

Up In Michigan—Over All Too Soon!

—Charlotte Ponder, *Queen of the Conference*

“As soon as it was safe for the boy to travel, they bore him away to the northern woods.” It was a fitting opening for Carlos Baker’s biography of Ernest Hemingway and it was the same for the conference taking place in the area that was so important to the Hemingway canon.

When the 15th Biennial Conference of the Ernest Hemingway Society began on June 17, 2012, Petoskey and Bay View, MI, joined the ranks of such cities as Paris and Pamplona on the international landscape of Hemingway scholarship and literary tourism. Participants arrived throughout the day on Sunday, to pick up badges and packets at the Campus Club at the Bay View Association, and they continued to arrive in rain and shine throughout the week. It would be the largest conference in the history of the Hemingway Society with nearly 320 full registrants.



The venues for panels and presentations provided by Bay View exceeded our expectations of Victorian atmosphere and charm. One member wrote to us later, “Even those rainy days made sitting together inside a 100 year old building talking about Hemingway even better!” The historic Perry Hotel, where Hemingway actually stayed at one



time, has often hosted the Michigan Hemingway Society in grand style, but the Opening Reception they provided for us on Sunday evening was superlative even by their standards. Old friends and new mingled while we enjoyed the excellent refreshments, elegant décor, and the stunning views of Little Traverse Bay.



(Top right: Jim Meredith and Charlotte Ponder at the closing ceremonies. Top left: Evelyn Hall at Bay View, where EH once wrote. Above: Welcoming Ceremonies: Charlotte Ponder, Dexter McNamara, Odawa Tribal Chairman, Robert Trogdon, the Hon. Bill Fraser, Mayor of Petoskey, Jim Meredith, Michael Federspiel. Left: “Hemingway’s Michigan,” Don Junkins, H. R. Stoneback, and Michael Federspiel. *Photos courtesy of Tom Adams.*)

The Monday opening sessions have been dubbed by many as the best ever. Jack Jobst, Fred Svoboda, and Michael Federspiel were both witty and informative while giving attendees an orientation on why we meet in Northern Michigan. The plenary session that afternoon, “Hemingway and Fishing,” presented by Allen Josephs and Ken Marek, continued the standard of excellence established by the morning’s activities. Audience members raved that it was Joseph’s best plenary ever and that the fly fishing demonstration by Marek brought a unique aspect of “pure Michigan” to the day.

Papers and panels and plenaries throughout the week were outstanding, thanks to all who participated. The most difficult task, as always, was deciding which session to attend. There were approximately 120 papers given, and several presentations were organized or given by the Michigan Hemingway Society that were open to visitors as well as conference participants as our way of



Five Hemingway Women. L-R Mary by Diane Fox, Martha by Audry McMullen, Pauline by Susan Lightcap, Hadley by Carole Underwood and Grace by Charlotte Ponder. (Photo courtesy of Tom Adams.)

thanking the community for its many in-kind donations. These included: “The Odawa Tribe in Hemingway’s Time”, “Hemingway’s Michigan, My Michigan”, “Five Hemingway Women: Biographical Portrayals”,



Hemingway and Food, Second Course. L-R: Gail Sinclair, Nicole Camastra, Hilary Justice and Valerie Hemingway. (Photo courtesy of Tom Adams.)

“Hemingway and the Local Area”, “A Michigan Writers Roundtable”, “Picturing Hemingway’s Michigan”, and “Hemingway and Northern Michigan.” The fascinating plenary session by J. Gerald Kennedy,

“The Letters of Ernest Hemingway and The Fiction,” was also open to the public and made us very eager

for the publication of the next volume of letters, which will cover 1923-1925.

Spellbinding is not too strong a word for H.R. Stoneback’s meditation “Hemingway’s Michigan, My Michigan,” and everyone was deeply moved by the story of young people being impacted by life, death, and literature and the message it holds. Michael Federspiel’s presentation of historic photos and materials from his very successful book, *Picturing Hemingway’s Michigan* gave us all a fascinating look into the Petoskey and Walloon Lake area as it was when the Hemingway family began summering there. The portrayal of Hemingway’s mother and wives (“Five Hemingway Women: A Biographical Portrayal”) had a most enthusiastic reception by a very gracious audience. It was an unexpected hit which generated many requests for video recordings and even tours.



Michigan weather, famously changeable, provided quite a show on Thursday evening as well. As our bus approached the docks at Mackinac City for the Sunset Cruise on a vintage ferry of the Arnold Line, impressively dark storm clouds approached. To quote from another reporter, “On cue, the weather for Thursday’s Sunset Cruise: sun, wind, rain, hard rain, wind, spectacular sunset—in that order—all between 6 and 10 p.m.” Along with a rainbow, there were drinks and plentiful food, but the five-mile-long bridge and the sunset were indeed the stars of the evening and photo ops with congenial friends abounded.

Most participants had the opportunity to tour the Hemingway summer cottage Windemere (right), either at the pre-conference reception hosted by owner Ernest Mainland or during the



week at a scheduled tour time. We also offered bus tours to Horton Bay (General Store pictured at left; Grace Cottage below), and walking tours of Petoskey’s Hemingway sites are now marked by new historic plaques and have an accompanying brochure.

The closing reception and banquet were held at the beautiful Bay Harbor Yacht Club, a new facility built in a Victorian-looking style. We enjoyed the views from the terrace, outstanding hors d’oeuvres, drinks and conversation until

time to be seated in the banquet room.

But the windows lining that room allowed us to retain the views of yachts, sky, and water until the sinking sun became too intense. The shades were drawn during Sandra Spanier’s keynote address and lifted again in time for one more of Michigan’s “million dollar sunsets.”

(Photos courtesy of Tom Adams)





I've had the most trouble writing a "wrap-up" for this conference that I've ever had producing an article. This event represents more than four years of planning by a number of people in the Michigan Hemingway Society, two years of really intensive work, and six months of beyond-insane total immersion. I had the time of my life, and because I feel the week was such a success, it seems like boasting for me to be the one to write it up! We have had

so many wonderful thank-you letters and calls from members and guests. Those of you who were with us know well the khaki and black streak flying around from building to building that was barely recognizable as Cecil Ponder and became known as Batman, Techno-Angel, and other terms of endearment. His expertise, determination, and duct tape kept most presentations visible and audible despite the many obstacles encountered in 120 year-old buildings which are being used by several groups. Nancy Nicholson and her crew of volunteers kept the registration and ticketing running day and night at every event, and none of us would have eaten or drunk a thing, let alone so elegantly and well, if weren't for the talents and inexhaustible efforts of Marian Sanford. I don't have space to list and thank all the contributors, but there are many. Please notice their names on the acknowledgements page of your program or on line and realize how much we owe them all. It took a village.



I announced at the opening session that everything would go smoothly if everyone remembered that I was the Queen of the Conference. We had a lot of fun with that joke all week long, and I am humbled by the kindness of so many friends and colleagues. It was good to be the Queen, if only for a week, and I thank you for the opportunity. We regard our subjects with very great favor, and we are amused. Thank you.

(Pinehurst and Shangra La. Above: Seney's Depot (Photos courtesy of Tom Adams); Bottom: Jim Sanford, Judith Butler, John Sanford, and Valerie Hemingway (Photo courtesy of John Sanford).