

**Fort Wayne Quest Club**

**The Allure of the “Bad Boy” in Literature, History, and Life**

**Kathy Callen**

**February 10, 2017**

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What did Cleopatra see in Anthony? What did Bonnie see in Clyde? What does Melania see in the Donald?

They’re bad boys... the boys we love to hate ... and love to love. Ever since language began, tongues have been wagging about their exploits and bad boy behavior...some with envy and some with admiration.

There is definitely a magnetism and allure of the bad boy. They don’t have to be handsome or rich but can look very average or even somewhat “toadish”. But they’ve got that “something” that “je ne se quoi” that is hard to resist. I suspect that every man, at one time or another has said: “What’s he got that I don’t?” I’m pretty sure that every woman has said “I’d like a little of THAT”!

Women are drawn to bad boys...if not in real life flesh and bones, then in our imaginations and fantasies. Be it real men we meet, manly men in literature, hunkish men on the big screen or ruthless power mongers, bad boys come in many forms and their allure is real.

What is it about bad that is so enticing to women? Psychologist Dr. Linda Sapadin says it best when she says “he’s an instant cure for the ho-hum of everyday life”. [1](#)

**What IS a Bad Boy?**

According to Urban Dictionary a bad boy is a young man who has many characteristics of a naughty boy: he's independent and willful, does what he wants when he wants; doesn't follow

trends, they follow him; he often looks scruffy, but hip; he's not necessarily looking for trouble, but there's a sense of danger about him... a Johnny Depp or Justin Beiber sort of guy.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, it's a man who does not conform to approved standards of behavior, especially in a sphere of activity. Regardless of your political leanings, this has to scream Donald Trump...and Vladimir Putin...both global bad boys.

While there are many different views about what constitutes a bad boy, there is general agreement on certain characteristics. Confidence is king...he oozes confidence. He's often a risk taker because he doesn't consider failure. Not needing to impress, he is comfortable in his own skin and doesn't need the approval of others. He's all about himself. Dark, unpredictable, and mysterious, he doesn't reveal

everything about himself but leaves people guessing. Who is this guy?

Many of the baddest of the bad boys possess the traits of the Dark Triad. The Dark Triad is a subject in psychology that focuses on three personality traits: narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. The narcissistic traits include a sense of entitlement, constant seeking of admiration and special treatment, the need for dominance and an overinflated sense of self-worth <sup>2</sup>. The second trait, psychopathy, is characterized by a lack of empathy coupled with erratic and antisocial behavior...in other words, callous and insensitive. He can exhibit charm while also being deceitful. Those who possess the third trait, Machiavellianism, tend to be insincere and coercive and use these traits to optimize short term sexual relationships. The hallmark characteristic of Machiavellianism is manipulation so it's no great surprise that, if sexual conquests are a measure of success, these guys grab the brass ring.

According to Susan Krause Whitbourne, PhD, people with high Dark Triad traits show a pattern of behavior that combines the worst of all worlds. They seek out multiple sex partners. They act aggressively to get what they want, whatever it is, and they are oftentimes callous to the consequences. 3

For some reason, many women find these dark and unpredictable bad boy traits hard to resist. Studies show that Dark Triad men are perceived as physically more attractive than those who don't have those traits. These guys know how to craft wily social strategies to lure people in...they know how to dress edgier and make themselves stand out. Packaging is everything. Their confident body language makes a statement when they enter a room and they definitely know how to display themselves to their best advantage. Charming and manipulative, they can "bring it". Because they are perceived as more physically attractive, people often mistakenly assume that they are better people.... with nice traits. 4

So, what's GOOD about being bad?

In the short term, especially in younger years, many women seek that testosterone fueled masculinity that's strong and dominant. So...being "bad" can be "good" for the guy that wants one night stands. But, like everything else...things change with time. Women may find messing around with the bad boys is exciting and thrilling when they are young and at their sexual peak. But...as they get older and want to start families, the thrill of the bad boy dims in comparison to the man who will be a good father and husband. 5

Evolution also has a hand in the allure of the bad boy. Cave ladies wanted cavemen who could protect them and bring home the bacon...that took a strong man with muscles, stamina, courage, and instinctual intelligence. High levels of aggression made it more likely that they could get and

keep the resources to provide for their mate and offspring. The brain took note and over generations it became instinct.

