

Thoresen Mixes a Rich Life With Tons of Guns

By Jane Eshleman Conant
Staff Writer

William Thoresen III, the gun collector of Pacific Heights, is a handsome and charming young man in whose life immense wealth and emotional agony have gone hand in hand.

He owns so many Ferrari sports cars — here and in Europe — that he can't remember where they all are.

He has the good looks, upright carriage and easy stride of a successful movie star — and he has such a crippling stammer that he sometimes "freezes" and can't speak for hours.

He has told acquaintances that he inherited \$70 million from a grandfather's trust — and yet he recently refused to pay a \$5,000 architect fee.

CHICAGO SUBURB

He grew up in the Chicago suburb of Kenilworth, a community of mansions for householders of great wealth — and yet he once was put on two years' probation for stealing six color photographs from a ferry terminal in Bar Harbor, Me.

Friends say he never tried to hide the fact that he was a purchaser of guns, ammunition, steel war helmets, grenades and other war material — and talked freely of placing orders in person or by telephone with firms in Finland, Sweden and Czechoslovakia.

And he flared up in sudden anger after his arrest, unwilling to believe that anyone could see anything wrong in his fantastic transactions.

LIKES GUNS

The tall and personable Thoresen, 30, says only that he bought the guns "because I like guns," and hoped to become a licensed dealer.

Authorities, his neighbors and his own attorneys regard him as something of an enigma. There is a general feel-



WILLIAM THORESEN
Faces mental tests

ing that "there are still some pieces missing" in his story.

Whether the amazing discovery of some 70 tons of weapons here points to some deep and devious intrigue — or merely to a wealthy young man's unconventional hobby — remains moot.

But from police records, and from the observations of his associates and neighbors, the picture of Thoresen as a tense and quick-tempered individual is beginning to emerge.

'NEGLECTED'

William and his late brother, Richard, 24, were "poor little rich boys." William has told friends they felt "neglected."

In 1965, their father, William Thoresen, president of the Great Western Steel Corp. of Chicago, had Richard arrested for burglary after several "incidents" at the Kenilworth family home.

Later that year, on the

night before he was to have appeared in court, Richard was found dead in a rented auto in fashionable Lake Forest, a bullet wound in his head and a .38 calibre revolver on the floor of the car.

A coroner's jury could not determine whether he took his own life — but William bitterly accepted his younger brother's death as suicide.

TEMPER

William can be serene, affable and winning — and he can flare into sudden anger.

He has had many brushes with the law. In 1957 he was stabbed in an Evanston parking lot during a quarrel with a service station attendant; in 1958 he was fined \$50 for shoving a Kenilworth resident out of his way.

He and his wife Louise — a Chicago speech therapist from a neighborhood far less posh than Kenilworth — were arrested for the color photograph theft in Bar Harbor in 1959, before they were married.

In 1964, he was arrested with a University of Arizona graduate student for a series of dynamite explosions near a Tucson radio station, but the charges were dropped when the student declined to testify against him.

He has been accused of such offenses as slugging a waiter in an argument over a

dinner check, and offering to fight another driver after their cars collided.

San Francisco friends said he sometimes drives so fast that he "scares his passengers to death." He told other friends that he wanted his three San Francisco Ferraris insured, but then decided not to pay the premiums, and the policies were canceled.

His Pacific Heights home at 2801 Broadway is equipped with an electrically controlled gate, which can be locked or unlocked from inside the house.

ADDITIONS

After he bought the mansion for a reported \$180,000, he engaged architect George Livermore to draw up plans for improvements including a swimming pool, steam bath — and shooting gallery.

Then he got tired of the project and refused to pay Livermore a \$5000 fee — which the architect is seeking to recover by putting a lien on the house.

One of the more spectacular of Thoresen's extravagances was his purchase of some \$15,000 worth of new clothes for his wife. ("I can never buy things one at a time," he once remarked.)

He told friends that when she tried them on, he didn't like them, and told her to give them away.