

# TWO WORKERS DEAD, FOUR HOSPITALIZED HERE AFTER BREATHING STYRENE FUMES

## Walker Resigns Chamber of Commerce Post

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24 PAGES

# Nab Double Murder Suspect Here After Beach Slaying

## 2163 New Homes Go Up in '51

Building permits for 2163 single unit houses were issued during the past year by the city, the City Engineer's office revealed.

Single units again topped the list of permits issued. In contrast, only two duplexes, one triplex, and one four-unit apartment house were built.

Overall building in Torrance was more than \$3,000,000 less than for 1950, the figures show. The 1951 city building total amounted to \$12,805,814. The previous year—a record high—\$16,009,783 was recorded.

The past month of December, 1951, recorded less than 10 per cent of the building business that took place in the previous December.

Next most popular type of structure erected in the past year was private garages, with permits being issued for 563.

Also included in the permit list were 18 stores and office buildings, 15 industrial and manufacturing buildings, 17 school buildings, 2 churches, 11 service stations, and a public library.

Other structures granted permits included a poultry house, 8 greenhouses, a bunk house, and an airplane hangar.

A total of 3128 permits were issued for new buildings during the year. Another 272 permits were granted for alterations to residential and non-residential buildings.

## Blaine Walker Resigns C of C Position Here

The resignation of Blaine Walker as executive secretary of the Torrance Chamber of Commerce was accepted unanimously by the Board of Directors here yesterday evening.

The board accepted Walker's resignation with regret and directed that a letter of appreciation be sent to the 65-year-old secretary who had been here during the boom years of the city.

Mrs. Gladys Tucker Walker's secretary, was named acting secretary of the Chamber until a permanent successor could be selected.

Asked what he intended to do after he left the post he had held since 1945, Walker said: "I'm going to look after some of my own interests, which have been neglected lately." He has extensive real estate holdings in Torrance and throughout Southern California.

Walker came here in 1945 from Culver City, where he had been president-manager of the Chamber of Commerce for two years. Prior to that he had spent nearly 18 years in the newsreel industry, spending 15 years of the time with Fox Movietone. At the time of his retirement he was Pacific Coast editor of the newsreel company.

During his career in the newsreel business, Walker covered most major news events west of the Rocky Mountains between 1918 and 1933.

He and Mrs. Walker now make their home in Newport Beach.

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BLAINE WALKER  
... Leaves Chamber Post

## 40th Standing By

# Guardsmen May See Korea Action Soon

Reports persisted today that the 40th National Guard Division, which includes the local 578th Engineers, will be sent into combat in Korea soon if truce talks fail to bring peace.

Giving substance to the reports was the revelation by the Army that the 40th National Guard Division from Oklahoma is now in action on the fighting front.

The 40th still is in Japan, an Army spokesman was quoted as saying. However, it may go into combat soon, he revealed.

A Korean truce, however,

## 3 Cars Collide On 'Murder Mile'

A three-car accident at Pacific Coast highway and Hawthorne boulevard, the "Gateway to Murder Mile," last week brought painful injuries to one of the drivers.

Treated at Harbor General Hospital for cuts and bruises was Augustin LeFarge, 23, of Hermosa Beach.

Drivers of the other cars involved were listed as Robert L. Gish, 24, of 3120 Dalemead street, Waveria, and Hamilton McKelvey, 24, of San Diego.

would change the Army's present rotation plans. Even with the truce, the 40th might be sent to Korea as an occupation force, it was pointed out.

Under present plans, according to authorities the 40th would not be split up to provide replacements for regular Army divisions.

However, the policy is to replace individuals in the division after 24 months of service. This system would provide a rotation plan within the division but retain the identity of the unit.

The 587th Combat Engineers trained at Torrance Municipal Airport prior to being called up with the 40th on Sept. 1, 1950.

Last spring, the unit was sent to Japan for "training and security purposes."

If the Guardsmen are sent to Korea, the first official word will come from the headquarters of General Matthew B. Ridgway, the theater commander.

## Alert Police Nab Suspected Slayer of Two

A 34-year-old aircraft worker is being held in Santa Monica jail today on suspicion of murdering two women, after his capture here early Sunday morning by alert Torrance police.

