

# Property Rights Key to Issue, ACT Claims

(Editor's Note: Torrance voters will be asked at the April 9 municipal election to determine whether the city's Uniform Housing Code should be repealed. The measure was placed on the ballot after Active Citizens of Torrance gathered signatures of some 15 per cent of the city's registered voters. This is the second in a series of articles which the Press-Herald will publish on this subject.)

By NATALIE HALL  
Press-Herald Staff Writer  
If Mrs. Carmen Rivera wants to keep a motorcycle in her living room, she believes then the housing code ought to permit it.

As a leader of the Active Citizens of Torrance (ACT), Mrs. Rivera is campaigning for the abolition of the Uniform Housing Code in this community. Local voters will have a chance April 9 to decide whether they want to keep the Uniform Housing Code or revert back to the California state housing code.

Mrs. Rivera, speaking on behalf of ACT, stated that the Uniform Housing Code is a "terrible violation of the right of ownership."

"The code tries to control the environment a person lives in by dictating to a homeowner certain qualifications," she said. As an example, Mrs. Rivera said that the Uniform Housing Code may impose regulations on a small

family which may apply to a large family, or vice versa.

The mother of seven children ages 2½ to 17 believes that people should be allowed to use their own judgment in running their households. "Some people go around with long hair and beards. I may not like it but that's their business," she exclaimed.

"When I get to the pearly gates of heaven, I only have to answer for myself and the way I lived with my family. I don't have to answer for the way Joe Blow down the block lived."

"The government shouldn't be allowed to tell us what the temperature should be in our hot water heater or whether or not we can keep a motorcycle in the living room," she

said, explaining that her family has not personally had any problems with housing code violations.

Another gripe Mrs. Rivera has against the housing code is inspections. She says she knows of a family of German immigrants who were "harassed" during the recent systematic inspection of North Torrance. The inspectors, she said, kept returning to the home after being told they couldn't enter.

"These people came to this country seeking freedom," she related, "and what did they find?"

Mrs. Rivera explained that she was born in the United States but was brought up in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. "I know what it's

like to live in a country where the government is dominant," she exclaimed. Members of her family, even the children, whispered in corners when they wanted to discuss the government.

Originally, the Active Citizens of Torrance sought to abolish Uniform Housing Code as a vehicle toward ending urban renewal projects in Torrance, collecting signatures of more than 15 per cent of local voters on a petition against the code.

However, Mrs. Rivera says she realizes that abolition of the Unified Housing Code will not in any way effect the Meadow Park renewal project in Torrance at this stage in its development. But she hopes it will discourage fu-

ture urban renewal in Torrance.

"The Uniform Housing Code serves no function, in my opinion, other than to qualify the community for federal urban renewal funds," she insisted.

The federal government requires that a municipality have a workable program of housing code enforcement in order to be eligible for renewal funds.

"Urban renewal is really a theft," from Mrs. Rivera's point of view. She believes that the people living in the Meadow Park project were "bullied" into selling their property and that the city caused the area to be blighted in the first place by slapping a building moratorium

on that property years ago.

In regard to the question of the city's losing control of housing by abolishing Uniform Housing Code, Mrs. Rivera said, "City officials don't want to lose control to the state, but they don't seem to mind losing control to the federal government."

She stated that under the state code, inspections and enforcement would still be local, even though control of the code's wording would be left up to Sacramento.

Mrs. Rivera termed the state housing code "less stringent" than the Uniform Housing Code and expressed some doubt that the state code could even be enforced since Torrance has its own building code.

Torrance

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## Penalty Trial

### State Rests Case

The prosecution rested its case against convicted murderer Jerry Lee O'Brien in Superior Court Thursday, giving way to Public Defender Bud Calof to make his opening remarks in behalf of the defendant.

Calof stood before the jury of seven men and five women and said, "We are going to give you some insight into Jerry's background."

Calof told the jury of the "terrible responsibility" of deciding the penalty phase of the first degree murder trial. He said he will present testimony that would be "self-explanatory."

O'Brien was convicted of the Aug. 10 killing of Torrance police officer David Seibert.

