

11-19-92

**CITY COUNCIL**

# Ex-mayor commended by County Supervisors

By **Brian Hall**  
North County News

In the face of a criminal conviction, former mayor Ron Isles was commended Tuesday by the Orange County Board of Supervisors for service to the community.

Isles resigned Oct. 21 after pleading guilty to seven counts of conflict of interest, improperly voting to impose eminent domain in downtown Brea and failure to disclose financial holdings.

Despite the legal troubles that have brought a downpour of negative publicity, he was recognized at the Supervisors meeting along with six other outgoing mayors.

Other local mayors honored are Jim Flora of La Habra and Don Bankhead of Fullerton.

"Ron's innate ability to bring people together to accomplish great things has brought overwhelming community involvement within the city of Brea," said the resolution honoring Isles.

Supervisors said Isles has devoted countless hours to the betterment of the city by serving on the Brea Police Reserve and supporting local civic organizations such as the Brea Lions Club, Rotary and Soroptimists. He was co-chairman of the facility needs committee of

the Brea Olinda Unified School District.

In addition, Isles has been a member of the Orange County Leadership Forum comprised of representatives from neighboring cities to address impacts to local communities.

The resolution states that Isles has participated in open communication with county, state and federal officials concerning regional issues.

He was elected to the City Council in 1980 and resigned in 1983. He was re-elected in 1988 and also failed to serve out his second council term, saying he was resigning voluntarily to avoid attracting further bad publicity.

Previously, Isles served for four years on the Brea Planning Commission.

The resolution states that "the Orange County Board of Supervisors hereby commends Ron Isles for his service to the city of Brea during his tenure as mayor and offers sincere, best wishes for continued success."

Isles is on three years probation. He has been ordered by the court to pay fines and assessments of \$13,500. And he is barred from lobbying or seeking elective office for four years.

# Brea mayor faces criminal counts...

(Continued from Page A1)  
charges that Isles repeatedly voted on redevelopment matters that may have financially benefited him.

In addition to being banned from public office, Isles could face 10 years behind bars and fines of nearly \$200,000.

Sounding defiant at Tuesday night's council meeting, Isles said he will not step down as mayor and, in fact, will press on with his plans to seek re-election in the fall.

"The answer is a resounding 'No!'" Isles said, referring to a reporter who asked if he would resign.

In a written statement he read at the council meeting, Isles said any votes that may have been illegal were "due to inadvertence on my part," adding, "Often the interpretation of what is required

to report is the root of the problem."

While Isles continually pointed out that the charges were misdemeanors, not felony crimes, Tuesday night, Mulgrew responded pointedly this morning that the mayor should not take the charges lightly.

"Just because they are misdemeanors and not felonies does not mean they are not serious charges. These are criminal charges. Each count carries up to six months in jail and up to a \$10,000 fine," he said.

Isles also called the charges a "mixed blessing," saying the long investigation has caused he and his family hardship.

"I am pleased that a conclusion to all this is now in sight. This problem will now be resolved and we can hopefully get on with things," he said, adding he was

confident he would be vindicated in the end.

The four other councilmen sat silently as Isles spoke, with none of them commenting on the criminal charges.

Prosecutors said Isles, as a member of the Brea Redevelopment Agency, voted four times in 1989 and 1990 to allow Olen Properties Inc. to construct a high-rise in Brea. In 1988, prosecutors said, the firm had loaned nearly \$1 million to Town and Country Partners, money which was used to buy out Isles stake in that company.

Isles also voted in October of 1990 to extend negotiations with his business partner Don McBride, to build an auto mall in downtown Brea, prosecutors said.

The council, which acts as the Redevelopment Agency, awarded McBride negotiating rights in

March of 1990, but then nixed further negotiations after concerns over conflict of interest became public.

Isles and McBride had been partners in Town and Country, though Isles maintains the partnership had been severed long ago.

Prosecutors disagree.

"(Isles) made a statement to a reporter that the partnership existed in name alone. The fact remains that the partnership did exist when (Isles) entered into (public) office and they had an intricate financial relationship," Mulgrew said, adding "The law gives a very specific definition on what is a financial interest and what isn't. Mr. Isles certainly had one with Mr. McBride.

Prosecutors said disclosure charges against Isles allege "various misstatements and omissions" regarding his financial holdings, which were made between December of 1988 and March of 1991.

Isles is set to be arraigned on the charges on June 18 at North Orange County Municipal Court in Fullerton.



# Daily Star-Progress

La Habra • Brea • Fullerton • East Whittier



## Practice drill

ROTC members practice lowering flag before Armed forces day ceremonies held last Friday.

Wednesday, May 20, 1992

# D.A. files 21-count complaint against Isles

## Brea mayor charged with conflict-of-interest violations

By Mark Cromer  
DSP Staff Writer

BREA — Culminating an investigation that has spanned nearly two years, the Orange County District Attorney's Office filed a 21-count criminal complaint against Mayor Ron Isles on Tuesday, alleging he violated conflict of interest laws.

In related developments, Deputy District Attorney James Mulgrew said similar investigations are continuing into the activities of Councilmen Wayne Wedin and Carrey Nelson.

The Orange County prosecutor picked up an investigation of Wedin initiated by the California Fair Political Practices Commission last year.

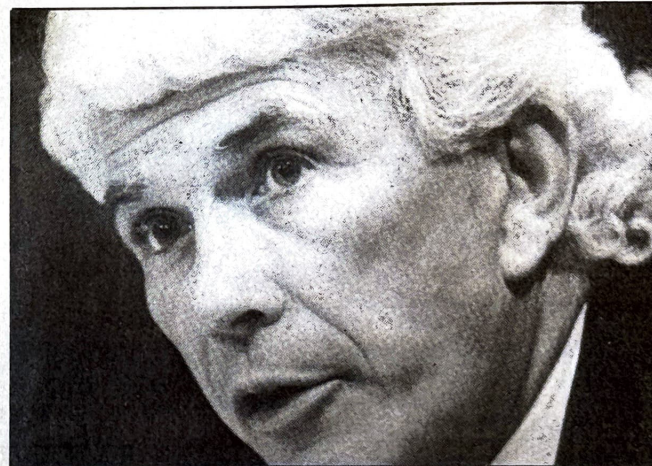
The criminal counts — which could result in Isles being banned from public office for the rest of his life if he is convicted — include

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**"I am pleased that a conclusion to all this is now in sight. This problem will now be resolved and we can hopefully get on with things."**

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Mayor Ron Isles



## Business group asks that project be put on hold

By Mark Cromer  
DSP Staff Writer

BREA — With Mayor Ron Isles facing a 21-count criminal complaint and two other city councilmen under investigation by the Orange County District Attorney's Office, businessmen in the downtown are hoping the city's controversial redevelopment project will be put on hold.

