

An American

*Veteran out of the wars before
he was twenty:*

*Famous at twenty-five: thirty a
master —*

*Whittled a style for his time
from a walnut stick*

*In a carpenter's loft in a street
of that April City.*

THUS POET Archibald MacLeish recalls one of the great American writers in his days of early glory, back in the 1920s, when it always seemed to be April in Paris. Today Ernest Hemingway is a long way from Paris and a long way from April. He was 55, but he looked older. He cruised in a black and green fishing boat off the coast of Cuba, near where the Gulf Stream draws a dark line on the seascape. The grey-white hair escaping from beneath a visored cap was unkempt, and the Caribbean glare induced a sea-squint in his brown, curious eyes set behind steelrimmed spectacles. Most

of his ruddy face was retired behind a clipped, white, patriarchal beard that gave him a bristled, Neptuneian look. His leg muscles could have been halves of a split 16-lb. shot, welded there by years tramping in Michigan, skiing in Switzerland, bullfighting in Spain, walking battlefronts and hiking uncounted miles of African savari. On his lap he held a board, and he bent over it with a pencil in one hand. He was still whittling away at his walnut prose.

Five thousand miles away in Stockholm, a white-starched, tail-coated assembly of the Nobel Foundation was about to bestow literature's most distinguished accolade on the products of his pencil. Then, "for his powerful, style-forming mastery of the art of modern narration," the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Ernest Miller Hemingway, originally of Oak Park, Ill. and later of most of the world's grand and adventurous places.

Storyteller

Few would deny that Ernest Hemingway deserves the trumpets of fame. As an artist he broke the bounds of American writing, enriched U.S. literature with the century's hardest-hitting prose, and showed new ways to new generations of writers. He was imitated not only by other writers but by uncounted young men who, in fact or fancy, sought to live as dashing as he. From Paris bistros to Chicago saloons, he is known as a character — not the fallow, writing type with an indoor soul, but a literary he-man. When his plane crashed on safari in Africa one winter and for nearly a day he was believed dead, even people who do not like his books felt a strange, personal sense of loss, and even people who never read novels were delighted when he walked out of the jungle carrying a bunch of bananas and a bottle of gin, and was quoted, possibly even correctly, as saying: "My luck, she is running very good."

The hero of the great Hemingway legend was still not sufficiently recovered from his accident to travel to Stockholm for his latest, biggest honor (hitherto awarded only to five other American-born writers: Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, Pearl Buck, T. S. Eliot and William Faulkner). Furthermore, the first announcement of the Nobel award and the bustle of publicity that followed had thrown Hemingway off his writing pace. He took to his boat in hopes of getting back to work on his new novel about Africa. "I was going real good, better than for a long time, when this came along," he said. "When you're a writer and you've got it you've got to keep going because when you've lost it you've lost it and God knows when you'll get it back."

Hemingway's African injuries were a ruptured kidney, bad burns, cracked skull, two compressed vertebrae and one vertebra cracked clear through.

These were added to scars that cover perhaps half his body surface, including half a dozen head wounds, 237 shrapnel scars in one leg, a shot-off kneecap, wounds in both feet, both arms, both hands and groin, all acquired in the two World Wars. In a few weeks he was much improved, but his back was still bothering him. When he sat, he lined his chair with big flat picture books and a backboard. "I have to take so many pills," he said, "they have to fight among themselves if I take them too close together." His daily quota of alcohol, though still substantial enough to keep him in good standing among the all-time public enemies of the W. C. T. U., had fallen far below the old records. Gone were the uninhibited wine-purpled, 100-proof, side-of-the-mouth bottle-swigging days of the swashbuckling young Ernest Hemingway who was "the bronze god of the whole literary experience in America," the lionhunting, trophy-bagging, bullfight-loving Lord Byron of America. "I'm a little beat up," Ernest Hemingway now admits, "but I assure you it is only temporary."

EVEN THOUGH held in by injury and age, Hemingway's life — on a small plantation ten miles outside Havana, called *Finca Vigia*, or Lookout

Farm—is still the special Hemingway blend of thought and action, artistry and nonconformity. The Hemingway of 1954 still has a bit of himself for the many sides of his life—and plenty left over to populate that private Hemingway world where the Hemingway heroes and heroines live their lives of pride and trouble enduring with courage as long as they can, often destroyed but never defeated.

