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May 21, 1999

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"Remembering Ernest Hemingway" . . .

**New Book about Legendary Writer, Nobel Laureate
Co-authored by Illinois Wesleyan English Professor**

"An important and unique addition to Hemingwayana— extensive interviews with his closest friends, including two of his sons, which do as much as any biography written to date in providing a vivid portrait of this great American writer."

George Plimpton, Editor-in-Chief, *The Paris Review*
commenting on "Remembering Ernest Hemingway"
by James Plath & Frank Simons

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—The gun Ernest Hemingway used to kill himself—telltale evidence of the Nobel Prize-winning novelist's suicide—was cut to pieces with a torch and buried by the sheriff who confiscated it.

One of Hemingway's sons—a doctor—goes on record, diagnosing his father as a "classic paranoid schizophrenic," as he battled the illness in the last year of his life.

And, an old Idaho hunting buddy reveals for the first time some of "Papa's" strange personality quirks, including his offbeat habit of barking like a dog at the mention of death.

These are just some of the revelations about one of the 20th century's legendary writers unmasked in a new book, "Remembering Ernest Hemingway," co-authored by James Plath, an Illinois Wesleyan University professor of English.

Hemingway Centennial

The book, set for release this month, will hit the nation's bookstores just as festivities marking the centennial of Hemingway's birth get underway. "Remembering Ernest Hemingway" is riddled with new information and analysis about the famed author. But, one of its great oddities—and perhaps a first in the publishing industry—is that the book's two authors, Plath and Frank Simons, have never met.

Plath recalled how they teamed up: "Simons contacted the Hemingway Days Festival in Key West, asking for advice on where he might publish two interviews he had done about Hemingway back in the seventies. The festival referred him to me since I'm the former Hemingway Days Writers' Workshop & Conference director."

Plath and Simons hit it off via e-mail and decided that with the upcoming Hemingway centennial the time was right to track down a group of the writer's friends, relatives, and colleagues to do a book of firsthand reminiscences about the larger-than-life character.

Plath and Simons will meet for the first time at an upcoming publication party for the book in Key West.

Noteworthy Interviews

Since Hemingway's 1961 death, biographers and scholars have posed a steady stream of questions to those who knew the author. However, Plath points out, "Remembering Ernest Hemingway" is the first collection of interviews to be published in a decade and the first collection to feature full-length interviews.

The book includes interviews with:

- Charles and Lorine Thompson, close Key West friends of Hemingway.
- Betty Bruce, wife of Hemingway's "man Friday."
- Bill Geiser, who was employed by the Thompsons.
- Patrick Hemingway, the author's second son.
- Gregory Hemingway, the author's third son.
- Valerie Hemingway, the author's secretary and Gregory's former wife.
- Kermit "Shine" Forbes and James "Iron Baby" Roberts, who were Hemingway's boxing sparring partners.
- L.T. Curry, dockmaster during Hemingway's Key West years.
- Joe Allen, a newspaperman who bowled "tenpins" with Hemingway.
- Forrest MacMullen, one of Hemingway's hunting pals.
- Bud Purdy, a Hemingway friend from Idaho.
- Tillie Arnold, another Hemingway friend from Idaho.
- William W. Seward, Jr., reputedly the only professor Hemingway liked.

The interviews contained in "Remembering Ernest Hemingway" were conducted and assembled by Plath and Simons. Plath's interviews were with Geiser, Patrick Hemingway, Valerie Hemingway, Forbes and Roberts, Curry, Allen, MacMullen, and Purdy.

The Authors

Plath is a Hemingway scholar who has presented papers at three international conferences and was invited by Cuba's Ministry of Culture to lecture on Hemingway at the author's former home outside Havana. He also directed the Hemingway Days Writers' Workshop & Conference in Key West, for 10 years. Plath was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1995 to teach courses on the American novel and short story at the University of the West Indies-Cave Hill campus. To experience part of the Hemingway mystique, Plath also has run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain.

Simons is a Sarasota, Fla., high school English teacher, who, as a graduate student in the 1970s, traveled to Key West to interview some of the people closest to Hemingway. He also is an avid fly fisherman.

