

WILL THE REAL JAMES BOND, PLEASE STAND UP?

By Daniel J. Voelker

Over the years, many have been named as the inspiration for the fictional James Bond. Or was he fictional at all? The decades long question, asked by many, has been answered: Porfirio Rubirosa or, as he would have more aptly introduced himself, "the name is Rubirosa, Porfirio Rubirosa," is the real James Bond.

Born in San Francisco de Macoris, Dominican Republic, in 1909, to a wealthy family, strong, athletic, and, as they say, dark and handsome (not tall, though), "Rubi" (meaning "red rose"), as he was affectionately known, was the person whom Ian Fleming, the British Intelligence Officer turned novelist, modeled 007.

Fleming decided to write a novel about a fictional spy while he served during World War II. Fleming never identified his inspiration for James Bond, but instead insisted the character was a compilation of many people he had known throughout his life. Fleming never claimed that he based the character on his own life.

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While it is not well-known, one of the people Fleming likely associated with and befriended was Rubirosa. Even the FBI, who had Rubirosa under constant surveillance for three decades (1935 to 1965) while he frolicked in the United States, concluded the playboy's lifestyle closely matched that of Bond.

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Rubi was a bon vivant, international playboy, secret agent, polo player, treasure hunter, jewel thief, womanizer, avid golfer, millionaire, gigolo, jet-setter, diplomat, boxer, pilot and race car driver all rolled up into one man. But, Rubirosa was even more; he was a rare algorithm of charm, good looks, ruthlessness and cruelty.

Bond's antics and overindulgences were a constant in Fleming's novels. James was noted for indulging in over 40 drinks and smoking hundreds of cigarettes a mission. Rubi, too, was a notorious glutton for debauchery, sometimes foregoing food for drink. Like Bond, Rubi thrived on danger and the thrill of the chase. Propelled by that *je ne sais quoi*, he was more than a "man's man." Having what was referred to as *tigreurismo*, he was the world's most interesting man.

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*“I’ve heard much about you, Monsieur.
None of it good.”*

In the late 1940’s and 50’s, Rubirosa was a center of attention for the gossip columnists. Rubi appeared in hundreds of articles, as readers throughout the world were mesmerized by his life, adventures and romantic interests. Rubirosa tried to dispel insight into his secret life with claims that he did not work, insisting rather that women were his job. Truth in fact, Rubirosa was as comfortable with a gun in his hand as he was with a woman at his side. It would have been literally impossible for Fleming to have not taken careful note of Rubirosa prior to penning the Bond novels, especially since he was a favorite subject of Caribbean and European journalists.

Rubi operated seamlessly within the most coveted circles, engaged in dalliances with the world's most beautiful blondes, brunettes and redheads, and married two of the wealthiest women in the world, Doris Duke and Barbara

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Hutton. Duke and Hutton were referred to as the “Gold Dust Twins” due to their large inheritances.

Rubirosa was reportedly a guest in Hitler's box at the 1936 Olympics in Paris, present in Havana when Castro invaded, arrested by the German Gestapo for selling visas to the Dominican Republic to fleeing Jews, shot three times in the kidney and nearly killed by the French Resistance during World War II and renown for a series of fly-overs of the beach in Cannes in his retrofitted B-25 bomber. Rubirosa

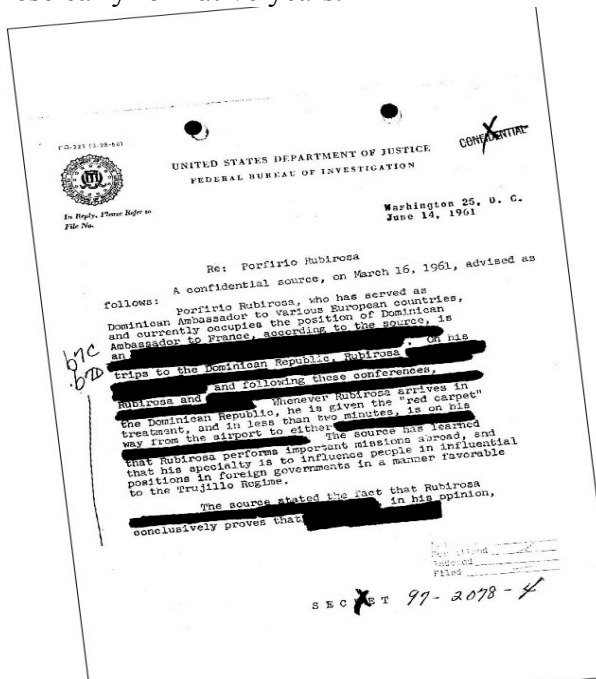
rubbed elbows with Frank Sinatra, the leader of the Rat Pack, Peter Lawford (brother-in-law of Kennedy), Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., and Joe and John F. Kennedy, among a host of other movers and shakers. In its then-classified files, the FBI noted Sinatra was so close to Rubi, he used his address to receive mail.

