

# The Journal-News

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20

## 'Sam' spins web of incriminatory letters

This is the third of a five-part series disclosing that David Berkowitz, who terrorized New York City for a year, could have been jailed two months earlier on charges unrelated to the Son of Sam murders.

By MAURY TERRY and TOM BARTLEY  
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As the Son of Sam siege in New York City entered its eleventh month in June, 1977, David Berkowitz' battle against his Yonkers neighbors took a more explicit, self-incriminating turn.

Through a web of bizarre and threatening letters, Berkowitz provided in just three days enough information to lead authorities in Westchester right to his apartment door at 35 Pine St. in Yonkers.

But it took another two months before New York po-

lice arrested Berkowitz, in which time Stacy Moskowitz was murdered, Robert Violante blinded and another young couple wounded.

More than 18 months after Berkowitz was arrested outside his Yonkers apartment house as the Son of Sam, an investigation by this newspaper has found that if information held by two Westchester police agencies had been put together, Berkowitz could have been arrested at least two months earlier in a host of state and federal crimes unrelated to the murder spree.

The first strand in the web of incriminating letters was spun by the Son of Sam himself. Silent since April, on June 1 the killer mailed a letter to New York News columnist Jimmy Breslin. Four days later the public learned the 44-Caliber Killer was not only a dangerous murderer—but a man of letters as well.

"Hello from the gutters of N.Y.C. which are filled

with dog manure, vomit, stale wine, urine, and blood," the killer saluted Breslin. He went on for four hand-lettered pages in which he warned darkly of the impending anniversary of his first attack and also urged New York City detectives to continue their hunt for him. Like the letter left at a double-homicide in April, this one contained references to the killings as acts to "please Sam." It was signed "Son of Sam." Unlike the earlier letter, this one was made public.

Overnight, Son of Sam became a household name not only in the terrified neighborhoods of New York City but now across the nation as thousands tried to unravel four cryptic aliases the killer had included "to help you along" in the search. With at least two of the aliases, the Son of Sam drew a dark, heavy circle around an embattled Yonkers neighborhood.

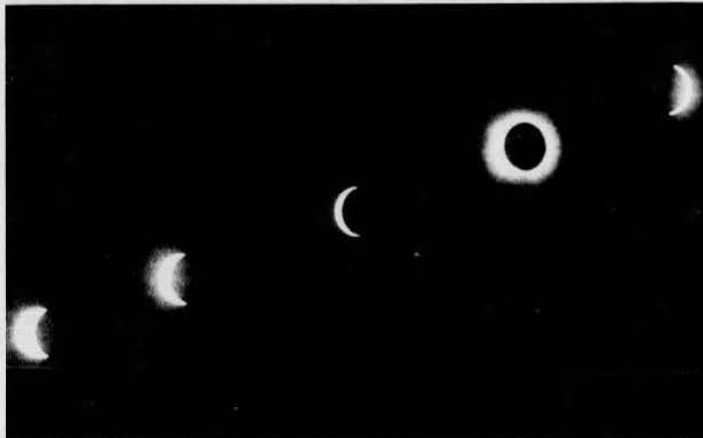
Those two aliases were "The Wicked King Wicker"

and "John Wheaties"—Rapist and Soffletter of Young Girls." In the preceding year, Berkowitz had savaged two families in Yonkers. One lived on Wicker Street. The other, a hundred feet away, listed "John Wheat Carr" among its entries in the Westchester telephone directory. The family was headed by a man named Sam.

On Wicker Street, Berkowitz had firebombed the home of Joachim Vieto, mailed anonymous threatening and obscene letters to the family and killed their dog with a volley of bullets from a small-caliber rifle. In a carbon copy of those attacks, Berkowitz had firebombed the neighboring Carr home, mailed anonymous threatening letters, then shot and wounded the family's dog with yet another volley of shots, these from a .45-caliber semi-automatic rifle.

The "King Wicker" and "John Wheaties" aliases

(Please turn to 6A)



AP Photo

### Going, going, gone

A sequence of exposures made at seven-minute intervals in Starbuck, Manitoba, shows the moon covering the sun during Monday's solar eclipse.

