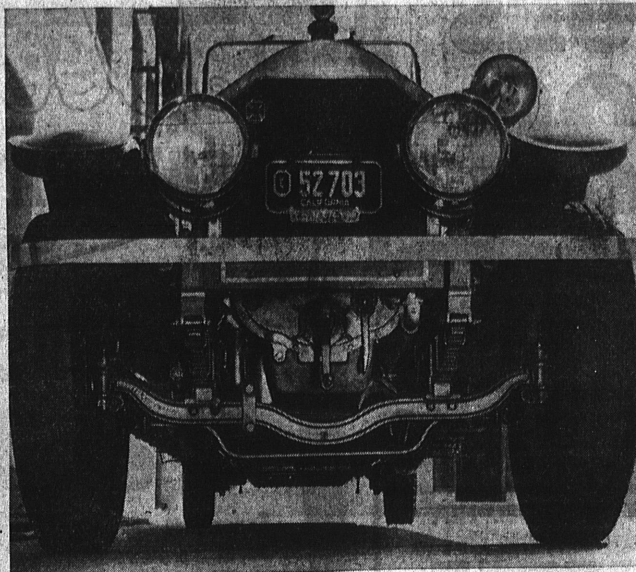


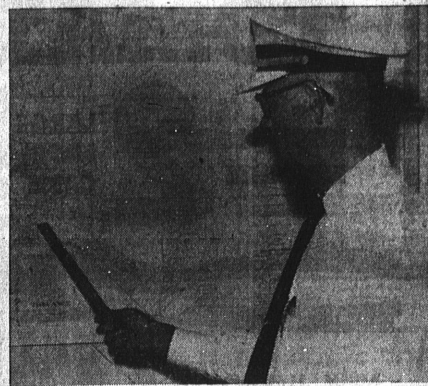
Chances of House Burning Down Best In '53



SULPHUR FIRE . . . Every fireman or exfireman in Torrance helped battle the calamitous fire at United Sulphur Co., as the above photo shows. All the on-duty and off-shift firemen were called to service. Many of the city's volunteer firemen who were in town also helped battle the flames, and even some men who were just former firemen came over and helped. And with all that help, the Torrance Fire Department had just enough men to control the fire.



VINTAGE 1926 . . . The fire wagon shown above rolled off the assembly line in the year 1926. In 1953 it makes an interesting antique but, sadly enough, it is still being used as a piece of fire-fighting equipment by the Torrance Fire Department simply because it's the only ladder truck it has. It is equipped with two wheel, mechanical brakes, and chain drive. Note the crank. A highway patrol check would banish it from the streets on safety rules alone. Chief Benner has called it "A hazard on the roads." Other firemen have been much less gentle in their descriptions of it.



SAFE AND UNSAFE ZONES . . . Fire Chief J. J. Benner points at one of the highest value districts in this city, the Hollywood Riviera section, which lies outside of the areas that the present fire stations can adequately cover (circles). Other large portions of the city also lie unprotected.

First of Series of Three Articles Tells Limitations of Torrance Fire Department

Ed. Note: The City of Torrance is in the unique position of being one of the fastest growing cities in the county. The growth here has been sudden and voluminous, in fact, that the various city departments have not been able to keep up with it. This is the first of a series of three articles on one of the most important of those departments, The Fire Department, designed to acquaint the thousands of new residents of this city with the men and equipment which protect them and their homes. Installments two and three will follow in subsequent issues.

By **MARV HALL**

The chances of having your house burn down this year are better than ever.

And it's not the Torrance Fire Department's fault. Thus far, Fire Chief Jake Benner has done a masterful job of juggling his few firemen and his scanty equipment to save Torrance from a serious conflagration.

How long he can continue to do this, with the present rate of growth here constantly cancelling his efforts, is a matter for grim conjecture.

One of these days, maybe soon, Torrance's luck is going to run out. A few too many fires will break out in a few too many places at the wrong time and homes will be lost and citizens will become justifiably irate and will demand to know "Why?" Others will investigate—and find out "Why."

