

# Killing Code Didn't End Renewal

When city voters tossed out the Uniform Housing Code April 9, did they automatically abolish the city's Uniform Building Code, electric code, plumbing code, heating and air conditioning code, and earthquake code?

Yes and no, says John J. McKinnon, the city's director of building and safety.

Technically speaking, all Torrance city codes remain in effect except the Uniform Housing Code (UHC), McKinnon said. But there's a catch.

The State Division of Housing and Community Development has formally told McKinnon and his staff that they may enforce the city's remaining codes as long as they en-

force all those state code provisions which are more restrictive than the city's code.

In practice, McKinnon said, this gives the local building department a choice between enforcing the strictest passages from both the state and local codes, or enforcing only the state code.

Obviously, McKinnon said, he would not choose to impose a double burden on the local populace with the most stringent provisions of both codes. So, for all practical purposes, the abolition of UHC had the effect of voiding all the city's modern local codes, he emphasized.

This is the tricky point which was not made clear to the public before the election, McKinnon said. As a result of

local code abolition, he added, a area building contractors have swamped McKinnon's staff with bundles of applications for building permits — trying to beat the June 10 deadline. Permit applications filed since that date will be judged in accordance with antiquated state code standards, McKinnon said, because state code provisions automatically went into effect with the voiding of local codes.

"This gives you some idea of what local builders think of the state code situation," McKinnon exclaimed. The building and safety director predicted a slump in Torrance building activity following this initial burst of applications, since state code provisions will force residential

building costs upward.

Why did the state rule that Torrance could no longer use its own modern Uniform Building Code after the Uniform Housing Code was removed from the books? A glance through the city and state codes provides a partial answer, McKinnon explained. The city's codes each constitute a separate volume; i.e., the city's building, housing, electric, plumbing, earthquake, and heating and air conditioning codes are distinct from one another.

But with the state code, housing and building codes are mixed together in one volume. At the end of each building provision there is a clause concerning the maintenance of the provision.

Therefore, McKinnon said, it would be a mammoth chore to ferret out housing provisions alone, taking them separately from building provisions. And the state has formally denied the city's request to do this.

However, the state has told McKinnon in no uncertain terms that it will send down inspectors to take over the local department if officials here do not enforce the state code.

McKinnon noted that Torrance is the first city in the state's history to adopt its own local codes and then abolish them in favor of the more antiquated state code. This is especially perplexing, he said, in view of the fact that the state government ac-

tually encourages local communities to adopt their own personalized codes.

McKinnon said the whole "vast misunderstanding" about the housing code situation may be traced to one source: urban renewal. When Congress passed its urban renewal law, it stipulated that a local community must have a workable program of housing maintenance in order to be eligible for renewal funds. Lawmakers reasoned that there was no point in pouring money into blighted areas if the surrounding community had no provisions for preventing decent neighborhoods from becoming blighted.

The Uniform Housing Code, McKinnon explained, was then created to provide this

workable program. The UHC preamble even contains mention of the federal urban renewal program and its standards.

Foes of the urban renewal believe that they can halt federal funds by abolishing UHC in local communities. However, in California, McKinnon said, there are state housing code provisions which serve adequately to qualify the communities for federal urban renewal funds.

Therefore, McKinnon said, opponents have gained nothing in booting out the Uniform Housing Code in Torrance. The only effect of UHC abolition, he said, was to turn over local control of code provisions to the State of California.

Torrance

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Ann Landers ..... A-5 Sacramento ..... A-4  
Crossword ..... A-5 Sports ..... B-3  
Editorials ..... A-4 Women's News .. B-1  
Obituaries ..... A-2 Want Ads ..... B-4

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**DEATH SCENE** ... Workers at Linair Engineering, 651 Knox St., check area where two plant maintenance workers were killed Friday afternoon. Wallace Borski, 35, and Lewis Nickerson, 37, were taken from the sump and rushed to Harbor General Hospital, where attendants reported they were dead. An autopsy has been ordered to determine cause of death.

