

National Law Enforcement Museum Collects Props From County Sheriff

By Brian Beegle

For their upcoming exhibits, representatives from the National Law Enforcement Museum recently collected several items the Anne Arundel County Sheriff Department used in sting operations. The stings were clever ways of luring those with outstanding warrants to their arrest.

Although the museum is not expected to open until 2013 in Washington, D.C., Sheriff Ron Bateman provided props he and his staff made to catch suspects. Bateman said he was excited about the idea of having his department's efforts to catch criminals put on display and remembered for years to come.

"It was a real honor," Bateman said. "It was a surprise to get the call, and it's great to think my children's grandchildren will be able to see something like this."

The sheriff department created fake candy gift boxes, car magnets for dubious businesses and phony tax refund checks to help arrest wanted men and women. Bateman gave these items to be displayed in the museum when it opens. Additionally, a giant wheel was donated from his



Photo courtesy County Sheriff's Department
Pat Sajak joined Sheriff Ron Bateman on his show "Anne Arundel's Most Wanted" during which Bateman spun a giant wheel with the names of wanted persons listed on it.

show, "Anne Arundel Most Wanted," when Pat Sajak appeared as a guest. Twelve names of wanted criminals were on the wheel, and Sajak spun it. After landing on a name, Bateman would discuss the suspect.

Bateman's most recent sting on Valentine's Day gained the attention of museum officials due to its overwhelmingly clever tactic of convincing suspects they were receiving free gifts. His team called hundreds of wanted suspects posing as the company Keystone Candigrams. The name was inspired by his great grandfather, William J. Bateman, who was a Baltimore City police officer in 1907. William Bateman's picture was used on the cover of the fake candy grams.

After telling them they would receive a free candy gram, the sheriff office asked

the wanted men and women to schedule a time for them to receive it at their homes. Bateman went the extra mile, providing a phony website to further legitimize the company with background information, a testimonial page and the tagline "Just One Bite & You're Hooked." There was even a page allowing online delivery to be scheduled. When the knock on the door came, instead of receiving their free candy, they were arrested. The website can still be viewed at www.keystonecandigrams.com.

The sting operations are an effort to curb the 13,584 warrants Bateman inherited when elected sheriff in 2006. Since then, he has been able to get that number down to 8,519, a 37 percent reduction. Bateman said 15 individuals were rounded up by the Valentine's Day sting alone,

with a total of 51 people being nabbed throughout the day in a separate sweep. The charges for these warrants ranged from misdemeanors to felonies, including theft, peeping, drug charges or failure to appear in court.

Bateman has previously conducted similar sting operation. In 2008, his team pretended to be a flower company called "Flowers by Ron," offering free gift baskets and flowers. His favorite sting, however, was in 2007, when suspects were told they could pick up their tax refund checks. He said even after the initial sting, people continued to come in two months later thinking they were picking up their checks, only to be arrested. This is in spite of having the sting already heavily publicized in newspapers and talked about on radio. After being caught in the recent Valentine's Day sting, a suspect told Bateman that he was also fooled by the "Flowers by Ron" ruse a few years earlier.

There is a humorous tone to these arrests, but Bateman stressed it is an issue of safety as well. He said it is a much more controlled situation if you have them waiting at home, and they are more likely to open their doors since they are expecting something. Bateman said the public has been overwhelming supportive in his efforts to catch suspected criminals.

To those uncertain about the dishonest tactics used to lure these suspects, Bateman said, "The criminals do not give warning to their victims. I don't recall where a criminal was ever honest to any victim, calling someone saying they're going to break into their house or that they were going to assault them." Bateman concluded, "I'm fine with misleading them if we can catch them."