Hemingway Secrets Revealed

Despite all that has been written about Hemingway over the years, Plath believes there is much new to say about the writer *Life* magazine once dubbed as among the most influential people of the 20th century. Here are some highlights:

- Purdy reveals in his interview that the gun Hemingway used to commit suicide was destroyed and buried by a sheriff. Purdy confesses that he urged the law-enforcement official to do it. MacMullen confirmed the story in a follow-up interview.
- Gregory Hemingway, a doctor, after much thought, goes on record with the paranoid schizophrenic diagnosis about his father.
- Seward reveals that while Patrick Hemingway has edited his father's African material into a novel, "True at First Light," Ernest Hemingway had told Seward years ago that the material was intended as a collection of short stories.
- MacMullen shares Hemingway's favorite song, off-color joke, and dog-barking habit.
- Adding fuel, if not resolution, to the debate over whether the cats at Hemingway's Key West home were carry-overs from the author's time there or a contrived tourism ploy, Curry—who admits to not being fond of Hemingway—says there were cats at Hemingway's Key West home.

Favorable Critical Comment

"Remembering Ernest Hemingway" is receiving favorable pre-publication comment.

James Nagel, author of "Hemingway in Love and War," said: "Hemingway fans and scholars alike will be fascinated by the interviews and reminiscences in 'Remembering Ernest Hemingway.' In this intriguing new book, Hemingway's sons Patrick and Gregory provide family insights into the legacy of their famous father, and many of his closest confidants reflect on the character, work habits, and dedication of one of the most important writers of the 20th century. No one who is seriously interested in Hemingway will want to miss this valuable collection."

Randy Wayne White, author of "The Mangrove Coast and North of Havana," said: "I recommend 'Remembering Ernest Hemingway' for two reasons: 1) It is a superb, fun, illuminating journey, from introduction to end, and 2) It's the only book about this great writer from which I came away feeling that I'd actually met the man—a man I now like very much."

Hemingway Celebrations Slated

Centennial celebrations are slated for Hemingway's childhood home in Oak Park, Ill., and at locales associated with his life, such as Key West, Fla., and Sun Valley, Idaho, and other far-flung sites, including China, Russia, Bimini, and the John F. Kennedy presidential library, which houses the Hemingway collection.

Simon & Shuster, Hemingway's long-time publisher, also is planning to release "Papa's" last posthumous work, a novel based on the author's African journals. Hemingway's son, Patrick, who spent much of his adult life as a white hunter in Africa, edited the work.

Hemingway Background

Hemingway (1899-1961) won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the 1954 Nobel Prize in Literature.

A colorful character, whom Plath compares to outdoorsman, writer, and U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, Hemingway was a journalist with the *Kansas City Star* and *Toronto Star*. He was a Red Cross ambulance driver in World War I, a war correspondent, and a foreign correspondent. In World War II, he is said to have aided in espionage in the Caribbean under the guise of deep-sea fishing; he accompanied U.S. forces on the drive to liberate Paris.

Among Hemingway's novels are "The Sun Also Rises" (1926), "A Farewell to Arms" (1929), "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (1940), and "The Old Man and the Sea" (1952).

"Hemingway is almost an industry," Plath said. "He is the most written about American author."

Plath credits Hemingway's enduring popularity, in part, to the fact that "he is the first American writer to be widely imitated" due to his distinctive style of penning terse, tense, declarative sentences—subject, verb, object—that some attribute to his background as a journalist.

"Hemingway captured the essence of things," Plath said, "rather than describing things."

Plath said Hemingway likened it to an iceberg theory of writing, where you see only the top, but there is so much more below the surface. It's the depth of what lurks beneath the surface which imitators frequently miss, Plath said.

In part, Plath credits the popular fascination with Hemingway to the writer's skill as a self-promoter. An image was created of a "larger than life" character—a hard-drinking, adventurous, macho personality—that "guaranteed people would read what he had to say."

Publication Details

"Remembering Ernest Hemingway" is published by The Ketch & Yawl Press, Key West, Fla. It features a foreword written by Lorian Hemingway, the writer's granddaughter.

The price of the 168-page book with 30 photos is \$19.95, hardcover, and \$12.95, softcover.

For more information about the book, contact: James Plath, 309/556-3352 or John Boisonault, 305/294-2904.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts, and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium.