

Headlines from the Ravensgate *Oregon Journal*:

Unlicensed Superheroes Strike Again, Paladin Noir Saves Mayor and Ball Guests; Mayor Escapes Unharmed, 5 Dead, 29 Injured In Melee And Crowd Stampede

PEAK CITY, RAVENSGATE (Jan 27, AP)—International terrorist Abu Scirocco and henchmen were captured last night by local superheroes, licensed and unlicensed, in a failed hostage-taking at the al-Amarja Shrine Temple. Mayor Salomé Throckmorton-D'Aubaine, who was at the charity fundraiser at the time of the attack, escaped unharmed with police escort.

Police and National Guard sources place casualty figures at five dead, including three terrorists, and 29 injured. Seven of the injured are in critical condition, including two terrorists suffering from hypothermia. Of the injured, most were trampled in a stampede after the attack, or, in the case of 11 police officers, were attacked by terrorists.

Abu Scirocco demonstrated no connection or relation to al-Qaida or Osama bin-Laden, says FBI spokesman Juan Long-Johnson: “The demands he voiced at [the Temple] were strictly monetary. Judging by his 20-year track record, he’s just a mercenary.”

When asked if Abu Scirocco possessed a live nuclear device as he had threatened, Long-Johnson said, “Absolutely not. That would have *cost* him money and made him a marked man. He’s a *mercenary*, get it?”

Paladin Noir, on his way home from Interpol Justice Force One duty in the war on terrorism, spotted Abu Scirocco being dragged out to sea by one of the unlicensed heroes. In an exclusive interview with *The Journal*, the mainstay of Hyperion said he grabbed a suspicious metal cylinder from Abu Scirocco and immediately left the earth’s atmosphere.

“I took off so fast that friction with the atmosphere vaporized [the cylinder] like any other tin can,” said the local icon. “It was anything but a nuclear or biological device.”

Paladin Noir’s sonic boom shattered windows and streetlights within one mile of the al-Amarja Shrine Temple and caused a three-hour power outage that affected 16,000 residents of the main island.

“Uh, sorry about that,” he added, sheepishly.

For the second straight day, the city has witnessed the actions of a group of unlicensed superheroes with mysterious powers. Various ball-goers described ice and darkness fields springing up from the temple floor as the heroes moved about with blinding speed.

Bystanders and members of Hyperion on the scene reported the presence of the same costumed vigilantes as had foiled the robbery of the First West Coast Reserve Bank early Friday: one female with blonde hair and an off-the shoulder, fur-lined deep-ice-blue costume; one ebony-skinned, white-haired elf-like creature; and a hard-hitting speedster in a black-and-green costume. One bystander asserts that the woman is capable of attacking with furry tentacles that emanate from between her shoulder blades.

A Ravensgate Legal Dilemma Redux

Ordinance 97.653.01(5), which the Ravensgate Assembly of Supervisors passed five years ago by a 4-to-1 margin, amends Ordinance 29.101.03. That ordinance made it a crime to “wear a disguise or some such concealment of physiognomy and identity in a public place on any day of the year save for Halloween and Mardi Gras, or on any day of the year in a bank or other financial institution.” In Prohibition Days, the Bootlegger’s Cove Machine used this law to suppress the Ku Klux Klan.

In its lifespan, the 1997 Vigilante Registration Law has undergone repeated challenges from the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU has criticized the law for endangering the “traditional secret-identity protection of the superhero” and violating citizens’ rights to privacy under the state constitution. Also, the ACLU has contended that the law is selectively enforced, discriminating against citizens based on ability, and potentially contradicts Nehalem County’s “Good Samaritan” Law.

City Attorney Bryan Sinclair, who has defended the ordinance in court, takes issue with the ACLU’s arguments:

“First, there has never been a codified legal protection of the superhero’s secret identity, just relaxed enforcement of existing laws. Second, someone who seeks to establish an alternate identity in public is, under common-law and codified traditions, placing themselves in the public eye and relinquishing a certain amount of privacy. Third, the Good Samaritan Law stands on its own, as long as one does not hide their identity or, if they do, have obtained the requisite police certifications. And fourth and finally, how can one guarantee their identity when testifying in court without such certification? Who’s to say Captain Amazing’s sidekick isn’t testifying on his behalf, opening up my department to legal challenges to the validity of his testimony?”