They'll learn that Torrance, a city of 40,000 people, is being "protected" by a Fire Department which is only large enough to protect a city half the size of this one.

Let's look at the sad facts.

Firemen Too Few
It is a sad fact that the present personnel of the Fire Department—40 men—was not considered large enough to protect this city in 1951, when the population was 10,000 less than it now.

According to state law, Torrance is 25 men under the minimum required for adequate fire protection. Now, with men taking summer vacations, plus the fact that each man takes one day off per week, the situation becomes even more serious.

At the WALTERIA station, the highest number of men ever on duty is four. With one man on vacation and the other three al-

though to douse only the smallest grass fires. In service at the main station is an antiquated 1926 ladder truck with two-wheel brakes, which have prompted Chief Benner to call it a "hazard on the roads." Its pump, when new—27 years ago—pumped 600 gallons per minute. Right now, you could practically wash your hair under it. There is one fireman manning it, while there should be eight.

Also on duty at the main station is a GMC grass wagon with a 500-gallon pumper and a 400-gallon tank. This particular vehicle was taken to the infamous sulphur fire at United Sulphur Co., but its top pump did little to quell the roaring inferno, according to firemen.

The Brighter Side
Bright lights, equipment-wise, are the two 1949 Mack trucks, one at the main station, and one at WALTERIA. These are both 750-gallon pumpers—heavy duty firefighters.

Another encouraging thing is the fact that the City Council, recognizing the need for new fire-fighting equipment, has allocated money in the budget for the purchase of a new \$23,000, 1250-gallon pumping fire engine. The city has obtained \$5,775 in Civil Defense aid to add toward the purchase of this engine.

Still, Chief Benner estimates that he needs at least eight additional fire trucks, plus a rescue outfit to protect the city. However, he wonders where he would put them if he had them. The present facilities are cramped.

Substations Needed
Thus, we come to a third sad fact. The total area of Torrance is 13.88 square miles. This gigantic area is covered by a grand total of three fire stations, six trucks, 40 firemen.

According to the National Board of Fire Underwriters, who set the insurance rates for all cities, no run of a fire truck to travel as far as 6, 6.5, 6.4, 5, 5.1, 4.5, and 4.1 miles through traffic JUST TO GET TO THE BEACH to fill in here, and a Redondo, rescue outfit was also brought here to help.

Woodpile Fire Chars 2 Garages

Fire in a woodpile between Mrs. Herbert Robinson, of 1638 Greenwood Ave., and Mrs. Nancy Hortel, of 1636 Greenwood Ave., did considerable damage to the two structures shortly after noon yesterday.

Damaged was the double garage used by Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Cannon and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Overland, who live in a duplex at 2873 and 2877 Carson St. Charred along one side also was another double garage used by the residents of another duplex.

Firemen are still investigating to determine the cause of the fire.

Grass fires are extremely prevalent in summer months. If a grass fire had broken out during the Sulphur fire, Chief Benner said, in WALTERIA or Hollywood Riviera, it could have swept into homes and caused untold damage before fire trucks could have gotten there. Luckily, this did not happen.

Nothing could have been done about a fire at that time except by Redondo Beach, since all the local trucks were intricately engaged in putting out the Sulphur fire—with hose laid and connected, streets blocked, etc.

(To Be Continued)

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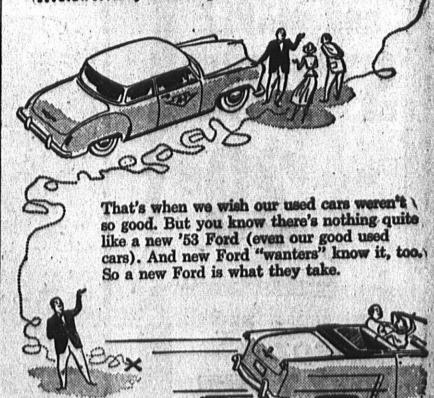


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