

Behind The Scenes of *DoubleShot*:

## How and Why Raymond Benson Put Me Into His Fourth 007 Thriller

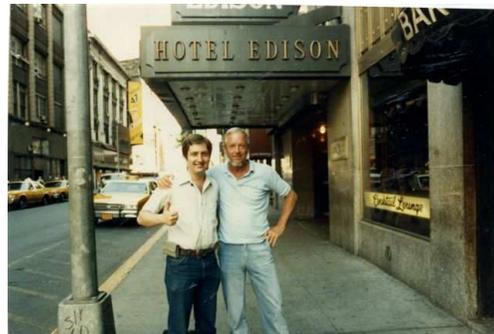
by  
Iwan Morelius

**Ed's note:** Below is the first submission to *Spywise.net* from Iwan morelius, A Swedish-born spy aficionado now residing in Spain. He has lots of stories to share about writers he has known and even worked with—in this case, Iwan talks about accompanying Raymond Benson while Raymond was touring Spain as research for *DoubleShot*, his fourth 007 continuation novel. As things turned out, Iwan and his wife found themselves as character names in the book. We hope Benson fans will enjoy the opportunity to match the photos and stories told here with what you can find in *DoubleShot*. (This article is a translation from Swedish.)

**My first contact with Raymond Benson was in 1983.** I had heard that he was working on a book about James Bond/Ian Fleming. I myself had written a book about the same subject (only 4 copies) so I thought maybe he might want to know about it and hopefully could use something from my book. I sent him parts of my book and he was fond of my chapter glossary, selections of which he used in his book, and also gave me credit for in his foreword on page 263. Of course I reviewed his book, *The James Bond Bedside Companion*, in my *Dast Magazine* when the book was published (1984).

In May 1985, I had the pleasure of meeting Raymond in person, just briefly, when we both attended the New York Edgar Awards. We had a pint of beer together and a chat, and decided to keep in touch.

*Our first meeting was outside the HOTEL EDISON, Manhattan in New York (14/5-1985) the day before Margareta's birthday. Raymond and I had a beer together talking about his Bedside Companion book and my contribution to it.*



In 1988 Raymond wrote me a letter saying he was interested in visiting Sweden together with his wife, Randi. In the same letter he invited Margareta, my wife, and me to stay in their flat in New York during the Edgar-week that year.



*Raymond was one of the authors who introduced one of the Edgar-winners. Can't remember who he introduced.*



We had just a wonderful week together and a tour on the Hudson river will stay in our memories for ever.

*All four of us on the MWA-touring cruise on the HUDSON RIVER. It was during the Edgar Award Week in April 1988 at THE FOURTH MYSTERY WRITER'S CON.*

We also talked a lot about the European tour and we invited the Bensons to our home in the south of Sweden. We told the Bensons they should stay a full week and we arranged a lot of interesting things for them. Margareta had 20 horses and the Benson's took riding lessons.



*The American Horse Guard" in Sweden. Raymond and his Randi showed Margareta that they could ride a horse and had done so before this time.*

But we also had planned a tour of Stockholm by car in order to let them see our beautiful capital city, called The Pearl of the Baltic. Unfortunately it was raining the whole weekend we were there.

*In June 1988, we had to introduce the famous "Swedish snaps", which they both like very much – although "a bit strong", Raymond added.*



Yes, every hour. But we saw the Royal Guard at the Royal Castle, we introduced them to the drinking of the Swedish snaps, and we are sure they liked their stay.

*Margareta and Raymond at the Royal Castle. Behind them is the most famous hotel in Stockholm, The GRAND HOTEL.*



At that moment we hadn't the slightest idea that we should meet in Spain in 1999, eleven years later, when Raymond was a most famous author with some James Bond thrillers to his credit.

This is what happened, this is a true adventure with Raymond Benson and his wife Randi visiting Margareta and me in Spain in 1999. At the time, the Benson's lived in Buffalo Grove outside Chicago. They had a son, Max, and in one letter he told us that he had been asked if he would like to continue the James Bond thrillers. He was required to write an outline and four sample chapters, and if they like the work, he was the new JB author. If they accepted his first manuscript, he and Randi were to fly to Hong Kong to conduct research for *Zero Minus Ten* in May of 1996. He couldn't believe his eyes, he told us.

When Raymond got the offer to write the thrillers about James Bond, both Margareta and I bombarded him with letters telling him that he should set one of those thrillers here in Spain. We had a lot of interesting plots to offer. A hidden treasure by General Franco, the most interesting caves in the world, a Nazi gold treasure hidden somewhere in the south of Spain etc. Well, he had his own ideas, of course. By 1998, Raymond's 2nd Bond novel *The Facts of Death* was about to be published (in May). So, one day we got a letter telling us that Raymond finally had decided to set a thriller here in Spain. Wonderful news!

So Raymond's fourth JB-thriller was to be set in Spain and Margareta and I would be helping him with the research. The Chicago office of the Spanish Office of Tourism arranged for hotel accommodations in Marbella and Ronda to be

complementary for Raymond and Randi as well as me and my wife. Raymond planned a four week trip beginning in London. He stayed there one week by himself, and then met Randi at Heathrow (she flew in that day) and they then set off for Spain together. After a week in Spain, Randi went back to the U.S. and Raymond would continue his journey to Gibraltar and then to Morocco.

