

Progress Report: Oil Field Mess Disappearing

By BOB WILTON
Herald Staff Writer

Whereas oil was big business in Torrance following its discovery in 1921, it has become a headache to city officials in recent years with the bulk of the area changing from open land to residential and commercial development.

As tract homes replaced the farms, oil fields became islands in a sea of houses and the old-fashioned derricks, machinery sheds, storage tanks, and oil sumps were now obnoxious to new land owners.

With these changing times the 650 free-flowing wells of the oil production peak era in Torrance dwindled and today 443 of the 503 existing wells average between four and six barrels of crude per day and the increased value of land has cast an economic shadow over the fields that once brought fortunes in black gold out of subterranean Torrance.

In 1951 George Powell, Torrance Planning

Director, first drafted a city ordinance, No. 440, directing a clean-up of conditions existing at the wells now nestled among dwellings in the rapidly growing city and along busy thoroughfares.

It was not until 1959 that a new ordinance was submitted to city council and the actual program was launched.

Powell said he had prepared this ordinance after studying ones in use in Long Beach, Signal Hill, and Inglewood. He added that this city's present oil well ordinance was so well drafted that many other cities have requested copies to use as guides in preparing their own laws.

That the ordinance is a good one is proved by the fact that 95 per cent of the oil men in the Torrance area have cooperated with the clean-up program. Of the original total of 650 wells 53 non-productive units have been razed leaving seven on the condemned list. Thirty-nine oil sumps have been reclaimed and

but one in the Crenshaw and 239th St. area is left to be filled. The State Water Pollution Board has assisted in the removal of salt water occurring with oil through county sewer lines and at this time no brine is discharged on open ground, Powell said.

Powell was also definite in his praise for the Torrance city council, and for City Attorney Stanley Remelmeier, for their part in preparing the oil ordinance, and cited Michael McMahon for his hard work as inspector on the cleanup program.

Well No. 1 is still pumping in the Del Amo field, now the Del Amo Shopping Center, where small, dignified pumping units continue to quietly draw their quota of oil from the ground without distracting from the beauty of the Broadway and Sears stores, nor interfering with the parking facilities, surrounding these modern buildings.

Across Hawthorne Ave. from the Del Amo Shopping Center old time "long-tail" rigs with their ugly

housing sheas still labor to surface their daily four, or five, barrels of oil.

These eye-sores, along with the old wooden derricks still standing, are doomed as July, 1961, is the deadline for their removal. The disfigured ghosts of yesteryear have out-lived their usefulness and must give way to property improvement in the wake of progress.

One question lurks in the mind of some of the "old timers" who helped bring in the oil that made Torrance a boom town:

"What if additional oil is discovered beneath the deep sand deposits that have been pumped dry?" They point out the second oil boom at Huntington Beach in 1954 when downtown and residential sections of this city were turned into a roaring oil town. If this came to pass what would happen to the residential and industrial buildings in the converted oil fields and ordinance 1116?

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COURT DELAYS ANNEXATION BID

City Stopped From Action Pending Study

The city's efforts to annex a 12-acre corner of Lomita at Crenshaw and Lomita Blvd. hit a legal snag this week as a Superior Court judge ordered hearings on the action.

Los Angeles Superior Judge Ellsworth Meyer ordered that documents effecting the annexation be not filed with the secretary of state until a hearing on the city's action is concluded. The hearing is scheduled for April 20.

ARGUMENTS on the petition for writ of mandate filed on behalf of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene C. Pel, who attempted to protest the action, will be received by Judge Meyer.

The Capels, owners of a parcel of land in the area scheduled to be annexed, were denied the right to have their protests considered before the city council when it ruled that they were not the owners of

record at the time specified in the annexation.

THIS HAS BEEN challenged by the Capels, who bought the property last year after the assessment rolls were closed—the official guide to legal protestants.

Documents which would formalize the annexation were scheduled to be filed in Sacramento tomorrow.

The city may seek a change in venue to have the case heard in the Inglewood Superior Court, it was indicated here yesterday.

10 Days Left

Council Race In Final Lap

The busy season has suddenly arrived for most of the 16 candidates seeking a seat on the Torrance city council at the April 12 election.

While most of the candidates have been making calls on area residents, attending teas and coffee klatches, the official rounds of homeowners groups and civic associations got underway this week and will continue almost until the eve of the election.