**THE FIRST** defense witness was Ted White, a correctional officer from Correctional Men's Colony East in Atascadero where O'Brien was an inmate from 1961 to 1965.

White said O'Brien demonstrated good behavior and was reduced from medium to minimum security while in custody.

Conditions of his parole in 1965 were that employment was not seen as a problem and O'Brien would not return to the Los Angeles area.

**DEPUTY** District Attorney Robert Burnett concluded his case Thursday by bringing to the stand three employees of a San Fernando Valley drug store who testified O'Brien robbed them Sunday, Aug. 13, three days after he allegedly robbed a Torrance market and shot Officer Seibert in the escape.

(See TRIAL, Page A-2)

## WALTER BARDWELL NAMED TOP CARRIER

Walter Bardwell, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Bardwell of 23837 Madison St., has been named Press-Herald Carrier of the Month for January.

Young Bardwell's selection was announced by Darrell Westcott, Press-Herald circulation manager. "Walter was quick to see the many opportunities offered in selling," Westcott said. "He has a great deal of pride and enthusiasm in his Press-Herald route. His readers get the kind of service that goes into building up a successful business."

Bardwell enjoys playing football and baseball and hopes to enroll in college after he completes high school.

His father is employed by the Garrett Corp.



**CLEANING UP . . .** Members of the congregation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints began clean-up operations early Friday after a fire did some \$10,000 in damage to the new church. A small electric motor which is used to raise and lower the podium was blamed for the fire. Pictured in the heavily damaged sanctuary are (from left) Bick More, Craig Allman, and Sam Allman. (Press-Herald Photo)

## Marriage Counselor Assigned to Court

By HENRY BURKE  
Press-Herald Staff Writer

Russell E. Berkley, a marriage counselor from Garden Grove, has been assigned to the Conciliation Court to serve the Southwest Superior Court in Torrance.

Berkley will be available four days a week commencing Monday.

Judge William E. MacFaden, presiding over the Conciliation Court, said this is the second district office created in Los Angeles County. A "branch" office is also in Van Nuys.

Conciliation Court is designed to protect children during pending divorces.

Announcement of the new program in Torrance was made in the chamber of Judge Bernard Lawlor. He introduced Meyer Elkin, who gave a history of the Conciliation Court. Among couples who completed the counseling process in 1967, it was reported 69.1 per cent were reconciled.

In cases where reconciliation was not possible, a by-product of counseling helped "close the book gently" rather than stimulate anger.

Referrals for the Conciliation Court are made through the courts, drop-ins from the street, and attorneys.

There is no fee for the service and no counseling limitations as long as a divorce decree is not final for any legal marriage.

Berkley cited some of the problems in marriage as alcohol, money, sex, children, and dominance by one party or the other.

He has been a marriage counselor in the system since

1965. He received a master's degree in social work in 1950. He has a background of 20 years as a marriage counselor. Berkley and his wife, Irene, have two sons, Bedford, 11, and Russell, 7.

Tuttle said minor structural work will be done. (See FIRE, Page A-2)



WALTER BARDWELL

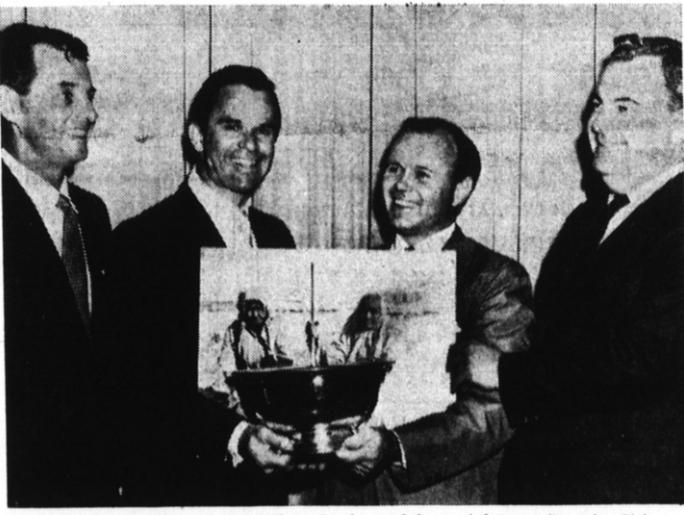
## Fire Damage Tops \$10,000 in Church

### Electric Motor Blamed

A Bible may have been the cause of a fire which resulted in extensive damage to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 4110 W. 226th St., early Friday morning.

