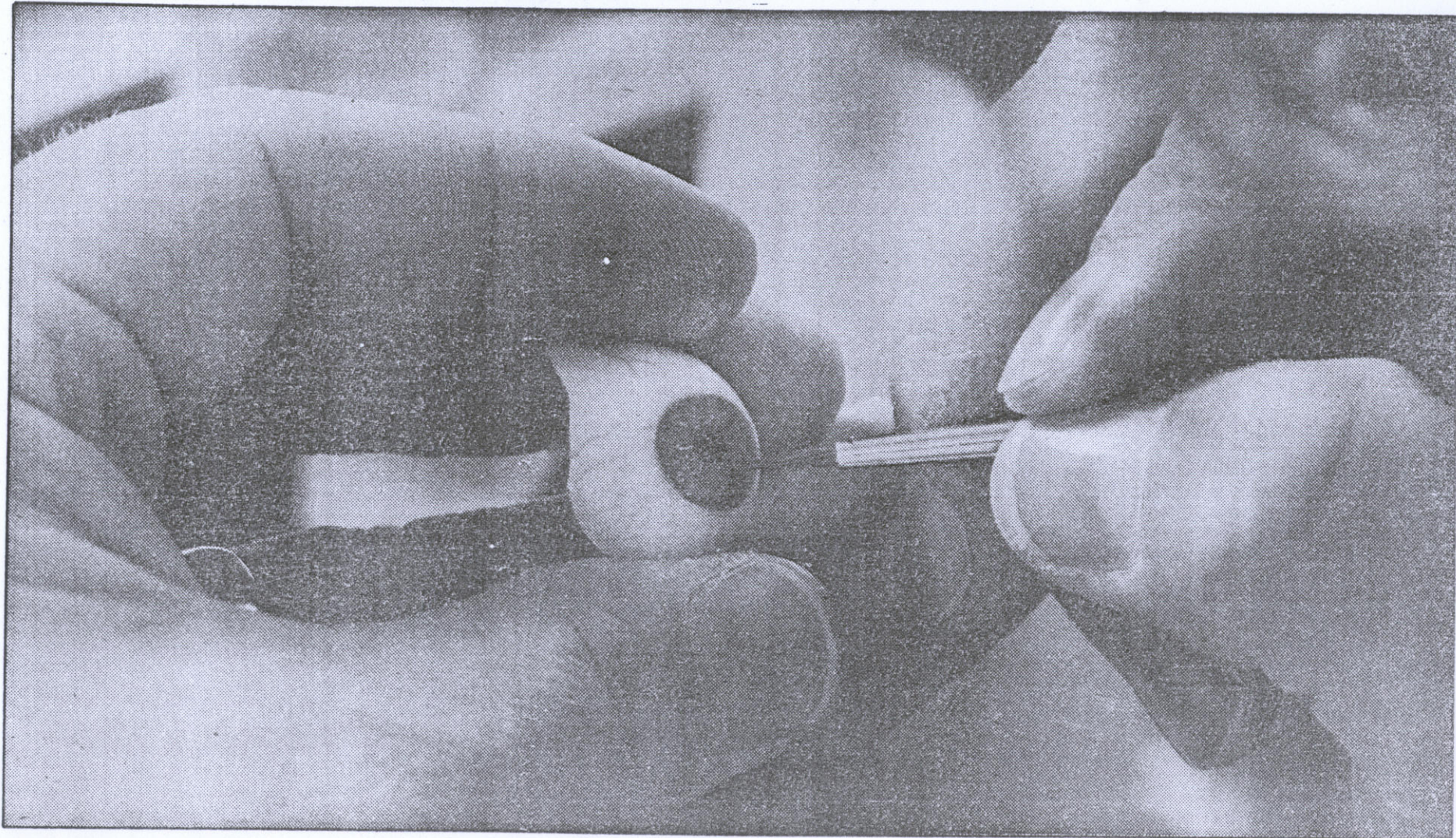


# Lifestyle

CLASSIFIED  
C-5

SECTION C

## *Oakland ocularist gives the lasting look*



Ocularist Steven Young paints his artificial eyes, made of plastic, to resemble the owner's natural one.

By Matthew J. Lee/The Tribune

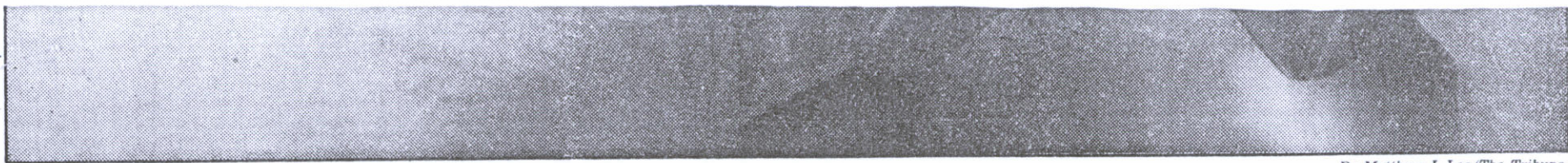
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By Matthew J. Lee/The Tribune

Ocularist Steven Young paints his artificial eyes, made of plastic, to resemble the owner's natural one.

# \* For those in need, his eyes have it

By Lynda Seaver  
The Tribune

IN STEVEN YOUNG'S office, seeing is believing. It's also not believing.

Look closely at any of his clients. Walk away in the aforementioned state of confusion, and Steven Young has done his job. Quite well, thank you.

Young is one of the world's premier ocularists. In less technical terms, he makes eyes. People come from all over the globe to Young's Oakland office to be fit with something that looks as good as the real thing.

The artificial model can move from right to left, up and down — future models may even dilate. The only thing it can't do is see.

But you wouldn't know that unless its owner told you so.

