



# Tied-In

The Newsletter of the International Association of Media Tie-in Writers

## IAMTW's GRAND MASTER SCRIBE AWARD, THE *FAUST*, GOES TO THE GENRE'S MOST PROLIFIC PRACTITIONER

By David Spencer

The inarguable preeminent author of tie-ins, with more published tie-in titles to his credit (well more than 100) than any writer in the game before or since—the legendary and until now somewhat elusive William



Johnston—will be honored by the IAMTW with a Faust Award, the honor bestowed upon Grand Masters. He is currently residing in San Jose, California, and will turn 86 on January 11—a fitting number, as it is his series of novels based on the spy sitcom *Get Smart*, about Secret Agent 86 for CONTROL, which turned his by-line into a virtual tie-in “brand” and thereafter defined the nature of his tie-in (and the largest proportion of his literary) career as the industry’s comedy specialist.

Johnston’s style is paradoxically recognizable, despite seeming matter of fact and transparent, his narration employing little reliance on metaphor, idiosyncratic locution or other literary manipulation. But the ostensible simplicity is utterly deceptive: for in the “serious” books, depth

of characterization sneaks up on the reader, dialogue and internalization unusually nuanced, layered and when appropriate even subtle, with a psychological perception very ahead of its time.

Johnston’s humorous novels are a textbook lesson on comic timing in prose, possibly because he had some experience as an actor (a signature of his books is writing phone conversations as play-format dialogue exchanges, woodshedding redundant “he said” and “she said”).

He knew the wisdom and the technique of “simply” staying out of the way, and letting the tale be carried by action, dialogue, and an impeccable sense of cadence and rhythm. Plus his own unique

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brand of whimsy and wordplay.

Johnston's career started in 1960 with the release of a hardcover comic murder mystery, *The Marriage Cage* (Lyle Stuart, reissued in paperback by Dell), which earned him a Best First Novel Edgar Award nomination from the Mystery Writers of America. Curiously, this did not lead immediately to more mystery novels (though he would write mystery tie-ins later in his career), but rather to a number of early 60s pulp titles for Monarch Books, which ranged from light comedy (*The Power of Positive Loving*) to medical romance (the *Doctor Starr* trilogy) to soft core racy (*Save Her for Loving*, *Teen Age Tramp*, *Girls on the Wing*).

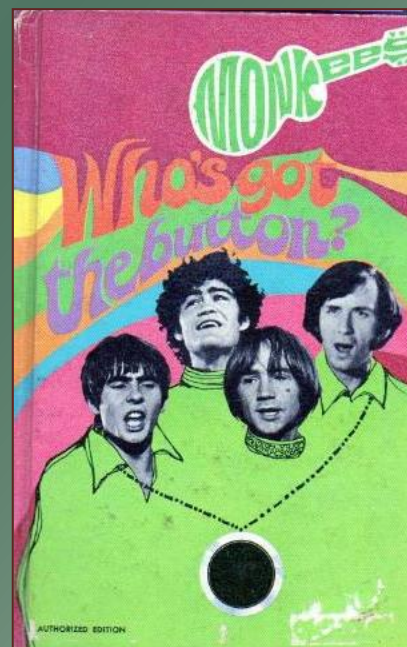
The medical novels in particular either dovetailed with, or led to, his first tie-in commissions, which were for original novels based on medical dramas, such as *The Nurses* (Bantam), *Doctor Kildare* (Lancer and Whitman) and *Ben Casey*. These books, published between 1962 and 1964, were so

successful that a cover variant on *The Nurses* includes a "2nd Big Printing" starburst; and his next (and it would seem last) original medical romance, *Two Loves Has Nurse Powell* (Neva Paperbacks) trumpets "From the author of *Ben Casey*."

It's likely that among these books, the *Doctor Kildare* title written for Whitman's young audience line was a significant pivot point, because in 1965, Tempo Books (the Young Audience paperback imprint of Grosset & Dunlop) commissioned Johnston to write *Get Smart*, an original novel based on the spy satire sitcom starring Don Adams, Barbara Feldon, and Edward Platt, created by Mel Brooks and Buck Henry. The first *Get Smart* book proved so staggeringly popular, going through multiple printings, that follow ups were immediately commissioned, leading to what would become a series of nine books over the course of the show's five-season history.

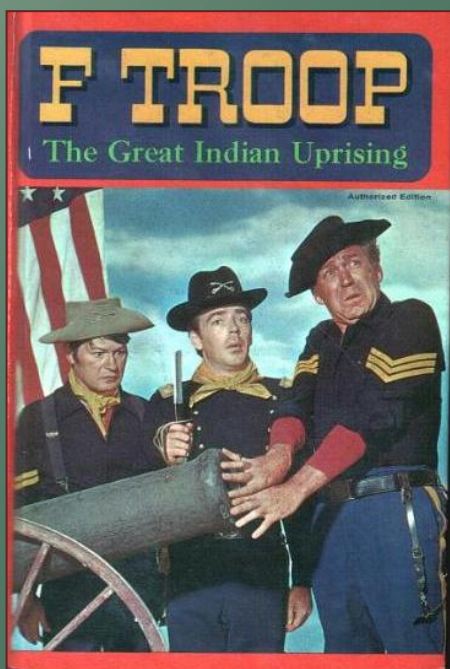
That doesn't sound like much in new millennium terms, but in the 60s it amounted to a single-author original tie-in grand slam, outdistanced only by the *Dark Shadows* series authored by Dan (as "Marilyn") Ross. Indeed, it was the third place holder for TV tie-in series originals in general, with only the 23-book *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* series—by multiple authors—between it and *Dark Shadows*. (James Blish's 12 book *Star Trek* series for Bantam, which continued into the 70s, did not feature original tales, but was rather comprised exclusively of short stories adapting the show's teleplays.)

