but now giving way to the newer apartments. Behind the painted glass window of a store front on the ground floor William Zorach has his studio. There he chisels his figures out of marble and stone and shapes huge chunks of mahogany into objects of art. Marguerite Zorach has her studio on the floor above. When she isn't painting she is to be found hard at work on one of her embroidered tapestries for which she has become justly celebrated.

That they have been able to achieve success as artists is witnessed by the fact that examples of their work are to be found in such galleries as the Metropolitan, Cleveland, Newark and Los Angeles Museums, in addition to a number of private collections. And, refuting the popular misconception of the artistic temperament, they have not only pursued a fruitful career in art, but have at the same time achieved a healthful home life, raising a son and a daughter—not to mention a magnificent Persian cat that regally condescends to pose, first for one of Mrs. Zorach's pictures, and then for one of William Zorach's chiselings in granite.

Although of widely different backgrounds, the Zorachs for that very reason might be said to be typically American. Zorach, born in Lithuania forty-two years ago, was brought here by his immigrant parents when he was an infant of three. They settled in Ohio, and when William was twelve he was already earning his living in Cleveland working in a lithograph plant. He became an apprentice, learned the art of the lithographer, began to attend the Cleveland Art School at night, and after several years of frugal saving found himself an art student in Paris, studying painting. It was in a Paris studio that William Zorach first met Marguerite Thompson, his future wife. She, too, had reached the French art center by an equally devious route. She was born in New England, her grandfather a New Bedford whaling captain and her father an adventuresome lawyer who moved to Colorado when Leadville was a-booming, and thence to California, where Marguerite was born. The young girl's talent

for drawing had been recognized by an aunt, who was also an artist and had gone to Paris to live. Marguerite received an invitation to pay her a visit and to study in one of the Parisian academies.

In 1912 Zorach and Marguerite Thompson met again in New York and were married. They have made their home in the Village ever since, except for the summers which they spend on their farm on the coast of Maine. Both of them began their careers as painters, but oddly enough each is also winning distinction in another field of art. As recently as 1922 Zorach did his first sculptural work. He made some wood carvings and for the first time realized that his most satisfying avenue of expression was through sculpture. Like the great sculptors of antiquity he chips his statues out of the stubborn material, eschewing the more common and speedier method of having a clay model executed by stone-cutters. His "Mother and Child," a life-size group cut from a two-ton block of Spanish marble, cost him three years of concentrated labor before he was ready to place it on exhibition.

"Time," says Zorach, "should mean nothing to the artist. The main thing is for him to realize his conception, regardless of how long it may take him."

WHILE Zorach makes occasional excursions into water-color painting, Mrs. Zorach likewise combines painting in oils with her embroideries. Evidently she, too, believes that the artist should work without regard for time, for her embroideries require two and three years each before completion. Her embroideries are a remarkable and highly individual form which represent a fine fusion of art and craft. They might be called paintings in cloth. Irish linen is used instead of canvas; and wool thread, dyed by herself, replaces paint. As though she were making one of her paintings she creates a design, sketches it lightly on the linen, and then begins the long task of executing the details. One enthusiastic critic has declared that Marguerite Zorach's embroidered tapestries achieve artistic effects unequalled since the fifteenth century, when Gothic tapestry weaving was at its height.

A unique collaboration this of the Zorachs. By so productively living a life devoted to their art they incidentally reveal no little genius in the art of living.

Oil Hells in Oklahoma

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Mary's No. 1—there are six other producers on the farm now—came in as a gas well first. It came in at daylight. It and dawn came up like thunder. Everything was peaceful one moment, with the tools down 6,450 feet. The next moment, with very little warning indeed, four tons of drilling pipe were sailing toward the sky, and Wild Mary was blowing gas at a rate of 75,000,000 cubic feet a day. For two hours the gas roared colorless toward the sky. Then, as the sand was eaten away more than a mile underfoot, a golden tint touched the derrick top. By the next morning that tint had changed to an oil torrent, and roads leading to the field were so jammed with cars you had to drive in the ditch to get there. By that time a howling black geyser was blowing 100 to 300 feet over the top of the 120 foot derrick and was being sprayed by a north wind all the way to Norman and the State University eleven miles distant.

Where oil men gather there is vehement discussion today whether Wild Mary was wilder than Stout Fella. You can have your choice. At least, Oklahoma City first learned about oil wells from Mary. The tricks learned in April were to help in October. The oil-drenched drillers tried to shut their gates in April and saw them gnawed to shreds by the sand blast. An epic battle of the oil country began. One that lasted exactly a week longer than the fight to control Stout Fella within the city limits six months later.

Wild Mary was a Kinter No. 1, with plenty added, and by the third day she was blowing 200 cubic feet of inflammable gas a day and 48,000 barrels of oil, causing such a fire hazard around the landscape that 150 drilling wells had to be shut down. Wild Mary was the first really dangerous well of the field. Fortunately, Mary happened seven miles south in the field, far from town.

The only hope of controlling this volcanic eruption was to lower a cap over the well head, a huge bell-shaped device weighing 3,000 pounds. It took eleven days to do that, and before the job was completed an expert had to be rushed by air from Mexico.

