

STALKING PAPA

The ex-barmaid with the big tits says to me, "I've got it figured out that you and Ray and the other writers around here feel you have to spend all your time in bars in order to keep up with Ernest Hemingway."

Now this is a new wrinkle, so it's a second or two before I say to her, "Look, I only come in the bar one or two nights a week. Since I have a small apartment and am not very hospitable it's a chance to get together with new students and old friends. Also I enjoy talking football with some of the guys and other things with others. Is everyone who goes out once in a while for a beer trying to emulate Hemingway?"

"It's something about you I can sense," she says.

So I say, "Actually by the time Hemingway was my age he was drinking at the Ritz and Floridita and Harry's and other places where they were naming drinks -- even boulevards -- after him. If anyone ever named a drink after me, it would probably be vodka and diet pepsi and the catch would be that you wouldn't drink it, you'd spill it."

She shakes her head: "You guys all think it's macho to drink like Hemingway."

"For God's sake," I say, "I don't hunt or fish or swim or ski or ride or box -- I don't even try to do any of those things that Hemingway could do so well.

I doubt that Hemingway would like the shit I write.

I drink too much

and I drink for a lot of bad reasons, but at least a hundred of the reasons why I drink

take priority over trying to be like Ernest Hemingway."

It's no use, though.
At twenty-three she's had
what may be the closest thing
to a literary insight
that she will ever come by,
and she is not about to relinquish it
in the face of mere facts.
I'm sure that if I'm still around
to run into her twenty years from now
the first thing she'll ask me will be
if I'm still trying to booze it up
like Ernest Hemingway.

BACK FROM VACATION

sergeant roger hotspur goes back to work
at the police station.
he storms into the middle of the office,
thumps his chest and bellows,
"well, i'm back you bunch of pukes --
i hope while i was gone you remembered
everything i've taught you about ripping off
the taxpayers.
i sure hope i don't hear about anyone
putting in a full shift,
or writing his eight citations,
or showing any hint of courtesy to the public."

then he lets a fart that he's been working on
for weeks of chili con carne breakfasts.

finally he sits down at his desk,
picks up the phone,
and says, "yes, this is the police department:
fuck fuck fuck
fuck fuck fuck fuck!"

he raises his eyes
a rookie policewoman
is sitting across the room,
wondering if perhaps she made
a poor choice of careers.

-- Gerald Locklin

Long Beach CA