Most of the United States missed any such spectacular views because of dense clouds. Had the sky over Rockland been clear, residents would have

been treated only to a partial eclipse with a maximum of about 60 per cent of the sun hidden by the moon. Story and photos on page 8A.

## E. Ramapo teaching cuts forecast for 1980

By DAVID COLTON  
Staff Writer

Teacher layoffs and at least one more elementary school shutdown are in the offing because latest East Ramapo School District enrollment data shows a continuing, slightly slowed, drop in projected school attendance.

"I don't think we can go five more years without closing another elementary school and some reorganization at the secondary level," district Superintendent Jack Anderson said after presenting a 1979-80 census report to the East Ramapo School Board Monday night. The study projects a total decline of 2,887 students, or 20.7 percent, over the next five years.

In addition, he said that more than 13 of East Ramapo school teachers may be without jobs next fall as a result of the continuing decline.

"I will recommend a significant reduction of teachers in the district next year," Anderson said. The exact number has not yet been determined, he added, but noted the cutbacks are needed to maintain "cost effectiveness" in the 1979-80 school budget.

Richard Mullin, the president of the East Ramapo Teachers' Union, would not comment on the accuracy of the report's figures when reached by phone this morning.

"But to project five years into the future can sometimes be inaccurate," Mullin added, "though I'm not questioning this report."

Mullin said he hoped the school district would find other ways of meeting the student decline without teacher layoffs.

"We would hope there would be other ways for the school district to react rather than by a simple and automatic reduction in the teaching staff," Mullin said.

Among the alternatives is a reduction in class size, Mullin said, "thereby increasing the educational opportunities for the youngsters."

Mullin said he hoped the union

would be involved in discussion of teacher reductions before any action is taken by the school district.

After a stormy year of protests and several School Board votes, the nine board members finally voted last November to close Summit Park Elementary School in 1980 because of declining enrollments.

Anderson said latest enrollment figures, prepared by Assistant Superintendent Louis Orazio, had scaled the fate of the school, projected to serve only 558 students in its last year of operation.

"In no way does this study have an impact on the board's action,"

he said. "I still feel the right decision was made. And I believe there will still be a need for school closings in the foreseeable future if the projections for the next five years are as accurate as projections for the last five years."

A total redistricting is expected to coincide with the 1980 school year, and Anderson said district lines for the remaining 11 elementary schools will be redrawn to anticipate another school closing.

"We will keep boundary lines that make the future closing of schools most expedient, but I don't think we'll have selected a school

by the time of the redistricting," he said.

The district will also consider alternative long-range plans for secondary schools, due to be hardest hit by continuing student declines. Elementary school declines have leveled off somewhat, and are expected to drop 7.8 percent next year, but only 17 percent over the next five years, he said.

The district's three junior highs will drop 1.3 percent next year, but 26.7 percent in five years, and the two high schools will lose 4 percent of enrollment by 1979-80, and 22.4 percent by 1983-84, Anderson suggested possible

consolidation of the junior highs, a middle school plan, or a grade-nine to 12 high school plan to offset the declines.

The report notes that despite the breaking in elementary school declines, large parochial school enrollments have contributed to continuing student losses. The report also notes that the area around the Elmwood Elementary School, which figured largely in the controversy over which school to close in 1980, has the largest percentage, 67.7, of pre-schoolers expected to enroll in non-public schools.

Board President Richard Urovsky called the report "no surprise. The figures haven't changed."

He predicted the board would be better able to handle another school closing without much of the turmoil that surrounded last year's decision, which involved several recommendations and votes on various schools, including Summit Park, South Madison, Elmwood and Hillcrest.

"There was too much vacillation on the board's part, and I was involved in that," he said. "Hopefully, it will be different in the future. I hope we will learn from our mistakes."

Anderson said the only part of the report to cause an increase was "the number of families without kids."