The army of 200 oil men who struggled to control what they had unloosed worked under a sickening black cloudburst. Compared with that ceaseless downpour of oil the Biblical forty days and nights of simple rain would have been blessed relief. This was Niagara and Vesuvius combined. As far as the eye could see the green world

➤ From the Life ◀

By IBBY HALL

turned black. Over the land for miles rolled a yellow, malignant fog. Fire engines from the city rushed along country roads. No man could light a match and iron chains were laid down as carefully as any baby was ever laid in blankets. One spark of metal against metal could cause an explosion that would kill hundreds and that might, even at that distance, destroy the city itself. There was a spectral gloom over the prairie, and men grew deaf from the roar, and the oil took the skin from the soles of their feet. This was hell, no less, and men with visors pulled down over their faces toiled hopelessly. These men had gone back a million years and were fighting nature in her youth. This was a scene from before history, and only three or four minutes could a modern man live up close to it. A few minutes of battle and he would be back behind the twenty-foot-high mound of earth, thrown up as a safety wall, gasping for breath.

Thus the threat to Oklahoma City is a very real one. The authorities have fought desperately to stay the steady advance of the derricks, but they are fighting against greed and a mad vision of wealth. Tricked by fate from their natural share in the field outside the city, home owners dream at night of gushers on their front lawns. When the City Zoning Commission definitely draws a line, some schoolhouse fills up with protesting citizens, their faces inflamed, their voices hoarse with their right to take what fate offers. So, the derricks slowly march closer, even with drillers being compelled to post \$200,000 bond per well against property damage and being warned of police action if they disturb the city's sleep, and being threatened by state authorities with confiscation under the state fire laws.

The greatest threat, by another trick of fate, has come not at the edge of the city, but at what might be called its very heart, on an undeveloped 104-acre tract stretching southwest from the new State Capitol and dividing the best residential parts of the city in half. To save taxes, the owner, W. F. Harn, a gruff '89er, refused for years to divide his property into lots and allow it to be taken into the city. The city grew up all around. When oil was discovered, Harn leased this tract to Wirt Franklin, also a resident of the city and president of the Independent Petroleum Producers Association, and who, as mentioned before, had just finished drilling a dry hole north of town.

The city, facing possibility of seeing its State Capitol covered black with oil and one of its best regions turned into a

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➤ Luck

WHEN he came back after eating his lunch he could see they were still at it. Luck! It was wonderful how people believed in it. He stopped for a minute before getting on to work and watched them.

There was only one rake and they handed it around good-naturedly among themselves, taking turns at it. But those without the rake were not content to be idle. They dropped to their hands and knees and crawled intently over the ground, brushing the grass carefully, raking it with their fingers, patting it with open palms. How hard they worked, he thought, and grinned as he watched.

The sun was hot and the Fair Grounds flat and breathless. Further off were trees, but it was near here that the lady had parked her car and there was not a morsel of shade in sight. She had left the car and walked over to the dog races and she was sure she had the pin then. She even put up her hand—so everyone told everybody else—to make sure it was safe. After the races she had walked back to her car. But of course there was a big crowd then. Maybe somebody had snatched it from her—a big stick of diamonds like that where everybody could see it. Maybe she hadn't dropped it at all. And maybe (if the pin had ever been lost in the beginning) some crook had found it and made up his mind he'd rather have the diamonds than the reward.

The young fellow shrugged his shoulders and moved off slowly, looking back once in a while at the treasure hunters and laughing. Funny? He'd tell the world it was funny. Why if you should ask any one of those fellows back there to work as hard as that, and tell 'em maybe they'd get paid and maybe they wouldn't, they'd lock you up somewhere for crazy.

All afternoon he went on thinking about it, every once in a while throwing back his head to laugh out loud. Five hundred dollars reward, and a whole crowd of guys running around in the sun working themselves to death, looking for something that probably wasn't there in the first place. He'd rather work at something steady, he told himself—as he went on following up wires and testing out lights—and have the satisfaction of knowing what it was all about. He guessed the rest of the world wasn't made that way. They'd rather

trust to luck. There was something about it seemed to fascinate 'em, like a snake. Why, everybody at the Fair was doing it, one way or another. Gambling on luck. The whole world, he thought, (squinting at the lights, working fondly on the wires) was crazy; except for electricity. He was glad he was an electrician—even if he held his job right now because a lot of luck-shooters wanted bright lights at a Fair.

When he went to get his supper he noticed they were still at it. They had more rakes now and seemed to be getting sort of exhausted, now that dark was coming on. Well, he'd give 'em all the light he could.

During the evening he didn't have much time to think about the search. But the crowds thinned out after a while and along about midnight he began to think of going home himself. He thought he'd stop around, he told himself, for one good laugh before he quit. He'd see how those hard-working guys were getting on.

When he reached the parking grounds it was plain that the searchers were slowly giving up. A few of the rakes were lying idly on the ground. The others, in the hands of depressed looking sleep-walkers, moved slowly back and forth.

As he looked at the fallen rakes, the young electrician felt a strange tingling in his hands. He started to laugh derisively, but it turned into a strange uncertain sound. He felt he had to get his hands upon a rake. He tried to turn away—and turned back again.

"Oh, well!" he said with a certain show of bravado, and stooping grabbed a rake. "I'll give her one try!" he said. And laughed.

He raked once and stooped to gather up the grass. Something was caught on the teeth of the rake. Something hard and glittering.

The young electrician felt suddenly weak in the pit of his stomach. His throat contracted and his mouth was dry. He straightened up and opened out his hand. There—in the uncertain light of a few electric bulbs—blazed and flashed and sparkled a diamond pin.

The next day the assistant electrician received a check which doubled the original reward. A respectful world of newspapers begged him, what had he to say?

"Nothing," said the young electrician, with his eyes still blinking. "Nothing."