There is also a biochemical reason we might like bad boys.

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter and it controls communication in the brain as well as the reward and pleasure centers. It regulates movement and emotional responses, and steers us to seek rewards.

How it works can be a mystery but we know that it is released in response to something pleasurable and rewarding. But it's not that simple.... dopamine actually is produced more when rewards are sporadic. The reward center of the brain...where dopamine is released...loves variable reinforcement.<sup>6</sup> Early men and women's survival depended upon their awareness of anything that was different because it was uncertain and more threatening. So, evolution rewarded us for paying attention to things that were variable by rewarding us with dopamine. <sup>7</sup> If being with a bad boy is anything.... it's uncertain and definitely variable. You never know what you are going to get. He's like an emotional roller coaster personified. This increases his appeal because dopamine increases with uncertainty. It also explains bad boy's risk taking and aggression. The results of those behaviors are certainly variable...and, when successful, blast them with a surge of dopamine.

In a nutshell, most of the time, a bad boy is bad news. He's aggressive, arrogant, and not afraid to take risks. Aloof and superior, he loves to dominate situations, doesn't smile too much, and exudes power. And, whether it may be true or not, he acts like there are a slew of women in the

dug-out waiting for his attention. Right or wrong, we love to think bad boys are sexually superior to the common Joe.

There is no shortage of bad boys ... it was impossible to reduce them to a manageable number on which to report.... there were so many from which to choose...so I have selected just a unique few to chronicle.

In literature and in film, older more traditional storylines typically have a villain, a conflict and a hero or heroine. Many detail the sparring between the devious villain and the squeaky-clean hero who comes to the rescue. Today's reader no longer pines for Superman and the Lone Ranger but the anti-hero. One who's soul is opened and we can walk with them through the story...witnessing all with which they must wrestle to "save the day" <sup>8</sup> To Quote critic Seamus Payne "in a sense, it's good to be bad, and we love our fictional characters not just for their resolution of conflict, but of the lines they cross along the way." But make no mistake; there is still appeal for the cold-hearted hero...who exudes no emotion.

A Bad Boy report would hardly be complete if it didn't include Ian Fleming's James Bond. The ultimate anti-hero, he lacks pretty much all the traditional heroic virtues. His motives are pure....to save Queen and country and world, and the appeal is that he is bound by no laws while doing it. It's true that in every James Bond film, Bond saves the day and he does it free of the moral and emotional constraints that restrict human behavior.

However, it is not his professional success which reveres him to the public, but his suave charisma, his swagger, and his enviable style. James Bond drives exotic cars, wears exquisite

custom suites, packs a Walther PPK and has access to every conceivable cool gadget. Top that off with bedding gorgeous women and a perfect martini, shaken not stirred, and you have a living fantasy.<sup>9</sup> As coolist.com writer, Michael Payne says” What man has not dreamed of getting the bad guy, driving the fastest car, firing the biggest gun all while saving the damsel in distress...or the world? James Bond is THAT GUY and has been its quintessential representative since the 1950s.... The icon of James Bond is aspirational in its very spirit, and his fictional life is more than just a story to many, it’s an unwritten code.” <sup>10</sup>

Bond is a classic Dark Triad guy ... having traits of narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. We know him to be dark, mysterious, and sexually promiscuous. But he also can be charming and charismatic, attracting the admiration of men as well as the affection of women.

“James Bond himself was neither shaken nor stirred by the trauma, the drink or the lack of meaningful relationships.”, said Michael Payne. Since the first film, Dr. No was released in 1962, 7 actors have played James Bond, most notably Sean Connery...whose 007 was emotionless and seemingly without heart. As the years and actors have passed James seems to have softened a bit... become more human. As in recent films with Daniel Craig, there has even been love, grief and tears shed over the death of a woman ... showing just a bit of vulnerability. As Payne says “This represents the full spectrum for the anti-hero: a man who is unbound by law and by morals, but ultimately faces the toughest villain of them all– himself”. So, 007 must have a heart, at least sometimes, after all.

