

Copy

Feb. 19, 1967

Dear Marge:

I've just had an interesting time reading the attached book which tends to be a semi satire on Ernest Hemingway's life in Horton Bay. I heard about the book first from Harold Loeb who himself was satirized by Hemingway in THE SUN ALSO RISES. Loeb served as the model for Robert Cohn of the Lost Generation crowd. He comes out as a pretty scurvy character, pushy, lecherous, generally obnoxious, but he turns out, in correspondence, to be a very nice guy and I have had a lot of help from him. It was he, for example, who told me where Bill Smith could be found. Even Hadley had thought Bill and his older brother, Y.K. dead. Both are alive and both play a large part in the book.

What I would appreciate your doing would be to go over this book - I'm sure you would want to anyway because it mentions your friends - and 1) give me your general impression of it from the point of veracity and 2) perhaps tell me who some of the characters are that I have failed to identify. So far the following identifications appear clear:

Georgie Warner-	Hemingway
Jay -	Dos Passos
Ben Harrington -	Bill Smith (William B. Smith, Jr.)
Zeke " -	Y.K. Smith
Lulie -	Kate Smith
Aunt Lyde -	Awnty Charles
Doctor Warner -	Dr. Hemingway
(both born 1850) Professor Harrington -	W.B. Smith, Sr., died 1934
Grandmother Waring -	Mother of Awnty Charles and (Merrils the mother of the Smith children)
Red Wing canoe	Bill's Old Town Canoe
Calumet Point	Horton Bay
Calumet City	Boyne City
Leman Lake	Lake Charlevoix
Uncle Prudy	Joe Charles, oculist

I haven't been able to identify Joe Newcomer, although I thought he might be Carl Edgar. Also I thought Mrs. Willard might be Mrs. Dilworth. Don't know about all the Willard girls, or the ice cream place, Pringle's or the hotel where the ballroom was. Thought the Indian might be Dick Smoke. Wondered if there was a ball team. Also I wonder about Jasper Milliron.

There are several things that really baffle me. If they are true it is odd and if they are not true one wonders why Dos Passos went to such trouble to defame a couple of people. Of course the background may help explain it, in case you are not familiar with it. The strange thing is that Katie Smith introduced Hemingway to Hadley - at her brother Y.K.'s apartment in Chicago in 1920 when Hem was editing a house organ for a financial company. Hadley had come east from St. Louis to visit Katie and her brothers. However, after Hem and Hadley were divorced, Katie became very fond of Pauline who of course came into the picture through Hadley. By this time Hem was famous and holding court in Key West and Katie Smith came to one of their parties as the girl of Waldo Peirce, the famous artist and good friend of Hem's. Dos was at Hem's house on one of these occasions and fell for Katie and not long after married her. Thereafter the Dos Passos' visited with the Hemingways quite often and after a while Katie would become enraged at what she termed Hem's cruelty to Pauline. As Bill Smith told me it took peculiar forms. He would make her sit out in a boat with him and get eaten alive by mosquitoes even though she was peculiarly sensitive to insect bites - and he wasn't. In Dos Passos' current book, The Best Times, he points out how hard Hem was on all his women, using as his example the fact that Hem made Hadley attend the six day bicycle races with him in Paris. Well anyway, Katie had a complete falling out eventually and of course Hem's divorce from Pauline in 1940 was the last straw. Apparently as a result of all this she unloaded a rather unfavorable picture in her conversations with her husband, and the book, Chosen Country resulted. It is a terrible book and, as Bill Smith says, was a complete flop; Hem could have ignored it; there were hardly any readers. But it made him furious anyway and a year or two after it came out Hem wrote a very nasty note about it on the back of his Christmas card to the Smiths in which he referred to Dos Passos (and this is confidential) as "a one-eyed Portugese bastard" (Excuse me please, name, but facts are facts and they must be put down this way for me to make my point which is - in Dos Passos' The Best Times, he confesses to being illegitimate and we know he lost an eye in an auto accident and is part Portugese; what I mean is that even under these tense circumstances Hem tried to be as accurate as he could.....

Question? Could it be that Dr. Hemingway was as unpleasant and as untidy as this book suggests.

Question: Did Hem's eye pupil quiver as the book says?

Question: Was he that loath to take a bath?

Was he that averse to being called Ernie?

Did he really spend any time in the hoosegow for shooting out the lights?

Of course there are a lot of inaccuracies in the book, i.e. Hem being more concerned about saving his rod than himself; and I guess it is true that Hem held on to grudges and was restless around girls in outdoor settings.

About the book: Skip the chapters I have indicated; they are irrelevant to me and, so far as I can see, irrelevant period. In any case I'll be interested in having your views in so far as the story is liar territory. I would appreciate having it back when you cause I guess it belongs with my other Hemingway books.

More later,

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