The fire, which broke out in the pulpit area about 2:45 a.m., was caused when a small electric motor used to raise and lower a podium apparently shorted out, Battalion Chief Frank Tuttle told the Press-Herald.

The short, he said, was caused by the failure of a limit switch which automatically shuts off the motor. The failure, he added, may have been the result of a Bible which jammed between the top and bottom sections of the podium.



**PRESENT AWARD . . .** Joe Wilcox Jr. (second from right) receives the Citizen-of-the-Month Award for February during a Torrance Family YMCA campaign dinner meeting. The engraved cup was presented Wilcox for his guidance of the Torrance YMCA programs, including the annual Navajo Project. Present for the ceremonies were Superior Court Judge Raymond Choate, one of the Citizen-of-the-Month judges; Jerry Hay, who made the presentation on behalf of the Great Lakes Properties, Inc.; and Leonard Kane, YMCA fund drive chairman and master of ceremonies for the evening.

**TWO ENGINE** companies, a truck, and a salvage unit responded to the 2:46 a.m. alarm. Firefighters extinguished the blaze in about 10 minutes, then took some three hours to clear the building of smoke. Battalion Chief Albert Salcido was in command.

## HEARING SET WEDNESDAY

### Planners Get Proposal For New Waleria Dump

Plans to build and operate a rubbish dump in the South Torrance area will be considered Wednesday by the city's Planning Commission.

The proposal, which involves land near Pacific Coast Highway and Crenshaw Boulevard, is identical to one rejected by the City Council Feb. 28, 1967.

imposed on dump operations will require "more staff time than is presently available," the departmental recommendation continues. It adds, "operation of this type of enterprise by a public agency would present a reduced policing problem."

The dump, residents say, will be operated in addition to quarry operations presently operating in the area claim that owners of the land, a sand and gravel pit, are proposing to develop the dump "to solve a problem which they themselves created some years ago."

(See DUMP, Page A-2)

## Perkovich Named Presiding Judge

Judge George R. Perkovich, Jr. has been elected presiding judge of the South Bay Municipal Court for the 1968 year, it was announced here yesterday.

Judge Perkovich, named to the bench in 1966, will preside over the Criminal Master Calendar of the court.

A native of Minnesota, Judge Perkovich received his bachelor's and law degrees at the University of Minnesota. He served as a bomber pilot in the European Theater during World War II.

Admitted to the California Bar in 1950, Judge Perkovich practiced law in Westchester until his appointment to the South Bay Municipal Court by former Governor Edmund G. Brown. He and his wife, Florence, live in Miraleste. They have four children.

Councilmen voted unanimously to deny the petition at that time after residents of the Waleria area protested that a dump operation would endanger the health and safety of the area and result in lower property values. Councilman George Vico was absent from that meeting.

**WALTERIA** area residents are expected to wage the same fight against the proposed dump.

The city's Planning Department, while cautioning that operation of a dump is not "necessarily inappropriate" in the area, said it feels the "major concern is the standards of operation and the ultimate use of the land."

Strict enforcement of any conditions which might be

### Customer Turns Robber ---

A customer loitering in Wallich's Music City, 17540 Hawthorne Blvd., got away with \$820 in cash late Friday night after pulling a revolver on cashiers. The suspect, described as a Mexican man in his 30s, handed a paper bag to one cashier and ordered her to fill it with money. He then told her to pass it over to the next cashier for the contents of a second cash register. The take also included a stereo tape which the suspect had started to purchase.

### Absentee Ballots Ready ---

Voters who cannot be present at their precincts April 9, the day set for municipal elections, may apply for absentee voter ballots at the Office of the City Clerk, Torrance City Hall, between March 11 and April 2. According to City Clerk Vernon W. Coll, each request for an absentee voter ballot must be made in writing by the individual applying for the ballot. Completed ballots must be returned to the City Clerk's office not later than 5 p.m. April 8.