Johnston's gig as Maxwell Smart's official novelist in turn led to his becoming the go-to guy for sitcom-based novels in general. Continuing with Tempo Books from the rest of the decade into the mid-70s, he authored a one-shot based on the short-lived *Captain Nice* (starring William Daniels of *1776* and also created by Buck Henry) and book series based on *Room 222*, *Happy Days*, and *Welcome Back, Kotter*. Concurrently he also authored



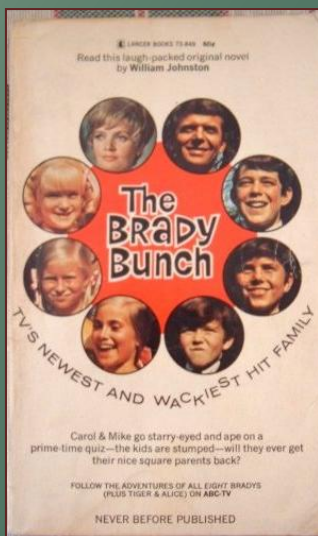
books based on *The Flying Nun* for Ace, as well as *The Brady Bunch* and *Nanny and the Professor* (Lancer). As if that weren't plenty, he also did sitcom novels for Whitman, including titles based on *The Munsters*, *Gilligan's Island*, *Bewitched*, *The Monkees*, and *F-Troop*.

Though the sitcom novels dominated Johnston's tie-in career, and were the work with which he was reflexively identified, he still did a catalog's worth of work in just about every other TV tie-in genre except science fiction and





military. He authored one-off mysteries based on *My Friend Tony* (Lancer), *Ironside* (Whitman), and the comic strip *Dick Tracy* (Tempo), a two-book series based on the American Revolution youth historical, *The Young Rebels*, and an original Western based on *The Iron Horse* (Popular Library). Under pseudonyms he tackled social drama, with a book based on Rod Serling's *The New People* (as "Alex Steele" for Tempo) and two based on *Matt Lincoln* (as "Ed Garth" for Lancer). His catalog even includes a

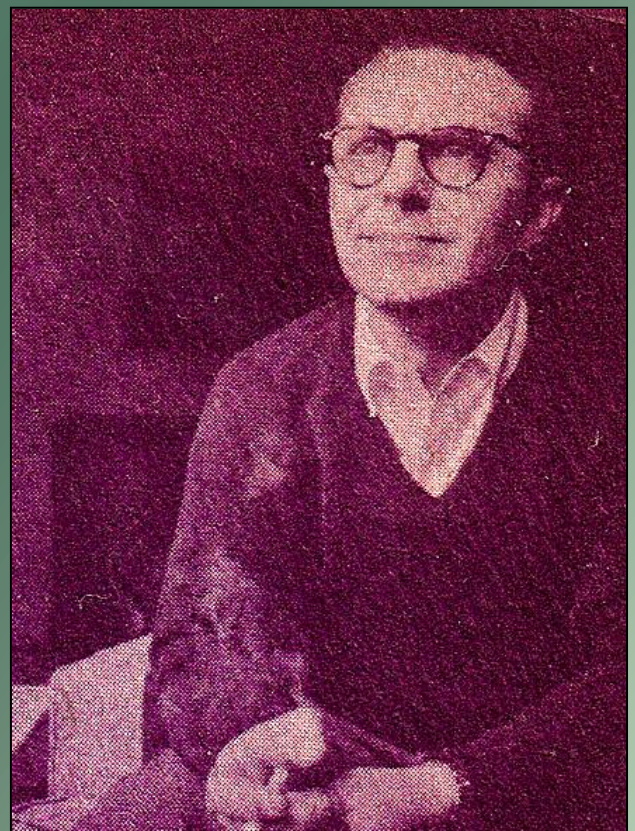


smattering of juvenilia, with Whitman Big Little books based on Hanna Barbera cartoon characters such as Magilla Gorilla and Snagglepuss, among others. (According to the late Howard Ashman—whose day job, before *Little Shop of Horrors* made him a musical theatre icon, was assistant editor at Ace/Tempo during Johnston's most prolific period—Johnston's services as sitcom specialist were so much in demand that, simply to keep up the pace and meet the deadlines, he would occasionally create detailed outlines which would then be farmed out to anonymous "ghosts" for fleshing out. Since the style remains consistent, one assumes Johnston added the final polish.)