For Ernest Hemingway, when he is writing, every day begins at 5:30 in the morning, before any but some gabby bantams, a few insomniac cats and a cantankerous bird called "The Bitchy Owl" are awake, he goes to work in the big main bedroom of his villa. He writes standing up at the mantelpiece, using pencil for narrative and description, a typewriter for dialogue "in order to keep up."

Rising up from one side of his villa is a white tower from which he can gaze meditatively at Havana and the sea, or at his own domain—the *finca's* 13 acres, including flower and truck gardens, fruit trees, seven cows (which provide all the house-hold's milk and butter), a large swimming pool, a temporarily defunct tennis court. In the 60-foot-long living room, heads of animals Hemingway shot in Africa stare glassy-eyed

rom the walls. But most imposing of all are Hemingway's books. He consumes books, newspapers and random printed matter the way a big fish gulps in plankton. One of the few top American writers alive who did not go to college, Hemingway read Darwin when he was ten, later taught himself Spanish so he could read *Don Quixote* and the bullfight journals. Hemingway has never slept well, and reading is his substitute. *Finca Vigia* holds 4,859 volumes of fiction, poetry, history, military manuals, biography, music, natural history, sports, foreign-language grammars and cookbooks.

FOR 15 YEARS Hemingway has lived in Cuba. "I live here because I love Cuba—this does not imply a dislike for any place else—and because here I can get privacy when I write." But his life in Cuba is not quiet. Guests at the *finca* are apt to include friends from the wealthy sporting set, say Winston Guest or Alfred Gwynne Vanderbilt; pals from Hollywood, such as Gary Cooper or Ava Gardner; Spanish grandees, soldier, sailors, Cuban politicians, prizefighters, barkeepers, painters and even fellow authors. It is open house for U.S. Air Force and Navy men, old Loyalists from the Spanish civil war, or for any

of the eight Cubans, Spaniards and Americans who served with Hemingway on his boat, the *Pilar*, early in World War II when Hemingway and the *Pilar* cruised the Caribbean hunting for enemy submarines. And even if there are no guests, there is always the long-distance phone, which may carry the husky voice of Marlene Dietrich, calling to talk over a problem with "Papa."

For Mary Welsh Hemingway, 46, an indefatigable former newspaper and magazine correspondent from Minnesota, it is a fortunate day when she can reckon by 7 p.m. how many are staying for dinner and by 12 how many for the night. Life at *Finca Vigia* is, as she once reported it, a "perpetual weekend . . . involving time, space, motion, noise, animals and personalities, always approaching but seldom actually attaining complete uproar."

In the past, when the routine at *Finca Vigia* grew too distracting, Hemingway found escape along grand avenues—a return to the plains below Tanganyika's Kilimanjaro or another trip to Venice, or a night-club-and-museum-crawling trip to New York. But for the battered and mellowing Hemingway of today, the favorite refuge is his boat.

ON A SEAGOING DAY (his first after winning the Nobel Prize), Hemingway's big Buick station wagon bounces through two Chrysler engines, built to the suburbs along the Havana wharfsides by 9 a.m. The *Pilar* is a hardy, 42-foot craft with Hemingway's specifications 20 years ago. Hemingway carefully supervises the provisioning of the *Pilar's* iceboxes for a hot day afloat—several brands of beer for his guests and the mate, some tequila for Skipper Hemingway. He consults with his mate, an agile, creased Canary Islander named Gregorio Fuentes. Then Hemingway shucks off his shoes and socks, chins himself on the edge of *Pilar's* flying bridge, throws one leg up, and, favoring his sore back, slowly raises himself to the roof to take the set of controls. The *Pilar* glides trimly past Morro Castle. Hemingway delightedly sniffs the sea-grape-scented air and gestures to the whole ocean. "It's the last free place there is, the sea."

Gregorio deftly baits four lines and trails them from the stern. In fluid Spanish, Hemingway and the mate decide to fish the waters off Cojimar, the little fishing village near which Hemingway set *The Old Man and the Sea*.

