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James Bond Gets 13th Assignment

By JOHN CRUESEMANN, London Express Writer

LONDON, Jan. 16—In Who's Who, he lists his output as "various novels of suspense." That might mean anything.

Ian Fleming is the creator of the most enviable hero of our day—James Bond.

In a few days Fleming flies off to Jamaica to start on novel No. 13.

Today he talked easily about James Bond and about himself.

Unlike many writers who have become bored with their creations, Ian Fleming still likes James Bond a lot.

"I've written for 12 years now," he said. "Of course, one is getting rather old for blondes and guns." (Fleming is 55.) "The trouble with my kind of writing is that action must be constant. And that requires invention.

How was Bond invented in the first place?

"He just came out of thin air. There he was: a compound of secret agents and commando types I had met during the war."

From 1939 to 1945, Ian Fleming was personal assistant to the Director of Naval Intelligence rising to Commander R.N.V.R.

"The odd thing about Bond is that I didn't think of him as a 'character' at all. I didn't mean him to have any characteristics except to be a blunt instrument in the hands of government. But over the years he has become a character largely exaggerated in the public mind.

"The paradox is I made him rather anonymous. Quite deliberately. This has enabled people to identify themselves with him.

"People have simply put their own overcoats on James Bond and built him into what they admire. In my books I don't actually describe him at all.

"There are all sorts of popular notions. Bond is a gourmet. In fact he just happens to have a good meal now and then.

"He very seldom drinks wine, an occasional glass of very good champagne. That doesn't make him a wine snob though. Basically he is a hard liquor man."

Fleming lit another cigaret—"I would like to smoke less, I've got a box that holds only 10 cigarets. The answer I found was to refill it rapidly"—then he went on:

"There is this business about Bond being fastidious over clothes. His shoes, for instance. In fact I've never mentioned them, except to say he doesn't like laces any more than he likes buttons. He's fond of black silk knitted ties, I agree. But there is no snobbery about his clothes."

I pointed out that two Bond films have stamped an image—Sean Connery. Is he as Fleming conceived the character?

"Yes, I believe he is. He's good, you know. One thing I put my foot down about when they planned the first film was to choose an unknown actor who wasn't yet typed."

Was there anything of Bond in himself?

"Nothing. Except that we both happen to like shortsleeved shirts. And I've been to all the places he has—so that I can describe them.

"And during the war I got mixed up in a lot of lighthearted things."

Which sounds a typical bit of English understatement, until Fleming smartly pointed out:

"Bond is Scottish. On both sides, as I shall explain in my next book."

Where actually did he get his name?

"Well, there again, I wanted the flattest name possible. One of my 'bibles' in Jamaica is a book called 'Birds of the West Indies,' by James Bond. That sounded all right to me.

"Two years ago the real Mrs. James Bond wrote to me rather pulling my leg. Her husband is a distinguished American ornithologist, a splendid chap, I believe."

Fleming continued: "I take a lot from life — plots I mean. They are bizarre, but they are made up of real things.

"Espionage is like an iceberg. So much more is hidden beneath the waves. The trouble is espionage always goes one better than a plot I can think up myself."

Bond's attitude toward his girl friends had been criticized as unchivalrous.

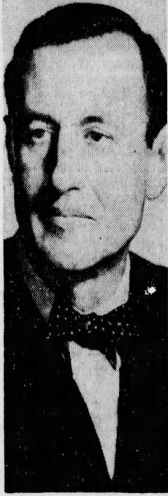

Sean Connery

"Oh nonsense," was the loyal reply. "Everybody complains he leaves the girl behind in some place like Mexico. But he has to get back to headquarters in London, you see. After all he is on a job."

Now in reverse Fleming is off to his headquarters in the West Indies.

"I can't put Bond into retirement. Oh, it's all been a tremendous lark. I never look back on the past. I have no regrets. I am happily married."

He paused thoughtfully: "It's just a question of knowing what Bond does next."

fleming interview 1964

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