Christine Mynes, president of

(Continued on Page A2)

# ISLES: Mayor Denies Intentional Violations

Continued from A1  
of \$10,000 per count.

At a council meeting Tuesday night, the mayor said he had been asked if he intended to resign. "The answer is no. I am not guilty of misdemeanors, which would imply some intent. I never willingly violated the laws, and all those who know me know that . . .," he said.

Isles, who was elected in 1988, also was asked if he would run for reelection in November.

"The answer is a resounding yes," he said.

But Drew Imler, a member of the Brea Small Business Coalition and a critic of Isles, said: "This is the final straw in his political career. This is the end of him, and it's about time."

Isles was first elected to the council in 1980, then resigned in 1983 because, ironically, he feared that his partnership with McBride might violate state conflict-of-interest laws.

City Manager Frank Benest said that the charges against Isles would have little effect on the city or its government.

"This is a matter between Mr. Isles and the district attorney," Benest said. "The city and the Redevelopment Agency are not parties to this, and we are going to continue moving ahead."

Isles isn't the only Brea councilman under investigation. The district attorney is still investigating unrelated, conflict-of-interest issues involving Councilman Wayne D. Wedin and his role in helping the Keith Companies of Costa Mesa, an engineering firm, win a city contract to study the best ways to develop a six-square-mile area of Tonner Canyon.

Mulgrew said no conclusion has been reached in the Wedin investigation.

Of the 21 counts filed against Isles, 10 alleged conflict of interest. Included are four counts that focus on the city's granting of a contract giving McBride Development the exclusive right to negotiate to build an auto service center on a 7.5-acre city-owned parcel at Brea Boulevard and Cypress Street.

Isles, as a city councilman, took part in the discussions and then abstained, citing no reason, in a March 6, 1990, vote.

However, when the council needed more time to negotiate and renewed the contract with

contract.

"They allege I participated in the negotiations with Don McBride. My comment is I did not represent him in that effort. I didn't own even a scintilla of interest in the project, and I have no way in the world of defining how I could have financial gain," Isles said.

Isles maintained that his partnership with McBride was "in name only" at the time.

"Looking back, I can see where I shouldn't have been involved at all [in the vote]. Back then it didn't appear to me to be a conflict," he said. "It felt OK to me because I knew I had nothing to gain either way. I was just doing what was best for the city."

In a separate interview Tuesday, McBride said he has had no financial ties with Isles since 1988, when he paid Isles \$1.4 million to buy his half of Town and Country Apartments.

"He was totally out of that partnership for all intents and purposes. But he did request that the partnership continue in name only because he had some tax advantages that way," McBride said. McBride has sued the city, seeking \$100,000 in costs, because the city pulled out of the auto center contract.

Isles and McBride said Isles kept his name on the partnership because Isles did not want to have to report the sale as income in tax filings at that time.

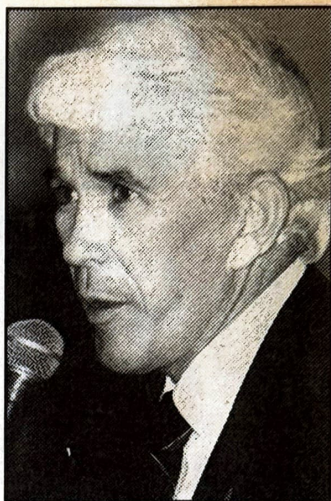
McBride added that "the whole town knew" about his partnership with Isles, which he said officially dissolved a few months ago. "He never hid the fact that he and I did a couple projects together in Brea," he said.

Four other conflict-of-interest counts focus on Isles' votes on Olen Properties Inc. development projects in 1989 and 1990. The district attorney says Olen Properties made a \$925,000 loan to Isles and McBride in late 1988, so Isles knew he had a financial interest in matters involving the company when he voted on issues related to its projects.

Isles said McBride received that loan and that his only role was "to sign the note because my name is on the partnership."

Two other counts alleging illegal conflicts involve Isles' ownership of three parcels in the city's redevelopment area—one of the parcels

## Profile: Ronald Eugene Isles



Age: 54

Born: Terre Haute, Ind.; moved to California in 1960; a Brea resident since 1970.

Family: Wife, Joy; five children.

Education: Western State University, JD.

### Government service:

- Member, Brea Planning Commission 1974-1978.
- Elected to Brea City Council in 1980, appointed mayor 1982, resigned 1983.
- Reelected in 1988; appointed mayor for one-year term in 1991.
- Defeated in Republican primary February, 1990, to fill vacancy in state's 31st Senate District.

### Also:

- Founder, Isles Industries, an electronics industry equipment manufacturer (sold mid-1980s).
- General Partner, law firm of Ronald E. Isles & Associates.
- Partner, Town & Country Partners, with Don McBride. Isles maintains that he has had no financial interest in the partnership since 1988, when he rejoined the council.

economic disclosure forms in 1989 and 1990, including property at 595 W. Lambert Road and 409 W. Date St., and five loans of almost \$7 million.

Isles said most of those loans involved Town and Country Apartments, and since McBride made the payments and arranged them, he mistakenly left them off his economic disclosure forms.

"Twenty-one counts sounds ominous, but you might find 21 errors in everyone's reporting forms," Isles said. "If I've got egg on my face, and I didn't pay enough attention to reporting, it's because it wasn't on my mind. I am a busy individual."

This company manufactures... being defeated in a poster... City of Industry was destroyed in a spectacular... \$3.5-million flash fire that, according to authorities, was fueled by gunpowder.

# Brea Mayor Charged on 21 Counts

■ **Complaints:** Ronald E. Isles is accused of misdemeanor activity in which he allegedly violated conflict-of-interest and financial disclosure laws.

By MARLA CONE  
and HELAINE OLEN  
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

BREA—Mayor Ronald E. Isles was charged Tuesday with 21 misdemeanor counts alleging that he violated conflict-of-interest laws by casting votes on issues involving a longtime business partner and failed to disclose millions of dollars in loans and other financial interests.

Many of the criminal charges focus on Isles' business ties with Don McBride, owner of McBride Development Co. of Brea.

