

To: Donald St John

From: Marjorie Bump Main

Date: December 3, 1966

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Dear Mr. St John,

I find your letter most amazing. It will be difficult to answer, for while I am glad to answer your questions, I have no wish to share memories with posterity.

Ernest and I were very good friends. I always felt close to the whole Hemingway family. His sister Ursula and I remained in touch thru the years, and I probably had one of the last letters written before her death.

I first met the Hemingway's when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. I used to visit at their cottage at Walloon Lake. Dr. Hemingway was a wonderful man and made a deep impression on me. I remember Leicester as little more than a baby, being looked after by everyone and Carol as a beautiful big girl with admirers hanging about. Ernest was usually off with friends. I had a wonderful time with Sunny and Ursula.

When Ernest came home from Italy, we all listened in awe to the tales of his adventures. Being older he paid very little attention to us. He was always like an admired older brother.

When Ernest decided to stay in Petoskey one winter to try his hand at writing, it was only natural that he should take me to the High School dances and parties. He was often at our house. Our friendship grew, for we could talk things out. He read his stories to me and we were sad together when rejection slips arrived. But there was no romance. I was very young seventeen with college ahead. The following year I did go to college and soon after that Ernest married. I never met his wives or children. I did have a few letters thru the years and he did come to see us. It was just before the publication of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. He liked my husband and children, and it was a nice reunion.

I think he wrote twice after that. I destroyed all his letters. As he became more famous I felt that perhaps they might gain interest as public property, and I didn't want that to happen.

As for the story in "In Our Time", I came to realize it was just another of his "spits" stories, of which there were too many. Whenever he felt real as imagined rejection, he struck back by writing a story. Feeling that my mother was against our friendship (imagined, not true) he wrote the story. Later he asked me to forgive it, and I did. I didn't resent it too much or think too much about it, probably because my mother didn't. I am sure Ernest came to regret the "spits" stories deeply.

I have told very few people that I knew Ernest. (No, I didn't like to call him Stein as many did in those days) The Ernest I knew bears little resemblance to the image he created of himself over the years. I think that is the image he wanted to live, and I have no wish to change it by giving any of my memories. I also believe that no one,

even with much study, can give a picture of someone they have not known personally. Spirit has to be felt, not analyzed. I was interested in Ernest as a person, not the author.

I am glad to know the friendship meant enough to him to remember me as you describe. Perhaps with a few changes in the sequence of events in both our lives it might have worked out that way. But it didn't. There was never any discussion of marriage and certainly no thoughts of it in mind.

But back there where I am seventeen and eighteen he remains a vivid memory of one of the nicest people I have ever known, very sensitive and very vulnerable.

I hope this answers your questions. Since very few people know my address here, I can narrow my guess. But I don't mind. It is nice to hear about people I used to know in Petoskey. I haven't been back for many years. My life has been very full of varied experiences, with full measure of joy and sorrow.

I wish you success with your venture, tho I feel too much has already been written about Ernest Hemingway, with too few drops of butter.

Sincerely,
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(Mrs. Sidney G)
Permanent address
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