Aside from his TV tie-in originals, Johnston penned many script novelizations, again in multiple genres. He novelized the pilots for the 1930s-era private eye series *Banyon* (Warner) and the high school drama *Sons and Daughters* (Ballantine). His feature film novelizations include (and may not be limited to) Alan J. Pakula's controversial *Klute*, *The Swinger*, *Echoes of a Summer*, Robert Bloch's *Asylum*, *The New Interns*, *The April Fools*, *The Priest's Wife*, Disney's *Lt. Robin Crusoe, USN* (written as "Bill Ford") and *Angel, Angel, Down We Go*. If you note that *The Swinger* was

published under the Dell imprint and review the publishers named in this release, another astonishing fact emerges: Johnston tie-ins seem to have been issued by every major paperback house of the era, with the exception of Fawcett.

Which is not to say that Fawcett didn't publish him: during this period he, like a lot of male pulpsmiths, also wrote gothic romances behind a female pseudonym. His were published—by Fawcett—under



Back cover of his first novel, *The Marriage Cage*, c 1960

the name "Susan Claudia." Johnston's wholly original work became scarce once he was established as a tie-in machine, but it didn't altogether disappear. Aside from the Susan Claudia gothics, he also authored *The Manipulator* (Lancer, 1968, re-issued under Magnum), a racy

paperback potboiler about an ambitious business executive fighting the odds to get a revolutionary jetliner into the air; and in hardcover, a novel about an overweight, bigoted beat cop called *Barney* (Random House, 1970, re-issued in paperback by Warner).

*Barney* was his longest novel ever, clocking in at 307 pages. The page count is an interesting statistic owing to the period in which Johnston wrote: at that time, tie-in novels were typically shorter than they are today—as indeed were genre novels in general—and a typical Johnston paperback ranged from between 128-144 pages of small print to 160-190 pages of moderate print. By those standards, his two longest original tie-ins, the small print releases *The Nurses* at approximately 224 (Bantam) and *The Iron Horse* at approximately 190 (Popular Library) were tie-in epics.

Johnston's last book—anyway, his last as far as can be determined—was an atypically “epic” small-print novelization, of the likewise epic, and thoroughly notorious film *Caligula* (Warner, 1979, 222 pages). As shamelessly salacious as the film apparently was, the book sported the by-line “William Howard,” possibly to avoid inappropriately attracting the younger readers who flocked to his sitcom pastiches. Indeed, the book had its own notoriety, for it was originally released in advance of

the film—with the film's logo design (a Roman coin featuring an embossed close-up likeness of Malcolm McDowell in the title role) against a tan background—as Gore Vidal's *Caligula*. But soon after, all unsold copies of the print run were recalled, as Vidal had filed suit to have his name taken off Bob Guccione's vulgarized film. Vidal lost the suit, but his

name was removed from the book, which was reissued with the logo against an ironically lily white background as simply *Caligula*, with no screenplay attribution.

The following profile comes from the premier edition back cover of Johnston's first book, *The Marriage Cage*, and constitutes virtually the only bio of any meaningful detail he allowed on any of his books (he is quoted as having said, “I wanted to stay as anonymous as possible”). Based on its irreverent style, it's safe to assume Johnston wrote it himself:

**William Johnston was born in Lincoln, Illinois on January 11, 1924.**

**He ended his formal education after three years of high school, when he left home and school at seventeen to become an actor. Claims he was a lousy actor.**

**Joined the Navy in 1942 after seeing a Naval band**

**marching in a newsreel. Has tried to avoid newsreels ever since. Served in the Pacific. After the war, he became a disk jockey for radio station WTAX, Springfield, Illinois. A year later, he became a wandering disk jockey, working at stations in Illinois and Indiana.**

**In another year, as Johnston tells the story, he, with two acquaintances and one client, formed an advertising agency in Chicago. For certain mystic reasons, they named it Merchants Limited, after a train that ran between Boston and New York. The day after the agency was formed, the client came to his senses and pulled out. Agency disbanded.**

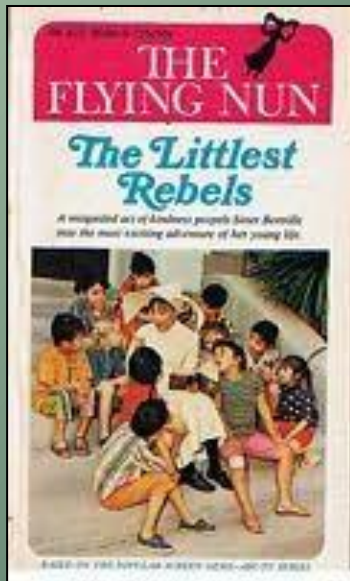
**He was for two years the associate editor of *The Lion*, magazine of the International Association of the Lions Clubs. For the past nine years he has been a public relations account executive. At the moment he handles the Lionel trains account for Tex McCrary's public relations agency.**