OPENING THE mass-meeting series this week were members of the South Torrance Civic Improvement Assn. who met at Howard Wood School Monday night to hear the office seekers.

What could be the biggest session of the campaign is scheduled for the Torrance High School auditorium at 7:30 tonight under the sponsorship of the Torrance Junior Chamber of Commerce.

ALL 16 CANDIDATES have indicated they will attend, according to Chairman Rich Gerold. Each candidate will be given time to talk to what is predicted to be a capacity audience and a question and answer period will follow.

The candidates will move to the Riviera School next Monday evening where they will face members of the Hollywood Riviera Homeowners Assn., according to Robert D. Sullivan, president.

AT THIS MEETING, the candidates will be asked to comment on matters of interest to voters in that area — sewers, streets, and the infamous "iron curtain" which separates Torrance and Palos Verdes Estates. They also will be asked specific questions on city policy concerning financing of civic center development, views on industrial zoning, appointment of commissions, and the financing of police, fire, recreation, library, and other municipal departments.

THE FOLLOWING Thursday evening, the candidates will appear at McMaster Hall in North Torrance in a forum called by the North Torrance Civic Improvement Assn. In addition to questions of general interest to the city, candidates can expect to be called on to answer questions of particular interest to North Torrance residents, officials said.

IN THE meantime, most of the candidates have been busy on their own behalf with press releases to match.

Thirvin D. Fleetwood, unsuccessful candidate two years ago, renewed his plea for councilmanic districts and was immediately charged with "plagiarism" by Henry Carreiro, Long Beach College student who had made a similar statement.

JOHN J. BARTON of Welteria making his first bid for (Continued on Page 4)

A Penny for your Thoughts

"What do you think could be done to make Torrance recreation centers and facilities more interesting to people in all age brackets?"

Answering were:

Mrs. Agnes Jarrett, 1634 Ar-

ton Ave., housewife: "I am a member of the Torrance Recreation group and use the shuffle board courts a lot. We sure could use a couple more, as it's always crowded and then you have to wait. I think the teen-agers have so much to do in their schools, etc., that it's nice to have some recreational facilities for us 'senior citizens'."

Mrs. Blanche McQuillen, 1635

W. 220th St., nurse and housewife:

"I think more parents should go to the parks with their children and get the children in the habit of going there instead of running the streets. They should have something where they can be supervised but not too much so, so they can develop a sense of responsibility. They need something to satisfy an active youngster, not games like checkers, and crafts, but maybe something along the line of an enclosed archery range."

Mrs. Frank Beckwith, 22602

South Denker, housewife:

"I think they should do something to give children between the ages of 12 and 17 something to do... that age group is sort of left out. They need a teen-age center with things like tennis courts and shuffle board courts, etc. We lived in Indiana when my oldest daughter was a teen-ager and they had lots more facilities there."

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Thugs Rob Market

A Torrance area market was robbed by three young bandits, each brandishing a revolver. Sunday night, according to Sheriff's deputies.

Officers said the three hoodlums took \$400 from the T. & M. Market at 1037 W. 208th St., then fled on foot after ripping out a telephone.

J. H. Paget Named City's 'Man of Year'

J. H. Paget, active in many community and business affairs and current president of the Chamber of Commerce, was named Torrance's "Citizen of the Year" last night at the annual banquet of the Chamber of Commerce held at the Statler-Hilton in Los Angeles.



J. H. PAGET
... Distinguished Citizen

A chamber director for eight years, Paget has headed the group's Downtown Retail Merchants Division, been a director of the Executive's Dinner Club of the Torrance Area, and is a past member of the city's recreation and parking commissions.

HE IS THE manager of the J. J. Newberry store in Downtown Torrance, and has been with the Newberry firm for 26 years. He came here from Salinas in 1947.