The air and the baking sun make him feel good. In the

sea haze, from the blue water, amid the occasional flying fish, ideas seem to appear—Hemingway notions about how things are. "When a writer retires deliberately from life, or is forced out of it by some defect, his writing has a tendency to atrophy just like a limb of a man when it's not used." He slaps his growing midriff, which in his enforced idleness, is spreading fore and aft. "Anyone who's had the fortune or misfortune to be an athlete has to keep his body in shape. I think body and mind are closely coordinated. Fattening of the body can lead to fattening of the mind. I would be tempted to say that it can lead to fattening of the soul, but I don't know anything about the soul."

IN A SENSE, Hemingway perhaps never fully faced up to the concept of soul in his writing. Religion is a subject he refuses to discuss at all. He is equally ill at ease in the world of the ruminative intellectual. But he recognizes that in that world there is much worth knowing. In the bright sun, Hemingway recalls the s'ut-in figure of Marcel Proust. "Because a man sees the world in a different way and sees more diverse parts of the world does not make him the equal

of a man like Marcel Proust," says Hemingway humbly. "Proust knew deeper and better than anyone the life of which he wrote."

Suddenly Gregorio cries out: "Feesh! Papa, feesh!"

Proust is gone. Hemingway reaches down, grabs one of the rods by its tip and pulls it to the roof. He jerks once to set the hook, then with slow, graceful movements he pumps the rod back, reels a few feet, pumps, reels. To protect his back, he lets his arms and one leg do the work. By the shivery feel on the line he can identify the catch. "Bonito," he tells Gregorio, "Good bonito." With smooth speed, he works the fish close to the stern. Gregorio grabs the wire leader and boats a blue-and-silver bonito of about 15 pounds. A broad, small-boy smile flashes through Hemingway's old-man whiskers. "Good," he says. "A fish on the boat before 10:30 is a good sign. Very good sign."

Gregorio takes the wheel and Hemingway lets himself down to the deck and sits down. His voice has an ordinary sound, but high-pitched for the big frame that produces it. For all his years away from his root-land, he speaks with an unmistakable Midwestern twang. Absentmindedly he rubs a star-shaped scar near his right foot, one of the scars left by mortar shell which gravely wounded

him at Fossalta, Italy, in 1918 when he was a volunteer ambulance driver. Nick Adams, hero of many of Hemingway's short stories, was wounded at approximately the same place in much the same way. So was Lieut. Henry of *A Farewell to Arms*; so was Colonel Cantwell of *Across the River and Into the Trees*. A critic named Philip Young last year published a book attributing Hemingway's approach to life and his artistic creation mostly to the Fossalta wounding (plus some brash sights witnessed when he was a boy in Michigan traveling with his doctor father on emergency calls). Hemingway does not think very highly of that book. "How would you like it if someone said that everything you've done in your life was done because of some trauma?" he says. "I don't want to go down as the Legs Diamond of Letters."

IN THE PAST, hardly anyone ever suspected Hemingway novels of symbolism. Then, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, people saw symbols — the old man stood for man's dignity, the big fish embodied nature, the shark's symbolized evil (or maybe just the critics).

"No good book has ever been written that has in its symbols arrived at before hand and stuck in," says Hemingway.

"That kind of symbol sticks out like raisins in raisin bread. Raisin bread is all right, but plain bread is better." He opens two bottles of beer and continues: "I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things is to make something really true and sometimes truer than true."

He looks ahead at some floating sargasso weed, where some flying fishes are skittering through the air. "Could be fish there," he says. A reel gives out a soft whine, and Hemingway goes into action again. "Beautiful!" he cries. "Dolphin. They're beautiful." After landing his fish, shimmering blue, gold and green, Hemingway turns his attention to his guests. "Take him softly now," he croons. "Easy, Easy. Work him with style. That's it, up slowly with the rod, now reel infast. *Suave*. With style. With style. Don't break his mouth." After the second fish at last flops onto the deck, Hemingway continues his reflections. "The right way to do it—style — is not just an idle concept," he says. "It is simply the way to get done what is supposed to be done. The fact that the right way also looks beautiful when it's done is just incidental."

