



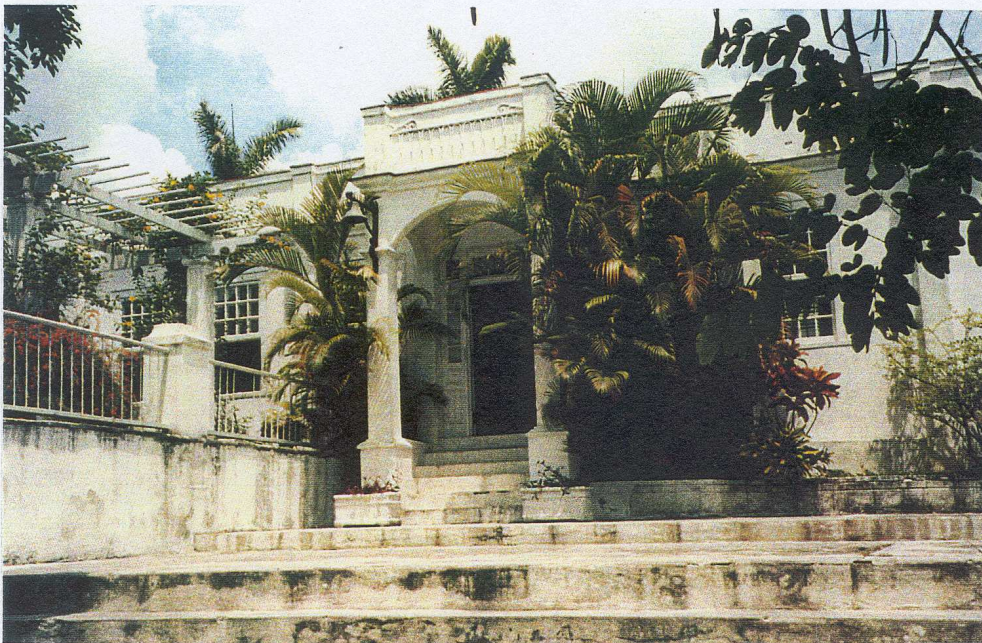
## John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

Columbia Point Boston, Massachusetts 02125

16 September 1995

Dear Friend of the Hemingway Collection,

On July 16–21, for the first time ever, Cuba was the site of an international Hemingway conference. Although Hemingway scholars have been visiting Cuba for years, this International Hemingway Colloquium was Cuba's official entrance into the larger community of Hemingway scholarship and appreciation. The Hemingway Collection was represented by associate curator Stephen Plotkin. The conference featured five days of paper sessions interspersed with numerous opportunities to visit Hemingway's haunts in and around Havana. But perhaps the happiest part of the conference was being able to meet and share with Cuban Hemingway scholars and to learn firsthand the high regard in which Hemingway is held in Cuba.



Although there was much to delight participants in the conference, the star attraction was undoubtedly the Museo Hemingway at the Finca Vigia, Ernest Hemingway's Cuban homestead. From their introduction to it at the opening ceremony of the conference, foreign visitors were astonished at the superb condition of the Finca and its furnishings and the obvious care taken to preserve the homestead just as it was when Ernest Hemingway lived there. In his inscription in the Finca's visitor book, Gregory Hemingway, Ernest's youngest son and a conference attendee, wrote that the Finca was

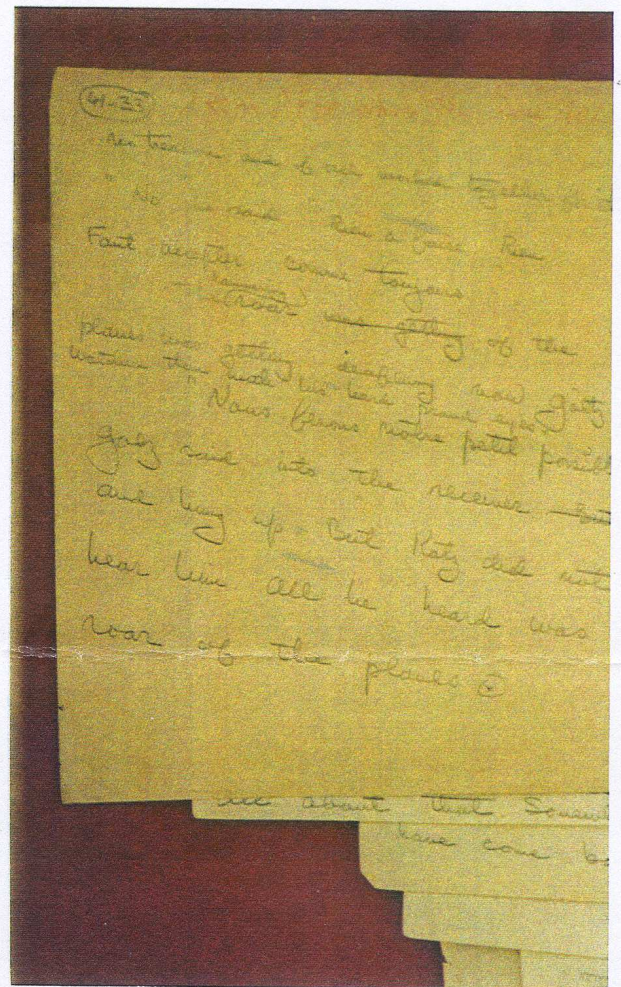
the best cared for of all of his father's former houses. Credit for this, of course, must go to Curator Gladys Rodriguez and her marvelous group of assistant curators. A tropical climate, heavy tourism, and a critical scarcity of supplies double, even triple the difficulty of their task. As a basic preservation measure, visitors to the Finca usually are not permitted to enter the building, but must look in through open windows. Photography is not permitted. However, as a courtesy, conference attendees were allowed inside the house to take photographs (without flash).

