

Patrick Hemingway: The Legacy of Ernest Hemingway

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Patrick Hemingway *son of Ernest Hemingway*

Stanley Katz *president emeritus, US Council of Learned Societies*

<http://forum-network.org/lecture/conversation-patrick-hemingway>

Good afternoon.

On behalf of Paul Kirk,
Jill Ker Conway,
and John Shattuck, Chair, Vice Chair,
and CEO, respectively,
of the Kennedy Library Foundation,
and all of my Library colleagues,
I want to welcome you to
this very special Hemingway Forum.
I'm Tom Putnam,
the Library's Acting Director
and let me begin by thanking
all of you for coming,
and acknowledging the sponsors
of the Kennedy Library Forums,
including lead sponsor Bank of America,
Boston Capital, the Lowell Institute,
and Corcoran Jennison,
and our media sponsors,
WBUR, the Boston Globe and NECN.
Before I introduce today's speakers,
I want to recognize that we are joined
this afternoon by Deborah Leff,
the former Director
of the John F. Kennedy
Presidential Library and Museum.
This is her first return to
the Kennedy Library since becoming
the President of the Public Welfare
Foundation earlier this fall.
Were she still my boss,
I would likely not dare to acknowledge
her publicly,
for though she brought this institution
to unimaginable new heights,
she did so with modesty and grace.
One of Deborah's many passions
was to preserve and promote
the Hemingway Collection.
So Deborah, for that, and for all
of your hard work and accomplishments
to transform the Kennedy Library,
we thank you.

"When I was six in 1934,
Papa would take me up from
the Florida Keys to shoot shorebirds,
golden plovers and yellow bills.

They would fly in small flocks,
and make a whistling sound.
Papa would sit in the mangroves
and make a soft imitation of their call.
The birds would circle curiously,
and Papa would fire with
deadly accuracy. I was retriever."
So begins a 1968 article written
by Patrick Hemingway,
recounting his earliest
recollection of his father.
One of the treasures of
the Kennedy Library is
the Hemingway Collection,
the world's principal center for research
on the life and works of
the Nobel Prize winning author.
Ernest Hemingway was affectionately
known by many as Papa,
yet we are honoured to have with us
today the only person who can truly
call him by that name,
Patrick Hemingway,
Ernest's sole surviving son
and one of the only voices remaining
with firsthand knowledge of arguably the
20th century's greatest American writer.
Patrick Hemingway spent his boyhood
in Key West and because of what
he describes as "his fortuitous position
as number two son,"
spent a great deal of time with
his father during his later childhood
and adolescence.
He learned how to hunt game
at his father's side in Idaho
and to fish on Hemingway's boat,
the "Pilar."
In fact, had Patrick been born a girl,
his parents planned to name him,
not their boat, Pilar.
A graduate of Harvard,
Patrick lived most of his adult life
in East Africa,
working as a professional hunter,
safari guide, and instructor
in wildlife management.

“Hunting,” he once wrote,
“is the old religion, the one we
all believed in far away and long ago,
even before the last time
the ice melted and the sea rose.”
While in Tanzania, he was the only
family member to be near during
his father’s feared fatal
airplane crashes in 1954.
Earlier that year, he had accompanied
his father on a safari, the genesis
of the fictional memoir,
“True at First Light,” a previously
unpublished manuscript which Patrick
edited in the late 1990s,
bonding him once more again
to his father’s presence.
Patrick now lives in Montana
with his wife, Carol,
who is also here with us today.
In fact, it was from Carol that
I learned that the only question
that tends to irritate Patrick
is when people ask,
“Did you really know your father?”
A question that is especially irksome
given that Ernest Hemingway
was so keen on spending time
with his children.
Carefully avoiding this question,
and sure to ask more astute ones,
is our moderator, Professor Stanley Katz
of Princeton University,
and the President Emeritus of
the American Council of Learned Societies.
Professor Katz currently serves as
Chair of the Societies’
Social Science Research Council
Working Group on Cuba,
which is devoted to extending
and broadening scholarly relations
between Cuba and the United States,
and recently undertook
a collaborative project to preserve
over 3000 personal photographs,
2000 letters and several draft fragments
of novels and stories housed
at the Finca Vigia, Hemingway’s
former home outside of Havana.
The project will also create
digital images of these materials
which will then be housed here
at the Kennedy Library as well
as at the Hemingway Museum in Cuba.

All who care about preserving these
priceless Hemingway materials
are deeply indebted
to Professor Katz for this work.
And we’re so pleased that he is here
today to moderate this conversation.
If, like me, the notion of preserving
the papers and photos of Ernest Hemingway
makes your heart beat a flutter,
I hope you will consider becoming
a member of the Friends
of the Hemingway Collection.
There is information about
how to join on your chairs.
Your membership will help preserve
the collection and support programming
that examines American literature
and the creative process
as personified by Ernest Hemingway.
As is often the case with
such larger-than-life figures,
it can be difficult to separate
the public Ernest Hemingway
from his art.
And his literary achievements can,
at times, be overshadowed
by his mythic persona.
“The trouble about these myths,”
states Patrick in a recent interview
“is that they might keep people
from reading what he wrote.
And that writing has
been pretty incredible.”
So let me conclude with a passage
of Hemingway prose
from “Islands in the Stream.”
Like much of Hemingway’s fiction,
it is based loosely on the reality
of the author’s own life.
At the book’s opening,
the protagonist is preparing
for a visit from his three sons.
Here is the description of his
second child, which many believe
is based on Hemingway’s
observations of Patrick:
“The middle boy always reminded
his father of an otter, the sort
of animal that has a sound
and humorous life by itself.
Otters and bears are the animals
that joke most.
And bears, of course,
are very close to men.