This feeling about style, perhaps more than anything else, has always been Hemingway's credo—whether it concerned the right way to kill a bull, track a wild beast, serve Valpolicella or blow up a bridge. And it was usually the redeeming feature and ultimate triumph of his characters: they might die, but they died with style. They left behind them some aura of virtue, nose defiant statement of this-is-the-way-it-should-be-done that amounted to a victory of sorts.

THE MATTER OF STYLE reminds Hemingway of many things, things, including his Nobel Prize. He knows just what he would like to say if he went to Stockholm for the acceptance ceremony. He would like to talk about a half-forgotten poet and great stylist—Ezra Pound. Poet Pound used to look over Hemingway's early manuscripts in Paris and returned them, mercifully blue-penciled, the adjectives gone. Indicted for treason for his pro-Fascist broadcasts in Italy during World War II, Pound was declared "mentally incompetent" in 1946 and confined in Washington's St. Elizabeth's Hospital. "Ezra Pound is a great poet," says Hemingway fiercely, "and whatever he did he has been punished greatly and I believe should be freed to go and

write poems in Italy where he is loved and understood. He was the master of T. S. Eliot. Eliot is a winner of the Nobel Prize. I believe it might well have gone to Pound . . . I believe this would be a good year to release poets. There is a school of thought in America which, if encouraged far enough, could well believe that a man should be punished for the simple error against conformity of being a poet. Dante, by these standards, could well have spent his life in St. Elizabeth's Hospital for errors or judgment and of pride."

Alongside the *Pilar*, the bait bobbing and Dante gives way to the dolphins. In little time the *Pilar* boasts 15 beauties. Excited as a boy, Hemingway overlooks a promise to quit early and take a late afternoon nap. Not until almost dusk does the boat put in to harbor. The sun seems to be setting only a few yards off a corner of Havana, four miles distant, and Hemingway savors it as if it were his first sunset—or his last. "Look!" he exclaims. "Now watch it go down, and then you'll see big green ball where it was." The sun falls as if jerked below the horizon, and for a long instant a big green, sun-sized ball hangs in its place.

As the *Pilar* turns the harbor mouth, Hemingway takes the controls. Ceremonially, Gre-

gorio the mate hands up to him what remains of the tequila and a freshcut half of lime. Hemingway does not actually drink the tequila, and the whole thing bears the appearance of a ritual, as if to ward off sea serpents. Only at the dock does he pass around the bottle. "We went out and had a good day and caught plenty fish and got pooped," he says. "Now we can relax for a while and talk and go to sleep." With a tired smile on his tired, grizzled face, he lumbers up the gangway and off to his car and home.

T IRED OR NOT, Hemingway is a man who likes to relax with memories. Once, he remembers, there was a battered old prizefighter in Key West who wanted to make a comeback and asked Hemingway to referee. "It was a Negro section," Hemingway recalls, "and they really introduced me in the ring: 'The referee for tonight's bouts, that world-famous millionaire sportsman and playboy, Mr. Ernest Hemingway! Playboy was the greatest title they thought they could give a man who has heard plaudits like that?'"

While Hemingway was perhaps never a millionaire, the playboy title often fitted him. Oak Park, Ill. (pop. 63,529) saw the earliest Hemingway—the versatile, out-doors-loving

son of respected Dr. and Mrs. Clarence E. Hemingway. Later Oak Park's people wondered, as one of them put it, "how a boy brought up in Christian and Puritan nurture should know and write so well of the devil and the underworld." (He was born a Congregationalist, became a practicing Roman Catholic, now apparently does not go to church). The city room of the Kansas City *Star* saw him fresh out of high school and itchy for excitement. He left after only seven months of covering "the short-stop run"—police, railroad station, hospital. He lied about his age (18) to join the Red Cross ambulance service. Soon, postcards came back from the Italian front. "Having a wonderful time," they said.

The Hemingway who first stepped into Gertrude Stein's salon in postwar Paris was 22, "rather foreign looking, with passionately interested, rather than interesting eyes." But the Hemingway she remembered later, after they had parted company, was "yellow . . . just like the flatboat men on the Mississippi River as described by Mark Twain."

