

Man Dies In Christmas Morning Gas Heater Blast

EDITED in Torrance — PRINTED in Torrance — OWNED by Torrance Folks — SINCE 1914

TORRANCE HERALD

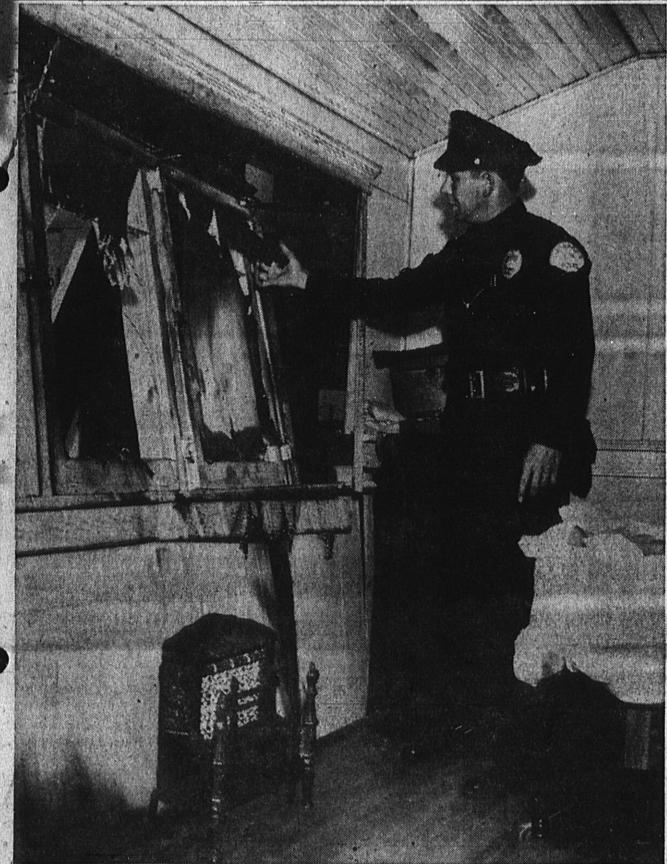
35th YEAR—No. 52

TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA — THURSDAY DECEMBER 29, 1949

Sixteen Pages



One Shot, Three Jailed in Bizarre Holiday Gun Play



FATAL BLAST SCENE . . . Officer John Maestri standing near heater believed responsible for a Christmas morning blast which killed a Granbery avenue resident, inspects damage to wall of home. Herald Photo

Shipyard Guard Dies Two Hours After Explosion Wrecks Home

Due to arrive in New York by air this morning is the body of Thomas D. Condon, boat yard guard, who was killed in a gas heater explosion on Christmas morning.

The 50-year-old employee of the Harbor Boat Building Company died of shock at the Harbor General Hospital about an hour after he was severely burned when he attempted to light a leaking gas heater in his small apartment at 1719 1/2 Granbery avenue.

The blast which rocked the neighborhood at 8:16 a.m. Christmas morning was so intense one wall of the building was knocked out and several windows broken.

Intense heat of the single blast was so hot the paint on the ceiling throughout the entire house was blistered. Bristles on brushes in the next room were burned to the handle base.

Condon, a resident here for the past ten years, was thrown across the room by the force of the blast. The skin on his legs was blistered from his shin bones. When police arrived he was sitting in a chair waiting for aid.

"Isn't this a fine thing to have happen on Christmas?" he was quoted as saying to Officer John Maestri of the Torrance Police Department.

He was rushed to the Harbor General Hospital by Sullivan's Ambulance. Hospital attendants said he died of shock.

Stone and Myers, in charge of shipping the remains to relatives in New York, stated that there were no known relatives of the special officer living here.

Man Slugged, Robbed Here

Four unidentified assailants early Saturday morning slugged and robbed Benny Montegno, 18344 El Nido avenue, as the man left a cafe at 1327 Cabrillo avenue.

