

March 2, 1967

Dear Marge:

I like Marge ok and Hem used that too so it is kosher on top of everything else. I also like Marjorie for some reason, although I suppose to someone used to Marge it may seem ornate. Somehow in my mind the "Marge business" was always the "Marjorie stories" and perhaps I inflicted the real Marge with the fictional connotation. The two Marge's are alike in some ways but different in many other ways and I sometimes forget to keep them separate. When I call you Marjorie it means that the old, fictional gal has taken over momentarily. That is not very communicative of me I must say. So from now on it will be Marge. After all I know you much better than the other one - now. It is really amazing the way your image has come alive and evolved during the course of our brief encounter. It's a question of true simpatica, I think; there have been few such in my own life I must say; it is seldom that the importance and the articulateness and the interest are all there in the same person.

I was very glad and most grateful to have your views on the Dos Passos book. It must have come as a surprise to you to know this kind of thing had evolved back in 1951 and that it had issued from an old friend of yours, Kate. In 1951 Hemingway had just written his least successful book, ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES, he had recently been characterized by Lillian Ross of the New Yorker, and he and everyone else were wondering if he was through. He must have been in a brittle mood. He was hard at work on THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA, which would come out in 1952, and of course he got the Nobel in 1954. So in 1951 this Dos Passos book made him very, very unhappy. Bill Smith wondered why he became so upset since the book was a critical and financial flop, but of course it is easy to understand that. It isn't what people would read about his father that angered him, as you suggested, it was that supposedly close friends of his would say something like that. I can understand his pain, and yet it does seem excruciatingly ironical that he who used friendships as literary source material with such utter disregard for personal feelings should act like a stuck pig when the tables were reversed. I had the same reactions when Sunny and others said that the man ought to be allowed some private life. I am a great admirer of Hemingway, the writer, as you know, but I do think Hemingway the man could be quite a louse. Hem was most unkind to Charles Fenton, the biographer of his apprenticeship years, calling him a member of the laundry list school of biographer and saying such appraisals should not be made in a writer's lifetime. It was all so comical, almost. There is the oddity about Hem in his relationship with his father. He has written that they had a falling out when he was 15 (I have never found out why. Bill thought it might be because the doc took out his tonsils at that time, he thinks, without using gas) and he has called his dad a coward (in FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS) but there was also this protective feeling that you suggest. Perhaps it wasn't that he loved his father but that the father of Hem should be inviolate to others. I don't think I can ever forgive Hem for his remarks about his father's underclothes; that belongs in the taboo department, I think, and yet I suppose if Hem had taboos in one thing he would have had them in another and he would have wound up being a Wm. Dean Howells. Still, I think any writer or human must decide which has the greater verity for his own soul - his honor as a man, or his honor as an artist. For living, the former, for immortality the latter I suppose.

You did your homework very well, and I hereby give you three stars. Seriously, I appreciate what you have done very much and thank you for it. You clarified the picture for me and this is doubly important and also a point for Hemingway since it is to his credit that he should be defended so to speak ~~mmm~~ by someone with a bit more compassion than he had.... Bill Smith had to tell me, his wife, Marion too, that Kate really hated Hemingway at the end because of what were vaguely called his cruelties to Pauline. Whether these were in the nature of marital infidelities, brazen perhaps (this was the beginning of the Gellhorn period) or whether he was simply cruel in other ways, indifference, crudeness perhaps or downright emotional sadism, I don't know. Bill told me he used to take Pauline out in mosquito country despite the fact that she would swell up at the mere mention of these insects, and that despite her discomfort, he would insist on her staying in a boat with him. Once Bill saw her back literally black with mosquitoes. Whether it was that kind of thing or something less subtle I'm not sure. In any case I gather Kate used to write the Smiths furious letters about Hemingway. You may remember that Dos Passos talked about this too. It is still hard for me to understand, however, how Kate could have been that mad, or how Dos Passos could have had such poor judgment as to write such a second rate second hand book... Come to think of it, I suppose all writers at some time use their friends. The only thing is that most of these efforts fail whereas Hemingway's little sallies happened to become best sellers or literary gems. That is what happened to Marjorie, Marge; she happened to have been dissected in one of two of the centuries purest short stories.