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## Begin barred from talks unless Egypt's Sadat attends

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli Cabinet today rejected an American invitation for Prime Minister Menachem Begin to attend a Camp David summit meeting without President Anwar Sadat of Egypt. Begin said last week's Camp David talks produced no progress and accused the Egyptians of hardening their position.

The Israeli decision indicated serious problems for the American effort to mediate a Mideast peace between Israel and Egypt.

The Cabinet decided that the prime minister is not in a position to accept the proposed meeting with Prime Minister (Mastafa) Khalil" Begin said after the Cabinet meeting. The vote against Begin going was 14-2.

Begin refused to answer questions about the six-hour Cabinet meeting, but an insider said only Foreign Minis-

ter Moshe Dayan and Defense Minister Ezer Weizman voted in favor of the summit and that Begin voted against it.

The insider said the general tone of the Cabinet discussion was to criticize Egypt's peace proposals, not Sadat's absence from the proposed summit.

Begin said Dayan had reported to the Cabinet on President Carter's proposal that Begin and Khalil meet at Camp David with Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance. Dayan had returned from five days of talks at Camp David with Khalil.

"It is now evident to the Cabinet that in those talks no progress was made toward an Israeli-Egyptian agreement," Begin said.

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## Clarkstown proposes bonuses Schools hope to spur retirements

By LEN MANIACE  
Staff Writer

A plan that would pay experienced teachers a \$10,000 bonus for early retirement so they can be replaced by younger, lower paid teachers is under consideration by the Clarkstown School Board.

About \$42,000 and \$28,480 in salaries could be saved during the

first two years of the program, respectively, if 20 teachers retired, according to Stuart Benson, the district's assistant superintendent for business.

Eligible to receive the bonus are teachers 55 or older in June of this year, or younger teachers with 10 years or more experience within the school district, said William

Griffin, vice president of the school board. Those teachers 50 or older do not have a longevity requirement, he said.

Griffin and school board member Jackie Bodine presented the retirement incentive program at Monday night's school board meeting attended by about 50 people.

Teachers about 55 years of age

receive approximately \$38,700 in salary and benefits, according to Ms. Bodine. They would be replaced by new teachers whose salaries and benefits in the district now average about \$24,250, she said.

While the school expects about 20 teachers to take advantage of the one-time, early retirement offer

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# Sam spins web of incriminating letters

(Continued from 1A)

were referenced. Berkowitz now confirms, to the crimes committed on Wicker Street and to the John Wheat Carr telephone listing.

At Yonkers police headquarters, the Son of Sam missive was duly noted, clipped from the newspaper and posted on the bulletin board, where Yonkers police officers playfully added new aliases of their own, a Yonkers police source says.

But if the aliases and quality of the writing did not point directly at David Berkowitz as the author, there was no doubt about the writer of the letters that followed.

On June 6, the day after the Breslin letter appeared, Berkowitz dragged his former landlord into the dark literary circle drawn by Son of Sam.

Berkowitz did that by dispatching a mysterious get-well card to the New Rochelle house he had just left before moving to Pine Street. The card was addressed to his former landlord there, Jack Cassara, and used the name and return address of Sam Carr in Yonkers. A day after that, Berkowitz sent an anonymous letter threatening the life of a neighbor living directly beneath him, Craig Glassman. Completing the circle around himself, Berkowitz inscribed his own most recent former address, Cassara's, on the envelope.

Through Cassara, and that choice of address, Berkowitz fingered himself in the crimes committed against Sam Carr and as the writer of the threatening letter to Glassman.

Although all three men had had encounters with Berkowitz only once—Cassara could identify him by name. And, after a meeting with Sam Carr, he was.

Cassara knew Berkowitz as the relatively quiet tenant who had rented an upstairs room of his 174 Coligni Ave. home for \$50 a week from Feb. 18 to April 8, 1978. In renting the room, Berkowitz expressed his dislike for dogs and, just four days before he left Coligni Avenue, he exploded over the barking of the Cassara's two German shepherds.