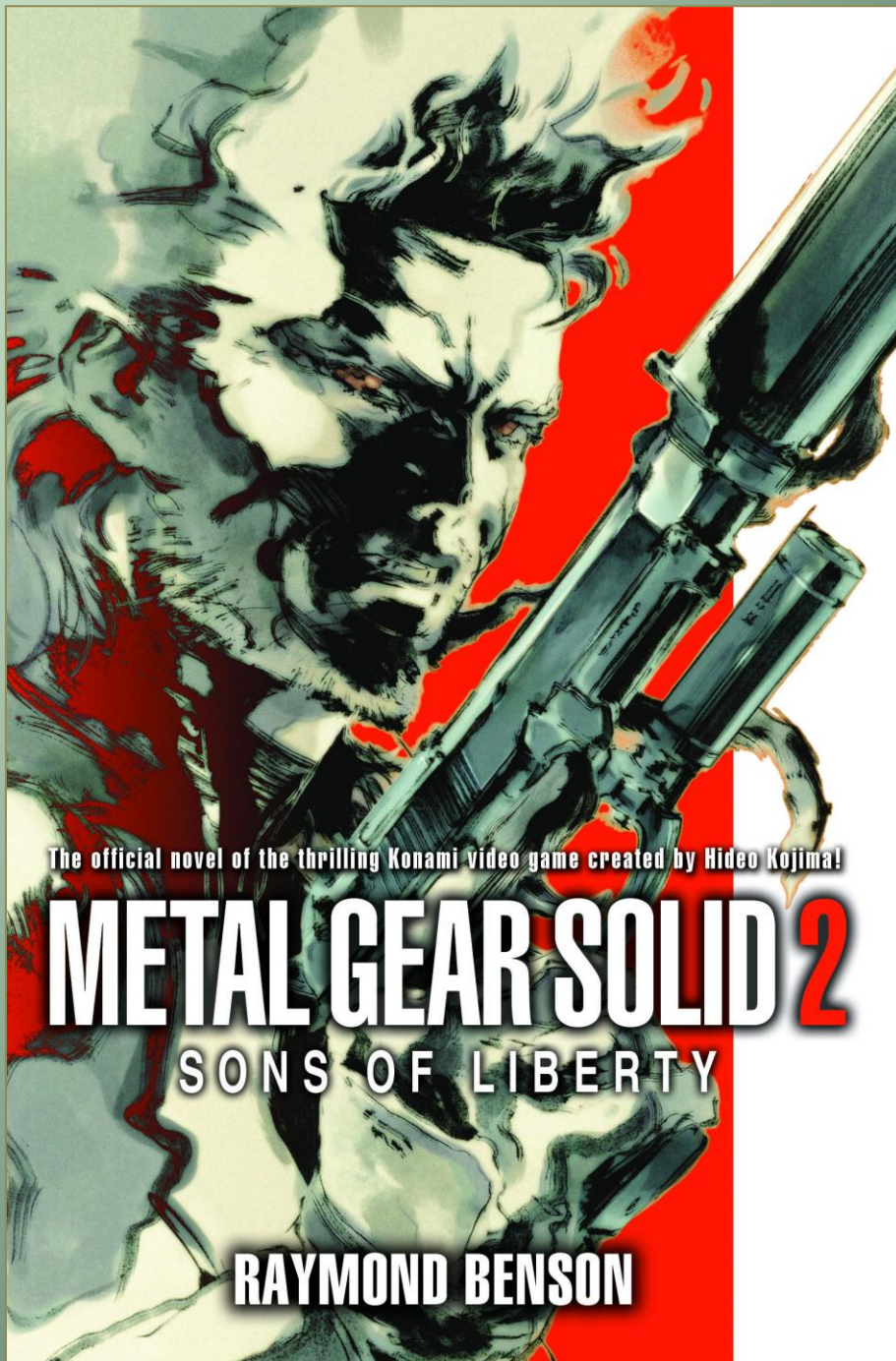
After *Caligula*, Johnston—who had amassed millions of fans yet little meaningful literary recognition—tired of writing and decided to become—

—wait for it—

—a bartender.

Then living on Long Island, New York, he attended bartending school and graduated to find that he was considered too old to hire. His solution was to buy his *own* bar, which he did. It was called *The Blind Pig*; it was located in Massapequa, and he ran it very successfully until his retirement.





## Playing 20 Questions with Raymond Benson

1. RAYMOND, YOU'RE A TERRIBLY BUSY SOUL. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT WILL BE HITTING THE BOOKSHELVES FOR YOU THIS YEAR?

In 2010, two titles—*Choice of Weapons*, an anthology containing three of my James Bond novels and two short stories. This, together with "The Union Trilogy" (2008), will completely collect my original 007 work in two volumes. Secondly, my addition to the "Gabriel Hunt" pulp adventure series will appear in late summer, entitled *Hunt Through Napoleon's Web*—it's the sixth and final episode of the series (each episode is written by a different author).

2. WHAT'S UP NEXT? WHAT PROJECTS ARE YOU WORKING ON?

It's a tough market for fiction these days, no matter what kind of pedigree one has. I have a couple of new things on submission, but it seems to be taking an impossibly long time to hear anything. In the meantime, I've been lucky to land some ghost writing/work-

### GET BIT BY THE SNAKE

Solid Snake returns in the sequel to the Scribe-nominated, popular novel based on the best-selling Konami videogame—and he is joined by a new young champion named Raiden. The President of the United States is being held hostage by terrorists in the Big Shell, a vast environmental clean-up

facility located in New York harbor. Calling itself the Sons of Liberty, the terror group responsible for the crisis consists of several professional killers with extraordinary abilities—and the leader is rumored to be none other than Solid Snake himself!