During his term as president of the Torrance Chamber of Commerce, which is nearly over, national honors have been conferred on the local group. Still other major honors are due in the immediate (Continued on Page 4)

Final Rites Today for Mrs. Albert H. Bartlett

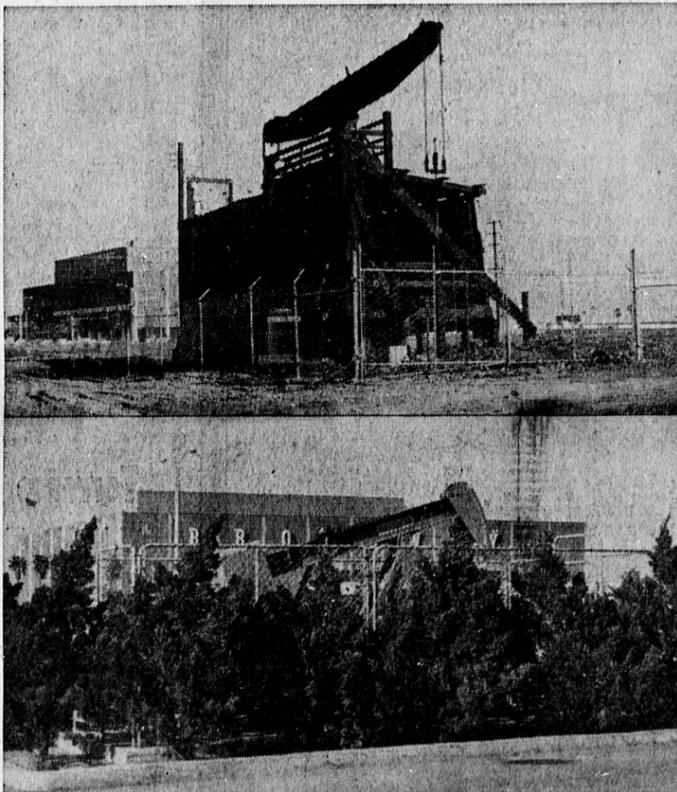
Funeral services for Mrs. Jessie Bartlett, 76, wife of City Clerk Albert H. Bartlett, will be held at 1 p.m. today at the Halverson-Leavell Mortuary Chapel with the Rev. Milton Sippel of the First Christian Church of Torrance officiating.

Mrs. Bartlett, who came to Torrance with her husband in

1912, was a native of Kansas. For many years she was active in many phases of the city's civic affairs.

The Bartlett's only child, Mrs. Polly Mosher of Hermosa Beach, was buried last Monday. Her mother never knew of her death.

Private cremation rites have been scheduled after tomorrow's services here.



OLD AND NEW... Pictured above (top) is old style "long tail" oil pumping unit decreed by city ordinance to be replaced by new units shown in lower photo. Both pictures were taken in the Del Amo Shopping Center area. Cleanup deadline for old style pumping units, derricks and sumps is set for July, 1961. (Herald Photo)

Assist from Outfield

Long Beach Councilman Backs Vico's Campaign

Former major league ball star George Vico, seeking election to the Torrance city council in the April 7 municipal election here, got an assist from the outfield this week.

Long Beach city councilman D. Patrick Ahern, an active promoter of athletics at all levels and known to a large number of Torrance residents, told Vico in a letter that "you have all the qualifications that go into making a good city councilman."

"I think you possess in your make-up the necessary qualities of integrity and basic honesty as well as a friendly, open-hearted love of people that is so necessary to make a good public servant," Ahern wrote.

THE TEXT of his letter follows:

"Dear George: "I was elated to receive your letter of March 16 telling of your being a candidate for city council in Torrance. It is always thrilling to me when people of integrity, ability and spirit offer themselves for pub-

lic office. Too many times people with selfish interests or motives, lacking these qualities, present themselves to the electorate.

"I HAVE BEEN a councilman for six years (two terms) in Long Beach and I think you possess in your make-up the necessary qualities of integrity and basic honesty as well as a friendly, open-hearted love of people that is so necessary to make a good public servant. I have known you for years and particularly in athletics. You are one of the athletes that I have known whose mentality and personality exceeds even his physical prowess. I have never met you in a crowd but what you were enjoying yourself because you were with people, and the people were enjoying your presence also. To me this means that if you were elected, you would not be bored or disenchanted with the position, because perhaps there was an item inciting great protest coming up and many

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ROAD'S END... This light sedan bounced across Torrance Blvd. at Crenshaw, struck a second auto, and then came to a debris-strewn halt amid advertising signs and light poles at a service station at the southwest corner of the intersection Monday afternoon. The driver, a Burbank salesman, told police his brakes failed. (Herald Photo)