But 007 was a dark triad guy. James was probably a psychopath and sociopath, and ... a booze guzzling alcoholic. Various sources claim Bond killed over 352 people in the first 23

movies...all without feeling or remorse. **10** He was a womanizer beyond measure...sleeping with over 55 women in his films...often with a deadly end as over 30% of his lovers died because of their relationship with him.... sort of like a male black widow.**11** Somehow though, he managed to steady his Walther, steely-eye his black-jack opponent, and successfully bed a bevy of women while drinking an average of 6 martinis a day. In fact, if James were flesh and blood, he'd be impotent, brain damaged and liver "cirrhosed", delusional and spending his life behind bars.... probably on death row. **12**

But, despite all his legendary flaws and BECAUSE of them, our fascination with him endures. As BBC's Jon Kelly says "What use, after all, would be a monogamous, committed, psychologically secure 007?" **13**

### **Bond, James Bond, Classic Bad Boy**

And then there are the bad boys of politics.

Harvey LeRoy Atwater, self-proclaimed bad boy, was born in 1951 and raised in South Carolina. A whirling dervish of energy, he loved to be the center of attention and was a stage grabbing, reasonably talented musician, a lady's man, and a darn good time. He was also a ruthless, win at all cost, Republican campaign strategist. Respected by some, feared by many, he was a take no prisoners political street fighter who could distort positions, impugn character, and use racial and ethnic messages to the benefit of the Republican Party.

He learned the political ropes while in college from Strom Thurmond, from whom he was given a college internship in 1971. For the next 19 years, his campaign tactics bludgeoned opponents... embracing what is known in the industry as "driving up the opposition's negatives" by aggressively taking every opportunity to subtly play on some character flaw or bad decision. **14**



Some say that his mastery of subtle and almost subliminal messaging was instrumental in bringing southern white democrats into the republican flock....and the resurgence of the party in the 1980s. Fed with Atwaterish spin, white democrat voters, dismayed by their party's support of the Civil Rights Act., fled to the party of Lincoln.... without so much as one overtly racist comment ... but with the subtle messaging that the Republican Party viewed blacks as second or third class citizens. This was classic Atwater.

In 1980, Atwater was a campaign consultant to incumbent Congressman Floyd Spence in his quest for re-election ...running against Democrat nominee, Tom Turnipseed. He used push poll tactics by creating fake surveys used by supposedly independent pollsters to falsely inform voters that Turnipseed belonged to the NAACP. Sending out letters signed by Strom Thurmond, voters were told that Turnipseed would disarm our country and turn it over to the communists. Particularly ruthless, Atwater planted a fake reporter at a press briefing who asked if Turnipseed had had psychotic treatment. Although Atwater quickly changed the subject during the briefing, shortly after, in a quip to reporters, Atwater famously said that Turnipseed had been "hooked up to jumper cables" referring to the shock treatments that Turnipseed had received for depression as a teenager. Spencer handily won the election.<sup>15</sup>

Having become acquainted with Atwater and his work during the Reagan administration, George H W Bush looked to Atwater to manage his presidential campaign in 1988. Running against Democrat Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, this campaign was one of the most negative to date and clearly demonstrated Atwater's cut-throat style.

Atwater saw an opportunity to skewer Dukakis on the issue of crime. Bush was a death-penalty supporter...Dukakis was not. While governor in 1976, Dukakis vetoed a bill to ban furloughs for first degree murderers. In June of 1986, Willie Horton, who was black and serving a life sentence for murder during a robbery, received a weekend furlough. He never returned and 10 months later, he kidnapped a young couple in Maryland, repeatedly raping the woman and torturing the man. He was caught shortly thereafter and tried in Maryland courts. After sentencing him to two consecutive life terms plus 85 years, Judge Vincent Femia refused to send Horton back to Massachusetts saying "I'm not prepared to take the chance that Mr. Horton might again be furloughed or otherwise released." <sup>16</sup>

This was prime pickings for Atwater who couldn't wait to drag Dukakis down. He took this story and ran with it...creating innuendos around black crime and Dukakis's softness on offenders. Atwater claimed he would strip the bark off the little bastard' and 'make Willie Horton his running mate.' <sup>17</sup> In the famous revolving door commercial, espousing Dukakis' position on weekend furloughs for murderers, actors were hired to portray convicts in a prison going through a revolving door from the yard back into the cell area ...the only prisoner who looks up at the camera was black. Although not overtly, the black and white commercial played on white's fear of black crime and was brilliantly effective at courting the southern white vote. <sup>18</sup> Ultimately, Bush overcame Dukakis's early 17-point lead to win both the electoral and popular votes. Dukakis returned to his Governorship of Massachusetts but never ran for re-election. Atwater was named chairman of the RNC.