*Metal Gear Solid 2* was released late last year and is available at all fine bookstores.

for hire jobs that keeps me in  
curry.

**3. HARDTOP OR RAGTOP? OR DO  
YOU TAKE THE BUS?**

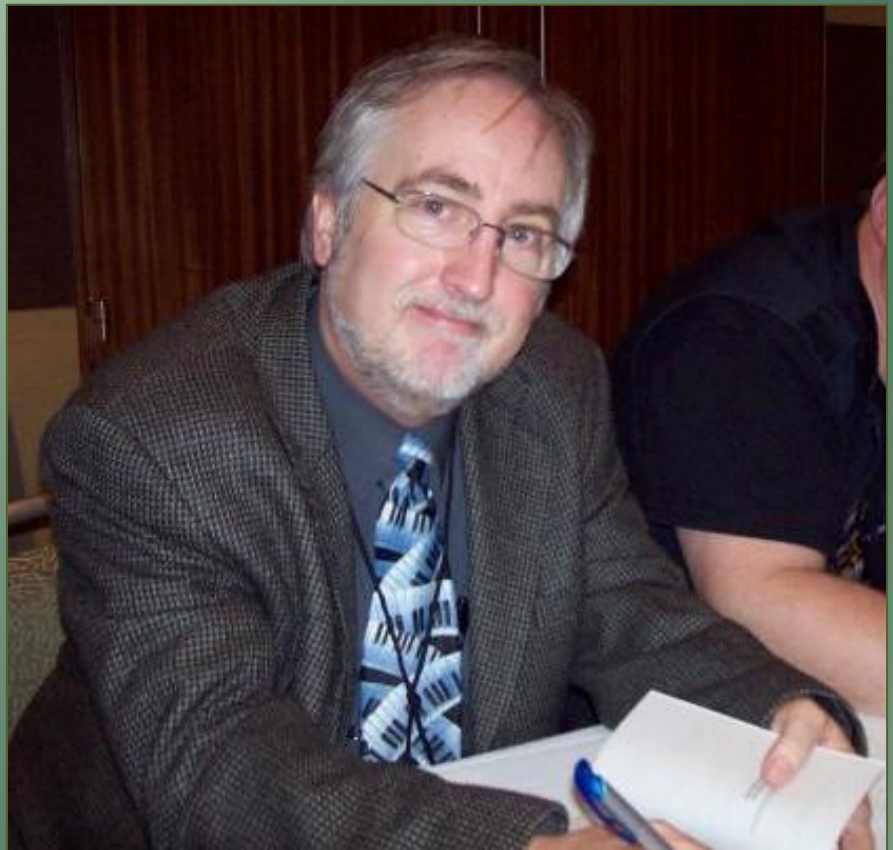
In Chicagoland, a hardtop is  
the only thing that makes sense  
with our winters!

**4. IN ADDITION TO YOUR TIE-IN  
WORK, DO YOU HAVE ANY  
ORIGINAL NOVELS YOU'RE  
WORKING ON THAT YOU'D LIKE  
TO TELL US ABOUT?**

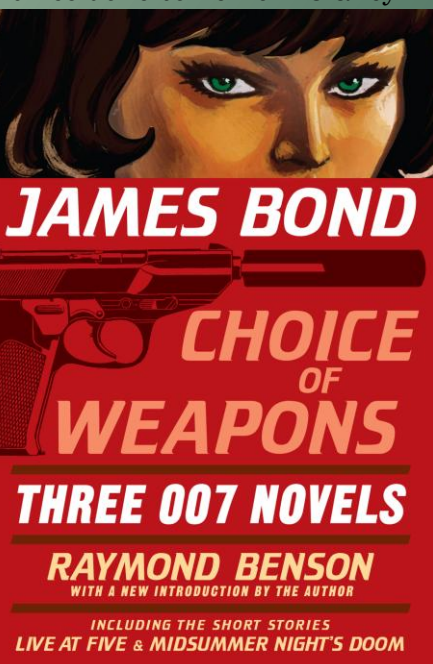
As I mentioned, I have a couple  
of things on submission, but  
until they're sold I usually don't  
like to talk about them.

**5. WHAT PROMPTED YOU TO GET  
INVOLVED IN TIE-INS?**

The Bond gig started it, and  
that fell into my lap. I did Bond  
for seven years—six original  
books and three short stories,  
plus three movie novelizations.  
After that gig ended, it wasn't  
difficult to be on a few editors'  
short lists for tie-in authors. I've  
since done some Tom Clancy



Raymond Benson signing books at a Love is Murder convention in Chicago.



spin-offs and a couple of  
novelizations of the Metal Gear  
Solid videogames.

**6. ICE CREAM . . . CHOCOLATE,  
VANILLA, OR STRAWBERRY?**

How about vanilla with  
chocolate sauce?

**7. WHAT TIE-IN PROJECT WAS  
THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR YOU,  
AND WHY?**

Metal Gear Solid. The games  
are extremely complicated plot-  
wise, and because they have a  
Japanese manga sensibility, i.e.  
combining science fiction,  
fantasy, and existentialism, it  
was a fine line  
between believable and silly!