This boy would never be wide enough
and strong enough to be a bear.
And he would never be an athlete,
nor did he want to be.
But he had a lovely,
small animal quality.
And he had a good mind
and a life of his own.
He was affectionate and he had
a good sense of justice,
and was good company.”
Patrick, on behalf of everyone here,
I thank you so much for coming.
We’re uniquely privileged to spend
this December afternoon in
your good company as you retrieve
for us memories, stories and insights
of the exceptional man
who was your father.
-Thank you very much.
- Thank you, Tom,
and thank you all for coming.
This is an unexpected pleasure for me.
I didn’t know until two days ago
that I was going to be doing this.
And I’m happy to do it.
It’s particularly a pleasure
because Ernest Hemingway—
I grew up in Chicago,
although not in Oak Park,
and I grew up like, I think, most young,
aspiring writers of my generation
to think that Ernest Hemingway
was America’s greatest writer.
I still think that his short stories
are the greatest works of literature
in our literary history.
But I had never met Patrick until
we had telephone conversations
about the Cuba project over
the last couple of years.
So I know what a rich store of insights
and anecdotes he has for us today.
And I wanted to begin,
simply by asking you—the audience
now has seen some of these
wonderful pictures of your youth,
and that of your brothers.
So the first question is really,
simply, when did you discover
and how did you discover
that you were a Hemingway?
- Pretty late.
I think most children, their

relationship with their families is,
you know, that they love
their parents very dearly.
They hate to see them leave the room,
really, or go out for a night.
But it came very late to me
what my father really was,
what his profession was.
He didn’t go to work
like most fathers did.
What he did was go to
a different section of the house
after breakfast, and was not
to be disturbed.
And so we were all very quiet.
And then, on his birthday,
we gave him yellow pad paper
that you got in the five and ten,
and pencils.
And the idea was that he would
write more so that
we would all live better.
But just what that amounted to,
I think, came very late for me,
probably even after
I got out of college.
Literature or writing or whatever
name you give to it,
is a very different art, I think,
from all the others, in that
its basic material is
just everyday speech.
And everyday speech is like
a public place:
full of dirt, papers,
bad smells.
And a writer has to take that language
which everybody uses and polish it up,
and push it out again so that it
really makes an impression.
And I did learn that finally
about Ernest Hemingway.
He was very good at this.
He could take those very shop-worn
dirty words and put them together
in a new way and shoot them out,
and not as so many times you read
that he wrote short, simple,
declarative sentences.
That is baloney.
Probably one of the finest paragraphs
in English prose is the opening
of “A Farewell to Arms.”
And that sentence is usually taught

in schools as being just very good indeed as per description.
And check how long it is.
I mean, like so many things, the writer becomes summed up in a few simple words and they're always wrong.
And I really recommend, if you like a writer, say, John Updike, get everything he wrote and then you can make up your mind about what he's like.
And it's very difficult because writers are—they change shape like an octopus, you know.
You see how an octopus is green, and then he's red, and then he's big, and then he's small.
A writer, in his lifetime, is all of us in every possible way we could be.
And so—
- Good. Well, let me follow on that and ask, then, what your sense was of the other writers who really mattered to your father.
- Yes. I really appreciate that question because I think that the main thing with writers is that they don't really live in the present.
They live in a world that goes back 2000 years, at least.
And everything they write is resonating with everything that was written before.
And I just – I know some of the writers that he really appreciated, he learned how to write short stories from Maupassant.
And it's a truism about everybody who writes in English that they learn how to write from reading French writers.
And, earlier on, they learn by reading Spanish writers because the person who invented modern literature as such was a Spaniard in Don Quixote, in my opinion, which isn't worth a great deal.
But that's at least the way I feel about it.
So I'd say Maupassant was his mentor in writing short stories.
I read a wonderful paper by an English scholar, not so long ago,

where he said that "For Whom the Bell Tolls" owed a lot to Stendhal.
And I think that was a very good insight.
As for style, I think W.H. Hudson, which he mentions early on in "the sun Also Rises," Robert Cohn has read – not "Green Mansions" but— I can't remember the -- "The Purple Land" and he wants to go to South America and live that life.
And, of course, Jake says, you know, not much chance of that sort of thing.
But W.H. Hudson was a largely forgotten writer today.
He wrote two works that you can still buy, "Green Mansions" and "The Purple Land."
"Green Mansions" was made into a movie quite a few years back.
But, it's funny.
This is an illustration of what. Salman Rushdie wrote a book called "The Satanic Verses" which created quite a stir.
We're feeling the repercussions of it even today.
And the one person he mentions in "The Satanic Verses" from the West is W.H. Hudson.
And W.H. Hudson, in – I can't remember whether it's "Idle Days in Patagonia" – "Far Away and Long ago" is the one, absolute, hardnosed statement that we have one and only life, and that there is nothing after death.
And that is unique in English literature.
And Rushdie refers to it.
So you have these little indexes or evidence that writers live in this 2000-year-old world.
And they are not writing for their contemporaries because their contemporaries don't count.
Whether they're admired or disliked by their contemporaries means nothing to them at all, anymore than it means to a mathematician whether he has proved, once and for all, that something is true in

the sense of a mathematical proof.
- But Pat, I think contemporary writers do matter sometimes negatively.
And I think your father had a lot of reactions to other American writers.
But I want to go all the way back because you intrigued me last night by mentioning Pound, Ezra Pound.
-Yes.
- Can you tell us about that?
- He was extremely fond of Ezra Pound as a mentor, as a teacher, as a person who taught him things that he never knew before.
And Ezra Pound has a terrible reputation as an anti-Semite, as a believer in fascism, and so forth and so on.
But as a poet, he's still respected by other poets who, I think, probably have to respect him in the privacy of their own rooms.
But Ezra Pound, when it comes to literature, was sound.
And I know my dad, who along with other people in the literary establishment, worked very hard to get him out of the mental institution which he had been confined as an alternate to hanging.
He did not believe in Ezra Pound's politics but he did really believe in his insight into literature.
-And it was the poetry that he was--
-Yes. And my dad always said, you know, that he wished he could write poetry.
And he did write some.
And it isn't very good, I guess.
The only one that I remember which, I think, is good, he said, "Never trust a publisher or you'll sleep on straw."
That was a poem.
You know, he's often criticized as a man who was incapable of sustained friendship.
And I quote this as an example which was sustained.
-Yeah. Did they know one another personally?
-Oh, very much.
They were tennis friends in Paris.
Neither one of them was very good