As stated by Margaret Carlson, writer for *Time Magazine*, "An effective smear has at its core an outrageous charge that would be devastating if true". Prime example: In 1989, upon the resignation of Democrat Jim Wright, speaker of the house, Tom Foley was to succeed Wright.

Atwater was concerned about Foley's very liberal leanings. Right before he was to take over as speaker, a memo from the RNC written by Atwater's communication director, Mark Goodin titled "Tom Foley: Out of the Liberal Closet" was circulated among the GOP. Designed to humiliate Foley, the memo compared Foley's voting record to that of openly gay Barney Frank. Remember, this was in 1989. Numerous attempts were made to get the homosexual story into print. Saying the memo was accurate and factual; Atwater professed amazement that anyone could interpret the memo as implying that Foley might be a homosexual. When high ranking republicans expressed disgust at the memo, Atwater changed his tune and said that he didn't approve the memo and he and Goodin apologized. Goodin took the blame and the fall, emptying out his desk several days later. Although supposedly Atwater didn't know about it, the memo had the hallmark Atwaterish trait of ruthless innuendo. And...it was effective. As a result of the memo, a humiliated Tom Foley, who had been happily married for 20 years, was forced to appear on national television to deny that he was a homosexual. 19

Shortly after Bush's election in 1988, Atwater's attention drew to the gubernatorial race in Arkansas as he viewed incumbent Governor Bill Clinton as a possible and very formidable rival in H W's re-election bid in 1992. Atwater was strategizing as to how to derail Clinton's re-election for governor and thus cut his political career short. His plan was to target Clinton's womanizing to bring him down...ironic because Atwater was a known serial philanderer and had been admonished by the White House to cool it.

But that was not to be. Lee Atwater's life was cut short...dying a year after his cancer diagnosis...at the age of 40. During his final months, he found religion and converted to Catholicism. He wrote several public and private letters to those whom he felt he hurt...among

them Tom Turnipseed and Michael Dukakis. In the 2008 documentary *Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story* former colleague Ed Rollins was talking about a conversation he had had with Mary Matalin, Atwater's close colleague, shortly after Lee's death. Rollins was telling Matalin that Lee had said that a living bible was giving him strength and faith and that Rollin's hoped Lee was now at peace. Said Matalin, "Ed, when we were cleaning up his things afterwards, the bible was still in the cellophane and had never been taken out of the package." ...which, said Rollins, just told you everything there was. He was spinning right to the end. 20

In 1982, a famous interview of Atwater was conducted by Alexander Lamis, a political scientist at Case Western University. In part of the interview, Atwater was explaining how the Republican Party could win over the racists without overtly sounding racist: It's better if you hear it straight from him...Please forgive the offensive language.

**"You start out in 1954 saying Nigger, Nigger, Nigger." By 1968 you can't say nigger ---that hurts you, backfires. So, you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states' rights, and all that stuff, and you're getting so abstract. Now, you're talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you're talking about are economic things and a byproduct of them is, blacks get hurts worse than whites... "We want to cut this", is much more abstract than even the busing things, uh, and a hell of a lot more abstract than Nigger Nigger." 21**

Those are the words of a narcissist, psychopath, and manipulator...all rolled into one ruthless man.

There are many Lee Atwater stories of cruel campaigning and his influence continues to this day. He has been credited by many as taking the art of the campaign down the irreversible road of ruthless winning at all costs.

