

"Miss Maggie" and Cor Were Characters . . .

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second in a series on art and artists in early-day Santa Cruz and Seabright.

By MARGARET KOCH
Sentinel Staff Writer

"Cor de Gavere was like a little gray dove..."

A friend of many years remembers the Santa Cruz artist this way and called me to tell me so, the other day.

And if Cor was the gentle gray dove, her friend and fellow-artist, Margaret Rogers, might be compared to the noisier, aggressive bluejay.

Short, heavy-set, firm in her convictions and brusque in her manner, Margaret was Cor's antithesis.

The only thing lacking in the bluejay comparison is the feathers. Margaret, who used blue and green so elegantly and freely in her marine paintings, dressed herself in dark and nondescript outfits — dull feathers, indeed.

It is almost impossible to write about Margaret without talking about Cor. The two artists were close friends and fellow-workers until Cor's death in Holland in 1955.

Cor came to Santa Cruz and Seabright from Holland in 1920 with an elderly Dutch woman for whom she served as nurse and companion. Margaret had been here since 1905.

Both women had European backgrounds. Cor was born in Java of Dutch missionary parents. Margaret was a native of England who had sailed from Liverpool with her parents to the U. S. in 1876 when she was 3 years old.

The two women, with another well-known Santa Cruz artist, Frank Heath, were to be instrumental in founding and establishing Santa Cruz Art League.

The league was organized by Heath and Margaret Rogers in 1919, a few months before Cor de Gavere arrived in Santa Cruz. However, Cor's art background had included shows of her work at the Royal Academy in Holland and the Annual Derby Exhibition in London. Her art reputation arrived with her, and from the moment she set foot in Santa Cruz County, Cor was welcomed to an active part in local art circles.

Cor and Margaret hit it off immediately, becoming best friends and painting companions.

Two more different women could hardly be found, to work together as friends on a project that would culminate in the dedication of the league's own gallery years later, in 1951.

Stocky, forthright Margaret had come to the Seabright world of art from early years as a rope-swinging cowgirl in the best "old west" tradition. "Miss Maggie" as she was called, laid down the reins and ropes when she came to Soquel and Santa Cruz in 1905, and took up her paintbrushes to become a well-known California painter of marine views.

Even before that fame caught up with her, she was written up in the San Francisco Examiner as Monterey County's "pretty girl who rides a man's saddle, marks and brands stock, breaks wild colts, plows and sows, plays classic music and paints in oils..."

Margaret herself, in an interview in 1959, told me: "I worked as head vaquero for the Willoughby Ranch in King City for two and one-half years, riding fence, helping brand and look after stock..."

Her father, Robert J. Rogers, was one of Monterey County's sheep ranchers. In England he had been an importer of tea, coffee, spices and other exotic commodities from far-away lands.

In California, Margaret's parents settled first in San Juan Bautista, then moved to a ranch on San Lorenzo Creek in Monterey County to operate the sheep spread and later, a cattle ranch. The nearest settlement was Soledad, 25 miles away.

Margaret's mother had the only piano for 60 miles around and she instructed Margaret in music and in art as well. Later, Margaret attended school in Salinas and took private art lessons from Miss Kate Baldwin. But her first love was her horses — she had 10 of her own, and rode and drove with a skill that astounded hard-bitten and long-time cowboys. When the Rogers family first moved to Soquel in 1905, Margaret drove everywhere in a horse-drawn buggy.

It was then that she started taking painting lessons from Frank Heath of Santa Cruz. Later she painted with L.P. Latimer who conducted classes at Big Basin, and in 1916 she studied with B.M. Bower, and began to produce the powerful marine oils that were to become her specialty.

Once, one of Margaret's art teachers made her sit down with pencil and paper to figure out the probable tons of weight of a huge wave of ocean water.

Margaret lived in the basement of Santa Cruz City Museum, the first museum, which was established in the old Tyrr Tyrrell home. It stood in Seabright, near the present Santa Cruz Museum building which was built as a library originally. For 29 years she managed the Art league's first "gallery" in that basement. When friends called, Margaret would open a can of sardines, put a few crackers on a plate and hold court.