**8. LET'S LOOK AT THE OTHER  
SIDE OF THE COIN. WHAT TIE-IN**

**PROJECT WAS THE EASIEST, AND  
WHY?**

For me, it was Bond. Not that it  
was "easy," but it was a  
universe I knew inside and out  
without any ramping up.

**9. WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY  
ABOUT TIE-IN WRITING?**

Is it gauche to say "a paycheck?"

**10. WHAT'S YOUR ALL-TIME  
FAVORITE MOVIE?**

Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A  
Space Odyssey" (1968), which  
was light years ahead of its time  
when it first appeared and is  
still a mind-blower; one of the  
most important films ever  
made.

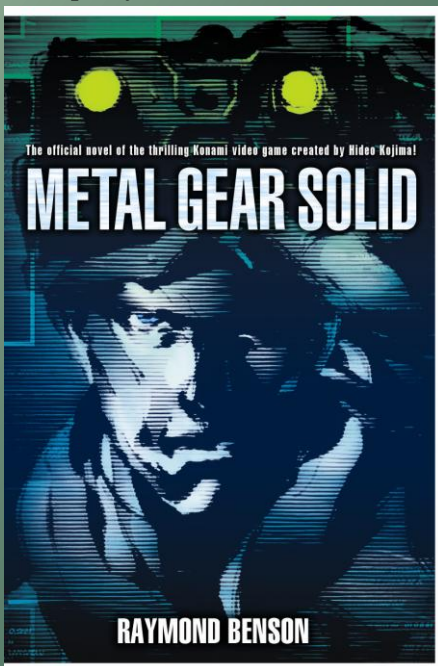
**11. PUBLISHING HAS TAKEN  
SEVERAL HITS IN THE PAST FEW**

YEARS . . . LAYOFFS AT THE BIG HOUSES, A CUT IN TITLES. HOW DO YOU THINK THE TIE-IN INDUSTRY HAS BEEN IMPACTED?

It's been impacted seriously. It's impacted everything. Fiction in general has been hit hard.

**12. WHAT ADVICE DO YOU OFFER AUTHORS WHO ARE TRYING TO BREAK INTO TIE-IN WRITING OR ESTABLISHED AUTHORS TRYING TO GET MORE WORK?**

I'm often asked that question, and I'm never sure how to answer it. Getting in to tie-in work is usually a "who you know" situation. It helps if you've been published already, and the editors you've worked with also handle tie-in properties . . . then they think of you for the jobs. That's how it happened in my case. As far as established authors trying to get more work, I'm constantly on the lookout for more work myself . . . I would say, never burn any bridges, keep in contact with former job editors, and every now and then send out query letters to the editors



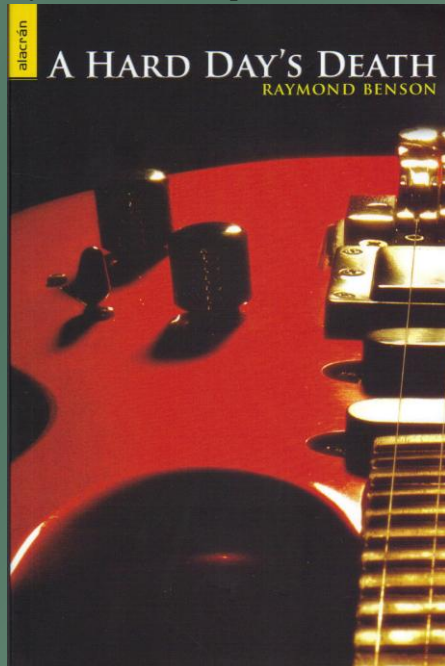
you know to remind them that you're still in the game.

**13. CAN YOU DESCRIBE ONE OF YOUR TYPICAL WORK DAYS?**

It really depends on what phase of the book I'm in. Typically, though, I try to take care of maintenance stuff in the mornings (e-mails, website updates, errands, whatever) and then after lunch I get to work on whatever I'm writing. Before going to bed that night, I read over what I wrote and make obvious corrections but leave the heavy re-writing until after I've completed the full first draft.

**14. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE FAST-FOOD OR CHAIN RESTAURANT?**

I'm a native Texan, even though I live in the Chicago area . . . so I love Tex-Mex. There's a place in Austin (and Houston, Dallas, not sure where else) called Chuy's . . . and it's the best Tex-Mex on the planet. In fact, I took James Bond there in one of my novels. A couple of the



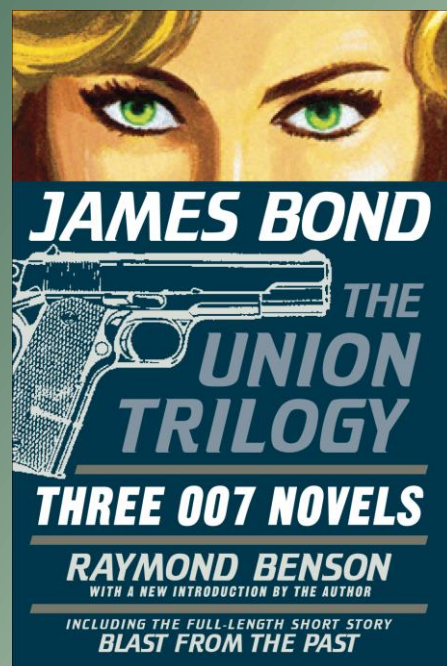
restaurants now have a sign inside that reads "James Bond ate here," with a picture of my book cover.