Before they arrived, I wrote to some important people, hotels and places and got the information that in Torremolinos we were invited to watch a bullfight (the only one in the south of Spain, we thought at the time). We were special VIP guest at The Marbella Club Hotel (5\*\*\*\*\*hotel) and had one suite each. We were invited to the old town Ronda. And that was just the start. The Marbella Club Hotel and Ronda was arranged by Raymond.

Around the same time, at the end of 1998, we got the information that a BOOK FAIR was going to be held here in a nearby town, Torrevieja, so I got in touch with some people there and they were happy to have Raymond there, hopefully signing books and maybe deliver a speech. Busy days now. I talked to one of the booksellers in Torrevieja ("Bargain Books") and he promised to make some posters and also have some of Raymond's books for signing. I talked to local radio stations and TV and newspapers.

Soon the time came when we were at the Alicante Air Port to see Raymond and his Randy again after so many years. And on April 9<sup>th</sup> 1999 they arrived.

*First photo of James Bond's new creator on Spanish soil.  
Here Margareta, Raymond and Randi at the Alicante Air  
Port on the 9th of April 1999.*



We drove directly to the BOOK FAIR and Raymond was introduced to the bookseller.

*Iwan & Raymond when Raymond signed his books  
during the BOOK FAIR in Torrevieja.*



Later that night Raymond was to give his speech about JB. Unfortunately, there was no translator, so the speech was scrapped. However, he was interviewed by Costa Blanca News and we had a marvellous night and the weather was

excellent with around +23 C in the shadow. We had dinner in the Torrevieja harbour at a famous restaurant named Miramar.

Next morning we were to take off by car to Torremolinos as our first stop. It was the first Bull Fight for all of us. We drove along the Mediterranean coastline and it was sunny and beautiful. It was a serpent road and one minute we were down close to the sea and next up in the mountains. A just wonderful trip.

*The tickets for the Bull Fighting in Torremolinos. Expensive? Yes, but we were invited As Honored Guests.*



At Matril we stopped at a sea restaurant where we had a typical Spanish paella. The Bull Fight was not what we had expected. It was my first and my last one. Nothing I could recommend at all. They were not fighting on equal terms, so to say.

Next stop was at the Marbella Club Hotel. I parked on a parking place outside a beautiful bungalow and when Raymond came back after an introduction he told us that that's the place. We had one bungalow each. This hotel took the prize! We had something to eat and then just walked around looking at all the beautiful things.

Next morning after breakfast we were greeted by the Spanish Office of Tourism. A guide took care of us and guided us up to the beautiful town of Ronda. Just the drive up to that town was an experience. I can't describe it – one must see it.

*On the 12th of April, we came to Ronda, the most beautiful town (so far) we had seen in Spain. From left our Danish guide Diana, Randi, Raymond, Margareta and Iwan.*



*Inside the Bull Fighting Museum in Ronda. Raymond is asking the guide something and Randi is listening eagerly. In the background are Margareta and Iwan.*



When there, we checked in at our hotel Parador du Ronda, where the manager for the hotel gave us a most beautiful book about Ronda and Costa del Sol. Then it started. Six people took care of us and guided us through the town, the bull fighting arena and a museum. We had a minibus all day and during the trip two famous guitarists played for our company. At the arena Raymond sat in the same chair that Hemingway and Orson Wells once had sat when cutting their hair before the fighting.

*A happy Raymond is sitting in the same chair where Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles once sat as well as all the famous matadors who have had their hair cut before beating the dangerous bulls.*



In the restaurants of Ronda you can find some of the best produce from the region such as olive oil, pork, cheese, fruits and honey. Cultural celebrities such as Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles were regular visitors to the restaurants of Ronda in their day.

We too had lunch at a famous restaurant called "Romero's," named after one of the most famous bull fighters in Spain, who during his lifetime killed more than 6,000 bulls and was not wounded any time! We learned Pedro Romero Martínez (November 19, 1754 - February 10, 1839) was a legendary bullfighter from the Romero family in Ronda. His grandfather, Francisco, is known for advancing the art of using the muletilla. His father and two brothers were also toreros. He was equally famous for being the first matador to view his job as an art form rather than just a display of courage. At the age of eighty, a crowd looked on as he allegedly killed numerous bulls in a bullring in Madrid, probably the last bullfight he ever participated in. WOW! After the siesta they had arranged a special flamenco dance for us.



*To the left Raymond is inside the arena in Ronda.*

The next day, Raymond was shown a farm where bulls were educated (brought up) and he also met the famous bull fighter Francisco Rivera for an half an hour interview. Everything was fantastic and because Randi had to fly back home to the USA the next day, we had to say goodbye and Raymond continued alone to

Gibraltar and Morocco where he continued his research. Margareta and I went back home to Campo Verde after a week full of excitements. Finally Raymond also went to Marrakesh, Tangier and Casablanca.

It had been so wonderful to have been part of the research for a James Bond-thriller. When the book was published in 2000 with the title DoubleShot we were so surprised to notice that we both were in the book. Margareta was a beautiful blonde assassin, a member of the Union who seduced James Bond (Margareta Piel). I was Iwan Morelius--The famous Swedish plastic-surgeon.