"The point is to be able to look someone square in the eye, so to speak, and not be able to tell that eye is artificial. That's what tells me I've done a good job," Young proclaimed.

In fact, Young says people would be surprised to find just how many people out there are operating on only one lens.

The files of senators, governors and all sorts of politicians fill Young's office. There are TV newspeople, actors and athletes.

*"The point is to be able to look someone square in the eye, so to speak, and not be able to tell that eye is artificial."*

— Ocularist Steven Young

Anonymity is a given.

"I've had people drive up in limousines with instructions to send the bills to consulates," he said. "I had a woman fly her own (Boeing) 727 out here from New York to be fitted with an eye."

He's even done special effects work for filmmaker George Lucas.

Young's business is booming, so much so that he works seven days a week.

"It's not fair to make patients wait any longer than they have to. Losing an eye is devastating," he said in understatement. "The healing process starts and stops with the artificial eye."

Of course, getting a new eye can be quite a

spectacle. Until she met Young, Jeanette Coleman thought she was walking around "looking like a cyclops."

Coleman, a 42-year-old client from Hayward, lost her eye about three months ago. She had been without sight in her right eye for about two years, due to glaucoma.

While she wanted the artificial eye, she said she had seen too many people "who look like headlights. The eye is so obvious that it would probably be better to walk around with an eye patch."

"People see you with a patch and they don't care. But when they see an eye that's so mismatched you know it's fake, they stare."

But Young says that is no longer a problem, thanks to plastics. The age of the glass eye has just about faded into oblivion.

Glass wouldn't mold as well — hence the mismatched shape. Because glass eyes were hollow, they could cause all sorts of problems during periods of temperature extremes.

"The eye would work as a vacuum," Young explained. "People would be outside in the cold, then walk into a warm house and the eye would suddenly explode."

See EYES, Page C-2

John Goodman



Photographers



"Top Hat IV Meets the Phantom of the Opera" is the theme of the annual dinner dance being presented Saturday, Feb. 10, by the Foundation of Fremont's Washington Hospital, and you have to give them points for originality.

To be held at San Francisco's Mark Hopkins Hotel, the event will raise funds for hospital equipment and services.

A mystery phantom is scheduled to appear, but its identity is secret, according to Janet Avila, chairing the event with Shirley Silva and Fran Stone. Meanwhile, guests can look for-

and music by the Scott Brothers. The party is a young professional group of the Northern California Chapter of the Leukemia Society of America. Tickets are \$30, available at the door. Call 553-5441.

*Fun-raising is written by Jan Silverman with reporting assistance from Sandra Charfauros. Send column information to: Fun-raising, Features Dept., PO Box 24424, Oakland, CA 94623. All announcements must be received two weeks prior to the event or deadline for ticket sales.*

## Eyes

*Continued from Page C-1*

A unique conversation starter, to be sure.

"I've heard some nightmarish stories of people walking into ski resorts," Young said.

Young approaches what he does with a sense of humor, which in turn softens his patients' anxiety.

Young explains that plastic can be molded precisely and won't chip or crack should the eye pop out, which can happen on rare occasions.

It can also be painted in such a way to match the exact color of the eye, as well as the blood vessels. Young is also trying to perfect a model that will dilate.

"There's nobody who's any better at what Steve does," said Dr. James Langham, an ophthalmic plastic surgeon in Oakland. Langham, who has been referring patients to Young for about 14 years, says many ocularists simply keep a collec-

tion of "stock eyes," for a sort of Eyes R Us approach.

"They pop the eye in and muck around. Steve's work is tailor-made to the nth degree."

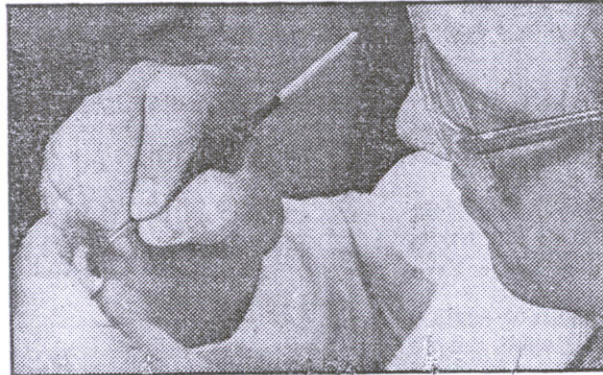
Young is one of about a half-dozen Bay Area ocularists, but he is probably the most popular.

Though he is not a doctor, he is certified by the medical board, a process that takes about five years of study and training. Young said he became fascinated with ocular prostheses while studying to be "your standard doctor" at the University of Iowa Medical Center. An avid painter, he found "this was a happy medium between a hobby and a career."

He graduated in 1974 and came to the Bay Area, where he hooked up with Langham. When Langham moved his offices to another building, Young decided to keep his Pill Hill location.

The fitting of an eye takes about 2½ days with a two-week tuneup and a once-a-year check-up.

"The eye has to be polished. This is really dentistry of the



By Matthew J. Lee/The Tribune

eyes," Young said of his practice. "The eye builds up plaque, just like teeth."

Young makes an impression of the eye with alginate, the same egg-white type glop used by dentists. From that mold eventually comes a wax model and later plastic, which can be grounded and sanded to match the shape of the eye.

It's the grinding process Young hates most, since his fingers usually end up "losing their tread." Young has to hold the eye

against the grinder, which often catches his finger.

He then dots his eyes with the necessary colors of paint and covers it with another layer of plastic. More sanding, grinding and polishing complete the work.

Cost is about \$1,200, and is usually covered by insurance.

"It's a lot of money, but it's worth it," Coleman said. "There are bad eyes out there, but it's the good eyes that make you feel like you are healed."

Steven Young put his talent for painting to work in his profession.

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