## **Harvey LeRoy Atwater, Self-Proclaimed Bad Boy**

Frank W. Abagnale, Jr. is one of the world's most respected authorities on forgery, embezzlement, and secure documentation. For over forty years he has lectured to and consulted with hundreds of financial institutions, corporations, and government agencies around the world, with his largest client being the US government.<sup>22</sup> He has won various awards, been recognized for his expertise, and is an internationally recognized speaker. But he wasn't educated at some Ivy League University, legitimately anyway, but learned his "trade" all on his own.

Bad boy Frank Abagnale, Jr. scored the number 6 spot on Time magazine's list of the top 10 imposters in history. <sup>23</sup>

Born in 1948, Abagnale began his "conning" career early in life... with his father as his first victim saying, "Dad possessed the one trait necessary in the perfect pigeon, blind trust, and I plucked him for \$3,400. I was only fifteen at the time." <sup>24</sup>

At the age of 15 he was a full-grown 6-foot man, weighing in at 170 pounds and who looked like he was 25. He was a charmer and addicted to "chicks" as he called them. He learned quickly that his part-time job didn't put enough money in his pocket to entertain women and satisfy his libido. What to do?

The answer miraculously appeared before him at a Mobile station with a sign on a pile of tires that said "put a set on your Mobile card – we'll put the set on your car". With a brand new Mobile card in hand that his Dad had given him, Frank pulled into the station explaining to the young attendant that he was short of cash and in a pinch. Could he buy the tires, put them on the charge card but instead of taking the tires receive \$100 instead? Able to resell the tires again at

full price, the attendant viewed this as a great deal. Frank happily drove away with 5 \$20 bills and plans for a hot date that night. The Mobile transactions continued for 14 weeks, putting over \$3,400 dollars in Franks hands, until Mobile finally caught up with his Dad. Dad paid the bill, Mom blew her stack and Frank ended up in reform school.

After a year, he went back to live with his Dad but he wanted out. At 16 he dropped out of school, left home and moved to New York with nothing but \$200 in his checking account, a small suitcase, and a driver's license he "doctored" to make him 26 instead of 16. But his hourly job couldn't support his love life and he was getting strapped for cash. What to do? He realized that checks didn't necessarily need to be cashed at the bank but also at grocery stores, hotels, and other businesses. This made life a little easier and he began writing 2 to 3 bad checks a day. Frank quit his job and began living off his swindles...life style and love life vastly improving. Life was good until he realized that was a hunted man. He had to change his identity. How would he do that?

The answer came in the form of an Eastern Airline pilot, leaving from a nice hotel with his co-pilot and crew, preparing to go to the airport. The men were trim and handsome in their uniforms ...the women beautiful. "I want to be a pilot" he said to himself. Fast forward several weeks and he had managed to con himself into the Pan Am supply center, be fitted for a Pan Am pilot's uniform, get the stripes and the wings, create a phony Pan Am employee ID under his new identity, Frank Williams, and counterfeit a FAA pilot's license. He learned the pilot "vernacular" by reading and by interviewing a Pan Am pilot under the auspices of a high school junior writing a research paper. He studied books and manuals and, at the age of 17, began a two-year stint as a Pan Am co-pilot...never flying a plane but "deadheading", or flying free as an

industry courtesy, all over the world. Staying and dining at nice hotels, all on the airline's tab, cashing bad checks from port to port, and pursuing stewardesses. He was living the dream.

But that charade ended abruptly when someone questioned his legitimacy as a pilot. Although the situation ended without consequence, he had to give up his pilot gig, at least temporarily, which was difficult as he loved the perks of wearing a pilot's uniform. He moved to Atlanta and when completing an apartment application, listed himself as a pediatrician. Coincidentally, a licensed pediatrician happened to live below him and wanted Frank to tour his pediatric unit. So, after months of reading pediatric journals, articles and books on children's medicine, Frank acquiesced and accepted the offer for the tour. He continued to study in the hospital library and, having impressed fellow doctors with his knowledge, was offered a temporary job when another abruptly quit. The hospital never checked the legitimacy of his credentials and Frank accepted the job and managed by allowing the interns to make medical decisions. This charade lasted 11 months during which time he was paid so handsomely that he never had to write a bad check. He decided on his own to end his medical career, one medical call too close. He resigned, moved to another city, went on to his era as an attorney. Declaring himself a Harvard Law grad, he meticulously counterfeited a Harvard transcript and presented it to the Louisiana state bar examiner's office and received an application to take the bar. He flunked twice but by studying the questions he missed, he passed on the third try and several weeks later had a job with the Louisiana state's attorney general's office. He lived off his lawyer salary and money he had conned...buying expensive clothes and leasing a Jaguar. Blessed with a grouchy bigoted boss who hated northerners and Catholics, Frank was assigned uninteresting and easy work so he was harmless. His legal career ended when a legitimate Harvard grad was getting suspicious. Frank bailed and decided to travel for several months.