but they used to play tennis together.
My dad helped Ezra Pound in his publication of a literary magazine where the author of "The Waste Land" was the star.
And my dad really always referred to him as the Reverend Eliot.
- That's great.
What about Scott Fitzgerald?
- Yeah. The relationship with Scott Fitzgerald was competitive, and very competitive, indeed.
And, you know, my dad had a great love of the Ritz Hotel.
And he, you know, I think, first probably became aware of the Ritz Hotel by being taken there by Scott Fitzgerald.
But anyway, you'll find in a later work he's in a conversation with the barman at the Ritz Hotel.
And the barman says, "Who was this Fitzgerald that all the Americans ask me about?"
So I think that it's hard to say, you know, I mean the nicest thing he said about Fitzgerald was he was like a butterfly.
You know, he didn't know how good he was.
And then, of course, he was soon injured and wiped out.
And, of course, we all know that "The Great Gatsby" is the great American novel.
That's an established fact all right.
Whether it's on an equal with the great Russian novel is another story but it is the great American novel so that's the truth.
- What kind of reader was your father?
Some of you have been to the Finca in Havana and we've seen the 7000 volumes that were, at that point, in his personal library.
And clearly, he was a voracious reader.
But did he read, for instance, contemporary fiction?
Not all writers do.
- Yes, he did.
And he very much admired Faulkner, especially when they were both younger, and they were both more

experimental perhaps.
I remember puzzling over two books
in the library in Key West before Cuba.
One was called "Pylon"
and the other "Mosquitoes."
And I thought, "What are these
books about?" I read them,
you know and I was about 12,
I guess.
And now, when I read "Mosquitoes"
and "Pylon" I'm very impressed.
There was a -- I think his relationship
with Faulkner was more of an equal.
He always, for some reason,
patronized Fitzgerald,
but not Faulkner.
Faulkner was a real rival.
I mean, he had to watch over
his shoulder for what
was going to happen.
- He was not particularly—
he said that Faulkner
was too onomatopoeic.
- I see. Okay, very good.
- I think he called it
"onomatopoeia county."
- It's because he, like we,
can't pronounce what it was.
Exactly. And that's really fascinating.
Did writers come to the house?
- Yes, they certainly did.
The writer that he had the
greatest social relationship with
was John Dos Passos.
And they were, throughout their lives,
friends. They then became estranged.
And I think, towards the very end
of their lives, they were
more friends again.
And John Dos Passos was
a charming man.
However, if you've seen the old movie
version of "Henry VIII"
with Charles Laughton,
to watch him eat was really a spectacle.
And, before he came to
visit in Key West, we would go out
and shoot shorebirds cause he loved
to eat shorebirds, which was illegal
by the way.
Anyway, the phrase was "We have
to get a lot of these birds because
Mr. Dos Passos could eat
the pants off a brass monkey."

And I still don't know what
that phrase means.
But that was one of his
strong literary friends.
And he was also at one time,
I think, very close to the poet.
He was Librarian of Congress
for a while --
- MacLeish?
- Yes.
- Archibald MacLeish.
- In fact, my dad said, "Ah, Archie's
work with America was promise."
And Archie became Librarian of Congress.
- They seem to be an odd pair.
- Well, they were an odd pair
but they did, at one time,
were very close.
And it was MacLeish and my dad
who really pushed for Pound
being released from the asylum.
- Right. I remember that.
Well, tell us more about growing up.
What was it like to be in
the various households that you were in?
- Well, I must say one of the --
some of you have probably read
Nancy Mitford's "The Blessing"
and it's about a child who suddenly
is dealing with his parents who
are being divorced and his lifestyle
really improves.
I think, you know, if you --
I don't know -- have been lucky
enough or unfortunate enough
to come from a home where your parents
were sort of a musical chairs game,
you really don't suffer.
I think a lot of people say,
"Oh, it's terrible to come
from a broken home."
I must say, in my case, it was fantastic.
You got to keep all the successive
mothers because they always
want to keep up with you even
after they had left their husband.
And Martha Gellhorn
was a wonderful person.
Hadley Richardson, I only got to
know fairly late in life
but she was terrific.
And my stepmother, Mary, the last one,
I really liked.
In fact, I sometimes felt I was

being disloyal to my own mother.
You know, I thought, "Why am I—"
But it's not a terrible thing anymore.
And I hope that children that have
this experience realize that
it's probably an advantage to learn
that you're not the unique person
for your two parents, you know,
that there are -- that you have to
prove yourself in a larger sphere.
And so I really don't hold
any grudges on that one.
- Well, did your father
work at making that
happen or did it just happen?
- Oh yes. No, no, he worked at it.
He was a very good parent.
I mean I don't want to be
hypocritical about this.
You know, any son and any father
are going to have times
when there is a conflict.
And I think the most difficult thing
that my dad ever said to me,
he said "You know, Mouse,"
which was his nickname, he said,
"Mouse, you know, I'm the wolf
and you're the coyote."
And I thought "What does this mean?"
And I figured that what he meant
was that physically I wasn't as imposing
as him and I liked to think later that,
in certain respects,
there were more coyotes than wolves,
and that the coyote has really
done better in life.
And I think that what this
means is, a wolf is a symbol.
You know, we've gotten very
involved with wolves in the West.
People love them. They hate them.
They're a symbol of something.
And they're very important.
Coyotes, not so important,
you know, I mean they're very important
to American-Indian lore and so forth,
clever coyote, but there's something
about a wolf that's unique.
I mean, you know, a wolf is a wolf.
So, I mean, that sums up
the relationship between us, really.
- Well, you're on to animals now,
so let's talk about animals.
Animals were very important