His ranting at 4 o'clock on a Sunday morning woke Jack and Nahn Cassara, who stalked downstairs and into the driveway, where he paced up and down, glaring at the dogs and cursing them, declaring:

"The goddamn dogs. It's like a goddamned kernel."

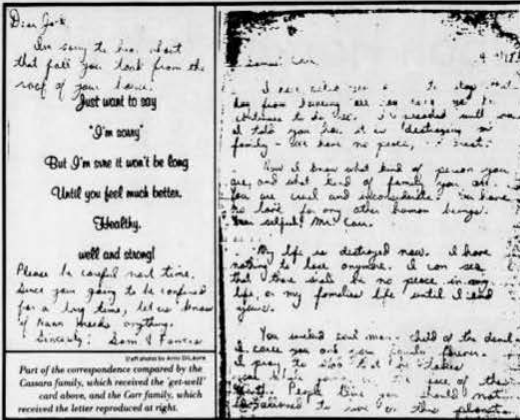
Four days later, neither paying his \$50 rent nor demanding the return of his \$50 security, Berkowitz abruptly moved out and sent a 25 Pine St. message a week later, that the get-well card bearing a puppy's picture arrived in the mailbox. Its message, in red ink, said: "Dear Jack: I'm sorry to hear about that fall you took from the roof of your house. Please be careful next time. Since you said going to be confined for a long time, let us know if Nam needs anything."

The envelope bore the return address: "Mr. & Mrs. Sam Carr, 418 Warburton Ave., Yonkers, N.Y. 10791." Inside, the card was signed from Sam and Fancis, using the male spelling of Francis, Carr's wife, and dropping the "e."

The eerie get-well card to a perfectly healthy Cassara from total strangers left Mrs. Cassara, in her words, "nervous and upset." Mrs. Cassara describes what happened next.

"On June 9, she called the name listed on the envelope and was told the Carrs had not mailed the card.

But Frances Carr went further. Her family not only had been besieged with threatening letters, but their home had been firebombed last year and their dog shot



Part of the correspondence composed by the Cassara family, which received the "get well" card above, and the Carr family, which received the letter reproduced at right.

barely more than a month before she spoke with Mrs. Cassara. She expressed her suspicions that the same person could have committed those crimes and sent all the letters. She asked to see the Cassara card and made a date to meet with them the next day to compare the handwriting.

At that meeting, held in the Carr home on Warburton Avenue, the families exchanged copies of the mysterious mail they had received.

Even to their untrained eyes, the similarities in the script were evident: "You couldn't miss it, we all saw it at one time." Mrs. Cassara recalls, "It was obviously the same person." The two families discussed who they could have in common who was capable of committing those crimes. That person remained a mystery until the Cassaras went home.

There, Steven Cassara, 20, their son, read copies of the Carr letters and connected the complaints about barking dogs to the tenant who had left so brusquely a year earlier after his encounter with the Cassara dogs.

Unable to remember his name, Mrs. Cassara checked rent receipts. Found David Berkowitz, looked in her telephone book and located him now living at 35 Pine St. in Yonkers. Jack Cassara telephoned Sam Carr. "We've got your man," Cassara said after learning the proximity of 35 Pine to Carr's home on Warburton Avenue.

The Cassara investigation was completed, and it had gone as Berkowitz hoped it would.

The material was turned over to the Sheriff's Department. The letter to Glassman, mailed the day after Cassara

He replied simply: "Well, I wanted the police to come and find me."

Even as Carr prepared to turn over his new-found information to the Yonkers police, another letter—one that could have led to Berkowitz's immediate arrest—landed in the files of the Sheriff's Criminal Investigation Division in Valhalla. The letter, postmarked June 7, had been sent to one of the Sheriff's deputies, unpaid volunteer Craig Glassman, 29, who lived 10 feet below Berkowitz at 35 Pine St.

Glassman, who refused to be interviewed for this series, wrote last November in Westchester Illustrated magazine that the letter threatened his life. "We will kill you. We will murder you," Glassman quotes the letter as saying at one point. It concluded, "Die Craig Die."

