

Jan. 11, 1967

Dear Marge (There - I've done it)

Thanks for your good letter. I particularly liked your mild corrective - that your relationship with Hem was not a "romance that developed. In life it was a potential romance that didn't." But I'm glad we keep pounding away at these points; I guess that's the only way to achieve clarity. One can log a lot of time and exchange many, many questions and answers - and still miss an overall point of view that holds the key to understanding everything else.

As to the pictures - I'm convinced you're probably right; my only hope is that asking you to have some of them copied for me will not be asking too much. However, the way you tossed off that remark about having a glossy print made for me of the large picture of your grandmother makes me feel the technological hurdle has been cleared and, come to think about it, I remember now that you used to take and develop your own pictures. It so happens that I live in a sparsely settled area where it is not too easy to have pictures made, let alone copied. Of course I have been copying documents myself; I have a wide-angle lens on my 35 mm single lens reflex Japanese camera which enables me to move into within four inches of my subject and fill the frame with all but the smallest objects, but lighting is critical at this distance and while my work is okay for copying letters and such things, it leaves something to be desired when it comes to half tones. I have been finding this out. I hate to settle for anything less than the best possible copy since loss in the next printing/press phase has to be expected. So --- if you can select for me the pictures that might be deemed of interest Hemingway-wise (no matter how remote the connection might be) and have them copied professionally (and recopied if necessary) and sent to me, with the bill for same, I will be very grateful. Meanwhile, accept from me, a tiny gift, a copy of a picture loaned to me by Bill Smith. I made several. The picture puzzles me a little. It is supposed to be post-war, presumably 1919, when Hem was 20, and yet he looks so young, almost high school age, and the uniform seems to have a U.S. insignia. Perhaps memories have failed and this was taken earlier. I wonder now if you might say if the pix looks postwar to you. On the original was inscribed: "Stein, yclept the Massive Woodsman" This fits properly since this was the self-descriptive postwar phrase remembered by Bill, who was in turn known as the Master Biologist (because he was a student assistant in college in charge of chloroforming frogs, according to Bill).

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I thought you might like to have a quote from K. Baker:

"Marjorie Bump and I were neighbors, good friends and classmates in high school. One day she said to me, "Guess who is coming in on the afternoon Pere Marquette train?" After failing to guess, she replied, "None other than Ernest" and I said, "now who is Ernest?" (Al had never met him up until then) At Marge's insistance I agreed to go with her and a small group of friends to meet Hemingway which we did and I shall never forget how he appeared as we looked up those Pullman car steps. He was just returned from the war and was tall, slim, emaculate and very handsome in his uniform. A great smile broke out on his face which was automatic when he saw that his old friends had come to welcome him. I was about 17 at the time with the proverbial hay seeds on my shoulder and was almost speechless - Ernest looking like a character out of "The Student Prince." End.

Now I am sure this account is given in good faith but it doesn't exactly sound kocher to me and I wonder if you can analyze it for me and salvage at least some truth - since I am sure it is based upon a memory of some kind, somebody's memory, somebody's account, a picture somebody has, something. We both know it is hard to separate the actually remembered from what we have heard or thought since. I would so much like to believe in the picture this story presents, but is it possible that you met Hem at the station? Of course this could have been a time other than his first return. As I figure the ages, K would have been 16, you maybe 17, and Hem 20. The trouble with bursting stories like these is that there are so few of them; I mean vivid little scenes rather than generalized recollections. Perhaps the Baker memory may stir one of your own, however, and if so not all will be lost.....I forget now, did you go to a dance with K? He wrote me a second letter in Florida which unfortunately failed to reach me until I had gone north, and in it he drew a picture of a martini glass next to a flagged mast. Which is doggone friendly to a stranger in my estimation.

More anon, but enough for now. And once again, thanks,

Don St. John

*P.S. note re pix negs and
request for negatives*