**15. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST TIE-IN NOVEL AND HOW DID YOU LAND THE PROJECT?**

That would have been Zero Minus Ten, my first original Bond novel (1997). I had gotten to know the people at Ian Fleming Publications when I wrote my very first book, a non-fiction tome called *The James Bond Bedside Companion* (published 1984). We had stayed in touch during John Gardner's tenure as the Bond author. When he retired in 1995, they called me out of the blue and asked if I'd like to give it a shot. Quite extraordinary, really.

**16. CAN YOU SHARE A FAVORITE MEMORY OF ATTENDING A CONVENTION?**

I've been to several Bond conventions, although most of them are not named as such due to trademark. One official



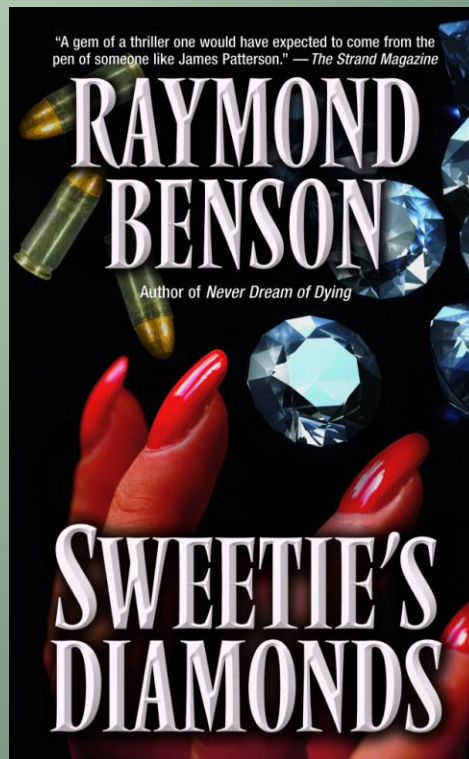
convention was held in Jamaica in 1996. I had written my first Bond novel but it hadn't been published yet, so I was there as the new kid on the block. But I got to hang out with Ursula Andress, Maud Adams, George Lazenby, Richard Kiel, and other Bond film luminaries who were there. It was my first taste of what being under a microscope was like.

**17. DID YOU HAVE OTHER CAREERS BEFORE WRITING?**

I started off as a stage director (I was a theatre major, specializing in directing). I worked in the theatre for several years in the 70s and 80s . . . but because there was no money in it, I became a writer. LOL. I started off with the aforementioned "Bedside Companion" but immediately after that my writing career took a sharp left turn and I landed in the gaming industry. I started designing and writing computer games and pencil/paper role-playing games. I was in that business until the mid-90s, when I got the Bond novel gig. Since then I've been a writer full time.

**18. WHEN AND WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BE A FULL-TIME WRITER?**

When I got the Bond novel gig, I kept my day-job as a computer game designer until the first book was out in 1997. Once it appeared that it was going to work and I got the contract to write more, then I quit the day job and haven't looked back.



**19. IF YOU COULD BE A CONTESTANT ON A PAST OR PRESENT GAME SHOW, WHICH SHOW WOULD YOU PICK?**

I was pretty good at \$20,000 pyramid back in the day and even had a home version of it. Today I'd love to be on "Rock 'n' Roll Jeopardy." I wouldn't mind trying my hand at "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" because I'm pretty good at trivia. "Deal or No Deal" would be fun.

**20. WHAT DO YOU HOPE THE IAMTW CAN ACHIEVE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS?**

I'd like to see the organization become as important and big as Mystery Writers of America or International Thriller Writers. And because it's something of an elite membership, it would be nice to get more respect as tie-in writers. What we do is unique and not at all easy like many people think. Anthology publications (like the Tie-In

book that Lee has initiated) are a nice start . . . I hope we can do more, even getting licenses to do our own anthologies of tie-in properties.

**TIED IN TO TIE-INS**

**By Lee Goldberg**

The IAMTW is putting together "TIED IN: The Business, Craft, and History of Media Tie-In Novels," as written by the authors who write'em. Our thought is the book can generate some publicity, educate people about tie-in writing, and also raise money for our organization.

Any member of the IAMTW is welcome to contribute on any area of tie-in writing of interest to them as long as it doesn't cover the same ground as something another member is already writing.

We'll also cherry pick material from the articles database on our site and perhaps from our newsletter (we'll also need a member with graphic design skills to create a cover). Our plan is to initially release this as a low-priced e-book on the Kindle, Nook and Sony platforms. The only cost to the IAMTW will be in the time it takes to edit and format the manuscript.

If the book does well, we'll make it available as a print-on-demand title. IAMTW members are welcome to query us at [lee@leegoldberg.com](mailto:lee@leegoldberg.com) with your chapter/essay ideas. First come, first served! The deadline for submission is May 1, 2010. Our hope is to have the book ready for download when we announce the Scribe Award winners in July.