He infamously indulged in affairs with the era’s bombshells and glamazons, all of “Bond girl” caliber, including Marilyn Monroe, Eva Peron, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Eartha Kitt, Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Veronica Lake, Joan Crawford, Kim Novak, and Judy Garland, among others. His roster was limitless as no mortal woman could resist this otherworldly man. Like Bond, he had an uncanny ability to render his conquests powerless against his charm. Yet, while Rubi’s good looks and charm were dazzling, his depth and

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sincerity, like the early Bond figure, were not. He wooed women with a sense of fabricated warmth and feigned concern for every ounce of their body and psyche, and would – with rare exception – cast one aside for another.

Rubi's foray into the cosmopolitan world of possibilities began at the early age of 6 when his father – a General in the Dominican Army – was appointed the Dominican Republic's Ambassador to France. Rubi lived in Paris until the age of 17, when he returned home to study law. Rubi and the Bond character were both residents in Paris (Bond, at the age of 16), and, in the series, Fleming writes it was there that Bond lost his virginity. We know Bond, like Rubi, developed a command of the French language during these early formative years.



An FBI document, dated June 14, 1961, describing Rubirosa's official position for the Trujillo regime.

After giving up on the study of law, Rubi embarked on a military career, and married Flor de Oro

(meaning “flower of the sun”), daughter of Rafael Trujillo, the Dictator of the Dominican Republic.

Trujillo was so smitten with his new son-in-law that he ordered the celebration of a national holiday to

commemorate Rubi and his daughter's union. Trujillo promptly assigned Rubi to be the principal officer of his security force and appointed him an ambassador at large. Rubi served in the embassies at Vichy, Buenos Aires, Berlin, Paris, Rome, Havana and Brussels. It was widely rumored Rubi, like Bond, carried a license to kill, and tended to the dirty work of his father-in-law.

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Rubi divorced Flor de Oro in 1937 and, a few years later, married Danielle Darriex, the famous French actress and arguably one of the most beautiful women in the world.

Nevertheless, Rubi continued to travel the world in the good graces of Trujillo's regime and worked tirelessly at maintaining the glamorous lifestyle of the rich and famous. Rubi traveled frequently between Europe, South America and the United States as the

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Dominican Republic civil attaché under the cover of diplomatic immunity. His roster of international destinations included the most glamorous locales, namely New York, Palm Beach and the French Riviera. Married three more times, and loyal to none, the “Casanova of the Caribbean’s” sexual prowess was reportedly unparalleled.

Fleming began writing the Bond series in January of 1952, at his home in Jamaica. *Casino Royale*, published in 1953, portrayed Bond as handsome, gambling and carousing in a French casino, wearing dapper suits and traveling the world with an unlimited expense account. Fleming introduced Bond in the first book of the series as a man whose “skill at gambling and knowledge of how to behave in a casino were seen as...attributes of a gentleman,” all the time being ruthless and daring.

Both Bond and Rubirosa needed to stay in top-notch physical condition. Fleming described Bond in one of his early novels, *From Russia With Love*, as a boxer. Likewise, it was known at the time, Rubi worked out regularly with a sparring partner to maintain his strength and agility.

Several of Fleming’s novels were dutifully set in the Caribbean, reflecting the azure waters and technicolor foliage that acted as a mystical backdrop for his characters’ adventures. In the early spring of 1952, Rubi spent months searching for buried treasure in the waters off of the Dominican Republic, Columbia and likely Jamaica where dozens of wrecks lie in waiting. Scuba,

having been publicized by the diving legend Jacques Cousteau, provided a new means of searching for the myriad of Spanish galleons that sank in the Caribbean carrying untold amounts of gold and jewels, including many just off Jamaica’s south coast, where pirates congregated for decades at Port Royal. Fleming, who was fascinated with treasure hunting and an avid scuba diver and snorkeler, sensationalized diving in the famous *Thunderball* novel, written in 1960, also set in the Caribbean. Fleming, no doubt, followed the reports of Rubirosa’s quest for sunken treasure closely.”

