

GOTHAM GAZETTE

All the news that fits, we print

BATMAN DEATH THREAT

Several days ago, Gotham awoke to a shocking display of braggadocio. High above 57th Avenue, plastered over a billboard advertisement for Pete's Pizza Emporium, was the following message:

He who protects the city during day and night
Will not be able to hide from our might
Behind the shield of darkest night

In the icy place
He will come face to face
With death on the case.

It is speculated that the rhyming act of vandalism was the work of Edward Nigma, AKA the Riddler, long-time adversary of Batman and a criminal mastermind still wanted by the police for many acts of larceny.

Pundits and commentators agree, this arrogant proclamation appears to be a taunt that the Riddler promises Batman's death at the Iceberg Lounge, a local nightclub and "icy" hot spot. Although the timing of this attempt on the life of the city's protector is less clear, some citizens believe it to be slated for tonight, the night of the new moon, when a charity function will be held there.

Realizing that Batman is sure to rise to meet the Riddler's a challenge, concerned citizens have decided to take it into their own hands to foil this scheme. Says Veronica Vreeland, "The Riddler can't make good his threat if he can't *find* Batman. Besides," she goes on to say, "it's for a good cause!"

Ms. Vreeland refers to the Stray Cat Rescue League, the organization for which this charity event is being held. Every year, they take in and find good homes for hundreds of homeless cats and kittens. Donations from this event are desperately needed to provide funding for the coming year.

Originally, the fundraiser was to have a "winter wonderland" theme. In light of recent events, however, organizer Vreeland has quickly reworked the motif. "The

new theme is Batman. Everyone attending is encouraged to show up in costume as Batman," effused Vreeland, modeling her own custom-tailored Batgirl outfit.

Vreeland's views on helping out Batman are shared by local law officials. Commissioner James Gordon has long been a supporter of the Batman's methods, to the point of having a large spotlight set atop the roof of the police department for use in contacting Batman when he is needed for help on a case. And according to Janet Van Dorn, Gotham City's recently elected district attorney, "vigilantism is not only all right, it's something to be encouraged."

ACCIDENT AT GOTHCORP RESEARCH FACILITY

Early yesterday there was a large explosion at a Gothcorp research facility in Gotham. Police and emergency workers arrived on the scene of the explosion which engulfed the entire building. Fire marshals investigating the incident have not yet determined what caused the explosion, which is currently believed to be an accident. According to company records the only person in the facility at the time of the explosion was Dr. Victor Fries, head of the Cryogenic research group. It is believed that Dr. Fries was killed in the accident as rescue workers have not yet located him.

According to Gothcorp CEO Ferris Boyle the facility was the main cryogenic research facility for the company. The facility, opened less than five years ago, is a key part of Gothcorp's research and development organization. While Mr. Boyle has refused to comment on the impact that the destruction of facility will have on Gothcorp, many analysts have seen this as a major setback for the company. The facility represented a five billion dollar investment for the company and its loss sets back their research efforts by several years. Mr. Boyle has vowed that the company will rebuild and continue its pioneering efforts into cryogenic technologies.

Laffco Toy Company Turns 50

This month marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Laffco Toy Company. Laffco is best known for the Walking Wendy Doll, which became an instant success for the company. Despite the success of the Walking Wendy Doll, the company came up on hard times and went out of business twenty years ago. The Gotham Museum has put together a display showing all of the different models of the Walking Wendy Dolls that the company produced, as well as some of the less successful toys, such as the Spitting Simon Doll, the My Fake Vomit kit, the Random Decision Maker, and the Sharpshooter Dart Gun. After declaring bankruptcy, the company was sold to the Metropolis Toy Co. Production of the Walking Wendy Doll was transferred to the company's factory in Nebraska. The Laffco factory was put up for sale, but there was no interest in the aging building and it has remained abandoned ever since.



Walking Wendy was named for the former wife of Thomas Laffer, president of Laffco

Yesterday's Police Blotter

5:47 AM The Gotham Museum reported several priceless artifacts stolen. Again.

7:43 AM A Bludhaven man reported that a black and tan dog broke its chain on Wayne Lane, ran out of the yard and nipped him on the ankle as he bent over to pick up a can.

9:14 AM A male was arrested for narcotics on Eggert Road following a report he was babysitting his grandchildren and left them alone inside to work on a vehicle.