The suspect, Merton Charles Misener, was picked up by Torrance police officers Jesse Holmes, Nolan Robison, and Thomas Pattishall after he had left \$2130 in cash on the doorstep of a friend, Wallace E. Miller, at 1614 Cota avenue here.

Complaints charging Misener with the killing of Mrs. Abbe Symington, 42, and Mrs. Margaret Cramer, 31, and with the assault with a deadly weapon upon Paul M. Beck, 49, were expected to have been filed yesterday, Santa Monica police indicated.

Misener is accused of the acts during a wild party in Santa Monica.

The shootings reportedly took place at about 3 a.m. Sunday morning. Santa Monica police notified the Torrance station, going on the assumption that Misener might attend to contact Miller, with whom he formerly lived.

Patrolman Ted Morris, on duty at the Torrance police desk, dispatched three officers to keep a watch on the Cota avenue apartment house.

Shortly before 7 a.m. Misener appeared at the Miller house. Denied admittance by Miller, Misener then dropped the \$2130 in cash on the doorstep, requesting that Miller send it to his wife and two small children in Portland, Me.

Misener was picked up by the three Torrance officers near Carson street and Martina avenue. He was not armed and offered no resistance, the officers said.

"What happened in Santa Monica?" Officer Holmes asked Misener as the arrest was made. "You tell me," Misener replied.

Santa Monica police immediately came to Torrance to take over custody of the suspect. They reported that Beck, in serious condition in a hospital, positively identified Misener as his assailant. Beck is suffering from knife and bullet wounds.

The two women, both nurses in a Santa Monica sanitarium, where Beck's wife is a patient, were killed by pistol shots. A .25 caliber pistol was found near the bungalow where the shootings took place.

Local police officers said that Misener would neither confirm nor deny the acts. All he would say was "maybe" to questions put to him by Torrance officers.

Misener had \$48.97 in cash on him at the time of the arrest. The Torrance police said that he was calm during the time he spent in jail here. He posed willingly for photographs.

## Tartar Cagers Bow

Torrance High dropped a close 33-38 decision to Narbonne yesterday in a practice basketball game in Lomita. The Torrance Bees won the prelim, 46-44.



DOESN'T SEEM WORRIED... Murder suspect Merton C. Misener, center, apparently seems unperturbed about the whole thing as he is pictured here with Officers Jesse Holmes and Thomas Pattishall after his arrest in Torrance Sunday morning. Misener was taken into custody on suspicion of killing two Santa Monica women and wounding a man in Santa Monica shortly before his arrest here.

# Crew Cleaning Styrene Tank Overcome by Fumes

Two Midland Rubber Company employees are dead and four others are in Torrance Memorial Hospital today after they were overcome with deadly styrene fumes at the synthetic rubber plant here yesterday morning.

Dead are George Williams, 40 of Inglewood, and George Jumper of Los Angeles. Hospitalized are Kei Kojima, 20, of Long Beach; Earl K. Brown, 27, of Los Angeles; Ben Fulson, Los Angeles and Johnny Roberson, 20, of Lawndale.

## County Seeks Old Alcoa Site For Warehouse

Negotiations for the Columbia Steel Company's property located at 180th and Normandie cropped up on a new front this week when the County Board of Supervisors approved a motion by Supervisor Raymond V. Darby to issue instructions for negotiations with United States Steel Company for purchase of the 240-acre plant.

The supervisors cited the county's urgent need for warehouse and storage facilities in granting the request.

Meanwhile, it was learned here that an aircraft company may have similar designs on the plant, which was formerly operated by Alcoa. Unconfirmed reports that Douglas Aircraft Company had been negotiating for the site, continued to circulate here yesterday. United States Steel officials could not be reached for comment.

## 5 Tots Start Life With '52

Five new babies entered the world on New Year's day at Torrance Memorial Hospital.

First baby of the year born in Torrance was a baby daughter, yet unnamed, to Mr. and Mrs. Julian C. Alvarez, 16953 Haldale. The child arrived at 12:28 a.m. on the first day of the year.

Next in line came a baby girl, named Dairde Gale, to Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Clelland of Wilmington. The Clelland baby was clocked in at 11:13 a.m.