Isles, 54, an attorney, and McBride until recently had a partnership which built a 122-unit apartment complex and business park in Brea.

The criminal complaint caps a one-year investigation of Isles by the Orange County district attorney's office, which was acting on tips from an unnamed Brea resident who complained about his business practices.

Isles on Tuesday denied any wrongdoing, saying that he had gained nothing personally from his decisions as a City Council member.

"I didn't knowingly and willingly violate the law, and nobody's ever going to prove I did," Isles said. "I might have inadvertently not reported something, or voted on something, but that's the long and the short of it. . . . If any irregularities occurred, they were inadvertent or oversights. Maybe I'm guilty of ignorance, but I'm certainly not guilty of being a criminal."

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 1992

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The complaint alleges that Isles, on three different Brea development issues, "willfully and unlawfully . . . attempted to use his official position to influence a governmental decision in which he knew . . . he had a financial interest."

Deputy Dist. Atty. James Mulgrew characterized the charges "as a very serious matter. We interviewed dozens of people and reviewed hundreds of documents."

Isles said he ended his financial involvement with McBride when he was elected to the council. He said he sold back to McBride in 1988 his 50% financial interest in their partnership, called Town and Country Partners, although he continued to keep his name on the partnership for tax reasons.

"On each and every incident, it can be clearly shown I had no profit to gain whatsoever," Isles said.

The prosecutor, however, said that despite some 1988 changes in the partnership, "there still existed an intricate financial relationship between him and Mr. McBride after he entered office," Mulgrew said.

If convicted, Isles could face six months in jail and maximum fines

Please see ISLES, A22

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## GOVERNMENT

# Brea mayor pleads innocent to conflict

**The Orange County Register**

Brea Mayor Ron Isles pleaded innocent via telephone to conflict-of-interest charges during his arraignment in North Orange County Municipal Court on Thursday.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office has charged Isles with 21 counts of conflict of interest and failure to report conflicts from

1988 to 1990.

During that period, he voted at least seven times on issues allegedly affecting his business, Town & Country Partners, or his partner, developer Don McBride. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in jail and \$40,000 in fines.

A pretrial hearing has been set for July 30, and a jury trial is scheduled Aug. 10.

## ORANGE COUNTY

# Embattled Brea Mayor Won't Seek Reelection

■ **Politics:** Ronald E. Isles, who faces 21 misdemeanor allegations of conflict of interest, says he wants to devote more time to his family, private interests.

By HELAINE OLEN  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

**B**REA—Mayor Ronald E. Isles, who faces trial next month on 21 misdemeanor charges of conflict of interest and failing to disclose millions of dollars in loans and other financial concerns, has announced that he will not seek reelection.

Isles, a 54-year-old attorney, said he wanted to spend more time with his family and on private interests.

"I've got horses and I've got grandkids, and right now I have time to play with one but not both," Isles said at the City Council meeting Tuesday.

The mayor made no reference to his legal woes, instead saying that he decided not to seek reelection because he had accomplished what he wanted to do while in office, including seeing the city established on a firm financial footing and working on a downtown redevelopment project.

Nor did Isles explain why he changed his mind regarding another

four-year term on the council. When the Orange County district attorney's office filed conflict-of-interest charges against him in May, Isles said then that he would run for reelection.

Several of the charges facing Isles focus on his business relationship with Don McBride, owner of McBride Development Co. of Brea. The two men had a partnership to build an apartment and business complex in Brea.

Isles has said he ended the partnership when he was elected to the council in 1988. However, the criminal complaint against him alleges that the relationship between the two continued even as Isles voted in 1990 to extend the time factor on a city contract that granted McBride Development exclusive rights to negotiate to build an auto service station on a city-owned parcel.

Other charges facing Isles include allegations that he voted on Olen Properties Inc. development projects, even though the group had made a loan of \$925,000 to Isles and McBride in 1988.

Isles is also charged with failing to report some of his economic interests in state economic disclosure forms in 1989 and 1990, including five loans totaling over \$6 million and owning properties in the downtown redevelopment area.

Isles, who has pleaded not guilty to the charges, could face six months in jail and a maximum fine of \$10,000 per count if convicted.

Councilman Glenn G. Parker said he was not surprised by the Isles announcement.

"I had the feeling Ron was looking to spend more time with his family," Parker said. "He's been doing work on his home, he seems to be enjoying his family, horses and home."

Bill Vega, a Brea resident and longtime opponent of Isles and the Brea City Council, said he was happy that Isles has decided not to seek a second term.

"Whatever the reason, [his decision] is in the best interest of the community," Vega said. "This decision is going to benefit not only himself but other people. It is going to start to help to clear up the city's reputation."

Isles, a native of Indiana, was first elected to the Brea City Council in 1980 but resigned in 1983 to

devote more time to his business interests. He was elected to a four-year term on the City Council in 1988 and was appointed mayor in December.

Isles, whose term ends Dec. 1, will be leaving office in a city rife with controversy.

In June, Orange County Superior Court Judge Robert C. Todd ruled against the city's Redevelopment Agency in a lawsuit brought by the Brea Small Business Coalition, which has effectively halted all downtown redevelopment activity. The group, made up mostly of merchants with small businesses, challenged the city's relocation benefits for business owners, tenants and homeowners who were moved to make way for an ambitious downtown redevelopment project.

In addition, Councilman Wayne D. Wedin, the other incumbent whose term ends this year, announced in July that he would not be seeking reelection. Wedin is being investigated by the Orange County district attorney's office on allegations that he attempted to gain a city contract for Keith Cos. of Costa Mesa, an engineering firm, to study development issues in Tonner Canyon.

**Friday, June 19, 1992**

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**BREA MAYOR**

# **Isles' arraignment postponed 1 week**

**The Orange County Register**

The arraignment of Brea Mayor Ronald E. Isles on conflict-of-interest charges, scheduled for Thursday, was postponed for one week.

Thomas Avdeef, Isles' attorney, said he needed time to study the prosecution's evidence before advising his client about making a plea.

Municipal Court Judge John McOwen rescheduled the hearing for next Thursday.



**GOVERNMENT**

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# Brea News

The North Orange County News

Brea's only hometown newspaper since 1967

May 21, 1992

4 Sections

44 Pages

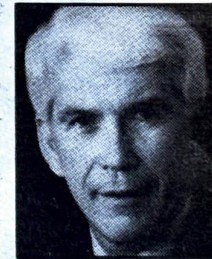
## DA brings charges against Mayor Isles

By Brian Hall  
Staff Writer

The Orange County District Attorney's Office filed a 21-count misdemeanor complaint Tuesday against Ron Isles, Brea mayor and Redevelopment Agency member.