# Rescue Too Late; Two Workmen Die in Sewer

## Autopsy to Seek Cause of Death

Two maintenance workers for a Torrance area industrial plant died enroute to the hospital Friday evening after being pulled from an underground vault where they had been working.

Wallace Borski, 35, of South Gate, and Lewis Nickerson, 37, of Los Angeles, were dead when they arrived at Harbor General Hospital shortly after 5 p.m. Friday.

A search for the two men was begun by fellow workers at Linair Engineering, 651 Knox St., when plant personnel missed them. They were found in the underground vault, used to carry away runoff from plating process equipment.

Firemen from Los Angeles County Station 36 responded within minutes after receiving a call at 4:43 p.m. Friday. Two firemen donned air masks and brought Borski and Nickerson up from the vault. It was feared at the time that the men may have been overcome by fumes.

The two workers apparently had gone into the vault to repair an electrical motor. There was some speculation that the men may have been electrocuted. They were sprawled in about a foot of water when found.

A coroner's study is planned to determine the cause of death.



**OFF TO SPAIN** ... These five senioritas from Torrance High School will be jetting to Spain July 10 for six weeks of study and travel. The students, (from left) Merrilee Olson, Margaret Kratville, Jan Sielaff, and Doris Hull, will be accompanied on the jaunt by their Spanish teacher, Miss JoAnne Cole (right). Heading first for Madrid, the girls will spend five weeks studying Spanish language and culture. The last week will feature a tour of northern Spain. Foreign Language League Schools, excursion sponsors, operate campuses in key areas throughout Europe.

### DETECTIVES REPORT

## Bum Check Artists Are Busy This Year

The prospect of 14 years in the state pen doesn't seem to phase bum-check passers in Torrance. With fraudulent document cases up 12 per cent over last year, Torrance police tally anywhere from 100 to 125 forgery incidents per month.

Assigned to the forgery detail with the Torrance Police Department are Detectives Frank Solis and Jim Fowler. Armed with high-powered magnifying glasses and a host of sleuthing methods, the Solis-Fowler team can expect to crack roughly half of the cases coming across their desk.

Nationwide, the bum check racket has practically reached national debt proportions. Some \$900 million worth of fraudulent checks were reported last year, Solis and Fowler said. That's something like \$1,500 worth per minute.

About 65 per cent of fraudulent documents represent nonsufficient-funds or account-closed cases. The rest can be classified as forgery of money and negotiables.

Why is Torrance a haven for the bum check passer? Solis pointed out that the array of major shopping centers here attracts check artists from all over the area. Forgers lean toward the large chain stores, chain markets, liquor stores, hotels, and large apartment buildings, and there are plenty of them in Torrance.

Who are the phoney check passers? Solis and Fowler estimate that about 70 per cent of them are "professionals." These people have planned, deliberate approach to forgery.

A typical method, Solis explained, is to open a checking account at a local bank with a small sum. The forger then proceeds to write checks from the nonpersonalized new account check book issued by the bank. Forgers have also been known to close their accounts but continue to write bum checks on them.

Hard-core, chronic check passers seem to need the "challenge" of practicing their "art," Solis explained.

"They become con artists. They do a real good selling job on the salesman or shopkeeper," he said, noting that some check passers will strike up a conversation and attempt to fool sales personnel into thinking they are ordinary, honest customers.

Solis described another type of bum check artist as a "rounder." Constantly on the move, the rounder will come into an area for a few days, cash bum checks until things get hot, then push on to greener pastures. A typical rounder passed through Torrance recently, cashing \$4,000 worth of phony travelers checks before leaving town. (See FORGERY on Page A-2)

## Legislature Considers New Horticulture Hall

A measure now before the State Legislature will provide funds to build a "Hall of Horticulture" at the South Coast Botanic Garden and earmark \$65,000 per year to maintain the gardens.

Assembly Bill 89 would designate the funds for forming a new agricultural district—number 33—encompassing the entire peninsula area south of Manhattan Beach Boulevard. At present, the area is an integral part of the sprawling sixth science and museum district.