In his Paris days, he often refused good newspaper assignments and lunched on five sous' worth of potatoes in order to write his stories his own

way. Even before any of his work was published (1923), word of Hemingway's fresh new talent floated like tobacco smoke through Paris' expatriate cafes and salons. He impressed and became friends with many of the literary greats of the day, including James Joyce. "Once, in one of those casual conversations you have when you're drinking," recalls Hemingway, "Joyce said to me he was afraid his writing was too suburban and that maybe he should get around a bit and see the world. He was afraid of some things, lightning and things, but a wonderful man. He was under great discipline—his wife, his work and his bad eyes. His wife was there and she said, yes, his work was too suburban—'Jim could do with a spot of that lion hunting.' We would go out to drink and Joyce would fall into a fight. He couldn't even see the man so he'd say, 'Deal with him, Hemingway! Deal with him!'"

The Hemingway of the late 1920s, prosperous and confident, dealt successfully with all comers. But he had his troubles. His first marriage to Hadley Richardson of St. Louis, broke up in 1927, and his father committed suicide in 1928. Hemingway was later to marry two more St. Louisans: *Vogue* Writer Pauline Pfeiffer

(1927) and Novelist Martha Gellhorn (1940). From his first marriage he has one son, John ("Bumby"), 32, a World War II soldier and OSS man who is now in a Portland, Ore. investment house. From his second he has two more sons, Patrick, 24, who has bought a plantation in Tanganyika, and Gregory, 22, who is completing premedical studies in Los Angeles.

THE HEMINGWAY OF *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) was passionate about bulls, matadors, violence and the art of risking death. Max Eastman, the pundit and critic, wrote in *Bull in the Afternoon* that Hemingway seemed to have "begotten . . . a literary style . . . of wearing false hair on the chest." One afternoon three years later, 54-year-old, relatively unhirsute Max Eastman was confronted in Scribner's New York office by bull-anxious, 38-year-old Hemingway, who ripped open his shirt to prove that the chest hair was real. The scene culminated in the notorious scuffle whose true outcome has long since vanished in the fog of subjective claims and counter-claims.

The Depression and the Spanish civil war produced the short-lived Political Hemingway. In *To Have and Have Not*, Hemingway's only full-

length novel with a U.S. setting, he sounded vaguely socialist. Some critics, particularly the Communists, grasped at the death of the novel's hero, Harry Morgan, because he died insisting that "a man alone ain't got no . . . chance." One critic saw in the book a plea for some form of social collectivism. Hemingway wore his heart on his sleeve for the Loyalists in Spain, but *For Whom the Bell Tolls* clearly showed his contempt for the Communists. They, in turn, denounced his books for being militaristic and lacking social significance.

The Hemingway of World War II wore a canteen of vermouth on one hip, a canteen of gin on the other, a helmet that he seldom used because he couldn't find one big enough. Accredited a foreign correspondent for *Collier's* (he jokingly called himself "Ernie Hemorrhoid, the poor man's Pyle"), he took part in more of the European war than many a soldier. With Colonel (now Major General) Charles T. Lanham's 22nd Infantry Regiment, he went through the Normandy breakthrough, Schnee Eifel, the Hurtgen Forest bloodletting and the defense of Luxembourg. Gathering 200 French irregulars around him, he negotiated huge allotments of ammunition and alcohol and assisted in the liberation of

Paris. Hemingway personally liberated the Ritz Hotel, posted a guard below to notify incoming friends: "Papa took good hotel. Plenty stuff in cellar."

THE POSTWAR HEMINGWAY settled into another good hotel, the Gritti in Venice, to write "the big book" about World War II (a draft is now finished). But a piece of gun wadding went into his eye during a duck hunt and started an infection that doctors feared was going to kill him. Wanting to get one more story out of himself, he put the big book aside and batted out *Across the River and Into the Trees*, which most critics found a middle-aged love fantasy with an admixture of bad-tempered military shoptalk. Said Hemingway about the critics: "I have moved through arithmetic, through plane geometry and algebra, and now I am in calculus. If they don't understand that, to hell with them."