9:27 AM An employee of a Woodlawn Green munitions company reported 12 sticks of dynamite missing from inventory.

10:25 AM A 3-year-old girl had a Tic Tac stuck up her nose on Woodgate Drive.

10:40 AM A man reported while he was driving, six kids were walking down Crandon Boulevard, when they wouldn't move he hit one them and they took off running.

11:45 AM A male was reportedly selling meat out of his truck on Kemp Avenue.

1:12 PM An employee at a Wayne Road business reported smelling a natural gas odor coming from a hole at Wayne and Lyndhurst.

2:03 PM A purse containing a wallet with identification and credit cards, two gold bracelets, a cellphone and a bank book was stolen from a 2002 Mercedes SUV. It happened while the owner was paying for gasoline inside Gas Station. Damages are estimated at \$1,375.

2:07 PM An intoxicated male was arrested for criminal mischief after punching holes in a wall on Roland Street. Waiving his rights under Miranda, the male identified himself as Jason Todd. The man escaped police custody.

3:04 PM A female turned in cocaine she found near a car on French Road. The substance appeared to be sugar and tests determined it was not drugs.

4:30 PM An employee, who had been reportedly fired from a Walden Avenue business, took the van. After recovery, police dogs detected the scent of gunpowder in the vehicle, though no active explosives were found.

4:32 PM A Robin Road resident reported that neighborhood children are harassing them. Resident said it is a constant problem: children are playing ball, ball went onto resident's property, so resident went outside and took the ball. Caller was advised by police and returned the ball to the children.

5:15 PM A Randolph Street woman reported finding an arrow in the snow in front of her residence.

5:37 PM A driver on Dennis Lane reported a dog was locked in a Chevy Cobalt, that was running.

6:12 PM Fire chiefs responding to a report of an unknown chemical odor in the right apartment of a Sable Palm Drive duplex determined it to be a waterproof spray for leather goods being used by the resident in the left apartment.

7:02 PM A woman from the Cauldron neighborhood reported that her mailbox was attached to her house when she left in the morning, but was gone when she returned.

7:31 PM A Park Edge Drive resident reported missing \$10,000 in cash.

7:45 PM A Summit Street, Lancaster, man reported that someone in a Batman suit, wielding a large samurai

sword entered his residence and removed an unsecured 12-gauge shotgun, stored in a brown, leather case.

8:15 PM An individual was charged with criminal mischief after the bouncer at a Seneca Street establishment saw him jump on the hood of a car. The suspect was reportedly involved in a fight at the address.

8:20 PM Youths were reported throwing water balloons at people on Clinton Street.

8:31 PM A suspect left the Bargain Outlet on Seneca Street without paying for items that an employee helped him load into a truck.

9:00 PM The security officer of a Walden Avenue business reported finding a small baggie of marijuana on the floor in front of the security office. He said it was difficult to guess who dropped it because there were 40 employees working there at the time.

9:02 PM A motor home was broken into on Eggert Road, a VCR, TV, radio, two Batman costumes and other items were stolen.

9:05 PM An Old Post Road, Lancaster, man reported that after hearing a loud noise outside his residence, he looked out the window to see a vehicle driving away with his mailbox and post in the trunk.

9:42 PM Police arrested a 44-year-old man for DWI on George Urban Boulevard after he drove up behind a patrol car with his high-beams on and ignored officers' signals to lower his lights. Once pulled over, he displayed obvious signs of intoxication, and recorded a .18 BAC at the station.

10:03 PM A woman driving a red Porsche, insisting that her age be recorded as 26, was pulled over for driving through three red lights. Finding that the woman had 32 unpaid traffic violations outstanding, the officer asked her to hand over her license. At which point she drove off.

10:42 PM A boyfriend was threatening his girlfriend on Wellington and told her he would cover her car in peanut butter and jelly, if she continued to speak to her ex-boyfriend. In an effort to calm the boy down, officers said they would charge him with unlawful use of a condiment with intent to smother. Under medical advisement, he was committed to Arkham.

11:05 PM A motorist reported seeing a man lying on the ground near Sheridan Drive. The driver stopped and approached the man, asking if he was ok. The man said he was fine and lay back down.