Mrs. R. O. Young, founder president of the South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation, said the cost for the Hall of Horticulture is in the neighborhood of \$350,000. The

structure would include exhibit areas and research facilities.

Money for the project will come from the Fair and Exposition Fund, which is derived from horse racing revenue. Mrs. Young said.

Co-authored by Assemblymen Bob Beverly, Vincent Thomas, and Larry Townsend, and Senator Robert Stevens, the bill has passed the Assembly ways and means committee and is now awaiting final action.

The committee action helped Assemblyman Beverly set a legislative record. A.B. 89 was one of eight bills authored by Beverly that passed the ways and means committee in one day.

## Bell to Install Chamber Officers

Congressman Alphonzo Bell, 28th California Congressional District, has accepted the role of installing officer at the Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce annual installation and awards dinner and dance, it was announced by Larry Bowman, president.

Congressman Bell will install the new president, six vice presidents, treasurer and 22 directors at the Friday affair.

The event will also mark the awarding of the Distinguished Citizen Award to a citizen who has made out-

standing contributions to the Torrance community.

The Proud Bird restaurant will be the site of the affair. A reception will begin at 6:30 p.m. and the banquet will follow at 7:30 p.m.

George Ebert, long time Torrance industrial and business leader, will be installed president of the organization. He will be joined this year by six vice presidents, following reorganization of the officer structure of the group which takes effect with the new terms.

Vice presidents to be installed are James P. Becker, area coordinator; Dan E. Butcher, civic affairs; Alan D. Smith, community development; Harry B. Gorman, economic development; Donald E. Martin, governmental affairs; and Robert L. Reis, membership.

Bret A. Swartz will be installed as treasurer. Reservations for the affair may be made by calling the chamber office at 1510 Cravens Ave., according to Bowman.

### Torrance Marine Killed - - -

Gunnery Sgt. William F. Gunset of Torrance was one of three Southland Marines listed by Defense Department Friday among latest American combat casualties in Vietnam. Sergeant Gunset's wife, Jequetta, lives here at 18916 Cerise Ave. No details of his death were announced.

### Street Widening Ordered - - -

Widening of 223rd Street between Western and Normandie was ordered by the Los Angeles board of public works Friday with awarding of a contract to Strecker Construction Co. on their bid of \$179,646, the lowest of eight bidders. Councilman John S. Gibson Jr. said the work would be financed by gas tax and city funds. Nearly six months will be needed to complete the project.

### Bank Bandit Gets \$400 - - -

A man giving a New York address was arrested in Lomita shortly after the Gateway National Bank at Narbonne and Pacific Coast Highway was robbed of \$400 on Wednesday afternoon. Deputies from Lennox Sheriff's station said a man entered the bank just before 3 p.m. and handed a note demanding money to one of the tellers. Deputy Gerald Gendreau arrested Gerald O'Rourke, 40, a few blocks from the bank. He has been charged with the robbery.

### May Building Compiled - - -

Construction permits issued in Torrance during the month of May had a valuation of \$1,572,255, according to figures compiled by the city's building department. Residential building was at a low point with only 18 new single family dwellings authorized in a single permit. Permits for 60 dwelling units in apartment buildings were approved. Only minor commercial and industrial projects were authorized.

## Finish First Course

Twenty-nine keypunch operators, the first group of students to complete training at the Southern California Regional Occupational Center, attended final classes last week. Dr. Wayne Butterbaugh, superintendent of the center, expressed his satisfaction at the accomplishments of the students. "These young people are now qualified for employment as keypunch operators. They are not half-trained, they have demonstrated that they can perform and exceed the standards established by our advisory committees."

Dr. Butterbaugh reported that the students would receive a Certificate of Proficiency as Keypunch Operators. The standards established by the advisory committee for keypunch operators indicated a minimum of 6,000 key-strokes per hour, a standard for the industry. He indicated that most of the students have exceeded this standard and that the student's performance rate would approach (See CLASS on Page A-2)