Isles, 54, is charged with violating provisions of the Political Reform Act regarding conflicts of interest and disclosure of economic interests. His arraignment is set for June 18 at the North Orange County Municipal Court.

All counts carry a maximum jail term of six months. The first two counts could impose a fine of \$1,000 and bar the mayor from ever again holding public office. The other 19 charges would disqualify him from campaigning for elective office for four years



Isles

from the date of conviction and levy a \$10,000 fine.

Two of the counts, along with two conflict of interest charges, pertain to an exclusive right to negotiate for development of a 7.5-acre auto service center on city-owned land.

Brea Redevelopment Agency awarded the negotiation rights in March 1990 to McBride Development Co. The complaint alleges that Don McBride, controlling owner, was associated with Isles on other investments. Isles is charged with improperly participating in the process leading to the award as well as an extension of the agreement in October 1990.

"They're alleging that I participated in a meeting or voted to extend negotiations with McBride," Isles said.

"But I inadvertently voted on it. I knew the item was on the consent calendar, but it was a ministerial action, a staff recommendation, and I didn't think

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# ISLES:

Continued from page 1

it was a conflict," Isles added.

"These statutes were designed to remove or limit even the possibility of someone using their personal influence to make an official decision on their personal finances, as opposed to making the decision which they felt was in the best interest of the public," said Jim Mulgrew, the deputy district attorney handling the case.

"We are alleging that he committed the offenses willfully."

Four of the conflict of interest charges stem from votes in 1989 and 1990 concerning projects of Olen Properties. The complaint alleges that in November 1988 Olen Properties loaned \$925,000 to a partnership in which Isles had a 50 percent interest.

Prosecutors only have to show that Isles reasonably or foreseeably could have been financially affected by the decision.

Isles said he never benefited from the Olen loan and that in 1988, he had already conveyed the property back to his partner, McBride.

"Because my name was still on the partnership, I was required to sign the loan documents, but I didn't get any proceeds, and I don't make any payments on the note," Isles said.

The remaining two conflict of interest counts pertain to decisions in June 1989 regarding enactment of eminent domain for a portion of the Brea redevelopment area.

Disclosure charges allege various misstatements and omissions in statements of

economic interests filed by Isles between December 1988 and March 1991.

"I have never failed to report something because I thought in doing so I'd be able to make some kind of gain somewhere," Isles said.

Isles chalks the reporting problems up to sloppy book-keeping on his part and delegation of responsibility in letting other people fill out his Statements of Economic Interest, state forms which candidates and office holders must file annually.

"But I can't give other people my problems. I'm ultimately responsible. If I didn't pay enough attention to the level of detail in reporting, then it's my fault, and I'll take the blame for it."

The investigation began in summer of 1990. Dozens of witnesses have been interviewed and hundreds of pages of documentation entered into evidence.

Isles said at the beginning of the investigation, the district attorney's office took a very aggressive posture.

"Their investigators, in my opinion, made statements to people, friends, which I think maligned my character," he said.

"They alleged that I had committed felonies. They have been after this a whole year and a half, and they have every document that I have available to me, having to do with my business activities over the entire period. Going over them with a fine-tooth comb, all they have been able to come up with is misdemeanor counts."

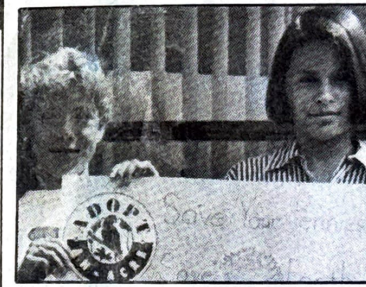
Isles said he hopes to run for council office again in November.

Daily

# Star-Progress

La Habra • Brea • Fullerton • East Whittier

Thursday, May 21, 1992



## Saving the earth

Macy School student body representatives collect coins to raise more than \$900 to save the rainforest.

# Isles faces biggest challenge: criminal charges

By Robert Chow  
Freedom News Service

At a council meeting in April, Mayor Ronald E. Isles became livid when a city resident suggested that he and other council members were involved in shady dealings over a redevelopment project.

"All I got in this world is my name," Isles said. "And I got to tell you, if you come after my name, you better be loaded for bear."

Isles again finds himself defending his name.

This time it's against the Orange County District Attorney's Office, which has filed a 21-count criminal complaint alleging that Isles violated conflict-of-interest laws when he voted on matters that allegedly benefited him and his business partner.

On the same day that prosecutors filed the misdemeanor charges, Isles not only denied wrongdoing, but announced his intention to seek re-election to the City Council in November.

For those who know the white-haired councilman who wears cow-

**"All I got in this world is my name. And I got to tell you, if you come after my name, you better be loaded for bear."**

Brea Mayor Ron Isles

boy boots with his pin-striped suits, the timing of his re-election declaration came as no surprise.

"He just doesn't know the word defeat," said Rex Gaede, a former Brea mayor and longtime friend and political ally of Isles. "That's what's got him as far as he's gone."

Isles' business partner, Brea developer Don McBride, said he warned Isles that running for the City Council might interfere with their business dealings.

"I asked him not to run," McBride said. "But you can't tell Ron and

his ego to do anything."

Isles has come a long way. The son of an Indiana coal miner, he became a millionaire after starting his own business. Without ever receiving a college degree, he earned a law degree and runs a private law practice.

But Isles has been stymied in his ambitions for higher office. Despite twice being elected to the Brea City Council, he has tried and failed to garner a seat on the Orange County Board of Supervisors, and lost in bids for the state Senate and Congress.

Those who know Isles say the traits that brought him success in business — his outspokenness, ambition, and risk-taking — have hindered his political career.

"I think he comes off a little rough on the edges and steps into things in an aggressive way," Gaede said. "Sometimes it's interpreted that he's dishonest."

(Continued on Page A2)

Isles describes himself as a hard-nosed businessman whose style doesn't mesh in the world of politics.

"I'm a bottom-line kind of guy," Isles said. "That doesn't always make me a popular guy."

Isles settled in Southern California in 1960 after serving in the Navy as an engineer on a submarine.

After a decade as a salesman, Isles founded Isles Industries Inc. out of his garage. The company manufactured dust-free work spaces that electronics and aerospace firms use for assembling delicate devices.

