



# THE DYNAMIC DUO REUNITE A TWENTY YEAR

All because of a 5-foot-4 swinger, Yvonne Craig

"Batbrood!" an assistant director yelps. *Batbrood?* Holy irreverence! Is this a way to talk to the newest crime-fighter in Gotham City? "Ready to go, Batbrood?" the man repeats. The luscious brunette named Yvonne Craig nods. She flicks a vagrant hair under her cowl, adjusts her mask, sets her cape in place and draws a deep breath. The camera whirs and Batgirl—for Miss Craig is, of course, none other—leaps foursquare into the fray.

Crunch! Zowie! Men with hearts of evil scatter like bowling pins as Batgirl kicks, whirls and slashes, crumbling the last of the foursome with a savage mock judo chop. Batman himself—bite your tongue as you say it—could have dispatched the blackguards no more efficiently. As meticulously choreographed as a rumble in "West Side Story," as stylized as "Swan Lake," the scene is thus set down on a back lot at 20th Century-Fox.

But why a Batgirl in the first place? Can the Dynamic Duo be slipping that they need a mere girl for help? "Look," says *Batman* producer Howie Horwitz. "I don't like to mess with success, but we think adding a Batgirl freshens up the show. We figure we've already got the kids, boys and girls, up to 8. But girls over 8 need someone, a big girl, to identify with. So we give them Batgirl." He smiles. "I rather think," says Horwitz, "the

big boys will like to watch her, too."

How true. As *Batgirl*, who is really Commissioner Gordon's prim librarian daughter when she isn't out belting heads, Miss Craig wears her own feminine version of the *Batman* garb. It's an eye-bogger, composed of a rubberized purple material, and it is tight-fitting where it is most effective on a healthy girl.

With her other assets, Yvonne Craig has an enticing little walk—"the ballet dancer's duck waddle," she calls it—and she moves with uncommon grace and fluidity. She strolls back to her trailer dressing room, all painted a kind of psychedelic orange, where she's greeted by a feisty Yorkshire named Sebastian.

Petite, standing 5-feet-4, Yvonne has a smiler's teeth, a Mary Tyler Moore nose, myopic green eyes, an insinuating voice, an ample figure for low-cut dresses—which she favors—and a superabundance of energy. She seems surfacely casual, a model of self-sufficiency, but she was hit by an ulcer at 18 and she still gratifies some hidden impulse by biting her nails. Overall, she's a bright, uninhibited talker with a flair for the flip, quotable phrase. Mention a random topic and Yvonne will issue an unhesitating response, as follows:

ON ACTORS: "As men, they have holes in their psyches. Off the set they can be very manly, but put them near →

a camera and they get devious and 'female.' They're constantly hollering for makeup or a hairdresser and they complain much more than any actress."

**ON SEX:** "In this country, everybody thinks everybody else is a swinger and nobody really is. There's an awful lot of talk for the little action that goes on."

**ON WOMEN:** "We have to be realistic about life so that our men can be stable. There's not a woman alive who isn't always testing men to see how much we can get away with."

**ON HOLLYWOOD:** "A town of misfits and impermanence, with a dull, unvarying climate, and houses that look like Standard Oil stations."

**ON MARRIAGE:** "It's not the answer. Man is simply not a marriageable animal. I'm hanging around waiting for a better way that'll work. If the gears mesh with a man and a woman, marriage isn't really necessary."

Possibly her views on marriage are tempered by her own abbreviated stab at the institution. In 1960, after a brief courtship, Yvonne married Jimmy Boyd, the singer-actor known for his recording of "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus." The union ended in divorce two years later.

Says Yvonne: "Actually I married my playmate. We were too young. I wanted to prove it could be done, the marriage, homemaking and career. It couldn't. Not with me, not then." For the last two years, Yvonne has had a warm, close friendship with another actor, Bill Bixby, once of *My Favorite Martian*. Before that, for three and a half years, Yvonne and humorist Mort Sahl were a consistent twosome. "Mort was an experience, a happening, a stimulating man but so concerned with his mission in life," says Yvonne with apparent if rueful warmth. "As I once told Mort, at my most depressed I'm at the same

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emotional level as he is at his happiest." A similarly bittersweet reaction comes from Sahl. "Yvonne," he says, "has something I've never encountered before in a woman—wit. She could keep pace with Adlai Stevenson and, in fact, she did, when the three of us had lunch at the UN. She's politically astute, which makes her rare in this town. She's also a very secret person. She only gives about eight percent of herself. The rest she keeps in the Federal Reserve somewhere. Yvonne, finally, is the most feminine, unaggressive girl I've ever known." Unaggressive. A key word. "I'm very noncompetitive," Yvonne says. "Nobody will play cards or chess or tennis with me because I just don't care about winning. I only want to win at what I really want. Like ballet or acting, where you don't have to beat anybody. You only have to be better today than you were yesterday."

Another key word—ballet. At 14, living in Dallas, Yvonne discovered ballet, its rigors and satisfactions. (She's in her mid-20's now, of Welsh antecedents. Born in Taylorville, Ill., eldest daughter of Maurice and Pauline Craig—her father is a tool-and-die maker, her mother a department-store buyer.) Showing inborn talent to go with her dream of being a ballerina, Yvonne became the protégé of Alexandra Danilova of the Ballet Russe, who established a scholarship fund enabling the youngster to study with George Balanchine in New York. Later, she auditioned for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, was accepted and told to report the following season.

She was now all of 16. After signing the contract, she returned to Dallas to complete her high school education. For three straight years, however, she had failed in physical education. "I kept refusing to get dressed for gym," she recalls. "I just wouldn't wear those bloomers, which were droopy in the

seat. Principle or vanity, I was stubborn all the way. Without gym credits you couldn't graduate. I didn't graduate." She breezed on to New York, thereafter touring with the Ballet Russe for three years. "Ballet," says Yvonne, "is the most masochistic pleasure you can have. I had the time of my life with the Ballet and, best of all, I knew it while it was happening. The other side is the sleeping in the buses, the total exhaustion and then the disenchantment." She quit the Ballet Russe to resume her dancing studies in Los Angeles. In a Hollywood restaurant one night, she was spotted by a movie director, Jerry Hopper, and promptly won a featured role in a picture, "The Young Land."

Other roles followed, movies and TV, about 30 in all, including *Kildares*, *Ben Caseys*, *Sam Benedicts* and *UNCLES*. Her credits embrace a spate of *Dobie Gillis* episodes, from which she still retains her favorite expletive: "Rats and mice!" Despite her lack of a high school diploma, she has attended classes at UCLA, majoring in Russian. "Yvonne," says Mort Sahl, "is the only actress I know who waits for a director's call on the set by reading Bernard Malamud." "I'd rather be well-read than well-degreed, anyway," she says.

Noncompetitive she may be, but a wry ambition still burns within her. "Rats and mice!" Yvonne cried one afternoon at a restaurant across the street from the studio where *Batman* is filmed. "How I wish I could be as good as Brando in 'One-Eyed Jacks' or Peter O'Toole in 'Lawrence of Arabia.' Once, in New York, I saw the Burtons, Richard and Elizabeth, getting into a cab after the theater. People were screaming, waving autograph books. The police had to hold back the crowd. Wow, I thought to myself. That's what I want someday—to be trampled in the street by avid fans." (END)