in your father's life.
And they were very
important in your life.
Is there a relationship
between those two things?
- Yes, yes. And that goes back even
to another generation.
I never met, as a sentient being,
my grandfather on my father's side
but he was a person very much
interested in natural history,
as a doctor, you know, what in
those days was called
a shotgun naturalist.
You know, the animals you loved,
you shot and examined
them in closed quarters.
And his trick, which my father learned
and later taught to me,
was to make out of paper a cornucopia,
a cone for saving birds that
you collect as biological specimens.
And my dad caught this from his father
and he loved that aspect of things.
And, of course, I caught it from him
because he would take me when
he went out in the afternoon
to essentially just take a trip,
but always shoot if you could,
you know.
And I think it's good for children
to experience this in a way.
You see death, among other things,
in a way that isn't all that threatening.
You know, you just think,
"What's happened to this toy?"
It used to move around,
now it doesn't," sort of thing.
But basically, it turned out to be
the sustaining interest in my life.
I'm very interested in
that sort of thing and --
- Say a bit about how you get from
that point to being conservationist
or somebody interested in ecology
because it's not a necessary leap,
I think.
- Well, I think what happens to people;
they can come to nature
in various routes.
I happened to come to it through
the hunting and fishing route
but then you see something
which is marvelous.

It's like for some people to go to their first opera, like Madame Bovary when she went to her first opera. Right? And you see this marvelous thing and you've enjoyed it and you think "Is it possible to keep it or is it doomed?" Like, you know, in China, I don't know whether that's true in China today. But when people talked about China in the 19th century, they said that for whole areas of China, you did not see a single tree because the tree enabled the bird to roost in it. And the bird ate the grain. So you chopped down the tree, and prevented the bird from eating the grain. And that sort of attitude towards nature is even relevant in a golf course. A golf course is an insult against the natural environment because it is an artificial thing sustained with chemicals. It's not nature at all. So you get this feeling "How can this thing last?" And you think "Well, the only way it can last is for people to understand it and enjoy it." If something is too elitist, you lose it because people just don't know it's there. It's like they're tone deaf. So that's--

- What about safaris, though? I've always --

- Ah. Well, safaris was-- you know, I wasn't rich enough to pay for safaris, so I had to run them. And of course, when you run them, you have a lot more safaris than most people. And I must say I spent, what, seven or eight years of my life doing that and it was a fascinating thing and similar in some ways to the old days of sailing ships, you know, you were away in a ship. And my family, at least on my

father's side, is associated with the sea. I think they were originally from Yorkshire, from that part. And I have an ancestor who sailed his own brig around the horn to California, and so forth. I don't know whether he sailed around the horn or sold it in the Isthmus of Panama but it went across that way. But the safari life, certainly in the Golden Age, which I consider the end of World War II to about 1965, was a wonderful thing. I enjoy people. And you were stuck with people for a month, you know, and the reason they were there is they paid to go, you know, and you never knew quite what to expect. I had some wonderful clients. One was the lawyer for Rita Hayworth's divorce from Aly Khan. And he got off the plane, you know, you'd go to meet people and he came off the plane, and there was a lady with him and I said, "Oh, I'm so pleased to meet you, Mrs. so and so." And he turned to me, he said, "No, not Mrs. so and so, Miss so and so." And so here was a guy who was a number one divorce lawyer coming with his secretary on safari. And this was a man who wanted to live dangerously.

- You lived in Africa for a long time. And I assume that -- you just described the end of that era as being around 1965 so I assume that safaris got mugged by decolonization.

- No, they still go on. It's just that when people went with me, it was \$100 a day. It's now \$10,000 a day. That's the change. But they still do it, yes, oh yes.

- They still are.

- Especially Tanzania. What has changed, I do think, is that we used to go—

we were self-contained with tents and everything and we'd travel around to different areas. Now, most people go to a single lodge and hunt out from that one place.

- Okay. But in general, what-- you were in Africa for quite a long time.

- Oh, yes.

- Twenty-five years, something like that.

- As my aunt said about the two rats, so one says to the other "Enough with the cheese, let's get out of the trap."

- I see.

- And, you know, I was in Africa too long. I mean Africa, for the Africans, okay. I mean it is a wonderful place. And perhaps, in South Africa, there is some possibility of a multiracial society. That, of course, was the ideal of the colonialists; I mean a multiracial society with the whites on top, and the Indians in the middle, and the blacks on the bottom. I think that-- I'm very grateful that I was able to spend that much time there. And I did work, towards the end, to try and hand over things. I mean, I taught in a school where we trained African game wardens.

- Sure. What was it that drew your father to Africa?

- Teddy Roosevelt, probably. Africa played a big part in the mystique of Teddy Roosevelt. If you go to the American Museum of Natural History in New York, Teddy Roosevelt is leading the people through the-- and it was essentially "boy's own paper" sort of world. But this has a big influence in later life. I mean, I think the reason I went to Africa was all the things that my parents brought back from there, you know, lion skins and all this. One thing stuck in my memory was that on the equator, it was still possible to have ice in the wash-up bowl in the morning.

And I thought, "That's strange. Isn't the equator supposed to be hot?" And it's funny; people make such a thing of seeing Kilimanjaro with snow on the top. But the Spaniards saw that mountain in Columbia, isn't it or is it Venezuela -- that goes up-- It's almost as high as Kilimanjaro.

- I'm not sure. Somebody will know.

- 19,000 feet or something.

And, of course, they brought back that news to Spain in 1527 or something; that you could have snow on the equator, was known for a long time. And it's comparable to the fact that the Spaniards knew about treating malaria with quinine. It's called after the Marquesa de Chinchas, who was the wife of the Viceroy of Peru in 1620 or something and she recovered miraculously from a bout of fever because of this Indian remedy. It took 250 years for it to penetrate the Anglo-Saxon world.

