

FOR TOMBSTONES

Bad Checks Get Weeper Two Years

John Ernest Austin, 57, a tearful forger who made a practice of swindling tombstone salesmen, Friday pleaded guilty to two cases and got two years in prison.

He admitted passing a fraudulent check for \$110 to the Dave N. Williams Monument Company, 3131 Grand, on Aug. 18, 1951, paying \$51.18 for a tombstone and taking \$58.15 in change.

He also pleaded guilty to giving a phony check to the O'Shea Monument Works on May 17, 1951, paying \$73.50 for a tombstone and taking \$61.50 in cash.

Austin, a melancholy looking fellow, ordered both tombstones for his mother, who he said had died recently.

At the Williams firm, said Asst. Dist. Atty. Clarence Bentley, the defendant went to great pains to specify the kind of monument he wanted, and said he would come by to pick it up later. The company had the tombstone hewn to order before it found that the check was no good.

Bentley said that at the O'Shea firm Austin wept and said, "Mother's Day has already gone by, and I don't want Decoration Day to pass without putting this on her grave." He told Daniel Patrick O'Shea, who waited on him, that he was going right to a florist's shop next door and order some flowers for the grave. But instead he walked off in a hurry, after leaving instructions to have the tombstone shipped.

O'Shea, suspicious, telephoned the bank and found out at once that the check was a swindle.

Criminal Dist. Judge Henry King, who sentenced Austin Friday, directed that his time be served concurrently with a recent two-year sentence from San Antonio for forgery. Bentley said the Alamo City cases also involved monument swindles.

"It seems to have been a fairly good dodge, as check swindles go," observed Bentley. "After all, who would ever think that a man ordering a tombstone for his mother had larceny in his heart?"