

SOUTH BAY NEWS

LAWSUIT: Torrance to Pay Shooting Victim \$1.9 Million

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Coyle will not be able to return to construction work after he leaves jail, but he hopes to find a job that is more sedentary, Panish said.

The lawsuit arose from a shooting that occurred May 9, 1988, at Western Avenue and 227th Street in Torrance. Coyle was shot after the Torrance police stopped him for questioning while he rode his motorcycle.

The three officers involved in the incident—Timothy Thornton, Timothy Pappas and Mark Holden—initially told investigators that the shooting occurred as Coyle made a sudden motion toward a wrench tucked into his waistband.

Investigators closed the case, but reopened it when Thornton told superiors that Pappas fired the shot at Coyle accidentally, several moments after Coyle put the wrench on the sidewalk.

All three officers were dismissed from the force.

Holden pleaded no contest last June to a single misdemeanor count of filing a false police report. He was sentenced to one year of unsupervised probation and a \$1,000 fine.

Pappas pleaded no contest last year to a misdemeanor count of filing a false report and was ordered to pay a fine and serve a year on summary probation.

Thornton was granted immunity

in return for testifying against the two other officers.

Patrick and Nancy Coyle filed a civil lawsuit against the city in September, 1988. The city later acknowledged liability, and, in exchange, Coyle agreed to drop his efforts to obtain punitive damages from the police officers and Torrance Police Chief Donald Nash, Panish said.

The agreement ending the lawsuit calls for the city to pay Coyle a total of \$1,935,859. It actually will cost the city about \$1.4 million, because the payments will be made over 15 years, and money set aside to pay the Coyles will generate interest, Nelson said.

The money will come from the city's self-insurance fund, which totaled \$10,476,000 as of June, said Ken Flewellyn, assistant finance director. The fund includes money for workers' compensation and general liability cases.

Nelson said the Coyle agreement marks the last of a rash of major cases against the city involving police activities.

In the most widely publicized of those cases, the family of Kelly Rastello, 19, of San Pedro, last year won a \$6-million civil judgment against the Torrance police. Rastello was killed in a collision with a vehicle driven by off-duty Torrance Police Sgt. Rollo Green.

Panish, the Coyles' attorney, also represented the Rastello family.