

A NAME WITH POW!

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Anne Arundel's sheriff, whose last name is similar to superhero Batman, may not have a cape, but he locks up criminals with an arsenal of tools

BY JOHN WOESTENDIEK
(SUN REPORTER)

IT STARTED WHEN HE WAS A BOY. IT didn't matter that he was the son of a state cop. He had a name that could be made fun of — so the other boys, being boys, did just that, often with the accompanying theme song.

Nun-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh-nuh
BATMAN!

For Ronald S. Bateman, the teasing never really let up. It followed him, off and on, through high school in Annapolis, through training as a cadet, through 23 years with the Anne Arundel County Police Department and three more as chief deputy in the Anne Arundel Sheriff's Office.

But it wasn't until he was running for sheriff in 2006 that the play on his name came into the public eye — thanks to a perpetrator or perpetrators unknown.

The first campaign sign that was hit was a 4-by-6-foot one, posted outside Heroes Bar in Annapolis. The "E" was removed from "Bateman" and replaced with a Batman insignia.

Then the "E" was removed from a Bateman sign on Benfield Boulevard, followed by another on Veterans Highway. As the spree continued, newspapers picked up the "Batman for sheriff" story — and the Democrat's campaign got the kind of publicity money generally can't buy.

Thanks, at least in part, he thinks, to the vandals — the kind of people he normally wouldn't think twice before locking up — Bateman won, by 7,000 votes.

Since taking office, Bateman hasn't started fancying himself a superhero. But there was that one night, at a fundraiser, when he appeared in Batman costume. There is that Batman emblem he sticks on his vehicle during parades. And there are a couple of shelves in his office that are filled with Batman memorabilia.

But Sheriff Ron Bateman is no flamboyant, cape-wearing comic-book superhero — just a by-the-book, straight-arrow, results-oriented third-generation police officer practicing good old-fashioned law enforcement.

ZZZZZAAPPPP!!!

Valentine's Eve, 2008: About 50 people get telephone calls from a woman named Maria, who says she works for "Flowers By Ron." Each is told they have a Valentine's Day gift — flowers, candy, wine, balloons — awaiting delivery.

In nine cases, the recipients confirm they will be home to receive the gifts.

The next day, the deliveries begin in a truck with a large magnetized logo on the side door. Flowers By [Please see BATEMAN, 2C]



FROM THE COVER

Bateman fights crime for Arundel's residents

BATEMAN (From Page 1C)

Ron, With An Arresting Bouquet.

When the recipients — all of whom were wanted on warrants — opened their doors and identified themselves, the arrests were made 14 by day's end.

Reducing the number of outstanding warrants countywide was one of Bateman's campaign promises, and he's made some headway. There were 13,584 when he took office; it was down to 9,916 by May 1 — and that's with an average of 1,000 new ones issued every month.

The idea for the sting came from one of the office's civilian employees, who, for her protection, Bateman identifies only as Mary T. It was Bateman, though, who came up with the "arresting bouquet" line.

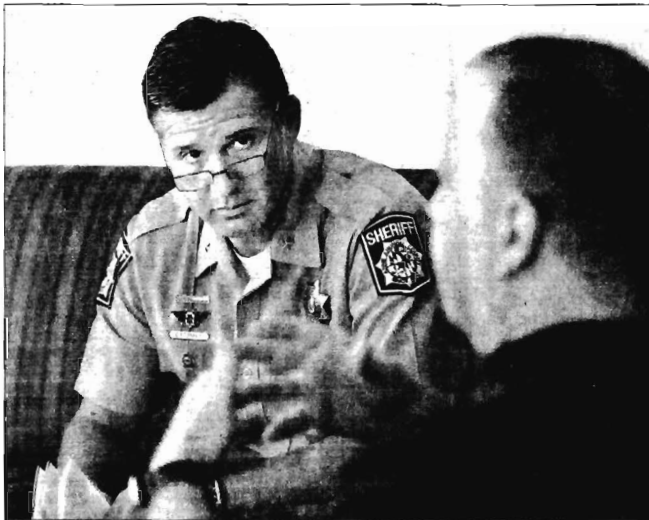
In addition to the stings, the sheriff's office under Bateman has conducted quarterly neighborhood sweeps to round up scofflaws, purged deceased people from the list (more than 500 had died with their warrants outstanding) and worked with judges to rid the list of minor and outdated cases, such as those involving shoplifting at businesses that no longer exist. (Nearly 2,500 of those were removed.)

He's made arrangements for the local newspaper to run a list of wanted people twice a week (at no charge), and his office sends out letters urging those with warrants — the vast majority are for probation violations and failure to appear in court — to turn themselves in to avoid an embarrassing arrest at work.

Every month, he tapes a local access television show, *Anne Arundel's Most Wanted*, on which representatives of local law enforcement agencies describe fugitives they are seeking.

The show was created by his predecessor, but Bateman says he has tried to "make it a little more exciting." He has taped episodes at the shooting range. He plans to invite crime victims to come on the show, and he's working on getting Anne Arundel County resident and *Wheel of Fortune* host Pat Sajak to make an appearance.