- Another in Latin America, what about Cuba?

Did you spend much time with your father in Cuba?

- Early on, yes. I left -- didn't spend any time in Cuba after 1950 or '51, I'm not sure which.

But up until that, yes, I spent a lot of time. We spent half our vacations there from school, because we were schoolboys by the time he went there. And I really love where he lived there. It was nicer, I think, when he first moved there because it hadn't been built up so much around. Towards the end, it became a little bit like Alexander Hamilton's home in New York. It's a little bit disappointing when you go there today.

- Did you go out fishing in the "Pilar" and --

- Oh, yes. And, of course, big game fishing in the "Pilar" was a spectator sport. You know, we were too young

to engage these monsters of the deep, you know, but it made an impression, I mean, in the early days, big game fishing was being developed as a sport, not as-- now, it's a commercial thing. And tuna were being caught in small boats off the New England coast, and even up in Nova Scotia and further north. And the tuna there were feeding on wonderful food, you know, and they were really fat. And they -- what happened is you'd hook them, and they'd dive and die because they were out of condition. Right. And then you had a long haul to pull them to the surface. When they got down to Bimini, they were lean and mean. And it was very difficult to catch them without sharks getting them first. And my dad was the first person to catch one. And the reason was that he was very aggressive. And I remember one fight that he had with a tuna that was actually witnessed by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings who was another Scribner author. And Max Perkins was always wanting his authors to learn to love each other, you know, and he'd arrange for her to go over and she wrote a description of this fight which is available. And, as I remember, my dad lost, I think it was 15 pounds in that fight from loss of fluid, you know. And it was six hours, six continuous hours. So that was the "Pilar." It was a spectator-- like going to the fights, you know. - That's great. Let me just ask one final question, and then we want to allow the audience to ask some questions here. You mentioned at lunch, we were talking a bit about your father and public relations, I guess I would say.

And the question is the obvious one, that is, to what extent was he responsible for the image of Hemingway? - And this, I think, lies at the primary core of the appreciation of Hemingway. I think it became finally a very bad thing. I mean he became such a public image that it tended to distract from the fact that he could actually write but it started with his publisher. When "A Farewell to Arms" came out, they more or less, in their press releases gave the impression that this was Hemingway. That Hemingway had fought in the retreat from Caporetto. That he'd made a separate peace with the nurse in Switzerland, and so on and so on. And I think my dad was very annoyed and he actually had some harsh words with Scribner but I think then he realized, well, this is going to happen and it's better that he formed it than the Scribner's for which he had no respect in this respect. So he started to work very hard on this image. And he formed it. And I think it became very bad in the long run. Because the truth is, when you read Hemingway, it's not what you think. It's not a big, macho man. That's not what it's about. He wrote some of the most sensitive stories about marriage, for instance, about almost everything. And it's not-- it really isn't this macho thing. I mean people always want a symbol that they can loathe, you know, a Guy Fawkes. And you know, I'm a special arguer but everybody in this room, if you go back; make an effort to read like "A Canary for One" is a good one to read. And, what else? I mean my memory is-- - Let me ask you this question.

If you had to recommend to someone who had never read a word, what book or story would you recommend that--
- I agree with you 100%, the short stories are Hemingway's masterpiece, no question about it; he was one of the truly great practitioners of the short story. His publishers wanted him to write novels because that's where the money is. And I think he was a good novelist but the short stories, you don't have to apologize or make any excuses for that.
- Okay. Good. All right.
Well let's first thank Patrick for this.
And then we have microphones in each aisle. So if people would like to ask questions, if you would line up behind the mics. And can I ask that when you do, if you would identify yourself, and ask a question rather than make a statement please.
- My name is Irving Smolens. I live in Melrose, Massachusetts. And I was a member of the 4th Infantry Division, with which Ernest Hemingway spent a great deal of time. And when you mentioned the fact that you used to give him yellow legal pads to write on, it reminded me that in the collection upstairs, there is a letter that he wrote on a yellow legal pad. And he had scribbled notations beside the writing. So you must be familiar with him doing that sort of thing. Anyway, it had to do with an incident that happened during World War II in Rambouillet which is outside of Paris. He had been accused of taking off his correspondent's ? and picking up a pistol or a weapon of some kind, and fighting with the FFI, the French Forces of the Interior.

And the Adjutant General at that time had instituted an investigation to find out if that was actually true. So he interviewed-- they sent a representative, they interviewed your dad, and he denied it. A number of years later, I think it was in 1952, the Adjutant General decided to reinvestigate the case. So they hired a retired judge to contact Ernest, and ask him if what had happened was actually the way he had described it when he was first interviewed. And he wrote this letter and said he had lied, that actually he had done what he had been accused of doing. But he lied because, not so much for himself, but he wanted to keep Buck Lanham his close friend, who was the Colonel who commanded the 22nd Regiment, and Ray Barton who was my Commanding General. So that letter is up there. And John Stewart, who used to be the Education Director here, made a copy of it for me. And I made a copy of-- I sent the copy that John Stewart made for me to our 4th Infantry Division Museum down in Fort Hood so that they would have a record of it. But the other thing is my last Battery Commander, on the way to Paris, had spotted your father with Robert Capa and their jeep driver. They were standing outside of the jeep and he snapped a picture of him. And he sent me a copy of the picture and I have it in my computer. And I made a copy and I brought it so that I could give it to you because I had previously made a copy and presented it to the Library. So that copy and my copy, and my Battery Commander—the only copies available and I'm giving this to you.
- Oh, thank you.
- And this is a reference to him, to your dad, that I read.
- Thanks very much.
- I'd like to just comment briefly

before the next question on this because this was a really important episode in my dad's life.

His relationship with the 4th Division and all the people in it was just, I don't know, it was a high point in his life to see how well the American soldier performed in the war against Germany.

It took him back to the Civil War, you know, he thought, "We're really something."

- That's great. Excuse me. Please.