Isles sold the company in 1981 to pursue a law degree from Western State University. He finished his studies in two years, passed the bar and started his own law practice, Ronald E. Isles & Associates in Brea.

The firm handles mostly criminal cases, Isles said.

"Ron's very gifted and very bright," said Mel LeBaron, former Brea mayor and a political opponent of Isles' in the early 1980s. "He knows money and he talks fast. ... Those strengths he overuses and people become offended."

In 1980, at the urging of his brother-in-law, then Brea Councilman Don Fox, Isles ran for City Council and won.

Isles tenure on the council was contentious, recalled Terry Belanger, Brea city manager in 1982.

Belanger said Isles' attempts to run the city in the authoritarian manner that he used in business often put him at odds with councilmembers who sought consensus.

In a surprise announcement in 1983, Isles resigned from the council, saying he wanted to pursue a writing career. But he never was published.

Instead, he formed a business partnership with McBride that prosecutors have identified as the focal point of the conflict-of-interest charges.

Isles and McBride formed Town & Country Partners in 1983 to build the 122-unit Town & Country Apartments at 800 S. Brea Blvd.

"I needed his experience as a developer and he needed my money," Isles said of the motivation for forming the partnership. "The project was just too big for one person."

Through the partnership, Isles also purchased an office building at 595 Lambert Road for his law practice and horse stables on Olinda Drive, where he operates Giddy Up, a boarding stable.

Isles never lost his appetite for politics, however. He made an aborted run for Congress in 1986 when Rep. William Dannemeyer considered a US Senate race. Isles announced his candidacy but later withdrew when Dannemeyer decided not to run for the Senate after all.

A year later, Isles unsuccessfully sought an appointment to the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

Problems arose when Isles won a seat on the Brea City Council in 1988, however.

As a councilman, Isles served on the board of the city's redevelopment agency, from which in 1990 he allegedly negotiated on behalf of McBride, who had proposed building a 7.5-acre auto mall in the downtown area, prosecutors said.

Later in 1990, Isles voted to extend negotiations with McBride on the auto mall.

Isles said he accidentally voted on the auto-mall issue because he failed to see it among a list of other items.

LeBaron, a political opponent, said, "Ron perceives himself as a law unto himself."

Isles continued to cling to hopes of higher office. In February 1990, he ran for the 31st District state Senate seat, losing to then-Assemblyman Frank Hill.

"He's always had the rough edge to his image," said Robert Kiley, a political consultant who managed Isles' 1988 election to the City Council and advised him on his bids for the state Senate and the Board of Supervisors.

"That was something he needed to compensate for."

## Yankees edge Angels

Blyleven loses in return, 5-4/D1

## Southside Johnny to go east

OC singer returning to roots/G5



## She wins by losing

Jenny Craig is the diet maven/F1

## IKEA comes to county

Furniture giant opens in Tustin/C1

T H E O R A N G E C O U N T Y

# Register

WEDNESDAY EVENING

MAY 20, 1992

23 CENTS

## Brea mayor faces conflict charges

21 misdemeanors are filed; official denies wrongdoing

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

BREA — Mayor Ron Isles voted on projects that allegedly benefited himself and his business partner, prosecutors said in a 21-count criminal complaint filed Tuesday.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office accused Isles of

■ **BUSINESSES:** Group wants redevelopment project halted/18

casting at least seven votes from 1988 to 1990 that benefited Town and Country Partners, which the mayor co-owns with a Brea developer.

"Public officials need to be on notice that they cannot act in their own personal financial interest," said Orange County Deputy District Attorney James Mulgrew. "We're charging all the violations

Please see ISLES/18

# ISLES: Brea mayor faces up to 10 years in jail if convicted

FROM 1  
were willful."

Isles, 54, denied any intentional wrongdoing.

At a council meeting Tuesday night, Isles announced he would run for re-election in November, despite the misdemeanor charges.

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If convicted on all the charges, Isles faces up to 10 years in jail and nearly \$40,000 in fines. He also faces the possibility of a lifetime ban from holding public office.

The charges stem from Isles' relationship with his business partner, developer Don McBride. Prosecutors said the mayor had a conflict of interest when he:

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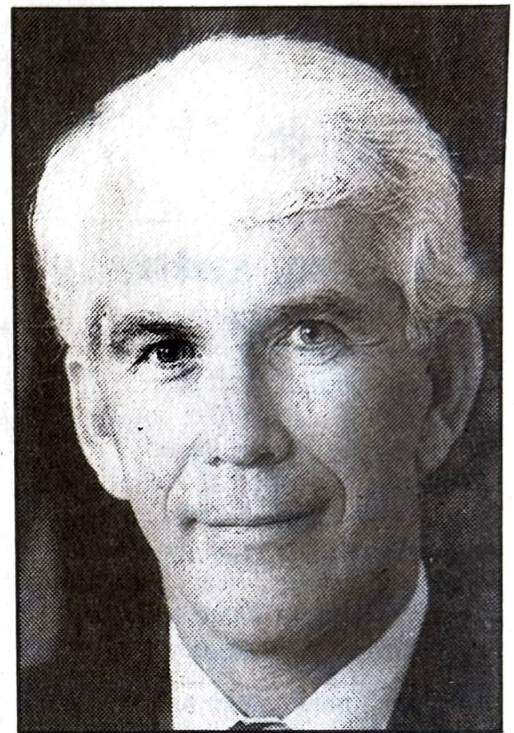
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The mayor said at least one of the votes — to extend negotiations for the auto mall — was an accident. Isles said he failed to notice that the auto-mall project was included on a list of items he voted for Oct. 16, 1990.

Isles said there was no conflict of interest in any of the other votes.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office began investigating Isles in June 1990. Mulgrew said he is continuing a probe of possible conflicts of interest involving two other council members.

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**Brea Mayor Ron Isles**

Will run for re-election in November

McBride said neither he nor Isles benefited from Isles serving on the council.

"I don't see where he benefited from his elected position in anything that he did with me," said McBride, who has filed a lawsuit against Brea and Isles to recover \$100,000 he said he spent on plans for the aborted auto-mall project.

Mulgrew disputes claims from Isles and McBride that they severed their financial relationship before Isles was elected to the council.

"The relationship between McBride and Isles did not end when Isles took office," Mulgrew said. "They had a rather intricate financial relationship. ... It was more than in name only."

# Complaints against mayor stem from his partnership with builder

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

The charges against Brea Mayor Ron Isles center around the partnership he formed with a local developer.