The attack, which occurred in an alley behind the cafe, netted the quartet \$40 and the remainder of the contents of Montegno's billfold, according to police reports.

Montegno told police he was leaving the cafe at 3:25 a.m. when he was stopped by three sailors and a civilian who beat him up and looted his pockets.

Public Invited to Jaycee Party in No. Torrance

It's "Howdy Stranger" tonight at the Torrance Junior Chamber of Commerce's "Get Acquainted Party" in the Higgin's Brick Patio, 2317 West 174th street.

Val Milletich, chairman of the party committee, announced there would be dancing, refreshments and door prizes donated by Torrance merchants.

The party is free and the public is invited, Milletich reported.

'All Quiet' Here Despite Heavy U.S. Traffic Toll

While the rest of the Southland and the nation was caught in its usual Yuletide frenzy of traffic accidents, Torrance motorists escaped last weekend without a scratch. Not a single traffic accident was reported here; there was only one instance of reported drunken driving.

Local Youth Takes Rifle Slug in Foot

A Yule celebration that began Christmas Day ended the next morning with three local men in jail—one in the hospital with a bullet wound in the foot.

Booked in San Pedro on suspicion of burglary were: Cureton W. "Doc" Simmons, owner of "Doc's Fountain" at 2203 Torrance boulevard.

Jim O'Toole, 20, temporary postal employee and son of a rural route carrier, Mrs. Margaret O'Toole, 1225 Madrid avenue.

Sam M. Intermill, 23, of 1018 West 256th street, Harbor City.

Young O'Toole was treated at the jail hospital for a bullet wound in the foot after he received a 22 cal slug said to have been fired from a rifle by Melecio Dellotta, manager of a harbor rooming house.

Still another man, John Lee McCoy who gave his address as Los Angeles was also booked as the result of the Yule celebration fracas.

It began said San Pedro detectives when the three men approached McCoy seeking his advice on the location of late hour entertainment. McCoy is said to have offered his services for \$20. One of the trio is said to have passed the money to McCoy who went into Dellotta's rooming house, telling the trio to wait outside.

After waiting quite a while and seeing no sign of McCoy, the \$20, or a signal of a raised and lowered window shade from within the house, the trio are then said to have entered the

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Prizes Awarded To Yule Home Decor Winners

First prizes in the Torrance Terrace Garden Club Christmas home lighting contest were awarded this week to the L. J.

Armstrong family at 1633 Juniper avenue and to the George L. Proberts at 1423 El Prado. Prizes were poinsettia plants.

The prize-winning Armstrong home was gaily decorated with three-foot imitation candles at the doorway and a lighted Yule tree stood in the window. In another window, a shadowgram depicted a Bible scene.

The Probert home was embellished by a four-foot replica of Santa Claus poised for entry into the chimney.

Mrs. Albert Ewalt, a garden club member, won the president's floral award inasmuch as members were not eligible for entry into the general contest. Mrs. Ewalt's home is at 1622 West 215th street.

Torrance's night before Christmas was just as it should have been.

So said Chief of Police John H. Stroh this week as he surveyed the surprisingly light "damages" which resulted from the holiday weekend.

Although the local police force was out in full strength to prevent any misdirection of Yuletide merrymaking, only one case of drunken driving was reported. Generally, everybody had a good time and didn't get into mischief, the Chief declared.

The dubious distinction of being Torrance's lone candidate for operating an auto while in tipsy condition went to Jose Luna, 4380 West 182nd street. Luna was released on \$150 bail pending a hearing before City Judge Otto B. Willett today. With Luna were Louie Martinez, 212 Sepulveda boulevard, and Joe Torres, 298 Arlington avenue. Both were charged with riding in a car in a drunken condition and were released on \$25 bail.

Teen Age Dance Postponed Until Next Thursday

Because many of the city's teenagers are out of town during the Christmas holidays, the regular Thursday night Teen Age Dance at the VFW Hall will be postponed until January 5.