Over the course of the next two years, he traveled from big city to big city, writing bad checks, conning people for information, bedding beautiful women and perfecting his skills at creating fake checks. He was enamored with being a co-pilot because the uniform and his fake Pan Am credential, now under a new alias, as well as his handsome physic and confident air, won him instant respect at hotels, restaurants and, most importantly, banks. Being expert at counterfeiting documents, he made himself a stack of Pan Am expense checks with a variety of clearing house numbers. Bank personnel never checked the codes so Frank would walk away with immediate cash. The check would bounce around several clearing houses before the original bank learned the check was bad, 5 or 6 days later. By that time, Frank had stashed the cash and was long gone. Along the way, he bedded stewardesses and conned them for airline information. He had women in every port, would love them, use them, and leave them.

As he boasted later, Frank viewed himself as a super con-man, not a hard -nosed criminal...the difference being that the con-man had three skills/traits that set him apart. First, conmen have personality...they have tremendous swagger, confidence and be quite charming.... even flirtatious. People believe them. It didn't hurt Frank that he was handsome and fit. Second, is the ability to keenly observe details. Committing to memory even the smallest details can mean the difference between a successful or failed con. Lastly, is the willingness to do research. His endless studying made it possible to pull off being a pilot, lawyer, and doctor ... and enabled him to master the banking system. The common thief just takes stuff and takes off. <sup>25</sup> Frank was constantly on the move and on the run. He knew he was being sought after in several countries. His luck ran out after he had "retired" in Montpelier, France...hoping to hide...permanently. He was arrested on numerous charges and spent 6 months in solitary confinement before being released to Swedish officials. After serving time, a Swedish judge looked kindly upon him, and



by confiscating his passport, prevented Frank from being extradited to Italy and then the 12 additional countries that were waiting for a piece of his hide. He released him to U.S. authorities and put Frank on a plane to New York where FBI agents would be waiting. He escaped and was arrested again...escaping again. He was eventually caught, at the age of 21, after writing \$2.5 million in bad checks in every state and 26 countries and assuming numerous identities. <sup>26</sup> Pan Am estimated that he flew over 1,000,000 miles ...boarding over 250 different aircraft. <sup>27</sup> Sentenced to 12 years, Frank served 5 years, and was paroled from the Federal Corrections Institution in Petersburg, Virginia when he agreed to help federal authorities catch other forgers and conmen.<sup>28</sup> He then decided to use his vast criminal knowledge for good. He started a consulting business, training bank and hotel personnel on ways to avoid swindling. He is now married with 3 sons, owns a security firm, and has earned, legitimately, millions of dollars helping the same businesses he once conned.

Some of which Frank claims as true has been questioned. But, as Frank said in an interview, I outsmarted airlines, the American Bar Association, the American Medical Association, the Federal Reserve System, and many others...all of whom would be embarrassed to admit that I penetrated their ranks and succeeded. End of story.

### **Frank Abagnole, Jr., Bad Boy Turned Good**

There are lots of bad boys ...from ancient times up through today. They have captivated, entertained, and sometimes hurt many people along the way. Yet still, men and women alike have a fascination with them despite their “bad boy” behaviors. With social media seemingly chronicling and reporting their every move, one can wonder if they are as mysterious and alluring as they used to be. Do we know too much about them now...making them less

enigmatic? Probably not, if you consider the preponderance of entertainment news sources... on TV, in magazines and on social media. It seems we just can't get enough. We may be outwardly disgusted by their bad boy behaviors, but don't we all want to be just a little bit bad?



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Footnotes

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