Isles said he formed the partnership with Brea developer Don McBride in 1983.

They formed it to build the 122-unit Town & Country Apartment Complex at 800 S. Brea Blvd. Isles said he later deeded his stake in the apartments to McBride in 1988.

McBride confirmed that he and Isles attempted to separate their properties before Isles was elected to the council. Isles' name is still on

the mortgage, McBride said.

"He quick-claimed the apartments to me before he was elected to the council," McBride said.

Even so, Isles and McBride never dissolved their partnership — mainly for tax purposes, Isles said. Isles included the partnership on his Statement of Economic Interests, which elected officials are required to file under the Political Reform Act.

"From my view, I conveyed away the apartments in 1988, so I didn't feel I needed to report it," Isles said.

Through Town and Country Partners, Isles also purchased an

office building at 595 W. Lambert Road for his private law practice, and acquired horse stables at 215 Olinda Drive where he operates Giddy Up Inc., a boarding stable.

Isles continued to represent McBride during Isles' tenure on the council in legal matters unrelated to Brea, McBride said.

McBride said he was concerned that retaining Isles as his attorney presented a conflict of interest, but he said Isles told him City Attorney James Markman advised Isles that it was not a conflict.

"I figured if Isles is an attorney and Markman is an attorney, who am I to say they are wrong," McBride said.

## Halt to Brea redevelopment work urged

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

**BREA** — A group of business owners demanded Tuesday that the city halt its downtown redevelopment project in the wake of criminal charges against Mayor Ron Isles.

"This just shows the illegitimacy of eminent domain and the redevelopment plan," said Bill Vega, a member of the Brea Small Business Coalition, a group of two doz-

en business owners who say the redevelopment project is forcing them out of town.

Two of the 21 misdemeanor criminal charges against Isles involve his voting on June 6, 1989, and June 20, 1989, to allow the city to use eminent domain to take property for the downtown redevelopment project.

Since 1986, the city has relocated hundreds of households and dozens of businesses to make way for a shopping center, town-house vil-

lage, movie-theater complex, apartments and tree-lined promenade.

City Manager Frank Benest said the city will move forward with its downtown redevelopment project despite the criminal charges against Isles.

"This is a matter involving Isles and the district attorney and does not affect the city or the redevelopment agency," Benest said. "We're going to continue trucking along."



REG 10-15-92

# Brea mayor's plea bargain is flawed

By Robert Chow

The Orange County Register

Brea Mayor Ron Isles can withdraw guilty pleas on seven counts of criminal conflict of interest because of an oversight by prosecutors.

"It's still kind of in the air," Deputy District Attorney James Mulgrew said Wednesday.

Isles pleaded guilty Friday to seven misdemeanor counts in exchange for having prosecutors drop 14 other counts.

But for a plea bargain to be binding, prosecutors must inform the defendant of the consequences of the plea.

When the plea was entered, Mulgrew said, he incorrectly advised Isles that he could serve the remainder of his mayoral term, which expires once the November election results are certified. That should occur in December. Isles is not seeking re-election.

State law, however, requires a public official to vacate office immediately if he is convicted of "any offense that involves a violation of official duties."

Prosecutors have scheduled a hearing in North Orange County Municipal Court in Fullerton today to inform Isles that he must leave office immediately if he accepts the plea bargain.

Isles said Tuesday night that he and his attorney had not decided what to do, but that he did not intend to leave office early.

If Isles chooses to serve out his term, the plea bargain will be void and he'll be tried on all 21 misdemeanor counts of conflict of interest, Mulgrew said.

Under the plea bargain, Isles must pay \$13,500 in fines and fees and accept probation for three years, Mulgrew said. He also will be barred from being a candidate for public office or acting as a lobbyist for four years.

Isles was charged in May with 21 counts of criminal conflict of interest. Prosecutors allege that he participated in City Council decisions or discussions that could have benefited him and a business partner.

# Brea Mayor Will Not Withdraw His Guilty Plea

10-16-92  
TIMES

■ **Courts:** Ronald E. Isles' decision means he may have to resign, according to state law. The city will have to decide what action it will take.

By MATT LAIT  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

FULLERTON—Brea Mayor Ronald E. Isles on Thursday declined to withdraw his guilty plea to misdemeanor charges of conflict of interest and failure to fully report financial holdings, setting the stage for his possible removal from office.

Isles, 54, pleaded guilty last week to seven misdemeanor counts stemming from his conduct as a council member between 1989 and 1991. But he had the chance to ask to withdraw that plea after prosecutors discovered this week that state law may require him to immediately resign.

The mayor said he entered the plea under the assumption that he would be able to fulfill the final six weeks of his term in office.

During a court hearing Thursday, Isles' attorney said the plea would not be taken back.

"Withdrawing the plea would not be in his best interest," attorney Thomas Avdeef said.

He said Isles only wanted to complete his term in office so he did not have to "go out with the stigma of a conviction when in fact he hasn't done anything wrong. . . . It's too bad it worked out this way."

Isles, who did not appear in court Thursday, said he was angry that Deputy Dist. Atty. James Joseph Mulgrew discovered the state law after a plea agreement had been reached.

"The district attorney's action is reprehensible," Isles said in an interview. "He acted in bad faith. . . . The D.A. has had two years of near-Gestapo tactics in investigating me, my business and practice."

Mulgrew and Avdeef agreed that the burden is now on Brea.

"The city is going to have to decide what the law requires," Mulgrew said. "On the face of it, his plea appears to be grounds for the office to be vacated."

Assistant City Manager Tim O'Donnell said that he was surprised that Brea would

Please see BRE A, B12

# BREA: Mayor Declines to Withdraw Guilty Plea

Continued from B1

"have to be the moving party in this. . . It seems incredible to me."

O'Donnell said city officials will have to consult with the district attorney's office to determine what steps, if any, they will take against Isles. If the city opts to do nothing, Mulgrew said he was uncertain what the district attorney might be required to do.

Isles said that he, too, will have to consult with his attorney to determine whether he would challenge any attempt by the city to remove him from office.

Under the agreement, Isles pleaded guilty to three counts involving action he took that benefited entities in which he had a financial interest and four involving loans that he failed to report on economic-interest disclosure forms.

The mayor was placed on three years' probation and ordered to pay fines and assessments totaling \$13,500, according to court documents. Also, the agreement states that Isles cannot be a candidate for elective office or act as a lobbyist for four years.