Mr. and Mrs. Theodore A. Eyriek of Long Beach became the third set of parents of 1952 at 7:57 p.m. Mrs. Eyriek gave birth to a boy, who is still unnamed.

Last new baby of the new year was Robert John Duran, born to Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Duran at 9:55 p.m. The Durans live at 2119 West 203rd street.

Company officials reported that Jumper and Kojima were working in a reactor tank—a huge styrene tank used in the process of making synthetic rubber—when they noticed styrene fumes.

Both attempted to leave the tank, but only Kojima was successful in getting out. Jumper was overcome before he could reach the hatchway, and he fell back into the tank, unconscious.

Williams, an operator who was working nearby, donned a mask and went into the tank to bring Jumper out. When rescuers got to the pair, Williams' mask had been removed. Officials were unable to explain why his mask was off.

Efforts of emergency rescue squads to revive Williams and Jumper were unsuccessful.

Brown, Fulson and Roberson were hospitalized after they had become stricken with the deadly fumes as they attempted to assist in the rescue operations.

It was Roberson who helped get Kojima out in time to save him from the deadly gas, witnesses say.

The Midland Company is located at 180th and Vermont avenues. During World War II it was operated for the government by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. It is now a subsidiary of the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company.

## Thomas Named Demo Delegate

One of two delegates to the national Democratic convention in Chicago from the 17th Congressional District will be Vincent Thomas, local assemblyman.

Thomas and I. H. Hawkins of Redondo Beach were elected last week by the Los Angeles County Central Democratic Committee.

## Residents Urged To Vote 'Yes' On Water Issue

Urgently recommended by city officials, leading industrialists, and civic leaders as a vital step in the future development of Torrance, voters will cast their ballots on a proposed \$2,000,000 water improvement program next Tuesday, January 8. Polls in 31 precincts throughout the entire city will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Included in the two million dollar modernization program are a 10,000,000 gallon reservoir for the entire system, a 1,000,000 gallon tank and booster station at 174th and Yukon avenue in North Torrance, a well and chlorination station at Ocean and Hawthorne avenue in Waveria, a new regulator station at 190th street and Western avenue, a new connection with the Colorado River Aqueduct, and a new 24-inch pipeline along Crenshaw boulevard, which will become the "backbone" of the entire consolidated water system.

Provided for also are many new feeder mains and connections to unify the three former water district systems into one efficient system, which will be known as "Municipal Water District No. 3."

Costs of the entire improvement will be paid out of water department revenues, according to city officials, without any increase in property taxes. It will, however, be necessary to make certain adjustments in water rates, according to James Montgomery, widely recognized hydro-engineer, who was in charge of designing the modernization plans following two years of study.

A big portion of the money needed to pay off the two million dollar bond issue will be collected from industries, which are the big consumers of water, according to city officials.

The balance of the bond retirement funds will come from small increases in residential water rates, City Manager George W. Stevens states. "The most that the typical home owner will pay will be 4 1/2 cents a day for the average family of four or five. In some areas of the city, like North Torrance and South Torrance, where the water rates are already somewhat higher than in Central Torrance, the

(Continued on Page 3)

# What Water Means To You

AN EDITORIAL  
by

City Manager George Stevens

On January 8, the people of Torrance will be asked to vote "yes" for more water tanks, more mains, and more water pumps for the City of Torrance.

I feel that a statement of the importance of water in the daily lives of the people of Torrance is appropriate at this time.

The new water distribution system will be a guarantee of a dependable water supply for the homes, farms, business establishments, and industries of our city. It will improve and protect the only water supply we can count on for continued growth and prosperity.

The new water system will stabilize property values, will encourage high employment, will bring about industrial expansion.

Our new water facilities will offer better fire protection for your home and your family.

The present water distribution system of Torrance was designed for a city of 8500 people. Today Torrance has a population of 31,000, and is expected to have 90,000 by 1960.

Water is the giver of life. It can play the roll of servant of man or his master. It is up to us to decide which. Today much of our city's water is brought over hundreds of miles of waste land to our cities. We have an abundance of it available to us but we do not have the tanks, the mains, and the pumps to bring it to our homes and factories in the quantity we need.

As a resident of Torrance, you can provide for the safety and prosperity of your city by voting "yes" for water next Tuesday, January 8.