It is impossible to overlook the adolescent in Hemingway—his bravado, his emotional friendships, his vague but all-important code, his deep sentimentality about the good, the true, the straight, the beautiful, and occasionally the unprintable. But to preserve something of the adolescent through three decades in a world of literary critics, parodizers and

cocktail-party highbrows takes a certain admirable courage. Above all, Hemingway can laugh at himself. Typical of Hemingway making fun of Hemingway is *El Ordine Militar, Nobile y Espirituoso de los Caballeros de Brusadelli*—which means, more or less, the Military Order of the Noble and Spirited Nights of Brusadelli. It was founded by Hemingway in Italy, and named, as he explains in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, "after a particularly notorious multi-millionaire taxpaying profiteer of Milan, who had . . . accused his young wife, publicly and legally through due process of law, of having deprived him of his judgment through her extraordinary sexual demands." As Commander of the Great Chain of the Order, Hemingway distributed knighthoods to friends; after his recovery he returned to Cuba, and mailed reports to fellow members. A sample written just after he had finished writing *The Old Man and the Sea*: "Your Cuban representative has not been able to do much for the Order in the last year due to the deplorable necessity of writing a book . . . The book will be published on Sept. 8th and all members of the Order will observe a moment of silence. The password will be: 'Don't cheer, boys. The poor readers are dying.'"

HOW DOES NOBEL Prizewinner Ernest Hemingway stand with his surviving readers? *The Sun Also Rises*, which offered an ironical thenody for the "lost generation," is today appealing mostly as a period piece. But even if Hemingway had stopped after the fine short stories written in the 1920s and *A Farewell to Arms*, he would have won a roomy place in American literature. Years later, when his style had become a fixture and when Hemingway prose occasionally dipped toward banality, the importance of the beginning was sometimes not considered. Much of his output of the '30s seems below par today, but *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) was one of his best, and in *The Old Man and the Sea* he is better than he ever was, more mature and less mannered. Unlike most American writers, who seemed inexplicably to wither after their triumphs (e.g., Sinclair Lewis, Joseph Hergesheimer, Thomas Wolfe), Ernest Hemingway has continued to grow.

Almost from the beginning, critics have talked about Hemingway's obsession with death, all the dark and clinical tear and bleeding on the battlefields, in the bull rings, in the lunchroom where *The Killers* wait, with gloves on, for their victims. Yet somehow, in an atomic age, Hemingway seems much less

macabre and violent than he did in the pacifist climate of the '30s. Hemingway still stands out from a pack of introspective and obscure writers with a dazzling simplicity, rarely politicking, never preaching, never using Freudian jargon.

Some, including 1949's Nobel Prizewinner William Faulkner, think that his world is too narrow. "(Hemingway) has no courage," Faulkner once said. "(He) has never been known to use a word that might cause the reader to check with a dictionary to see if it is properly used." Hemingway has indeed remained in the carefully delineated, cut-to-the-bone world of simple, palpable acts. But at his best, Hemingway has a sense of fate recalling Melville, an American heartiness recalling Mark Twain (who never used big dictionary words either). Hemingway can carve icebergs of prose; only a few words on paper convey much more beneath the surface. The taut, economical style contains more than meets the casual eye—the dignity of man and also his imperfection, the recognition that there is a right way and a wrong, the knowledge that the redeeming things of life are measured in the profound satisfactions that come from struggle. Said Dr. Anders Osteberg, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy, in Stockholm this week: "Courage

is Hemingway's central theme—the bearing of one who is put to the test and who steels himself to meet the cold cruelty of existence without, by so doing, repudiating the great and generous moments. . . .”

John Donne provided Hemingway with the title of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. “No man is an Island, intire of it selfe,” said Donne. Says Hemingway now: “A man both is and is not an island. Sometimes he has to be the strongest island there can be to be a part of the main. (I am not good at stating metaphysics in a conversation, but I thought Santiago (the Old Man) was never alone because he had his friend and enemy the sea and the things that lived in

the sea some of whom he loved and others that he hated.’ ’

His lifetime has brought Ernest Hemingway recognition, distinction and reward that only death and passage of time bring to many others. Hemingway is satisfied. He would not change any of his life or of his writings—anyway, “not yet.” He feels now as he did some years ago, and he is willing to rest on it: “You only have to do it once to get remembered by some people. But if you can do it year after year after year quite a lot of people remember and they tell their children and their children and their grandchildren remember, and if it's books they can read them. And if it's good enough it lasts forever.”

* * *