

D.A. Begins Police Probe

CHIEF'S RESIGNATION IS URGED BY PRESS

An Editorial

Events of the past few weeks have brought an unhealthy situation into such sharp focus that it can no longer be ignored.

The obvious moral decay and low morale in the city's police department are direct results of an infection that has been allowed to fester too long.

What is lacking in the police department is a firm hand at the helm to give direction to the many fine, able, dedicated and courageous officers the city is proud to have its service.

IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE—and this newspaper, which has always led the fight for clean city government, can not keep silent.

We have a basic obligation to inform our readers of this dangerous situation and to urge major IMMEDIATE corrective steps.

Police Chief Percy Bennett should resign at once and pave the way for a leader who can inspire a new excellent personnel of the police department to devote its full time to its chosen task of protecting the peace and preserving law and order in this fast-growing, complex community of ours.

This would end the jockeying for power, the personal frictions and the undercurrents of dissatisfaction and unrest in the department.

It would also end such shenanigans that are not in the public interest as the foolish and ill-advised attempt dictated by the chief to conceal for two days, and possibly indefinitely, had not The Press alertly pushed for full public disclosure, the minor deflection of an officer.

This is symptomatic of the moral decay in the department—stemming directly from leadership.

POLICE PROBE ON; 3rd OFFICER NAMED

Investigators from the district attorney's office today were in the second day of their intensive investigation of the Torrance police department, its personnel and their activities.

The probe was launched in the wake of three recent arrests of Torrance police officers.

Roger L. Jacobson, 25, and Robert W. Keith, 26, were arrested July 6 in Los Angeles in connection with a \$1,700 holdup outside a bank, and are awaiting trial.

Sgt. Ralph A. Walker, a 13-year veteran with a "perfect record," was arrested Saturday afternoon in connection with an early Thursday morning burglary of a local doctor's office.

Denied Knowledge

Torrance police, including Chief Percy Bennett, steadfastly denied knowledge of any crime involving a third Torrance officer until Friday afternoon, nearly 36 hours after the crime, and nearly 30 hours after Walker reportedly admitted involvement in the burglary at 22509 Kent St.

Walker, who lives at 22322 Kent Ave., was sought from 4 p.m. Friday, when the district attorney issued a complaint on one count of burglary, until he surrendered at 2 p.m. Saturday, saying he had been in Crestline and had read in the newspapers that he was wanted.

Walker had been suspended Thursday morning and submitted a letter of resignation.

He was booked Saturday and released in \$1,050 bail. He will be arraigned Friday in Judge William B. Keene's Torrance court.

Incident Recounted

Walker's arrest followed this incident, police said:

Early Thursday morning officers Vince Davey and Bruce Randall, cruising in a car, noticed a torn screen

and glass removed from a window at the Kent Street doctor's office.

They checked the building, and noticed a man run out and across a field. They fired at the suspect, who dropped to the ground. They approached but couldn't find anyone.

Moments later a man approached them, disheveled, and identified himself as Walker. He said he had heard the shooting, and came over to assist.

He was brought in for questioning and hours later according to police, admitted he had been involved in the break-in.

There was no entry noting either his admission or involvement, nor his suspension or resignation in the police blotter or arrest records file as late as 2 p.m. Friday, and police denied any knowledge of the case.

Investigation Admitted

Under heavy questioning from The Press, it was finally admitted that the department's internal affairs unit had been investigating and finally decided to seek a complaint. The Press was told by a high city official that the department originally had planned to seek Walker's dismissal from the force, and presumably was unwilling to prosecute another officer if it could be avoided.

The district attorney's staff sent a team of five to Torrance yesterday and met with city manager Wade Peebles, Chief Bennett and two members of the city council's police committee. They then began their investigation but gave no indication of its scope or duration.

The investigators headed by Lt. Col. James E. Bigler, chief of the district attorney's bureau of investigation, will conduct the investigation. (Continued on Page A14)

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LITTLE LEAGUE
PLAYOFF RESULTS
(See Sports)



POLICE CHIEF PERCY BENNETT
He's Urged to Resign His Post

Police Shakeup Is Hinted

Torrance city council last night endorsed the district attorney's sudden investigation of the Torrance police department, but expressed some reservations as to method.

A possible shakeup in the police department was hinted by Councilman Nick Drale, who said "It may be necessary to reorganize the police department. It may be having growing pains."

"Perhaps the sheriff's office will lend us a man to study the department and offer suggestions."

'Everyone Concerned'

Drale said "Everyone on the council is concerned, but I take issue with some of Bowler's statements." He was referring to quoted remarks of Manley J. Bowler, chief deputy district attorney, whose announcement of the investigation Monday night implied, according to the council, that there might be serious problems in the police department.

Councilman Jay Beasley said "It might be well to call Bowler in to discuss the

MORE RACIAL MOVES THREATENED BY CORE

The threat of new racial demonstrations against developer Don Wilson in the Southwood Riviera Royale tract was raised this week by CORE (Congress of Racial Equality), although the National Assn. for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) indicated it was taking a "wait and see" attitude.

CORE charged Wilson with failing to live up to the agreement to sell to a Negro and other conditions following a meeting July 12 with CORE and NAACP officials.