Fourteen other counts against

him were dismissed in the plea bargain.

Isles, who was elected to the City Council in 1980 and 1988 and twice served as mayor, still contends that he did nothing wrong, saying that he might have been a little careless in his paperwork when he failed to report the loans and that he reaped no personal financial gain from his actions on the council.

Isles' guilty plea was entered under a provision of law that allows him to state that he does not admit having done anything wrong but agrees to plead guilty because he feels it is in his interest.

REG 10-13-92

# Brea mayor agrees to plea bargain

## He says DA will drop 14 of 21 conflict allegations

By Brian Hall  
North County News

Brea Mayor Ron Isles said Monday that he has made a deal with the Orange County District Attorney's Office to drop 14 of the 21 conflict-of-interest charges filed against him in exchange for guilty pleas on the seven remaining counts.

Isles' attorney had advised him to enter special guilty pleas known as West pleas. Isles said he is not admitting knowingly, willingly or factually breaking the law.

"This goes as much to mental state and intent as to whether I improperly participated in activities," Isles said.

Isles said he will pay a \$5,000 fine and be

placed on probation for three years.

Deputy District Attorney James Mulgrew declined to comment on the case except to say no deal has been finalized and there could be further developments in court today. He said he was uncertain whether the case would go to trial.

Prosecutors brought the criminal complaint against Isles on May 18. It alleges that he participated seven times in City Council decisions or discussions that could have financially benefited him and a business partner, local developer Don McBride.

In 1990, Isles voted to extend exclusive negotiations with McBride on construction of a 7.5-acre auto mall at Cypress Street and Brea Boulevard.

"I will defend to the death my honor and the fact that I acted in good faith," Isles said. "I have not sacrificed that in any plea bar-

gain that has come about."

Isles also was charged with failure to report millions of dollars in loans. He and McBride jointly owned a 122-unit apartment complex for which they received a \$925,000 loan from Olen Property. Isles later voted on a high-rise office project by Olen.

Isles said he agreed to the plea bargain to avoid subjecting his family and friends to a three-week trial and to save time, money and effort.

"If my taking this kind of hit serves to put members of the public and elected officials on notice that they can't be careless as I was, and that they have to pay more attention to their reporting forms, then I can say that something positive came out of this."

Isles said he will not seek public office again. His term on the City Council ends in December.

# Mayor still hopes to hold on to job

By Jeffrey Miller  
The Orange County Register

Brea Mayor Ron Isles remained adamant about staying in office Friday after meeting with City Attorney James Markman to discuss whether he could keep his position for the last six weeks of his term.

"The position we're taking is that I don't have to give up my seat on the council," Isles said.

Isles pleaded guilty last week to seven misdemeanor counts of violating state conflict-of-interest laws in exchange for prosecutors dropping 14 other counts. As part of the plea bargain, prosecutors told Isles he could keep his office until his term expires Dec. 1.

But earlier this week, prosecutors said they were mistaken to assure Isles he could remain in office. Under state law, a public official must leave office immediately

if convicted of an offense involving official duties.

The responsibility to enforce the law belongs to Markman, who could not be reached Friday. Isles declined to discuss their meeting, citing attorney-client privilege. He said the legal question of whether he may remain in office is still up in the air.

"This (plea bargain) is something that's completely new," he said. "Mr. Markman is researching it and when he's prepared to take a position on it, he'll notify everyone."

The conflict-of-interest charges stemmed from a vote by Isles that benefited his business partner, developer Don McBride. Isles voted to extend exclusive negotiating rights to McBride for construction and development of a an automotive center.

# Brea Mayor's Plea Bargain Is in Jeopardy

By CATHERINE GEWERTZ  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

FULLERTON—Brea Mayor Ronald E. Isles has pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of conflict of interest and failing to fully report his financial holdings, but the plea agreement could fall apart if Isles refuses to leave office immediately.

Isles, 54, entered the guilty plea this past Friday to seven misdemeanor counts stemming from his conduct as a City Council member between 1989 and 1991. Three of the counts deal with actions he took that benefited entities in which he had a financial interest, while four deal with loans he failed to report on economic-interest disclosure forms.

Fourteen other counts against him were dismissed in the plea-bargain agreement.

Court documents in Fullerton Municipal Court show that Isles agreed to be placed on three years' probation and pay fines and assessments totaling \$13,500. As part of the agreement, he also agreed not to be a candidate for elective office or act as a lobbyist for four years.

Notations in the documents indicate that the prosecutor, judge and defense attorney all believed that the plea arrangement did not require Isles to step down from his post immediately. His term as mayor and City Council member expire Dec. 1, and he is not running for reelection.

But after the plea agreement was entered in court, the prosecutor, Orange County Deputy Dist. Atty. James J. Mulgrew, discovered a section of the state government code that seems to require a

**Please see ISLES, A17**

# Brea's off the beam

**W**ould a radio or TV station be a cure for a civic inferiority complex — or assuage the sinking feeling that others just don't yet appreciate the finer aspects of life and governance in your fair municipality? Mayor Ron Isles of Brea seems to think so. Unfortunately, he also seems willing to blow the taxpayers' money on the dubious project of luring a broadcaster to Brea.

City officials claim to believe having a broadcaster based there would put Brea "on the map." We don't know which maps the city patriarchs are using. We haven't yet been able to find a local map that excludes Brea.

But if any are extant, you'd think the logical course would be to complain to the map publisher. Luring a radio station seems a roundabout approach to the problem.

All right, all right, what they really mean is that Brea has charms and attractions — a fine shopping mall, an active tax-supported arts program, lots of nice houses, and a bunch of property owners disgruntled by the wholesale use of eminent domain by the city's redevelopment program — that just aren't properly appreciated in the larger world of Southern California. Why, Mr. Isles claims he still runs into people who expect to find tar pits instead of oil wells and sculptures in beautiful downtown Brea.

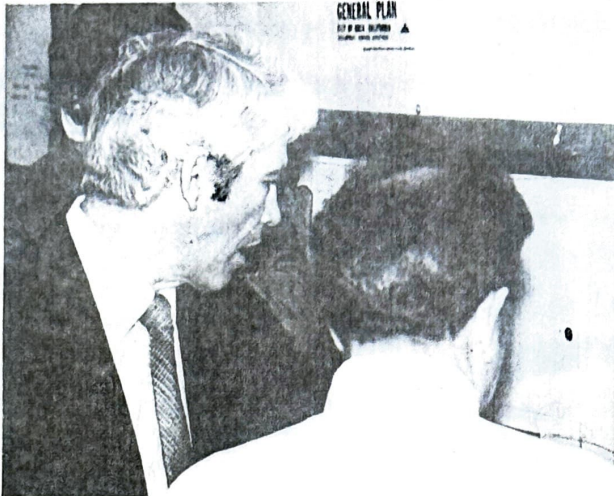
Dean Martin used to sing a song called "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You," but he could have been sozzled at the time.