- My name is Kumu Gupta and I write poems.

And I just had a question that—

What was it like, I mean, how did being the son of, you know, Mr. Hemingway, how did it influence your growing up, and shape your life as it is today?

- Well, you know, I think everybody's life is shaped by their parents, unquestionably so, for good or bad.

And in my case, it made me a very satisfied person.

I was satisfied very early in life.

And so I've had a very happy life.

And I have to say that that happy life was due to both my mother and father.

- Thank you. Sir.

- My name is Sean Rurk.

I'm doing a biography of your father's friend,

Evan Shipman who was a poet, a journalist, and a horseman.

- Absolutely.

- And, about two years ago, Bob Risch, who lives about two miles from here, published an article in "Hemingway Review" in which he quoted you about the time you and Uncle Evan took care of the horses.

Have you any idea when that was?

And can you tell about the circumstances?

- Well, I'm not so sure

I can confirm this.

The story I remember about Evan Shipman was his taking

some horses across the Atlantic.

And, you know, the heating facilities were very inadequate

and he was worried.

You know, they flew at high altitude and he was afraid these horses were going to die.

And he was, you know,

I just remember him talking about that.

It might be my older brother who, you know, Mr. Shipman coached.

He wasn't doing too well in mathematics and Evan Shipman coached him in mathematics.

I don't think it was his strong subject either.

- It was. He is a bookmaker.

- Absolutely. Absolutely.

That he was able to survive all those years betting on the horses is a sign he knew something about probability.

- Thank you.

- Thank you.

- Yes, hello. My name is Pat Healey, and I'm a writer.

I have a question because you mentioned Max Perkins and I noticed him on the list of people that your dad knew.

Well, would you happen to remember Max Perkins was also an editor for Thomas Wolf.--

- Oh, yes. Yes, of course.

- And I was wondering, did your dad—

He happens to be one of my favourite writers, Thomas Wolfe.

Did your dad ever mention knowing him?

They would have been contemporaries.

And if Max Perkins introduced his writers around, they might have known each other.

- Oh, yes. I don't remember him,

for instance, ever coming, you know, to Key West or to Cuba.

Well, I don't know whether he was still alive when my—

- He died very young.

- He died young.

- He died in 1938.

- But yes, my dad had a lot to do, through Perkins, with him.

I mean, I couldn't tell you really much about this because

it was professional stuff, you know,

and they didn't talk to me about that,

you know, I was eight or nine years old

but I do know Max Perkins was

so fond of both those men.
Tom Wolfe, now, is a different person.
So you say Tom and Wolfe,
and they don't know who you're talking
about but "Look Homeward,
Angel" was that right?
- Yes, that's right.
- He was a writer, unlike my father,
who needed editing.
You know Maxwell Perkins
never edited Hemingway,
actually but he sure did edit Wolfe
and the result was very felicitous.
You really like him, don't you?
- Oh I loved him as a child
and I never --
- No, that's-- I can certainly confirm
that they knew each other.
It wasn't like with Dos Passos
where he came and stayed at the house.
- Right.
They would have been the same age.
Tomas Wolfe was born 1900
but he died at 38 so I was thinking
it's probably a long shot but I'm sure
they must have at least talked --
- But you're right because Max Perkins
did really like his office.
- Yeah, he did.
- And it was a fortunate thing cause
I don't think the Scribner's did.
They were the lower social class.
- Right. It doesn't matter.
Right. Okay, thank you so much.
- Thank you.
- Thank you. That was great.
- Paul Bogosian from Belmont,
Massachusetts.
One of the first books I read about
your dad was Morley Callaghan's
book "That Summer in Paris"
- Oh, yes.
- And I thought your dad,
in some ways, came across as, perhaps,
being sarcastic and belittling
of Scott Fitzgerald and some of
the other people during
that period of time.
And I was wondering if you could
comment on your dad's sense of humor
and how it might have been demonstrated
with the ladies in his life,
perhaps with his children,
his colleagues, and any anecdotes

that you might have that would
indicate your dad's sense of humor.
- Well, I do believe he had
a sense of humor.
But humor is difficult.
I mean, if I was good at it,
I would be very wealthy.
I mean, humor is hard.
I think he had a good sense of humor.
He could be a little bit rough.
I wish I could think of,
just offhand, an example of it.
Yeah. We just heard from
the gentleman about the 4th Division.
And I think my dad,
who originally went to the war
as the correspondent,
felt a little bit voyeurish,
you know, when you're,
what's the term now, embedded
with the 4th Division.
And he didn't quite know
how to introduce himself.
So he said, "You know," he said, "you
probably never heard of me," he said,
"But I'm Ernie Hemorrhoids,
the poor man's pile."
- Thank you.
- It's a very good answer.
- Hi. My name is Dave Wilson.
My question is more of a question
about editing as to-- you mentioned
that he did not have a steady editor.
He did most of his editing himself.
Was there anyone that advised him
or that he ran his ideas by,
for the -- say, for the ending
of "A Farewell to Arms?"
Who advised him
on things like that?
- Well, you know,
I was a bit young to pontificate
on that process but I think that
he did get a certain amount of advice
from Scott Fitzgerald early on.
I don't think that he particularly
valued it.
I think that he was a writer who
didn't depend much on
other people's opinions, you know.
I don't know whether that is
a good thing or a bad thing in
the long run but he's not a writer
that people had much influence

on what he wrote, no.

- Thank you.

- Thank you. Sir.

- My name is Dick Paine
and I'm a retired Air Force
World War II pilot.

I may not look like it, but I am,
B-17 bombers and so forth.

That's all irrelevant.

What I wanted to ask about was
a more general question than
what we've been hearing.

I've been very much interested
in a question of creativity,
what makes us creative.

And I teach Shakespeare,
or have taught Shakespeare and poetry
in the Harvard Institute
for Learning in retirement.
It's comparable to the group here,
I think.