During World War II when meat was in short supply, Margaret raised rabbits in cages in the gardens surrounding the old museum-home. Margaret and Cor shared many meals, although Cor's little home was several blocks away, but Cor could never bring herself to chop off a rabbit's head. Ranch-raised Margaret had no such qualms.

"She whacked them off and never batted an eye," a friend recalls.

Good friends though they were, the two Victorian ladies, Cor and Margaret, always addressed each other as "Miss Rogers" and "Miss de Gavere." And as Victorian ladies, reared within the rigid social conventions of their whale-bone corset era, they no doubt found emotional release in their painting.

They took off occasionally in Cor's auto which she named "Little Lion," for camping and painting trips. Cor drove in later years, after her own fashion, and to the terror of all

speeding"...or maybe "Is this open window too much air for you, Miss Rogers? If so, I'll close it"...

In later years, Margaret was able to purchase a small studio-home on Alhambra Street in Seabright — money was not plentiful for either woman, ever. And for more than 20 years, Margaret had charge of the statewide art shows initiated by the local league under her direction.

Before she died in 1961 she was recognized as one of the State's important early marine painters; she was an honored member of the Society of Western Artists, Who's Who in American Art, the Salinas Art Association and was president emeritus of Santa Cruz Art league.

Margaret was crusty and outspoken to the last day of her life.

Once I had an oil painting of my own on exhibit at the league's Broadway gallery. The show closed and I neglected to pick up my painting immediately. When I went to the gallery to get it several weeks later, I found myself facing a stern Miss Rogers.

"You should have called for it sooner," she barked. "We don't have much space here for storage, you know!"

At my stricken look she softened a bit.

"Come on, I'll find it for you," she offered kindly, heading for the storeroom.

Crusty — outspoken, yes.

But she could be kind, too. (To Be Continued Next Week)



Margaret Esther Rogers, as painted by Claude Buck

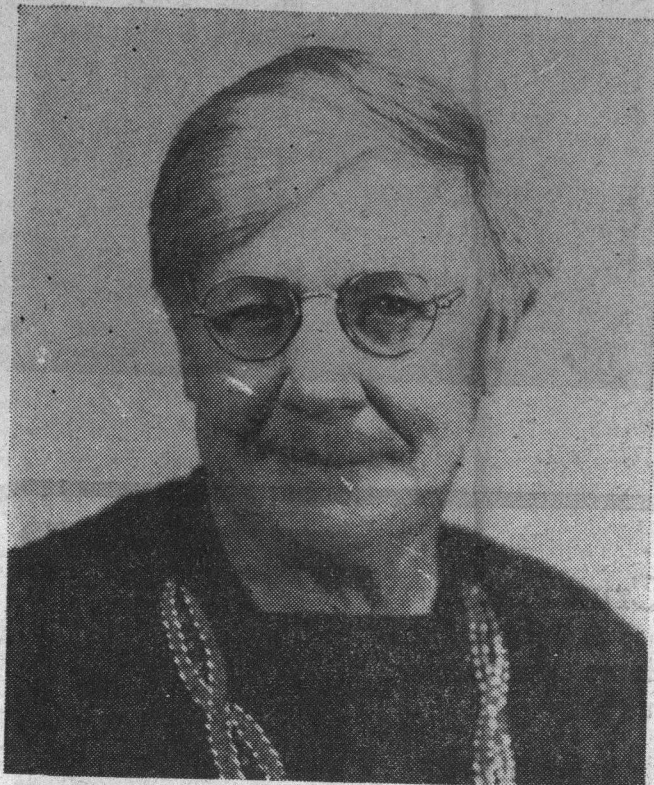


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who rode with her. South along the coast they would go, or maybe inland to fields of wild flowers in the spring, or to the high mountains. One can almost imagine the conversations..."Not so fast, please, Miss de Gavere, you are

Faithful stalwarts of Santa Cruz Art League, they called themselves: from left, Lillian Heath, wife of Frank and artist in her own right; Leonora N. Penniman, Cor de Gavere and Margaret Rogers. All friends, all Santa Cruz artists.



"Miss Maggie," at left, in later years, had mellowed a bit but could still make her displeasure known in no uncertain terms. Cowgirl turned artist, she was president of Santa Cruz Art League for 24 years.



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