Here's the latest update of contributors and chapters we have so far. But it's not too late to become part of it. If you're an IAMTW member, and would like to contribute a chapter, please send us your notion at [tieinwriters@gmail.com](mailto:tieinwriters@gmail.com). The chapters should be 2500 words or more. Our goal is to have the book ready, at least for the Kindle/Nook/Sony e-reader, in time for the Scribes. We're also looking for an artist to design a cover for us. Current contributors and their chapters:

**Alina Adams:** updating and expanding her upcoming "Tied In" newsletter article on licensed tie-in writing online, specifically her work on tie-ins for two canceled soaps, "Another World" and "Guiding Light."

**Jeff Ayer:** Overview of the history of STAR TREK novels and novelizations (he's the author of "Star Trek: Voyages of Imagination, The Star Trek Fiction Companion").

**Donald Bain:** The inside scoop on writing the 30+ novels in the MURDER SHE WROTE tie-in series.

**Raymond Benson & John Cox:** Updating and expanding his "Benson on Bond" article on writing the JAMES BOND novels and novelizations.

**Max Allan Collins:** on his adventures in tie-in writing,

including the bizarre story of writing the novelization of the movie version of his graphic novel ROAD TO PERDITION.

**William Dietz:** updating and expanding his article "Novelizing A Game."

**Keith R.A. DeCandido:** The view from the other side of the table... a first-hand account of editing two different large tie-in lines—the Marvel novels of the 1990s and the STAR TREK eBook line.

**Jennifer Fallon:** A humorous essay on working with collaborators. She works with a partner. But with tie-ins, there is a unique, unseen "third collaborator" -- the canon for the original work.

**Robert Greenberger:** Overview/history of pulp magazine tie-ins.

**Lee Goldberg:** The inside scoop on writing the DIAGNOSIS MURDER and MONK tie-in series, focusing on his unique position having been a writer and/or producer on both shows first.

**Tod Goldberg:** Expanding his Los Angeles Times article on writing BURN NOTICE, the robust sales of tie-in books, and the bewildering lack of respect tie-ins receive among the writing community.

**Jeremiah Healy:** "Capturing—Without

Caricaturing—The Voice of the Original" on his experience writing Philip Marlowe.

**Nancy Holder:** On her experiences writing the BUFFY and HIGHLANDER tie-ins.

**Paul Kupperberg:** The history of tie-in novels based on comic books.

**Jeff Mariotte:** On being a "jack of all trades," writing in many very different universes and genres, from BUFFY to CSI to LAS VEGAS to SUPERNATURAL.

**Elizabeth Massie:** On the challenges of novelizing entire seasons of THE TUDORS into single novels.

**William Rabkin:** The inside scoop on writing the PSYCH tie-in series.

**Aaron Rosenberg:** "Dumbing Down? The challenges of writing YA tie-in fiction" A chapter that explores the challenges of keeping the story age-appropriate, balancing character complexity against sentence simplicity.

**David Spencer:** An overview/history of tie-in novels, focusing primarily on major novels and authors from the 1960s & 70s.

**Brandie Tarvin:** How to break in to tie-in writing.

Plus expanded & updated

versions of these Q&A articles from our website:

The Business of Tie-Ins and Novelizations Part One: The Deal

The Business of Tie-ins and Novelizations Part Two: Deadlines

The Business of Tie-ins and Novelizations Part Three: Characters

The Business of Tie-ins and Novelizations Part Four: The Agents

Are Tie-In Writers Hacks?

Writing A Novelization

Writing A Tie-In

Vincent Villafranca. The convention promotes the advancement of education, with emphasis on horror, fantasy, and science fiction literature. For more information, visit the web site: [www.condfw.org](http://www.condfw.org)

### ConDor 2010

IAMTW's Nancy Holder is among the guests at ConDor, San Diego's longest-running science fiction convention. The event is set for February 26-28 at the Handlery Hotel and Resort, 950 Hotel Circle North, San Diego. The theme is Tripping the Past Fantastic with steampunk and retro future fiction. Visit the web site for more information: [www.condorcon.org](http://www.condorcon.org).

### BayCon

May 28-31 at the Hyatt Regency in Santa Clara, CA. The convention

# Convention Calendar

### ConDFW

February 12-14 at the Crowne Plaza Suites Hotel in Dallas TX marks the annual running of ConDFW. Highlights include discussions, booksellers, shopping, an art show, charity book swap, auction, short story contest, and non-traditional activities such as a sci-fi spelling bee. Guests include IAMTW member Kevin Hosey, Jack McDevitt, Elizabeth Moon, and

charity is the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. Visit the website for more information: [www.baycon.org](http://www.baycon.org).

### Balticon 44

May 28-31 at Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn, Baltimore. More than 1,000 attendees are expected. More than 300 hours of multi-track programming featuring authors, publishers, editors, artists, scientists, musicians and more. Visit the site at: [www.balticon.org](http://www.balticon.org).

# IAMTW

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Max Allan Collins  
Vice President—  
Lee Goldberg

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