Almost a month earlier Glassman had received a telephone call at 2 a.m. from a voice that cursed him and demanded he turn off his television set. Glassman is distressed now that his caller was Berkowitz. At the time, however, he simply shrugged off the call. The letter, promising his life was a different story.

Since the threat had been sent through the U.S. Postal Service, it represented a federal as well as state crime. Glassman had the options open to any Yonkers resident of reporting the matter to the city police or the FBI. But Volunteer Deputy Glassman had a third alternative, and, understandably, it was the one he chose. The material was turned over to the Sheriff's Department.

The letter to Glassman, mailed the day after Cassara

received his get-well card, bore Cassara's return address. It was also the most recent former address of Glassman's upstairs neighbor Berkowitz.

The Sheriff's Department, however, did not contact the Cassaras and therefore did not learn of Berkowitz, the family's former tenant, or of the crimes they suspected he had committed against the Carrs.

The sheriff, moreover, did not notify the Yonkers police of the crime committed against Yonkers resident Glassman. For all that the sheriff's investigators knew, 20 people in the same neighborhood could have received the same kinds of letters, and turned them in to Yonkers police, a New York detective says.

In addition, that notification would have reinforced the story Sam Carr was telling the Yonkers police at that time: "It would have been the case-breaker," the New York detective maintains, pointing out that through Cassara and his New Rochelle address on the letter to Glassman, Berkowitz would have been linked to the crimes committed against both Carr and Glassman, now his close neighbors.

Sam Carr went to the Yonkers police four days after Cassara received his card in New Rochelle, three days after Glassman received his letter in Yonkers, and the day after he and Jack Cassara compared their strange mail. The Glassman letter remained in the sheriff's hands, undisturbed but for a futile fingerprint check.

Carr, the victim over the past eight months of an arson, dog shooting and hate-mail campaign, gave the police on June 11, the name, address and telephone number of David Berkowitz, copies of the letters Carr had received and the card Cassara had received, and background information on Berkowitz' hatred of barking dogs.

Two weeks later, on June 26, July 14, 1978, was celebrating her graduation from St. Catherine's Academy in the Bronx not 12 hours earlier. She planned to attend Pace College in White Plains that fall, majoring in pre-law. She had a lot going for her.

But at 3:30 a.m. her thoughts were not on her academic future. She, like so many other young women in the New York area, was preoccupied with Son of Sam. Placido and a friend, Salvatore Lupo, 29, were sitting in a car outside the Eliephs discotheque in Queens. They were sharing a cigarette and talking about the 44-Caliber Killer, wondering who it could be. At that moment, the killer was standing on the sidewalk, pointing a gun at her head.

Suddenly, four explosions split the night, gravely wounding Placido in the head, neck and shoulder. She staggered from the car, dragged herself 10 feet along the darkened roadway, and collapsed to the pavement. She survived her wounds. Lupo was also wounded, but not as seriously as Placido.

A Yonkers policeman acknowledged after Berkowitz' arrest: "But he's always been a habitual complainer."

And in Yonkers, sources say, Sam Carr's letters had been bundled up with a copy of Berkowitz' hand-printed Pine Street apartment lease and shipped to the FBI, where the material lay dormant until August. Sources say that was the extent of the investigation conducted on Berkowitz. "Maybe a little more effort would have been expended if it was someone other than Sam Carr," a Yonkers policeman acknowledged after Berkowitz' arrest. "But he's always been a habitual complainer."

Next: How David Berkowitz remained at large for four more shootings.

# Saudi discount trend, steady oil price hike

NEW YORK (AP) — Saudi Arabia announced today it will not raise oil prices during the first quarter of this year, breaking with a series of oil exporters who have raised prices to take advantage of the cutoff of Iranian exports.

The Saudi announcement came one day after Kuwait told customers it was taking 9 percent onto its current price of \$13.35 a barrel, raising it to about \$14.50 a barrel.

The Saudi royal court decree broadcast by Riyadh radio and monitored in Nicosia, Cyprus, also called for an urgent meeting of oil exporters and consumers "to regulate consumption and stabilize oil prices" to avert the world from a possible economic relapse.