The Dos Passos account is the one place I have found criticism of Dr. He

Another thing, Dos is sarcastic about Hem in THE BEST TIMES, and he wrote the hateful CHOSEN COUNTRY and yet he kept going back to Hemingway and to Hemingway's Key West. He and Fitzgerald couldn't stay away from the man. It is odd that these titans in their own rights were so drawn to

I forget if you told me somewhere what your most common name ~~of~~ address for Hem was. Ernest I take it, or seem to remember.

Did I tell you that when I mentioned to Leicester that Granville Hicks had called Hem "nasty" and "mean" he had protested that that was wrong; that what Hem was was malevolent, that when he hated he hated full steam and that he worked at it harder than anybody he knew. You are right, Hem was implacable, apparently, in holding a grudge. Les said when someone was drummed out of his set he stayed drummed out, ceased to exist forever. Hotchner said about the same thing. This interests me more than mothers me because as I have told you before I am sure you have to pay for genius in some way. Nothing is for nothing. The only thing, genius is hard to live with, for genius and the friends of genius. I think the non-genius is by far the happier man - but he doesn't cause as much happiness and satisfaction as genius, and that I suppose is the strange goal that most men seek.

I didn't quite get your Lawrence reference - re world being sexless until Lawrence made it fashionable.



No, Bill did not know how to get hold of Carl Edgar. I suppose I could if I really went all out and I suppose I should, but you have to stop someplace or all you are doing is gathering and never putting down and this can be a trap that lets life ebb before life is faced. Carl is important, though; without him, Hem might not have gone to K.C. although Hem's uncle Tyley did live there and have influence and, as a matter of fact, helped Hem get his Star job. But I think it is Carl who cinched Hem's going there.

How did I find you? Let me count the ways. No, basically, it was through Dutch Pailthorp. Everyone asking about Hemingway in Petoskey is inevitably referred to Dutch; he is considered the No. 1 expert (living) although there were those that said a Chuck Bailey was a good or better source before he died. I like Dutch very much and we have become quite good friends but he is a far cup of tea from Hem. After being with him some time I said, in the presence of his nice wife, Frances, (Burch) what he had in common with Hem if he didn't like hunting or fishing or literary things. He thought a moment, looked at Fran, and then exploded his answer: women. He played up the woman angle a great deal in my early interviews, and I was left with the impression of a rather swaggering, rather typically lecherous 19-year-old, but as my talks went on and I came and went, Dutch seemed to revise his opinion and would suddenly say to me: "You know it's a funny thing about Stein; I can't remember him ever talking about a woman actually; sometimes I think he wasn't very good with women; he was shy, did not push himself forward; I think I made more scores than he did, come to think of it." He always fastened on the "fat" aspect of the Marjorie story. He didn't like Hem calling your father in law fat; that seemed terrible to him. His theory about the insinuations about you were quite frankly that you were impregnable physically to Hem and that he got even with you in the story. I never believed that. That is not the way great stories get written. Anyhow, it was after this theory, that Dutch began to pull in his horns about Hem's prowess with women. For years (and I hope this frankness doesn't come off as crude) Dutch imagined Hem had had an affair with Irene Golstein at the famous Christmas party and it is not until very recently that he has revised his opinion about that. On one trip he told me that you had married a dentist and that the dentist was very sick or had died. Months later, he remembered the name, Main and about that time he also recalled that you had lived in Ormond Beach. He doesn't like Connie Curtis but may have gotten it from her, or possibly the Hoffman of the clothing co. I found your name in an old Ormond Beach city directory at the Chamber of Commerce. So now you know. Dutch is a kind of vasty wind bag at times but he is nice in his way. He admits Hem would probably not have looked him up in Petoskey in 1949 if he (Dutch) had not happened to run into him at the Arcade rest. around the corner from the Curtis boys' bank. Dutch and his wife are both alcoholics, I'm afraid, but handle it fairly well, if that is possible. Dutch was on the wagon for a long time. They go to Arizona nowadays for the winter. Dutch still retains his office in Petoskey but merely puts in an appearance I think. He has a beautiful home in Harbor Springs with a rushing spring and brook (with trout) in his back yard. Actually, I met Dutch because he was a friend of Ruth's childhood friend, John McCune, also a lawyer. John's father is the minister you knew. My lord, let this be all for now although I am not finished.

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