Accepted Check

Wilson had accepted a \$500 check from Negro attorney Odis Jackson, but announced that there were prior deposits on the 20 or so remaining homes in the tract, and that Jackson would have to await withdrawal of one of the deposits or failure of one of the potential buyers to qualify financially.

Wilson was reported by another paper as stating that Jackson's check had failed to clear the bank, but Jackson told The Press last night that the check was never presented, and that his bank in Santa Monica said no check for \$500 had been presented, turned back or paid, and that no check had been refused payment by his bank. He said his account has never had less than \$600 in it since he gave Wilson the check.

Jackson said he had tried to reach Wilson by phone when he heard the story but had been unable to do so. This paper also was unable to reach Wilson, and cannot confirm either that the check was presented or that Wilson stated the check had not cleared.

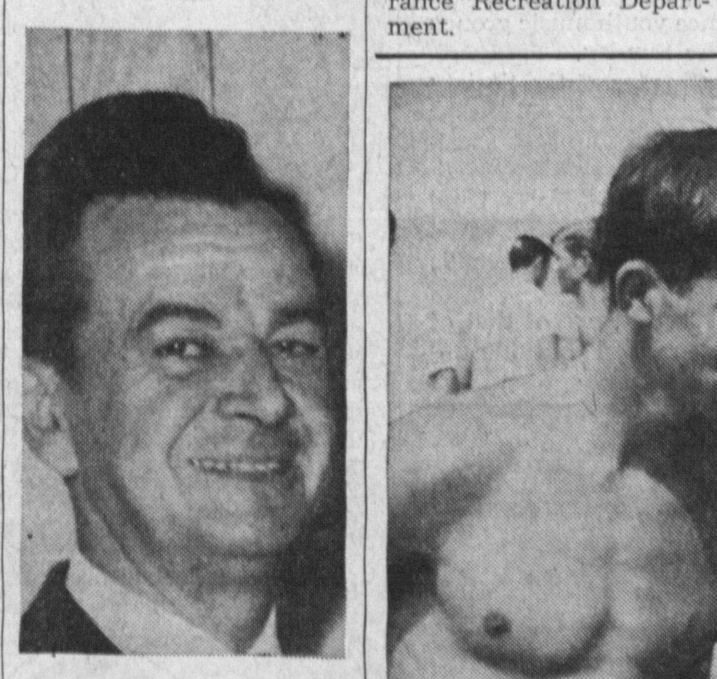
CORE, meanwhile, which only offered brief token picketing Saturday and none Sunday at the Wilson office in the Southwood tract, charged that Caucasian buyers sent to the tract had been offered homes for sale.

CORE indicated through spokesman Sylvia Richards it is ready to resume demonstrations at the Southwood tract. But NAACP leader Dr. George Taylor said he wants to meet with CORE before his group decides what to do.

She'll Rule Rodeo



RODEO QUEEN — Rita Hancock, 16-year-old representative of the Waleria Businessmen's Assn., will be queen of the RCA Rodeo Aug. 3-4 that winds up the gala five-day Rancho Days fete co-sponsored by the Torrance Mounted Police and the Torrance Junior Chamber. Rita was selected last night on the basis of ticket sales by herself and her sponsors. She will ride a horse in the grand entry both days of the rodeo. Booths, carnival and games all five days at the site next to the Del Amo shopping center are scheduled in the ninth annual event. Princesses will be Charlene Forsythe, North Torrance Lions, Margaret Thomas, Wilmington Caballeros, and Gaye Kirkland, Torrance Junior Chamber. —PRESS photo.



APPOINTED — Kenneth Peters, president of the Torrance-Lomita Board of Realtors, has been named to the California Real Estate Assn.'s nominating committee, announced L. H. Wilson, association president. As a member of the committee, Peters will assist in selection of candidates for state office during forthcoming CREA convention to be held in Los Angeles this fall.

College Rift Erupts in PV

Opposition to the location of the new state college on the Palos Verdes Peninsula — first reported a week ago in The Press — crystallized yesterday.

At a meeting Monday night of the Rolling Hills Estates city council, that body, previously favoring the location of the college in and near their community, put up its back at the attitudes of state officials.

The officials, from the state department of public finance and the state colleges' planning facilities, indicated they would probably have to use a large portion of the city's scientific research zone (SRD) for the college. This will be firmly opposed, councilmen indicated, as it would heavily affect the city's projected tax base.

One councilman, Paul Gilmore, said "I think we were talking to the wrong people; it was just like sitting on the bow of a boat and spitting into the wind."

Meanwhile, Torrance city council last night decided to send letters to Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills and Rolling Hills Estates. (Continued on Page A14)



SURFER JAY RICHARDS, 16, of Rolling Hills, who rescued another 16-year-old boy, Raye Fore, also of Rolling Hills, from Torrance Beach surf yesterday, tells Torrance officer Raymond Ouellette how he pulled out Fore, who fell off front end of his surfboard, and hit bottom, head-first. Fore was rushed to South Bay Hospital, where he is reported resting in satisfactory condition today. He was in surgery yesterday for 2 1/2 hours. Fore sustained a broken neck, shock and concussion, but will recover, hospital sources said. —PRESS photo by Mitch Major.

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