

V NOW WE'RE TALKIN

By Helen Marketti

Interview with 1960s Batman sidekick Burt Ward

Burt Ward, who played sidekick Robin in the 1960s TV Show, Batman (1966 – 1968), recently took some time to share memories and current projects.

“I always enjoyed watching I Love Lucy and The Ed Sullivan Show. I liked Ed Sullivan because you could see people from all over the world. I also loved watching Superman. That’s the show that started the whole process of me wanting to be a superhero. My mother had a photo of me when I was three years old sitting on my tricycle with a bath towel around my neck held together by a clothespin. I wanted to be Superboy!” (laughs).

Burt was not involved in acting during his school years. It was all by chance and networking that things progressed as he got older. “I went to Beverly Hills High School and of course many famous people went to that school including sons and

daughters of film directors, producers and so forth,” he remembers. “I decided during high school that I wanted to be an actor. I went to UCLA to take classes on acting.”

He continues: “My father was a real estate broker in Beverly Hills. He sold many houses to celebrities. In fact, I became one of the youngest real estate agents in the state of California right after I turned 18. I knew so much about the business from my father that I actually passed all of my exams and became a licensed agent without having to take any classes.”



“It was all by chance how I got into the movie industry. I was showing a house to a gentleman named Saul David, who was a well-respected movie producer. He is the one who suggested I stop by the 20th Century Fox studios for an interview. Because I had never tried out for any parts before, I wasn’t jaded with rejection so I was happy just to have the opportunity and never thought it would go anywhere. The part of Robin was the first part I had tried out for. I didn’t even know what the show was at the time. I remember meeting the casting director who asked me if I would like to meet the executive producer and I happily agreed. I didn’t have a clue that not everyone got to meet the executive producer. I thought everyone did!” (laughs). “William Dozier was a prominent producer. He had been the VP at CBS. I remember when I met him, I said, ‘Hello Sir!’ and shook his hand. He definitely looked at me a bit strangely. He then asked me if I would like to do a screen test and I said, ‘Sure!’ because I thought everyone got to do a screen test.” (laughs).

Burt went on to impress the powers that be. “1959 was the first year that Karate was introduced to the United States. I had been studying it during high school. So, I was doing the moves and busted a board, then I was able to do a screen test with Adam West. When that was over, I thanked them for their time and started to leave. But they sent me to wardrobe to be fitted for the Robin costume. It was the most uncomfortable costume I have ever worn. Well, I got the part and actually had it for close to a month before anyone officially told me. Adam West will always be THE Batman. He and I got along great. We never followed a script. Much of our dialogue was adlibbed on the spot.”

When asked why he thinks fans are still interested in Batman 50 years later, Burt said, “Batman has a wide appeal to children because it’s hero worship. Who wouldn’t want to be riding in the Batmobile, climbing walls and fighting for justice? The color and glamor are there. Many remember the comic book and now



Robin with Batarang

the characters have come to life.”

He continues: “At the time, high school and college students were difficult to reach. They didn’t want to be told what to do, after all it was the 60s. Adam and I did what we wanted on the show. Then high school and college students were starting to become interested because of our dialogue and suggestiveness. There was something for everyone watching Batman.”

The character of Robin has been resurrected, with Burt playing the role on a few CW Network programs such as Supergirl, Legends of Super Heroes, and Batwoman.

On January 9, 2020, Burt was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame: “It only took 50 years!” (laughs), “I am right across from Adam West. Our stars are facing each other just like we faced each other on camera. It was purposely planned that way. We are right in front of the Guinness World Record Museum.”

Burt and his wife Tracy are involved with caring for man’s best friend, starting 25 years ago. “Dogs are usually rescued by their breed,” explains Burt. “We originally started rescuing Great Danes. They are gentle giants. Tracy and I decided we needed to do more. Thankfully we have the space, land, and resources to take care of these dogs in addition to veterinary services. We now take any breed of dog. At one point we were taking care of 60 to 70 adoptions a week. Great Danes usually live seven to nine years. English Mastiff’s live around five to seven years. Tracy and I started working on what we could do to help dogs live longer. We came up with a special feeding and care program which is on our web site: www.gentlegiantsdogfood.com.”

“On average, our program adds three to five ears to a dog’s life. We had a Great Dane that lived to be 16 years old. Tracy and I figured we could make the finest food money can buy. We hired four top nutritionists. Our food is only 9% fat. Our dogs are living longer and are more active. In fact, we have 50 dogs at our house at any given time! We do not make any salary from this dog food, not a dime. This is all about helping people’s dogs live a longer and healthier life. If you look at our web site, there are hundreds of testimonials. Our dog food is sold at all Walmart and Target stores. We are now working on creating a cat food. I think of this in terms of ‘I used to be a cape crusader and now I am a canine crusader.’”

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