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Ventriloquist Released from Arkham

Arnold Wesker, AKA the Ventriloquist, was released from Arkham Asylum this week after having been pronounced cured by Dr. Joan Leland. Despite reservations of some members of the Gotham PD, especially Commissioner James Gordon, the board at Arkham voted unanimously to release Mr. Wesker on probation. According to reports obtained by the *Gotham Gazette*, the doctors have managed to suppress the Scarface personality that has been plaguing Mr. Wesker. The reports claim that the key to doing this was to create a new harmless personality for Mr. Wesker to replace the Scarface persona. This new personality, called "Socko" is a simple sock puppet. Doctors and social workers at Arkham will continue working with Mr. Wesker for the next few weeks to help him integrate into society.

Mary Louise Dahl, former child actress who later became the criminal "Baby Doll," was also up for parole, but her request was denied. According to witnesses, upon receiving the news, Ms. Dahl threw a tantrum, screaming that it wasn't fair.

Who's Who and What's Hot in Gotham

Naturally, the buzz about town concerns tonight's to-do at the Iceberg Lounge. Everyone who's anyone is expected to be there, as well as a number of people who are no one at all.

We at the *Gazette* have gotten the scoop on some of the outfits we can expect to see this evening, and are pleased to be able to dish to you, dear readers.

The first is no real secret after his appearance on today's edition of Good Morning, Gotham. Lex Luthor, billionaire industrialist and presidential hopeful, looked sleek and splendid in his jet black Batsuit. Eschewing traditional design, Luthor's suit was custom-crafted by LexLabs, and makes a bold statement, its bat-logo a splash of red across his chest, and swept-back cape giving the appearance of wings. Yes, there is a man who knows how to make an entrance, and how to be noticed.

Not so Gotham's own resident billionaire industrialist, Bruce Wayne, who was nowhere to be found. His current paramour, however, looked disturbingly manly in her Batman outfit.

Veronica Vreeland looks to once again be the belle of the ball in her dazzling Batgirl costume. Good for you, Roni, don't let the fact that you planned the whole Batman theme make you feel constrained to playing by your own rules!

Also not playing by the rules of the game is Oswald Cobblepot, owner of the Iceberg Lounge. Perhaps not so surprising given his shady background, though Mr. Cobblepot demurred that his decision not to don a Batsuit for the event was motivated purely by the need to be accessible should his patrons need anything, rather than from any lingering resentment towards the man responsible for his stint in prison.

Word has it that there is a costume shortage in Gotham, though, after some anonymous person or group bought up Batman costumes in bulk.

Batman Returns to Network TV?

Speculation abounds that with the current buzz about the caped crusader, that the time may be right for a revival of the Batman television show. The series starred Adam West as Wayne Hollings, billionaire indus-

trialist by day and Batman by night. Burt Ward co-starred as his boy wonder sidekick, Robin.

Fans claim the network is to blame for the sagging ratings which led to the cancellation of the series. The show's ratings began to show a marked decline when it was moved to the 9 PM Friday timeslot.

At its debut, the series caused waves for being based off of actual news stories. Many of the villains portrayed within the series — including “the Joker,” “the Riddler,” “the Penguin,” and “the Catwoman” — were culled from the very pages of the *Gotham Gazette*. And of course, the heroes of the series — Batman, Robin, and the later addition of the mysterious “Batgirl” — are modelled after Gotham's enigmatic costumed defenders.

The reality-based nature of the series resulted in mixed opinions here in Gotham. Some residents of Gotham appreciated the verisimilitude this provided. “You read about all the crime that occurs, and it was nice to be able to flip on the TV and see those very same villains being brought to justice week after week.”

Others have expressed the view that basing the characters so directly off real-life criminals and vigilantes was in poor taste.

“I was nearly killed by the Joker,” says one woman. “You think I want to relax at the end of a long day to hearing his insane laughter on my TV?”



Burt Ward, co-star in the cancelled Batman TV series

Similarly, District Attorney Janet Van Dorn and many other law enforcement officials feel that the series does the nation a disservice by portraying vigilantes as heroes. “By glorifying the illegal actions of Batman and his ilk,” says Van Dorn, “you spread the message that vigilantism is not only all right, it's something to be encouraged. What these so-called crimefighters are doing is dangerous, it's unethical, and it is a crime.”

Whether despite or because of the controversy surrounding costumed superheroes, the movie industry is looking to get in on the action. Michael Keaton has been signed on to play Batman in a movie about Gotham's dark knight, slated for release in the fall. When asked for his opinion on the decision to cast Michael Keaton in the starring role, former Batman Adam West said [continued on page E-23]