Taking that sentiment seriously, however, is really not good advice. It's fine to celebrate how love can make you feel complete, but people — men, women, children, city governments — who really base their sense of self-worth on how others view or evaluate them are in for a lifetime of disappointment. Because — we know this is hard to take, but most government officials are presumably adult enough to handle it — no matter how wonderful you are, no matter how effectively you advertise yourself, there are bound to be some people who simply don't appreciate your sterling qualities. Sad but true.

If Mr. Isles wanted to use his own money to try to lure a broadcaster to Brea, or to invest in a broadcasting entity on condition that it move to Brea, there would be no grounds for complaint. But last July the city government actually retained a telecommunications consultant to help woo a station to relocate. Word is that the consultants met with TV station KDOC/56, now in Anaheim, and with three radio stations that haven't been named.

Clearly, this is a city government whose officials have too much time on their hands and too much taxpayers' money to play with. Maybe if they rebated some money to city taxpayers, or worked on a redevelopment plan that wouldn't violate peoples' rights, then the people themselves would find more creative ways to dazzle the map-makers.

# An Interview



**Q.** Will Brea continue to grow like it has?

**A.** No. The revisions to the General Plan and the Hill-sides policy we developed assure that this growth spurt is over. As a member of the City Council I'll work to see that we stick to the plan.

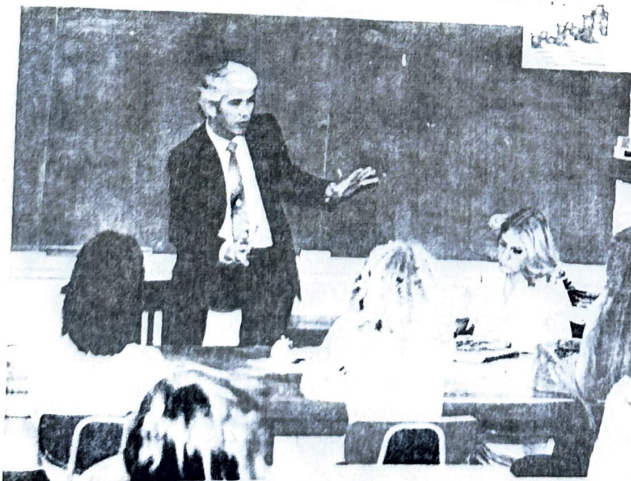
**Q.** Some towns fear and fight growth — should Brea be concerned about our rapid growth?

**A.** Yes, we should. We have seen a great deal of development in a short time. As Chairman of the Planning Commission and for three years before that as a member, our concern was to manage growth intelligently. We want progress, not problems. That's why I was quick to oppose the monstrous Fedco project that would have taken the Hillside area and created traffic jams.

*From Mr. Isles - Campaign '80*

**Q.** Has growth created problems that threaten the home-town quality that makes Brea a desirable place to live and raise kids?

**A.** Congestion and noise from traffic are the two most important problems. We've got to keep the traffic moving on main arteries. If we do nothing, Brea could end up like Newport Beach. Anyone who has been there on a summer weekend realizes what can happen if you don't plan for the future.



**Q.** What about noise?

**A.** So far we haven't done enough about shielding residential neighborhoods from freeway and boulevard noise. We must insist on landscaped berms and fencing to protect homes and schools. Noise is more than an irritation, it's a serious health hazard like smog and chemicals.



# With Ron ISLES

**Q.** Are there other major issues facing Brea residents and what can we do about them?

**A.** Money and morale. First, Brea has not seen a major cutback in essential services as a result of Prop 13, because our tax base has expanded and because the state pumped \$300,000 into this year's city budget. I favored Prop 13 and I favor cutting state income taxes by passing Prop 9 this June, but it means we have to get our priorities straight and plan a budget that protects essentials like fire, police and paramedics. If the courts should rule that we can't assess the mall owners to pay for the civic/cultural center, then we would face a real budget crunch.



**Q.** You said there were two major issues, what do you mean by morale?

**A.** When a town grows this fast, and when some who are supposed to provide leadership put their personal ambitions first, then we risk pulling apart. We risk losing our identity as a city, we risk losing the home-town quality that brought us to Brea. I see some of that happening, but the City Council can work for unity among citizens.

**Q.** What about Proposition A, the rent control initiative?

**A.** I personally will vote against it. That, however, is not a council issue. The people should decide that issue and they don't need advice from candidates or public officials.

**Q.** You often talk about teamwork, can you cite an example of what you mean?

**A.** Sure, we need more teamwork between the city and the school district. A representative from the school district should sit on the Redevelopment Agency to ensure that the needs of the schools are considered. As a result, the high school, right across the street, didn't get the protection it needed. Now there are problems that wouldn't exist if the Council and the School Board had been working in concert.



# Brea mayor faces conflict charges

## 21 misdemeanors are filed; official denies wrongdoing

By Robert Chow  
The Orange County Register

BREA — Mayor Ron Isles voted on projects that allegedly benefited himself and his business partner, prosecutors said in a 21-count criminal complaint filed Tuesday. The Orange County District Attorney's Office accused Isles of

■ **BUSINESSES:** Group wants redevelopment project halted/18

casting at least seven votes from 1988 to 1990 that benefited Town and Country Partners, which the mayor co-owns with a Brea developer.

"Public officials need to be on notice that they cannot act in their own personal financial interest," said Orange County Deputy District Attorney James Mulgrew. "We're charging all the violations

# ISLES: Brea mayor faces up to 10 years in jail if convicted

FROM 1  
were willful."

Isles, 54, denied any intentional wrongdoing.

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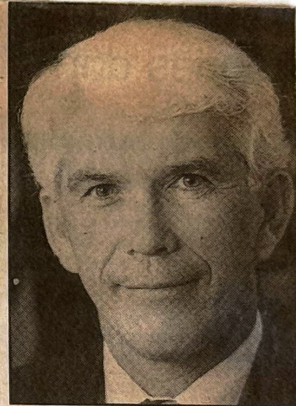
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