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Rubi was strikingly handsome, and, like Bond, he too wore suits handmade in England and was always seen sporting a fresh manicure and pedicure. He was named to the Best Dressed Men’s List on several occasions. Rubirosa is also often cited as Ralph Lauren’s inspiration for the iconic Polo brand.

He also spent money like a drunken sailor traveling the world and, was undeniably, the epitome of a gentleman at least to outside observers. Fleming’s early descriptions of Bond are undoubtedly based upon the looks and characteristics of Rubirosa. Bond was portrayed in the

early novels written by Fleming as slim, with black hair, cold-eyed and cruel. In later novels, the Bond character took on a more well-rounded likable role, becoming more suave and debonair like the maturing and increasingly complex Rubirosa.

In addition to close surveillance of Rubirosa, the FBI briefly investigated Fleming. The focus on Fleming was the result of the producer of *Goldfinger*, the most well-known and popular Bond novel and movie, which was based on the contamination of the gold reserves at Fort Knox, asking the military for the use of its planes in the filming of the movie. J. Edgar Hoover, not wanting the agency to be involved in this nonsense, directed that his agents remind the producer of the law against mentioning the FBI in a film, but not without first noting the Bond novels were one of President

Kennedy’s favorite reads.

Kennedy likely admired Rubirosa because of his similarities to the Bond character. It was reported Kennedy sought the advice of Rubirosa as to how to deal with Castro, a friend of Rubirosa. Fleming, too, met with Kennedy to engineer a strategy for Castro’s fall from power.

Fleming was an avid-bird watcher, or ornithologist. He admitted during his lifetime to lifting the James Bond name from one of the most famous books of

birds in publication at the time, *Birds of the West Indies*, what he referred to as “his bible”. Authored by the American, James Bond, the tome featured birds of Jamaica, where Fleming lived on an ocean estate he named “Goldeneye,” and the Dominican Republic, where Rubi frequently was in residence.

By the early 1940’s, air travel between Jamaica and the Dominican Republic was readily available, at least to those with big pocketbooks; the two islands were only a few hundred miles apart and were easily accessible by boat. There can be little doubt Fleming’s bird-watching expeditions took him to the Dominican Republic. No trip by Fleming to the Dominican Republic would have been complete at the time without sharing libations and women with Rubi and his Latin entourage.

The likelihood Fleming and Rubirosa met and were acquainted with each other is far from surmise. While Rubirosa was more a lover of women than birds, Rubi and Fleming ran in the same circles, both men infamously devoted to self-pleasure.

Fleming, along with Errol Flynn, the swashbuckling film star, and Noel Coward, the jack-of-all-trades playwright, composer, actor, singer and director, lived on the north shore of

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Jamaica in the 1940's and 50's, and, in fact, Fleming and Coward were close neighbors. Fleming, Flynn and Coward were good friends and referred to affectionately by the Jamaicans as the “British Mafia”. At Goldeneye, Fleming, Coward, and Flynn entertained a succession of socialites and were notorious for their partying.

Flynn shared many common friends with Rubirosa including Duke, Hayworth, Prince Aly Khan (Rubirosa's dearest friend), Gardner, Greta Garbo, the socialite John Galliher and the Kennedys. Both Rubirosa and Flynn were also romantically linked to Eva Peron, the exquisitely beautiful Argentinian actress and first lady of Argentina, and Flynn was involved with Duke as well.

Coward was close to Duke, Hutton, Hayworth, Galliher and Gabor, with whom Rubirosa had a notorious and long-standing affair that began in 1952. Coward and Rubirosa frequented the same nightclub, the Peppermint Lounge, which opened in 1958, in New York. Coward even named Rubirosa in the lyrics of a song he re-wrote for Cole Porter, “Let's Fly Away”, in the late 40's.