Fill It Up!



(HOUR GLASS FILLER . . .) Frances Barrington, former Torrance Queen, and now a Junior at Mills College, scoops Father time by the bucketful as she replenishes the sands of time on Torrance Beach. Special Photo Effect by Lee Weinstein

Fire Causes Much Smoke, Small Damage

Fire, which caused much smoke but minor damage, was reported at the American Rock Wool plant, 401 Arlington avenue, at 5 p.m. Monday.

The blaze occurred in a machine which spreads liquid asphalt on paper, and portions of two rolls of paper were burned at an estimated loss of \$25.

Yule Post Office Records Crumble

More than 71,000 letters were cancelled at the Torrance Post Office December 19 to add to the record-breaking total of postal activity for the year, acting Postmaster Louis H. Deininger said this week. The local post office head ex-

pects that last year's record-smashing total is to be exceeded by \$4000-\$5000 when a final tally of postal receipts is taken.

He said that although most of the 42 extra employees hired for the Yule rush had been dismissed, the post office "was still going strong on Tuesday."

Thirteen vehicles were rented to help deliver the record mail load.

Aiding also, said Deininger, was the Post Office Annex located in the former location of the Torrance Herald and the Drive-in service also in the same building. He said the public received them well and by making extensive use of the facilities reduced the load at the main post office.

An average of 1000 insured packages were handled daily during the peak of the Christmas mailing rush, Deininger said.

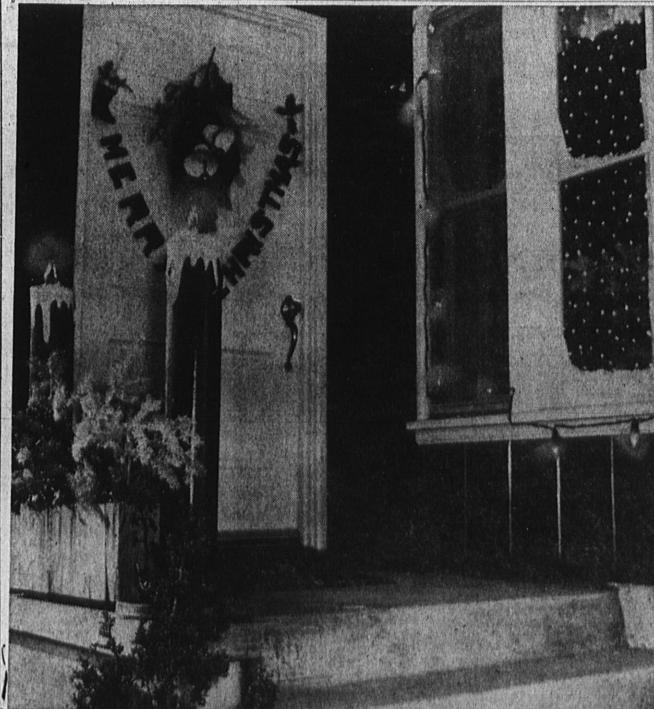
Robert Sleeth, Waleria substation postmaster, also reported a record-breaking Yule season.

Lt. Gov. Knight Will Address Joint-Club Meet

Lt. Governor Goodwin Knight has accepted an invitation to speak at a joint meeting of all Torrance service clubs to be held sometime in the latter part of March or early April.

The meeting, which will be larger and similar to an event held this year, will include the four major service clubs, Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, and Optimists. The Toastmasters club also will participate.

Lt. General Ira C. Eaker was speaker at the joint meeting held this summer. Actual date for the 1950 event will not be set until the first of April. The meeting probably will be held in the Civic Auditorium.



YULE WINNER . . . L. J. Armstrong's home at 1633 Juniper avenue took one of two top awards in last week's Torrance Terrace Garden Club Christmas Home Light Contest. Herald Photo

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