

Heather Richie:

I made two trips to JFK Library where I was able to view the Hemingway papers, the first being in November of 2016 and again in February 2017. These journeys through Boston were especially memorable to me because they were my first experience researching a special collection. In the same way I viewed the ephemera of Hemingway's life, from his multiple yacht club membership cards to his Idaho liquor consumer's permit, in hopes of stringing together narrative, I hope some beloved relative of mine one day stumbles upon the blue researcher's card I was given in the JFK research room, with towering glass wall and intimidating view of the sea, and feels they know me a little better. I like this way of remembering each other via artifacts, tangible daily bits inseparable from the meaning of authenticity.

In November, I looked for other famous names, anything that might resonate with me about his work. So much of the handwriting I viewed was impossible for me to decode in a day, or ever. Still typed letters from Sylvia Beach and Sinclair Lewis were legible. Lewis' letter was typed in a November like mine of 2016, but seventy-six years before:

1940 Nov 17

Lewis Sinclair

praise for "Bell Tolls"

*But you damn near killed me, waiting
for Would he blow up the bridge and get
away with it, holding myself rom skipping a*



word, but wanting to know.

*... It is as "realistic" as Zola, or as
"romantic" as Kipling.*

Ever,

Sinclair Lewis

Reading these exchanges was as if overhearing one hero speak in confidence and praise to another in a way that made them more human to me, and in turn made me feel more capable of the same good works.

Sadly, I could not make heads from tails of his manuscripts in a day's visit. That was where I wanted to focus to feel professional growth, to have the rare opportunity of seeing how another done it. I came away with a gloss understanding of what viewing a writer's papers entailed, of what was available to me, and with the lingering question of what to do about it.

It was on my second trip I remembered Hemingway did not want his personal letters read. I read early letters to his family, among them several notes thanking his mother for sending cakes when he first began his career as a newspaperman. I saw the newspapers, too, and those articles were my favorite part. There was the real thing, old sepia sheets one after the other of Hemingway the journalist telling the story. It hasn't escaped me that I visited Cuba for the first time in 2016, that I've visited his house in Key West, that on a recent return to Ireland I thought for the first time of his influence even there, that I write for a sporting magazine that has begun to use his old images on its cover twice just this year, and that I write now from South Africa where all I want to do is hunt and fish species, some analogous to North America, in this strange new place. Yet no one wants to think of themselves a Hemingway wannabe, and I am just a woman.

I've written about food more often than not, and decided that I would take inspiration from the young reporter's thank you notes to his mother praising the treats he shared with his fellow newspapermen. I've started to look at what recipes would have been available to her, what it was she might have mailed. I thought I'd cook a few up, and write about that process. ■