In addition to all being regular visitors to the Cote de Azure of the French Riviera, Rubirosa, Flynn, Coward and Hayworth all traveled frequently in the 40's to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. At the time, Haiti enjoyed a reputation of a get-away for the rich and famous and even hosted the 1949 World's Fair. Haiti shared the island with its neighbor, the Dominican Republic. It was there Rubi and Flynn

would reportedly refill their supplies of *Pega Palo*, the magic elixir made from the roots of a local tree, known for its aphrodisiac qualities. Fleming, also a notorious womanizer, no doubt was aware of their trips and surely partook in the elixir they returned with as well.

Both Rubirosa and Flynn also traveled to Havana frequently both before and after the revolution. Before Castro and the revolution, Havana – the Las Vegas of its day – was the preferred destination for those seeking the high-life and its elegant casinos and women were attractive to the social elite. Flynn even suffered a much publicized bullet wound to his leg, presumably by government troops, on a trip to Cuba in the late 50's to visit with Castro.



Rubi with his fifth and final wife, Odile Rodin.

Beginning in at least the early 50's, Fleming spent at least two or three months a year, usually January through March, in Jamaica writing the next novel in the Bond series.

When he was not resident in Jamaica, Fleming traveled throughout Europe and, from time to time, the United States. Fleming and Rubi both frequented the casinos in Monte Carlo, where Rubi would have likely ordered his signature martini, “shaken, not stirred.”

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Fleming was charmed by Rubi's lifestyle. There can be little doubt, given their many mutual friends, Fleming and Rubirosa had crossed paths and were acquainted with each other.

Like 007, Rubi was no slouch behind the wheel, and loved fast cars and their advanced gadgetry. He raced in dozens of races, including Le Mans and Sebring. In Bondesque fashion, Rubi is noted for having told a friend if he ever died behind the wheel, it would be in a Maserati or a Ferrari, not the Lancia his friend Aly Khan had died in.

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On July 4, 1965, Rubi won the Coupe de France Polo Cup held in Paris. In true form, he spent the night celebrating and wining and dining the ladies. While driving home to his

wife, the beautiful 28 year-old Odile Rodin, the spitting image of Ursula Andress, the legendary Bond girl from Fleming's *Dr. No*, Rubi's prediction came true. Rubi crashed his silver 250M Ferrari convertible into a tree while traveling over 80 miles per hour. The legend died en route to the hospital. Conspiracy theories aside, Rubi died doing what he loved the most: partying, carousing and living on the precipice of overindulgence.

Both Fleming and Rubi died at the age of 56; Fleming in 1964, and Rubi in 1965. While Fleming never formally identified Rubi as the inspiration for the James Bond figure, there is little doubt he is in fact the man behind the

mystery. In addition to the obvious parallels in their appearances and personas, Rubirosa's residence in the Dominican

Republic and close proximity to Jamaica, and Fleming's love of birds that could be found in the Dominican Republic, hunting for sunken treasure and the gossip columns, along with his close relationships with Coward and Flynn, who ran in the same circles with Rubirosa and shared common friends, lovers, destinations and nightclubs, make this the most likely inspiration for Fleming's 007 character.

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Fleming was restrained from identifying Rubirosa as his inspiration, as that would have created unwanted liabilities and may have put an end to what would

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become the most successful movie franchise in history. Moreover, given Rubirosa’s Creole or mixed racial background, Fleming’s audience in the 1950’s and early 60’s may not, unfortunately, have been very accepting of such a revelation. But, even after the passage of over 50 years following their deaths, it is now clear Porfirio Rubirosa was Fleming’s inspiration for 007 and was the real James Bond.

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Dan has written several ground-breaking articles including **"It Ain't So, Kid, It Just Ain't So", History's Apology to "Shoeless" Joe Jackson, Charles Comiskey and Chicago's Black Sox**, that literally rewrote the history of the 1919 Black Sox scandal.
(www.chicagobaseballmuseum.org/files/it-just-aint-so-200909.pdf.)

Dan also recently wrote and published an article about the longest pending litigation matter in history brought by Christopher Columbus and his progeny for their share of the spoils of discovering the New World. (**"Legal Lessons from the World's Longest Running Litigation: The Lawsuits of Christopher Columbus,"**
<http://www.voelkerlitigationgroup.com/legal-lessons-from-worlds-longest->