The show has led to several arrests, with citizens calling in tips. A personable and outgoing sort, Bateman — who had some previous experience on an Anne Arundel County Police Department show called *Neighborhood Alert* — makes it a natural TV host. He's relaxed them, at ease, which is often rare



Sheriff Ronald S. Bateman has spent almost three decades in law enforcement.

JEK KIRSCHBAUM (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)



Bateman's great-grandfather, a Baltimore City police officer.

than can be said about his guests.

ZZZZZING!!!!

May 28, 2008. Michael A. Pristop, the newly named interim chief of the Anne Arundel County Police Department, is making his first appearance on Bateman's show. Like most first-time guests, he's a little uncomfortable in front of the camera.

The director counts down, "Five, four, three, two..."

informs him that it is customary to start the show with the national anthem. Putting his hand on his heart, he asks Pristop to lead him in song.

Pristop is silent and stunned, then meekly asks, "Is that the 'Oh Say Can You See' one?"

The other officers in the room burst into laughter and Bateman slaps Pristop on the back. He begins to realize he's been punked, but he also looks relieved.

The results of the "whole Batman thing" can be seen in Bateman's fourth-floor courthouse office: an inflatable Batman standing in a corner, a Father's Day gift; and two full shelves of Batman memorabilia, also mostly gifts — figurines, flashlights, handcuffs, cars — all on display with his more meaningful mementos.

There's the riot helmet his father, who retired as a state police lieutenant, wore during the Baltimore riots, a photo of his great-grandfather, who was a Baltimore City policeman. On his desk are family photos (he's married with three children) and a shot of him from the 1960s, in black T-shirt and windbreaker mullet, making up a brief conversation in a dimly lit

growing up, Bateman considered a career as a pharmacist, but not for long. "I just couldn't see my hyper body counting pills all day." After high school, his aspiration had changed to fighter pilot, but instead he applied for the Maryland State Police and Anne Arundel County Police Department.

While serving as a police cadet, he attended Anne Arundel Community College. He later attended the University of Baltimore for a degree in criminal justice.

Bateman spent 23 years with the county police, retired for 33 days, then went to work in the sheriff's office. After three years, he decided to run for sheriff.

"When he called me and told me he wanted to run, I said, 'I think you've lost your mind,'" said Rick Tabor, who worked with Bateman on the county squad since the mid-1980s.

Then again, he knew Bateman as a man who finishes what he starts, generally with success.

"He's always been 100 miles-an-hour, get it done, and get it done right. That's one of his favorite sayings: 'Do it right. Do it now. Do it right now.'"

serve as Bateman's campaign manager, and then became second in command at the sheriff's office. Close friends on and off the job — when one doesn't have his glasses, the other hands him his — they compiled a list of a dozen goals on a greaseboard in Bateman's office, most of which they are in the process of achieving. New goals get scrawled in where there's room.

"We check things off when we get them done," Bateman said. "That's a four-letter word that I like: Done."

KAAAPPOWWWWW!

Oct. 5, 2007: Written on official stationery from the state comptroller's office, 500 letters are dropped in the mail informing each of their recipients that they had overpaid their taxes and had a \$572.26 refund coming.

The letter invited them to come into the comptroller's office on Oct. 20 and receive their refund.

Fifty showed up. They left in handcuffs.

For weeks after the sting — even with its news media coverage — calls kept coming in from people wanting their "refunds," Bateman said. "One guy called in and asked, 'Is the sting over with? I want to come get my check.' We said, 'Sure, come on in, and he came in and we arrested him.'"

With all the sheriff's office is responsible for — transporting prisoners, courthouse security, serving summonses and warrants — Bateman says he enjoys tracking down "the bad guys" most, but has also learned to enjoy the speaking engagements, ribbon cuttings and public appearances. He plans to run for re-election in 2010.

He has grown to enjoy the link to Batman as well — to the point he plays the Batman theme when he appears in parades.

RONALD S. BATEMAN

Born: Sept. 12, 1961

Political party: Democrat

Attended: Anne Arundel Community College and University of Baltimore, graduating with degree in criminal justice

Career: Served in the Anne Arundel County Police Department, 1980-2003, retiring as captain; served as chief deputy in the Anne Arundel County Sheriff's Office, 2003-2006; Anne Arundel County Sheriff, 2006-present

Wife: Married to Teresa, a hairdresser with whom he co-owns a salon and spa in Pasadena

Children: Two daughters, 15 and 23, and a son, 13

Author(s): *The Promotional Edge: The Complete Guide to the Successful Oral Interview* (1998)


Host(s): The public access TV show *Anne Arundel's Most Wanted*, airing on Channel 98

"I was kind of offended when I first saw that sign. Those cost \$94 a piece. But after a while I thought, hey, it's not so bad. He's a crime fighter. I'm a crime fighter. I had gotten pretty sick of hearing it — and the nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh, Batman. But now it's not so bad."

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