

'C' STANDS FOR CRIME, COPS AND COURAGE

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of weekly articles on the Torrance Police department and how it ticks.)

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ

Why does anyone want to be a cop? "I thought it was an opportunity to help other people," Percy Bennett stated. Bennett, who became a Torrance policeman in 1932, is now assistant chief. Police Chief Willard Haslam elaborated further on this idea.

"The best officers see that police work is an opportunity for public service, at the same time offering a certain amount of security."

Police work didn't always offer "a certain amount of security" and there was a time when it was just a casual rough-and-tough calling rather than the profession that it is now.

Cattle Rustlers

"Pop" Haslam's first encounter with the law came in 1922. He was plowing the field with a team of horses when a sheriff's deputy rode up.

"We need a reliable man to take care of the cattle rustlers and horse rustlers in these parts," the deputy announced. "The work is under cover and there's no need to make arrests. All I need is evidence. There's been a lot of stealing and it's got us stumped because we don't know the country here."

When "Pop" indicated he was thoroughly familiar with these parts he was made a deputy.

The best part of the job was that he recovered some of his own horses which had been stolen.

Haslam continued in this capacity for only two years. "I couldn't see any future in police work," the chief recalls with a chuckle.

Doubling Up

Bennett's initiation into police work occurred somewhat directly. A builder and carpenter, he was asked in 1932 whether he would take care of the fire department in Waveria.

He accepted the assignment. He soon discovered that residents called up not only for fire protection but for police protection as well.

Doubling as policeman and fireman occasionally caused a conflict of interests when there was a fire in one part of town and simultaneously a riot in the other part of town.

There was no problem, however, about changing uniforms since all he wore to identify himself as an officer of the law and/or the fire department was a cap.

Today police work is a science and officers are trained with the same thoroughness as other professions. About 40 men on the local force, for instance, are going to college. They are being trained to specialize in various aspects of police work.

In the old days, Haslam and Bennett recall, every policeman was a one-man police department.

Officers handled every type of crime, following it up personally until it was solved.

Vice, But Not Organized

While Torrance has never had any organized vice, it did see some pretty rough early days.

One of the tough spots of the early thirties was the Cow Shed, formerly located at Newton and Hawthorne in Waveria.

Bennett recalls the place vividly. The rough element in town — both men and women — used to congregate there nightly for anything that might develop.

The main attractions were drinking, fighting and knifings. One of the victims had his leg slashed open from ankle to hip, requiring more than 100 stitches. Despite this, he refused to prosecute his assailant.

Bennett used to walk into the Cow Shed nightly swinging his billy club. He took nine men to jail one night.

"They gave me a hard time," he said, "but I was hard, too."

Police Chief Gerald Calder kept applying the heat and the Cow Shed finally gave up the ghost.

Haslam and Bennett still speak of cases which led them to many a rough haunt and low dive in search of their man.

"I was never worried about getting out alive—as long as I had my six shooter," Bennett explained significantly. Despite this, he never shot to kill.

"The nearest I came," he stated, "was when I shot the tires off a man's car whom we were chasing. I had all the right in the world to shoot him—but I couldn't do it."

A good policeman, Haslam and Bennett explained, is a person who likes his work and is interested in human nature. He should be even-tempered and have a good perception.



LAW AND ORDER
Assistant Chief Percy Bennett (l) and Chief Willard ("Pop") Haslam.—Press Photo

He must know how to handle a situation, show good judgment, be able to act quickly and firmly.

Crime Here To Stay

"Crime," Chief Haslam stated, seeing the problem realistically, "hasn't been eliminated in 6000 years. It will never be eliminated."

Haslam labeled money, the proverbial root of all evil, as the major motive for crime.

"The lure of easy money; trying to keep up with those having more; carelessness and temptation—these lead to crime," he said.

Constantly exposed to the seamy side of life, policemen look upon life philosophically.

"You take it as you find it," Bennett says, "you go along with it and accept it as you can. Ever so often someone comes along who renews your faith in mankind."

Law Not Heartless

People are prone to think of Justice and the Law as cold, impersonal, heartless.

But when you ask a policeman how he feels about tracking down a criminal you change your mind.

"We are interested in prevention and correction, not punishment," Chief Haslam explained.

"You're mad when you chase a criminal and sorry for him when you catch him," Assistant Chief Bennett reflected. "In most cases you turn right around and try to help him." (Next week: On the Prowl with a Prowl Car)

Vandals Sought In Fire

Police were still seeking vandals who started a blaze in the home of a Torrance High school teacher while she was on vacation.

The fire occurred at the home of Miss Cathryn Chisholm, 2514 Sonoma st. Vandals apparently piled her clothes in the bathtub and set fire to them.

A neighbor, who had been watching the house, said the door was locked but that vandals apparently broke in through the back door.

Miss Chisholm said that there was considerable damage and that she lost all of her wardrobe.

