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TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1955

Police, District Attorney Warn of Hot Check Racket

Bids on Gym, Cafetorium at NTHS Set

Bids for the construction of North Torrance High School gymnasium, shower, locker rooms, cafetorium, and music building will be opened Feb. 18, school officials announced Tuesday.

The gymnasium will not be ready when classes open in September, but school officials hope to have it ready before Christmas. How soon it will be completed will depend on weather and labor conditions.

The plans approved by the Board of Education and the State Division of Architecture call for a 115 by 93 foot gymnasium with one standard basketball court and two practice courts. It will include a door which can be used to divide the gym for boys' and girls' physical education classes.

Shower and locker facilities for both boys and girls will adjoin the gym.

In girls' shower facilities, modest coeds can shower in privacy, although the majority of shower facilities are in a mass shower room. Boys shower facilities are in a mass shower room.

Included in the same bid will be plans for 12 basketball courts, 12 volleyball courts, and six tennis courts.

A football field, practice field, softball and baseball diamond, and track facilities are being developed, officials said, and should be ready by September, although there will be no bleachers yet for the football field.

The cafetorium will include facilities for eating, with a kitchen at one end. At the other there will be a stage. The eating space can be converted into auditorium space for some 400 to 500 students.

A music building will be attached.



CASHIER'S OKAY . . . Not only the store manager should okay the check, but the person actually handing over the cash, Bennett says. In the event of a criminal action, the clerk taking the check will be asked to identify it. Here, a grocery store checker puts her initials on the check of a customer, and notes the amount of goods and cash given in return.



DOUBLE PROTECTION . . . Some of the bigger markets, like Jim Dandy have installed photographic check protectors. They photograph the check, the identification and the cashier. Police have used photographs to nab check thieves, cashing checks stolen from homes and businesses, and forgers. Again, protection is afforded the business place who is giving out cash for the check, and the legitimate check writer.

Hundreds of Phony Checks Cashed Daily

The most rapidly growing fraud in the county is the trading of worthless checks for good dollars, District Attorney S. Ernest Roll said yesterday.

The number one felony offense prosecuted during 1954 was forgery and the issuing of checks without sufficient funds. This crime totaled 4571 complaints or an increase of almost five hundred over the previous year, and represents nearly one-third of all felony cases prosecuted in this county, Roll said.

In Torrance, Detective Sergeant Percy Bennett spends nearly forty hours a week tracking down culprits who write these worthless checks, and who offer them to unsuspecting merchants who lose thousands of dollars yearly to check artists.

Gets Many Checks Bennett receives checks daily from markets, jewelry stores, clothing merchants and gas stations. And often, though the writer is nabbed and sent to prison, the merchant still is left holding the bag—without the cash he laid out in the first place.

He pointed out the recent apprehension of one Walter Demeter who has been brought to trial in Contra Costa County on forgery counts, portrays what can happen to the thoughtful merchant.

Demeter is charged with writing more than \$250,000 in phony checks, from Torrance to Connecticut. He has operated for more than four years, and was arrested after a store clerk recognized him from pictures printed in a police bulletin.

Numerous Safeguards "The joint community action of all citizens is vitally necessary if the operations of check swindlers are to be stopped," Roll said. There are numerous safeguards that persons cashing checks may use in preventing this type of swindling.

1. Slick talkers with fast answers for every question and a pocket full of ready references are good people to go slow on when cashing checks. Also, beware of the stranger in a hurry to get a check cashed.

2. The average businessman should not set himself up as a character reader. He is not a detective.

3. Never cash a check on the basis of casual acquaintance, sympathy tales, hard-luck stories, distress telegrams, or in haste, bluff or bluster.

4. Beware of checks offered by strangers having transient addresses such as hotels, rooming houses or general delivery.

5. Never accept checks bearing rubber stamp imprints or checks which appear to have been altered.

6. If during bank hours, call the bank before cashing the check.

7. Don't take "hand-made" checks which have been altered, or improperly endorsed. But remember, even "good" looking checks can be fakes.

Bennett suggested that a merchant never cash a check which has not been endorsed in his presence, and in ink. If the customer already has endorsed the check, have him do it again, in ink, in your presence.

Watch Alterations Checks which must be okayed by a manager, then taken to a clerk for cashing, can be altered on the way, Bennett pointed out. The person who hands over the money to the customer also should initial the check, the amount of goods and cash given, and check the identification of the customer.

Regarding identification such as drivers' licenses and social security cards, it must be remembered that such identification can readily be secured at a small fee, the district attorney warned.

"Be accurate, be slow, and be careful," was Bennett's reminder to merchants who don't want to take a beating at the hands of the bad check artist.

County to Plant Trees at Alondra "The County Department of Parks and Recreation is planting 1500 trees of many varieties in county parks, some of which will be planted at Alondra and Lomita parks, it was revealed yesterday.