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil exporter and traditionally has been a moderate in pricing decisions of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The supply squeeze caused by Iran's oil cutoff has been pushing prices up on the open or spot market, and producing nations feel the general market will bear higher prices, according to analysts.

The Saudi announcement said it plans no increases before the scheduled April 1 OPEC increase of 3.9 percent. That rise is part of a four-part increase totaling 14.5 percent spread out this year. The first increase of 5 percent was Jan. 1.

Saudi Arabia previously raised prices on some of its crude oil production, saving its extra production to help make up for the loss of the Iranian crude should be paid for at the higher April 1 price.

But OPEC could decide at its scheduled March 26 meeting to speed up the gradual price increases, analysts say.

Meanwhile, Hassan Nazih, the new director of the National Iranian Oil Co., said at a news conference in Ahwaz that sales will resume next week and "we may be able to sell the oil at \$18 to \$20 a barrel."

This would be \$4.65 to \$6.65 more than the current base price of \$13.35 a barrel set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. But five of the 12 other members of OPEC already have jumped prices because of the worldwide demand due to the suspension of Iranian exports, and more are expected to do so.

"At this moment, there are several foreign tankers in Iranian waters ready to take on oil," said Nazih. "These are expected to dock within a few days."

The present agreement with the consortium, which is led by British Petroleum, given it an 18-cent per-barrel discount in long-term con-

tract. The consortium includes Exxon and a number of American independent producers who have exchanged several billion dollars worth of oil for General Dynamics jetfighters.

In the future, we only will sell oil for cash, unless it is exchanged for agricultural goods."

British officials said they were questioned and freed. The Flier Co. said the American was John Cassaba, 49, a construction foreman who lived in South Carolina as a youth but now considers himself a "perennial expatriate."

Iran's oil prices up 39%

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Spurred by the cutoff of oil from Iran, Israel has boosted petroleum prices by up to 38 percent to reduce consumption. Gasoline jumped from \$1.70 to \$2.35 a gallon.

With increases of almost 40 percent, we hope people will think twice about hopping into the car for a nice drive to Galilee on the weekend," energy ministry spokesman Shaul Galai said Monday.

The prices of diesel oil, cooking gas and crude oil for generating electricity rose by an average 23 percent, providing new fuel for Israel's inflation, 48.1 percent in 1978 and estimated at an annual rate of 80 percent so far this year.

The energy ministry estimates the average family may pay an additional \$25 monthly because of the price increases, David Neuman, spokesman of the government statistics bureau, said the consumer price index by four percent.

The average salary in Israel is \$350 a month, although many families have two salaries.

Before the revolution in Tehran, Israel imported 60 percent of its oil from Iran. But the new Islamic government cut off the sales and Israel has had to turn to the increasingly expensive free market, which charges what the traffic will bear, for oil supplies.

Israel has had to pay as much as \$22 a barrel for oil that cost \$15 a few months ago.

Last week, Defense Minister Ezer Weizman ordered the army and defense industries to cut consumption by eight percent.

Several oil companies have reported problems in supplying jet fuel, but most say they aren't major. Texaco, however, has asked airlines flying out of New York to reduce consumption there by as much as 40 percent and also reports problems in Kansas City and Chicago.

Other carriers say fuel supplies are tight, but they have not had to cancel flights and are coping with fuel shortages by loading on extra fuel in cities where it is more readily available.

And National has called off today a New York to Amsterdam flight. The airline, which has canceled the flight several times in the past two weeks, including Monday, because of difficulties in getting fuel.

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# Iran oil plan — Highest bidder gets the barrel

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran will sell its first exported oil in months next week on the spot market at the highest bidder and hopes to get \$18 to \$20 a barrel, the nation's new oil chief said today.

Hassan Nazih, the new director of the National Iranian Oil Co., said at a news conference in Ahwaz that sales will resume next week and "we may be able to sell the oil at \$18 to \$20 a barrel."

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