So I wonder if you would
just make a comment,
either from your own mind
or from your father's mind,
about the interesting question
of, is a creative personality necessarily,
I'm holding up two fingers here
to indicate quotation marks,
normal or abnormal?

Can you comment on that?

- Is the process of creativity normal?

- Yeah. Well, to just restate it,
I guess, in order to be creative,
do you have to be abnormal?
Whatever that—however
you want to define that.

- Yeah, well, I agree, that's a—
I don't feel qualified
to answer that question.

But, you know, if you want
someone eminently unqualified
to answer it, I'd say that when,
you know, someone said that
opera stars are freaks, you know,
that they have larynxes and
an ability to project their voice
which is outside the normal.

And so, I guess I would make the
same answer about literary creativity.

The ability to tell tales is freakish,
it's not characteristic of everyone.

And I think its origin
is in the shaman.

A shaman got a certain status
and people fed him, and so forth,
because he could put a spin
on people's lives that was
worth feeding him.

And that's all I can say.

- Thank you. Thank you very much.

- Hi. I'm Bill Berlino

and I teach high school English
at Bedford High.

I've been trying to teach Hemingway
the last couple of years
and I was wondering if you had
any advice on how you would
go about teaching your dad
to high school students.

And then I just have
another quick question.

I find myself -- because
he's so difficult, I think, and,
as you say, sensitive, but also
sometimes very dark,

I find myself resorting to teaching
kind of the cold hero concept.

And I was wondering what you thought
about that or what your father actually
thought about that or is that just
the development of literary criticism
and things like that?

- Well, you know, much has been made,
and, in fact, this institution
that we're at, President Kennedy
quoted grace under pressure, okay.

And there is a certain stoicism,
an admiration of people that
they can hold up, and everything
is going to hell, and so forth.

I don't know whether that's
the essential thing about Hemingway.

I think that, you know,

if I were teaching him
to high school students, I'd have them
read that story "Fathers and Sons."

Now that's a loaded story
because Turgenev wrote one
of the most famous novels
of the 19th century with that title.

But "Fathers and Sons,"
you know, it does—

I think high school students
would appreciate it because,

you know, your dad, you don't know—
I mean one of the things in
that story is about the terrible things

that self-abuse would do to you.
You know, if you played with yourself,
you would go blind,
that's what his father told him.
Well, I don't know. Maybe --
- Obviously,
you haven't taught high school.
- That's a problem in high school.
- Thanks.
- Thank you. Please.
- Marla Metzner, New York City.
- Oh. Hi, Marla.
- Nice to see you.
Always good to see you.
There is a bit of folklore that's
been growing down at the house
you grew up in Key West
about six-toed cats that your father
supposedly owned.
I wonder if you'd like to tell us
the true story about those cats.
- Oh, well that is interesting, yes.
Yes, if you go to Key West,
I think the subliminal message
is 50 bucks, and you can have
a six-toed cat, okay.
And they must have some place
where they breed them.
And I don't know. I mean,
it is utter nonsense.
The real cat story
of Key West is bizarre.
Next to us, our neighbor,
if you're on Whitehead Street,
it's going, I can't remember, east,
I guess.
On the eastern side,
there was a family and the little girl
had a cat that had been
terribly injured as a kitten.
And this child had looked after
this kitten and raised it.
Its backbone had healed
but when it walked,
it was just an extraordinary sight,
you know, as we've seen
some handicapped people.
So, one day, this cat strayed
into our yard.
And my father saw it and he was
very upset and he thought
the cat had just been run over.
So he went and got a pistol
and shot the cat, to - you know,

euthanasia.
And he gave it to the fellow
that worked for us, Jimmy Smith,
the garden guy and he took it
into the garden shed where
they stored the hose and everything,
and shut the door
or he didn't shut the door.
Evidently, the cat revived,
having nine lives, of which probably
this was only the seventh
and it managed to crawl
back to the owner.
And this was a terrible
business because, you know,
there was nothing wrong with this cat,
actually and now,
my dad had shot it and it was awful.
But that was the end of that.
Okay? Later on, I got so tired
of the six-toed cat thing,
I wrote to "The Miami Herald"
and said, you know, this is not true
and so forth and so on and there
were all sorts of letters saying
what did I know about it.
And this lady who was now,
you know, 70 years old or something
wrote to "The Miami Herald"
and said "What Mr. Hemingway
said is absolutely correct."
She said "Ernest Hemingway
was practicing for his safari in Africa,
and he shot my cat."
So that's it. I mean there's no truth
in the six-toed cats.
And there is absolute
truth in this story.
- Thank you for asking that question.
- That was very good.
- Good afternoon.
I'm Carol Ann Dumond
and I'm from Prides Crossing.
I'm a high school librarian
and prior to that,
I taught American literature
for a long time.
In order to supplement or to enrich
or to expand on your father's literature,
we often show the films
and I just wondered, was he pleased
with the cinematic quality
of his literature?
- Well, you know, that's a

very interesting question because I do know something about it. I mean, Hemingway identified the modern film as the enemy of literature. It was what was going to put writers out of business. And so he was absolutely ruthless on this. I never knew him -- he made a point whenever he went to a movie, to fall asleep. He just had no, you know, And, as far as I know, most critics of the cinema, trying to do just your question exactly, say Hemingway was not a success in the movies. And I think the reason is that he was a writer. And films are told visually. And God help them.

- Thank you.
- Thank you. We'll take her. Go ahead.
- I'm Judy Leck.

I'm from Cape Cod and I was asked to deliver a note to you from a woman who knew you when you were a child in Havana. Her father was Bill Hedney who was a friend of your father's and she told me about an evening that you children, Mr. Hemingway's children and Bill Hedney's children, spent together because your parents were having dinner together. And she has fond memories. And by the way, when she gave me the note the other night, she did tell me the story about the six-toed cat. So it's a memory. But I'd like to give this to you from her.

