

A REPORT TO THE PEOPLE ON CRIME IN BURBANK

This is a story about our hometown -- the town we look upon proudly as a typical American suburban city.

Trim and neat in its appearance, its miles of paved streets slope down from the Verdugo Hills through blocks of shaded, attractive residences. Its retail stores are bright and progressive, its industry balanced and active. The schools are good. There are parks and recreation centers, and the city's musical culture is advanced. The city has provided the best in public utilities and many other services.

This is the city we all know as Burbank. All of us like to live and work in Burbank -- a regard reflected in the doubling and redoubling of its population.

Our Burbank Citizens' Crime Prevention Committee members who are sending this report to you like our city, too. And as good citizens, we are concerned with preserving and improving the reputation of our hometown.

This, our first report, follows a year and a half of careful investigation. It shows that beneath the pleasant surface of our city has festered an ulcer of crime and civic corruption.

We are sure the conditions we describe in this report will come as an unwelcome jolt to almost all Burbank residents -- to those citizens who have trusted the honesty of all the city's public officials in their enforcement and administration of the law and have believed their frequent assertions that our hometown was free of crime.

Some may argue that publishing our report will damage our city's reputation, perhaps more than allowing the conditions of crime and corruption to continue. We cannot go along with this argument. Unchecked and unchallenged, crime and civic corruption can destroy the character and life of a city. Exposure with

full publicity is the way to stop these undercover actions and maintain an informed citizenry alert to its responsibilities to check and control what goes on in their hometown.

To nearly all residents it will be a shock to learn that notorious criminals like Mickey Cohen, Joe Sica, and Ralph Maddox operated or sponsored gambling dives and bookmaking joints in Burbank during the years from the end of World War II until recent months.

It will be a shock to learn that such establishments operated openly along the finest streets of our city -- Magnolia Boulevard, Victory Boulevard, Mariposa, Olive, San Fernando Road. Our investigation shows they operated with protection from the city's police authority arranged through regular bribery and payoff, at rates so high that the underworld complained about the size of the weekly payments on Thursdays.

It will be a shock to learn of the tremendous business of these illegal activities -- to learn that one Burbank bookmaker hired as many as 20 agents and four women clerks to handle his annual gross of \$2,500,000 to \$3,000,000 a year -- resulting in an estimated \$500,000 a year profit.

And there were at least three other bookmaking syndicates that flourished after the end of World War II -- in our hometown.

Our citizens will be amazed to find that a member of the Burbank Police Commission freely admitted that he was a bookmaker. They'll be amazed to find that even after this admission his claim to continued public service as one of our law enforcement officials was defended by the commission's chairman and on the floor of the city council. And now this ex-bookmaker and police commissioner has the effrontery to run for a seat on the city council.

They will be distressed to discover that, in this land of a free press, one local newspaper editor -- a heroic woman who had the courage to print information

about crime in her neighborhood -- immediately received calls from a councilman and the police chief with a demand for an apology. Telephone threats followed, warning her not to walk home alone that night and asserting that her life was in danger. Thereafter, underworld pressure upon the advertisers was so great that it silenced the newspaper -- and some weeks later it went out of business.

They will be surprised to find that Burbank's police chief for several postwar years was a frequent visitor and dinner guest at the expensive Toluca Lake home of Burbank's leading bookie and at the luxurious West Los Angeles residence of Mickey Cohen.

They will wonder how this police chief managed to buy \$250 suits at Cohen's Sunset Strip haberdashery, or how he and his wife could drive two Cadillacs, or how they could own and operate a fancy yacht -- and even two yachts at the same time -- on his salary of \$_____ year.

They will be saddened to know that through all these postwar years -- until after the formation of the Burbank Citizens' Crime Prevention Committee late in 1951 -- that neither the city council, nor the mayor, nor the city manager made any real investigation of crime or the corruption of law enforcement in our hometown or took any steps to eliminate this festering ulcer.

Instead, city councilmen professed to become indignant when they heard reports of local crime growing out of our committee's investigation, feeling these reports besmirched the town's fair reputation. They expressed ignorance of these conditions and demanded retraction of such charges.

Yet one councilman admitted an "innocent relationship" with our hometown's most prominent bookie -- a relationship that our investigation shows included a dozen visits to the bookmaker's home, a weekend jaunt with him to Las Vegas, placing bets in his football pool, the councilman's intervention when one of the bookmaker's agents was arrested, the bookie's celebration of an election victory

builders. This councilman voted repeatedly on agreements and ordinances of direct and immediate benefit to the construction company despite a state law that provides that city officials shall not be interested in any contract made by them in their official capacity or by any board of which they are a member.

2. Electrical contractors working on new homes built by this company were granted variances that permitted them to violate the Burbank Electrical Code in 10 ways by using sub-standard materials and installation practices. Many war veterans and other local residents in the hundreds of homes built by this company since have learned of these sub-standard practices and materials -- to their dismay and often to their great expense.

3. Another councilman wrote insurance policies for an ambulance service that since 1948 has held lucrative contracts authorized by the city council. And there are good grounds for suspecting that at least one other councilman may have benefited personally from these contracts.

In the pages that follow our report cites other irregularities in our city government -- over a shady sale of a new branch library site, over the strange manner in which a defense attorney obtained a confidential police report, and others.

As you have noted, not all of these irregularities in our city government have occurred on a grand scale. Individually, some of the improper actions may appear of relatively little consequence. Repeated frequently among many officials, however, they weaken the whole fabric of government. They demoralize subordinate employees who, aware of the conduct of their superiors, feel they must compromise their principles or lose their jobs.

Our Burbank Citizens' Crime Prevention Committee does not maintain that all of the incidents as we have reported them constitute crimes. As a private body, our committee has faced great difficulties in digging out information, obtaining testimony, getting access to certain records, and otherwise substantiating our facts.

But we do believe that the actions and statements reported in the following pages present a general pattern of either criminal or unethical conduct that has greatly harmed our hometown and all of us as its citizens.

And we do not want to give the impression that all of the underworld activity we have referred to is still going on in Burbank. Since the formation of our crime prevention committee, one city official whose conduct was most flagrant has been forced to resign. Other characters in distasteful operations in our hometown have left Burbank, temporarily at least, or gone underground.

Many of the people associated with these incidents, however, are still in our midst. And there are always new undesirable elements ready and anxious to move into any community that relaxes on the enforcement of its laws. The threat remains with us that crime and corruption once again could surge to even greater heights.

We urge you to read our report. And we want you to understand that mere publication of a report like this is not in itself the solution to the problem of crime and corruption in Burbank.

By pointing out conditions that need correction, however, our report can help our hometown and those of us who believe in it and want to promote its integrity and sound development.

While our committee's work already has brought about some reforms in our local government and at least a lull in underworld operations, the real and final solution to our problem lies with Burbank's voters and taxpayers.

We must keep ourselves informed about the affairs of our hometown. We must work to elect officials who are able, well trained, and honest. Once they are in office we must support them in their worthy efforts. Or if they abuse their authority or fail properly to discharge their responsibilities, we must point out what's wrong. If need be, we must use the constitutional processes of government to remove them from office.

If Burbank is to rid itself of crime and corruption -- and remain clean -- then we must be vigilant and willing to assume our full responsibilities of citizenship.

Bonar Dyer, President

The Burbank Citizens'
Crime Prevention Committee