SERVICE CLUB TOURS WARDS AT HOSPITAL

Approximately 40 Torrance Kiwanians toured two children's wards of the Harbor General hospital after their meeting Monday night, January 14.

Mrs. Rita Smith, Gardena, vice-president of the Volunteers

Supervisors Salute City

A salute to the City of Torrance for their selection as one of the eleven All-American Cities of the United States for the year 1956 was voiced in a special resolution introduced Tuesday at the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting by Supervisors Burton W. Chace and Kenneth Hahn.

The resolution called attention to the fact that Torrance, founded in 1911 by Jared Sidney Torrance, was incorporated as a city first in 1921 with a population of approximately 1800 and today has a population over 82,000.

Presenting the resolution to the Board of Supervisors, Chace and Hahn pointed out that Torrance is considered one of the best-balanced cities in the United States with excellent educational and recreational programs that have kept pace "with their unprecedented population growth."

for Children in the Harbor area conducted the tour. About 25 children are in each ward, who receive lots of TLC (tender loving care) from the 60 Volunteer for Children workers.

CITY CRIME DURING '56

Crime in Torrance for 1956 amounted to the following, according to police records:

- Homicide—2;
 - Rape—17;
 - Robbery—31;
 - Aggravated assault—20;
 - Burglary—406;
 - Grand theft—462;
 - Auto theft—146;
 - Check offenses—209;
 - Sex offenses—13;
 - Kidnaping—2;
 - Narcotics—10;
- For the pleasure of committing misdemeanors, citizens paid to total of \$151,317 in court fines.

Police Staff

The Torrance Police department now totals a personnel of 72, including the chief and assistant chief; captain of detectives and four officers; lieutenant of the juvenile division and five officers; 16 in the traffic division; seven clerical employees; and the remainder in the uniform division.

Attorney Is Hospital Drive Chairman

Donald J. Hitchcock, Torrance attorney, was named chairman of the professional gifts committee for the Little Company of Mary Hospital campaign.

Hitchcock and his committee membership will undertake solicitation of attorneys, accountants, architects, engineers, and other professional individuals and firms with the exception of doctors, who already have pledged \$150,000 toward the \$775,000 campaign goal.

Subcommittees will be formed for each category of professional solicitation. He personally will head the group seeking support from attorneys. Gerald L. Revell is the industry committee chairman.

While industrial and professional solicitation groups are increasing their activities, the campaign executive committee is undertaking first solicitation of advance gifts from individuals capable of giving substantially to the voluntary institution. Reports on these gifts are scheduled to be presented before February 1.

Cunningham Will Head RC Drive

The Harbor region's 1957 Red Cross fund campaign, in which Torrance and four surrounding communities will take part, will be led by Jack Cunningham of Shell Chemical Corps.

The appointment of Cunningham to the regional campaign's top volunteer position, was made today by John W. Lühring, chairman of the Los Angeles Red Cross chapter's 1957 campaign for funds.

High optimism — based on enthusiastic volunteer leaders and the performance of the Red Cross service program during the past year — marked Cunningham's comments as he accepted the appointment.

"In view of the major role Red Cross has now assumed in the Hungarian Relief project, together with the Malibu fire emergency and rehabilitation program being carried on by the Los Angeles Chapter, I am sure that Harbor area residents will respond with the enthusiasm needed to put us over the top of our goal," asserted the new chairman.

Associated with Shell Chemical Corps. for the past 20 years, Cunningham lives at 2915 Via La Selva; Palos Verdes, with his wife Isabel, and their four children: Stephen, 11; Bonnie, 9; Shiella, 6; and John, 5.

Torrance Press Included in University Study

The Torrance Press has been requested to participate in a statewide survey regarding the coverage given city and county government in California weekly newspapers.

Conducting the survey is Wilbur Sims, a graduate student at Ohio university, working toward his Master of Science degree. He is specializing in community journalism.

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King Announces 3 Appointments To West Point

Congressman Cecil R. King announced the appointment of three 17th District young men to the West Point Military academy and one alternate.

They are James Joseph Mullen, Jr., 112 Via Alameda, Hollywood Riviera; James Gillis

Address, 16123 South Denver ave., Gardena; and Robert Hollis Strauss, Jr., 936 Calle Miramar, Redondo Beach.

Monte Bern Whitson, 5324 W. 117th st., Inglewood, was named as first alternate.

Passes . . . turn to the Classified ads and see if it isn't a fact there are all sorts of big values from A to Z. Yes, there might even be a zither. P.S.—If you have a zither to sell, place an ad of your own! Dial FA 8-2345.

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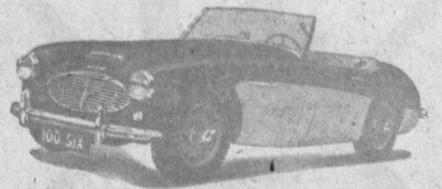
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