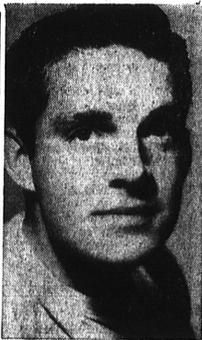
The plan is in keeping with the Los Angeles beautiful program.

Local Singer Subject of TV Forecast

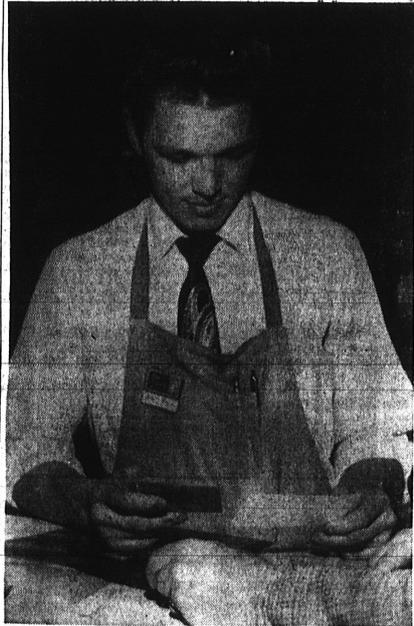
A prediction of great things in the future for Baritone Keith Kittrell will be made tomorrow evening by Criswell, former HERALD columnist, as he features the young Lomita singer on his television program.

"Keith will not only invade the cafe field, but will become a great success in motion pictures, television, and will be one of the greatest names in the record industry," Criswell plans to tell his television audience.

Kittrell, who attended Narbonne High School, has been active in local musical productions and in USO shows throughout the west.



KEITH KITTRELL . . . Sees Rosy Future



COMPARES ID . . . Checking the identification card of a customer with the check helps to detect irregularities in the name and signature; also insures that the customer is the person named on the check. This protects not only the store, but the check writer who might have had checks taken from his home, business place or purse. Police advise to check not only driver's license, but employment credentials, if available.



WITH FAKE CHECKS . . . Detective Sgt. Percy Bennett goes over some of the fictitious and "rubber" checks which have been turned over to police for criminal action. Many are checks stolen in burglaries, with forged signatures. Others are written on closed bank accounts. Writing bum checks is a felony in California.



MONEY IN THE BANK . . . Money collected in Monday's Mothers' March on Polio is deposited in the bank by polio campaign chairmen. The mothers turned in \$7,279.80 from their one-night march. Pictured with the money are, from left, George Post, drive treasurer; Mrs. Clara Conner, campaign general chairman; Mrs. Glenn Runsted, Mothers March chairman; and Police Chief Willard Haslam.

ADULT OPEN HOUSE SET ON FRIDAY

An Adult Education open house will be held at Torrance Evening High School on Friday evening at 7:30. Vernon Sheblak, director of adult education, announced yesterday.

The program will include a style show and a color and accessory demonstration, Sheblak said. In addition, there will be displays of lampshades, knitting, water color and oil painting, ceramics, and hooked and braided rugs—all the work of adult students.

NORTH TORRANCE SEWER WORK DONE

Machine and wood shops will hold a regular session. A demonstration of cake decorating will be held in Room 112, and public speaking demonstrations will be given in Room 101.

Everyone in the Torrance area is invited to attend the open house. Information will be available about the classes for next semester which start next Monday.

25 Pigeons Stolen

Twenty-five pigeons were taken from a shed behind her house, Bertha Whalen, of 22216 S. Normandie Ave., reported to sheriff's deputies Friday. She reported a similar theft several weeks ago.

Check form from California Bank, dated February 25, 1955, payable to John J. Doe for \$74.63. Includes fields for Manager's OK, Cashier's OK, Ink Endorsement, Identification Numbers, and Pencil Endorsement.

Check form showing handwritten ink and pencil endorsements, including identification numbers and signatures.

CHECK POINTS . . . Even though the manager or store proprietor has okayed the check (1), the person actually giving the money to the customer should note his initials (2) and the amount of goods taken, or the amount of cash returned with the goods. Police requirements for prosecution make it necessary for the person actually giving the money to be able to identify the culprit—making this notation on check will aid identification. Always inspect the firm name (3) and address. If in doubt, ask to telephone the firm, if local. Ask cashier to show identification card from the place of employment.

ENDORSEMENTS . . . Always ask the customer to endorse his check in your presence (4), and in ink, and with full address. Put his telephone number, if available. If he already has endorsed the check (6) have him do it again in your presence—and in ink. Compare the signatures. Put identification card numbers (5) on the check, and mark them so you will know what they are should the bank return the check. If possible, obtain a license number as the person drives away. Don't be afraid to ask questions, Bennett says. A person with a legitimate check, and most are, will not mind your inquiries.