After its recent refurbishing, Hemingway's fishing boat, the *Pilar*, is on display in a covered area once occupied by a tennis court. The boat lacks only a few parts and some detailing to put it in showroom condition.





From the archival point of view, the most significant information to come out of the conference was the extent of the archival holdings at the Finca. Although there had long been rumors about papers that remained at the Finca, the conference provided the opportunity to confirm the existence of these materials and to learn more about them. In brief, there are 3000 photographs, 2000 letters, and more than 500 pages of manuscripts. The photographs, which represent every period in Hemingway's life, have been cataloged, and the assistant curator for the photographs, Roberto Nuñez Jauma, gave a presentation on the extent of the holdings. Many of the photographs are not duplicated in the Kennedy Library, and, indeed, are undoubtedly unique to the Finca. Ms. Rodriguez has promised to send the Hemingway Collection a copy of the finding aid for the photographs as soon as this can be arranged. The surprising amount of correspondence and manuscript material still at the Finca was extraordinary news indeed. Ms. Rodriguez informed conference participants that the correspondence represents letters both to and from Ernest Hemingway, although letters to Hemingway naturally predominate. For the moment, little information about the manuscripts is available; however, some manuscript pages from *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as well as some story notes were on special exhibit for the conference.



Despite these exciting details, perhaps the most important material at the Finca was already well-known. When Mary Hemingway removed the bulk of Hemingway's papers from Cuba in 1961, she left his library of approximately 9000 publications. These books, journals, and periodicals remain on the shelves in the Finca; they are a part of the permanent exhibit of the Museo. Unfortunately, the Finca does not have temperature and humidity controls and there are no resources to install them. Only the rigorous policy of restricting use has preserved the publications. Many books probably have not been opened in 35 years. Thus, the interiors of several publications that were opened for conference attendees were in relatively good condition. Nonetheless, deterioration of the books is evident; jackets, covers and bindings of all books have been affected, and damage has progressed to the interior of many volumes. The publications are of intense interest to scholars because of Hemingway's habit of writing notes in books and using letters and manuscripts as bookmarks, as we have discovered in our own holdings here at the Kennedy Library.

The condition of the books underlines a stark fact: the Finca Vigia is an archival emergency. Lacking resources for even the most basic preservation measures, the Finca's caretakers are in the unenviable position

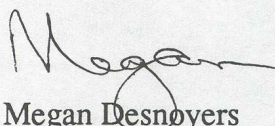


of watching their collection decay. Ms. Rodriguez summed the situation up for a group of conference attendees: "Many visitors tell us what we need to do. But we know what we need to do! We don't have what we need to do it. The Government supports us as much as possible, but we are only one of many museums. And sometimes the choice is between us and the schools or the hospitals. Then everybody knows what is important."

As a result of these observations and meetings with Ms. Rodriguez, many of those attending the conference have pledged to work toward an international project to aid the Finca. The possibility of a microfilm project is under discussion and efforts will be made to convince the Cubans to release more details of their holdings, including cataloging for the archival holdings. We will keep members of the Friends of the Hemingway Collection apprised of any efforts that we may hear about to aid and cooperate with the Museo Hemingway. We thank the Friends for their part in making this important trip possible.

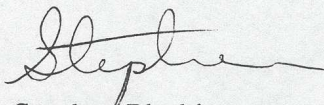
In other Hemingway Collection news, the **oral histories** conducted by Megan Desnoyers with **William Walton**, friend of Ernest and Mary Hemingway, are now open and on the shelves in the Hemingway Room. Processing of the **papers of Mary Hemingway** was recently completed, and those papers are now open for research. Mary Hemingway's papers include her own manuscripts and correspondence from both before and after Ernest Hemingway's death. The most significant single entity in the papers is the manuscript of Mary's memoir *How It Was*, which takes up 5 linear feet of the collection. Additional manuscripts by Mary comprise another 3 linear feet of the collection; contained here are Mary's journals from the late 1940s and early 1950s. Other element of the collection include 3.5 linear feet of incoming and outgoing correspondence, newsclippings about both Ernest and Mary, papers on miscellaneous subjects, and manuscripts by Mary's father Thomas Welsh. The papers as a whole comprise 16 linear feet.

For the Friends of the Hemingway Collection,



Megan Desnoyers  
Curator

The Ernest Hemingway Collection



Stephen Plotkin  
Associate Curator

The Ernest Hemingway Collection