- Okay, thank you.
That's very kind of you.
Thank you. Please.
- Hi. My name is Alexandra Ashley and I'm a senior at Elon University. And I'm taking a course right now on your father's writing and I read a lot of his novels and short stories recently. And my final paper was

on Hemingway and alcohol and I know that that's been a recurring theme in a lot of his writing and I was wondering if you had any comments on that.

- Well, you know, again, this is out of my depth. I'm not a clinical psychiatrist or a doctor or a brewer or any of them. You know, alcohol is characteristic of Western culture, I mean, you don't really think of it so much with the Chinese and so forth. And Hemingway was born at a strange time in the history of the United States. While all the men were away fighting World War when, the women managed to pass a law against alcohol. And this resulted in what we call the Prohibition Era where the fundamental fabric of our nation was shaken by the disrespect for law. This was finally restored by the election of President Roosevelt. And I think, in that sense, Hemingway was a son of the times. You can hardly be a red-blooded American and not drink. And there was a little ditty: "Root-ta-toot-toot, root-ta-toot-toot. We are the boys from the Institute. We don't drink and we don't chew. And we don't go with the girls that do." So, you know, people took the pledge. And there's that story, you know, where they're on the thing and they're telling of the horrors of alcohol and drop a worm into a glass full of alcohol, and the worm withers up and dies. And they say, "People, what does that tell you about alcohol?" And the little boy raised a hand, he said "Drink more and kill your worm." Now, I've gotten a laugh but the truth is alcohol, at least for many people, is the beginning of the end. Okay? And it's a horrible business. Perhaps it began when my dad took his first drink, and it ended when he died. Okay. So at least he survived

61 years of it. Pretty good.
And you know, in Europe,
especially in England, they talked
about a four-bottle man.
That was a man who could drink
four bottles of claret at night,
and never show it.
Okay. I mean,
alcohol is very complex.
I don't know whether it really
undermined Hemingway's health
because he seemed to have
a lot of things that were bothering
him at the end of his life.
And whether they were helped
or hurt by alcohol,
I have to leave to doctors
and practitioners of medical science.
It's too complex. I mean,
I'm not so sure.
He wrote this; that he found
that creating yourself a level
of sensitivity to what was going on
with the people you were surrounded
with became unbearable,
and that the only way he could deal
with it was to have a drink,
the "giant killer" as he called it.
Now that doesn't sound good, does it?
Not from the standpoint
of clinical psychology. Okay.
But I don't know.
I don't know whether Hemingway
could have done better without drinking,
worse with drinking. I don't know.
It's a mystery to me.
I don't have that problem.
You know, it doesn't mean
anything to me.
And when I was a child,
I was allowed to drink.
And I drank enough so that
I would go to bed reeling.
And I'm one of those people
who has terrible hangovers.
If I've over-indulged in alcohol,
I feel lousy the next day.
But I never treated it
by having a drink.
So I don't know.
This is something which I think
is a serious question with Hemingway.
It's a serious question with
a lot of writers, okay.

But remember, so much social life
in America takes place in bars.
You know, that's where you
really get the true gem.
You go to a bar, and you can find out
more about what's going on in
a town than anywhere else.
So it's an occupational hazard
for journalists, especially journalists.
I mean, you cannot be
a journalist and not drink.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
- These will be the last two questions.
- My name is Mike Fleming,
from Chelmsford.
I was just wondering,
you said your father was not very open
to advice from his peers
or his publishers,
so like who do you think were
the seminal influences on his style,
on his terse style?
I mean, were there authors,
or working for a paper or why did
he write the way he did?
And also, I'm going to sneak
in a second question.
I'm a student at Stanford University
and I take a big interest
in Steinbeck there.
And I was wondering if your father
and Steinbeck ever crossed paths.
- You know,
that's a very interesting question.
I wish I could answer it for you.
I can't.
I really don't know any of, you know,
and Hemingway.
I think that Steinbeck
is a great writer.
That's all I can say on the subject.
I've very much enjoyed
reading Steinbeck.
As far as the influences on Hemingway
from contemporaries, I don't think
that's probably what writers do.
I don't think that they compete
with their contemporaries.
I don't think they learn
anything from them.
And so learn in a sense that
when Faulkner may have written
something that my dad thought

was pretty good then he'd go out
and try and write it better,
you know, and not necessarily
successfully but the people that
writers learn from is
that 2000-year-old pool, okay.
- That's what I mean, who --
- Writers have to read writers
that wrote before their time,
not just what they're writing now.
And that's what's missing now
in American literature.
I'm not impressed.
I'm not impressed by modern
American literature at all
because we've cut ourselves off.
We think we're so clever.
We know everything.
We're born clever.
We're the master race.
Now that's the first time I've showed
a nastiness here this evening.
- I'm honored.
- Thank you.
- Who he learned from was
everybody that wrote before him, if I—
- Final question.
- Hi. My name is Richard Naiman.
I live in Waltham.
One of the Hemingway magazines,
the name Philip Percival is mentioned
who ran the African safaris.
Apparently, he was good friends
with your mother and father.
Did you know him?
- Very well. He was a great friend
of mine as well.
He was a very fine example of
a type of Englishman that was created
in Edwardian times.
You know, he guided Teddy Roosevelt
when he first came to Africa.
He had many members of
the British Royal Family as clients.
He guided, you know, Eastman,
the founder of the Kodak Company,
was his client.
He's a very interesting man and,
to a certain extent, he was used
as the hunter in "The Short Happy Life
of Francis Macomber" the physical type.
He was not the character
but the physical description of that man
is based on Percival.

I really, talk about mentors.
Percival was my mentor.
I thought he was the cats whiskers myself.
- Thank you.
- Thank you.
I want to take this occasion
to thank the Kennedy Library,
the Friends of Hemingway,
but particularly Carol and
Patrick Hemingway.
All of us who are parents know
that the most important thing
that could happen to us is to hear
someone say that our children
were admirable people.
And I think we can say
that of Patrick, and thank him
profoundly for being
such an admirable person.