

Feb. 28th '67

Dear Don,

This is quite an assignment that you have given me. I hope I can fullfill it. When I woke up about four this morning, I turned on the light and used the time to read. I read with mixed emotions.

First I must say that whatever I can tell you is from one of those small pitchers with large ears who constantly gained information by listening to adult conversations and tried to piece together the bits and pieces. So everything I tell must have the preface "I believe, not "I know."

The only thing I could think while reading the first three, was how much they resembled the conversations of my poor disoriented husband. Here and there an idea or a name would be real, but so surrounded by a garble of event, ages, time element and personality that true perspective was impossible. The picture of Ernest and his father is as unsympathetic and false as that drawn by Ernest of my mother and me. I am sure Dos Passos knew that writing that way about Dr Hemingway would hurt Ernest, just as Ernest knew it would hurt me more to have him write about Mother than anything he could say about me. I find it revolting to think grown men could use their power to get printed, to voice grudge and spite, whether ~~true~~ just or not. In the past I would have felt anger. Now I only want to reject it and forget that I have read it.

Kate must have told Dos Passos many incidents which he wove together, and moved about. For his convenience he seems to have moved a section of Charlevoix to the Bay. On the Lake Charlevoix side of Charlevoix is a section called the Belvedere Side. It is the strictly non jewish section. The hotel, cottages, icecream parlor, and the sail boats all fill the description. The Charles' cottage has been moved nearer the lake. Hildegard must be Kate's close friend Edith Foley, so the Willards must be her family. I didn't know them but Ernest told me about them. He wrote me about Kate's marriage to Dos Passos and then Ede's marriage to someone soon after. So some people must also have been moved over from Charlevoix. Joe Newcomer must certainly be Carl Edgar. He used to talk to me about Kate, and several things fit.

In Chicago the Charles' apt has been moved from St Louis. I seem to remember that some sort of unpleasantness developed in Chicago, but I don't remember what. I think Ernest was living with the Smiths when I had the last phone conversation from his Oak Park home. I seem to have been on the fringes of many things, but never a part of them.

My only comment on Chapter 8 is that I like it enough to make up for the rest. The emotions must be real tho the setting is changed. I feel Kate is the one clearly drawn character.

Answers;

It is hard for me to imagine Ernest being hard on, or cruel to women. That must have been the result of drinking. I can understand it a little, for the only times Sidney ever spoke ugly things to me was after too much liquor. Ernest was always considerate and quite protective of me. Had I been the one married to him I wouldn't have been able to take him as described. No one ever made me do what I didn't feel was the thing to do. I might have died, but I would never have been possessed. Sounds like quite an averted battle.

I remember Dr Hemingway as a wonderful and kindly man. His mouth was stern, but his eyes were oh so kind. He could scold us as

he did when we girls went out in a canoe in a storm, but it was because we were in danger. He had much of the responsibility for the children at Walloon, and I know Ura was devoted to him. I know the Dilworths were devoted to him. I believe Ernest was always bitter because Marce was sent to college rather than he. Had he been sent, everything in his life would have been different.

I have no memory of a quivering eye.

At both Walloon and the Bay, there were no facilities for a bath. Since we swam four times a day that was no problem. Each room had a wash bowl and a pitcher of water. Now and then we took soap to the lake to wash our hair and all the places not covered by a bathing suit. Aside from that we were all in the same category of the great unwashed. I don't know how Ernest reacted to a real bath opportunity, but I imagine the things written were a part of the plan to discredit him just as it was ugly to mention an odor of dirty linen in connection with Dr H. I never saw Dr H. when he didn't look nice. I can't say the same about Ernest.

Yes, Ernest hated to be called Ernie.

No, E did not spend time in the Hoosegow for shooting out the lights. The time for this incident was after the war and entirely different. They were never caught, and I doubt that Dr. H. was told about it. The boys were all old enough to look out for themselves.

I do know Ernest held grudges. I don't know whether or not he was restless around girls in outdoor settings. All the world seemed ~~bad~~/ beautifully sexless. I am inclined to think it was somewhat that way for boys, too, until Lawrence brought it into the open and made it fashionable.

O.K.?

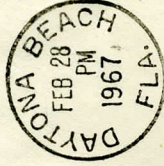
Marge -

*Why the long Marjorie? - I am
never called that.*

Did you ever find Carl E.? He is the one I would like very much to find again. Also, how did you find me?

Mrs S. Main
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Mr Don. St John
Franconia
New Hampshire



Air Mail

