

To: Donald St John

From: Marjorie Bump Main

Date: December 1, 1966

Dec. 1 1966.

Dear Mr. St John,

Since I have a feeling that you are trying to get a true picture of Ernest Hemingway, and since I am the only one who can give a picture of the past relating to me, I suppose I am stuck with it. To understand it you would have to know something about me in those days so I am trying to remember.

First I was more immature at eighteen than most thirteen year olds are today. I grew up in an all female household. I had no brothers and my father died when I was quite young. I was never afraid to talk with boys. I remember well walking around a block when I thought one was going to walk down the street with me. I was able to talk to Ernest and was not afraid of him. It was probably because he seemed more like the brother I had always wanted. I had never gone out with boys at all. Having become acquainted with Ernest in more casual situations, the strain was gone. I think he may have realized how immature I was and so stayed away from the usual boy girl angle of relationship. I have always been grateful to him that he made this first acquaintance with someone of the opposite sex such a good one.

I believe he did like me very much. He probably loved me as I did him, as a person with an understanding spirit. But the thoughts of marriage could not have entered in. I was full of plans for going to college the following year. Ernest had no money and no job. His father was against his wish to try to become a writer and wanted him to go to work. No stories were accepted. I believe now that he came to our house as often as he did because he needed to eat there. I was living with my grandmother that winter (grandfather had died) Ernest adored her and she always made him feel welcome.

I always had two homes, my grandparents house and ours next door. Sometimes I stayed in one, and sometimes the other. When my grandparents were away for the winter I was at home, but as soon as they returned I wanted to live with grandmother. I loved her deeply and she had a great influence on my life. That is probably why I had more of the ideas and ideals of the generations before me, and was never quite comfortable with people my own age. That was probably why I married someone twenty years older and happy in the marriage. Dr. Main enjoyed the usual correspondence with Ernest. He liked his stories more than I did.

I don't believe it was until Ernest saw me really grown up with a home and children that he may have had the thoughts that perhaps he should have wanted for me to be more grown up. But it could only have been a passing thought. He was then involved with Martha Gellhorn. He wrote me about her.

A marriage for Ernest and me could never have been a happy one. He wanted his wives to drink with him. One drink is all I can manage. I was very frail after having

children and needed lots of care all during my thirties. The strenuous life Ernest led would certainly have killed me had I tried to keep up. I think we always remained good memories for each other, and it was only that short time of misunderstanding that was a blot.

Perhaps that had to happen to send each of us on paths more suited to our natures.

Please excuse my grandsons school paper. I haven't time to copy.

MBM