“To me, it’s crystal clear,” Sinclair concluded, “especially after 9-11. These heroes need to register and get licensed—unless, of course, they’re staging these little Wild West shows to undermine civil authority. Anyone ever thought of that?”

Let's Repeal An Un-Enforceable Nuisance Law

[The opinions of Vic Charlton, KRGV News 11 commentator, are featured in The Journal to provide readers with a diversity of public opinion. In no way do Mr. Charlton's opinions reflect those of The Journal and its staff.]

Regardless of what City Attorney Bryan Sinclair and Journal Publisher Jean-Pierre D'Aubaine may tell you, no one from Hyperion cold-cocked a single terrorist at al-Amarja Shrine Temple last night. I was there, they weren't.

What did I see? I saw an underpaid and outclassed police force valiantly attempt to retake the Temple. I saw ordinary citizens jump terrorists when the opportunity arose, fallout from the September 11 attacks. I saw a coordinated counterattack by "unlicensed" superheroes, one that began with a dark elf's entrance masked by his fields of darkness and continued with a girl's entrance wrapped in ice mist.

Vic Charlton *You Know I'm Right*



It was almost as if The Frozen Ghost were back from the dead. But I didn't see a single member of Hyperion until after the terrorists were subdued.

This isn't to take anything away from our local licensed superheroes; they've been spread thin lately. We were lucky that Paladin Noir was flying back home for a weekend break from doing his patriotic duty. We were lucky that it was just a tin can strapped to Abu Scirocco's waist. But we were just as lucky that a trio of heroes risked arrest to save hundreds of lives.

That, my friends, is heroism. It's better to be judged by twelve than to see hundreds carried by six each.

Let's look at City Ordinance 97.653.01(5) from an historical perspective. It was an amendment of a Prohibition Era law that the Bootlegger's Cove Machine used to suppress the KKK, which had elected three governors of Oregon in the 1920s, and which was harassing the d'Ambrosio Gang's Italian and Irish Catholic constituency. I'm all for suppressing the KKK on general principle, but the law back in the Twenties also hampered the activities of the first "masked men of mystery" who were fighting corruption.

The original law is still on the books today, so when the clock strikes midnight Halloween night, peel off your Nixon mask. Don't say I didn't warn you.

I've never been a big fan of the ACLU, despite its unquestioning and staunch defense of the First Amendment, but I have to agree with them on the issue of 97.653.01(5). It's a ridiculous law which targets superhumans on the basis of their abilities, gives the police arbitrary veto power over some of the very citizens whose taxes pay their salaries, and places the secret identities of our superheroes in jeopardy of being revealed to the gangster who names the right cop's right price.

Oh, yeah, and lest we forget, it also places all of us in the damned-if-we-do-and-damned-if-we-don't dilemma. Let's say you intervene to stop a mugging, yet your "physiognomy"—that's "face" for us non-lawyers—is obscured by an allergy mask. Or you're a painter on the job who has to wear a mask to keep away the fumes and you react without thinking.

Congratulations, pal, you just broke the law. You practiced super-heroism without a license, punishable by up to one year in jail and required community notification of your status as a "potentially super-powered criminal," despite having demonstrated abilities far within those of mortal men and women.

Community notification—of name, address, occupation, and whereabouts—includes notification of the criminal element, too, as an added bonus. I don't know about you, but that thought warms the cockles of my heart. **Not!**

So, let's say you are aware of that law, so you decide not to intervene and the mugger kills his victim. Well, guess what—you just broke the law, even if you called the cops. That's the substance of the 1997 Good Samaritan Law, passed by the same allegedly-evolved primates—our City Assembly—who passed the Vigilante Registration Law.

Bryan Sinclair and our very young Mayor D'Aubaine, daughter of this august publication's publisher, have invoked September 11 when goading the unlicensed heroes into registering. Well, I wonder what would have happened if New York City had our half-baked laws and even flakier legal priorities on that terrible day.

Imagine how many volunteer rescue workers, T-shirts or bandanas tied around their faces to keep from inhaling debris, would be rotting in jail right now. **Now** does the law make sense?