

*Notes taken  
going with James  
Aldridge to  
the village where  
Hemingway's boat  
sunk - Cuba 1971  
I-05 conf*

He told us at the luncheon table in the Hotel Habana Libre that he would write about the archeology of Ernest Hemingway, the broken fragments, the pieces of the Hemingway legend, the arti facts of the dead writer.

A writer himself, he knew the questions to put to Gregorio Fuentes y Betancourt, the old capitan of Hemingway's celebrated boat.....

When we arrived in the Village of Cojimar, where Hemingway had kept his boat, the first person we spoke to happened to be Gregorio. A fine old man, in his seventies, with piercing eyes, pleasant, soft spoken, he answered all our questions.

To find the heart of the dead, broken-spirited author through his captain for some twenty years was not so easy. Gregorio, it was clear, revered his former boss and friend and was, in fact, a loyal friend.

We discussed friendship. Had Hemingway discussed this with Gregorio? Yes, he had asked Gregorio what he thought were the qualities of a good friend and Gregorio had told him, that one must be willing to die for the friend he loved. And Gregorio said that Hemingway, or "Papa" as he and others called him, had agreed with his definition.

We were told that he used to go out in his boat and sometimes write until 5 in the morning, producing some 2500 words a night. He was a friendly simple man who according to Gregorio drank not excessively, never swore, never lost his temper and got on well with his crew and the others who came in contact with him.

He was sick near the end of his period of living in Cuba. He would feel sick, knew that he was sick, that he was "perdido". He found it increasingly difficult to concentrate on his writing.

And while Gregorio was fascinating to listen to, James Aldridge, the author who was asking the questions, who was seeking out the soul of the dead author was more interesting to watch. The author at work, digging deeply, with the hunger for detail that is the fuel that feeds the author's soul, asked penetrating questions.

He saw Hemingway as the man who created his own destruction by creating the image that the world saw, but who had to escape the destruction of his own creation. For the Hemingway that the public saw was not the real Hemingway, it was the facade to cover up and protect the

real man, simple, kindly, plain.

He believed that the real Hemingway was the one who went out on the boat, away from the pressures of the life he created for himself.

..... The first wife was always his real love. The third wife, who went to Spain to capture him for marriage, was the cruel one. He remembered her in Helsinki at the early stage of the war, when it was rumoured that the Russians were going to gas the city. Only he, Aldridge and an AP correspondent remained in Helsinki. He said he would always remember the picture of her, the 3rd wife of Hemingway, walking alone down the snow covered road, in a long mink coat over her pjamas; she pulled out a bottle of Bourbon and drank.

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