

Paper Mache for 7-17-26 by David Read

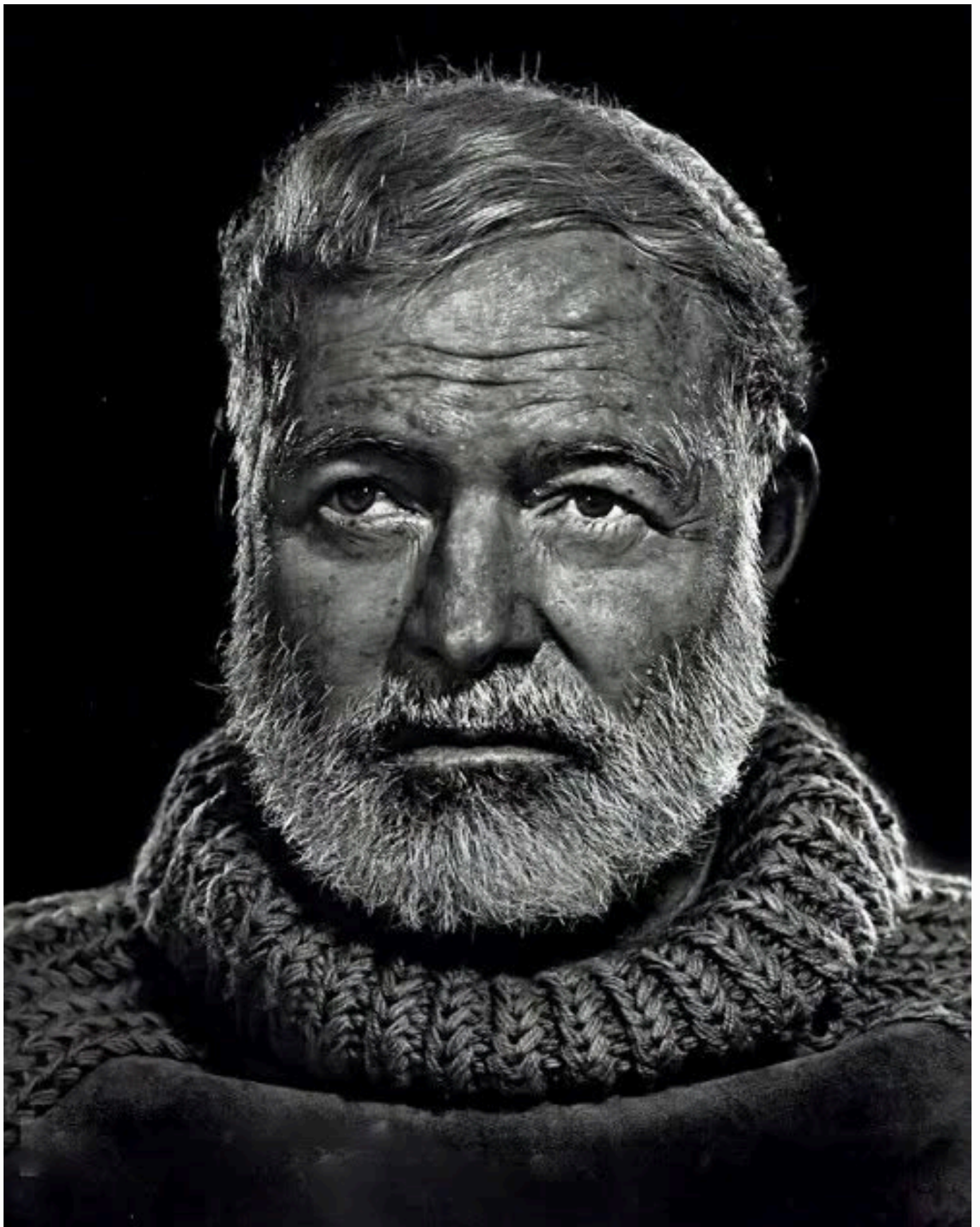
I grew up with a father who fished and hunted. He was self-educated, listened to classical music and read voraciously. We fished off the coast of south Florida and in the keys, trapped raccoons in the Everglades and did some shooting, but never enough for my taste. I devoured magazines like *Outdoor Life* and *Field & Stream*, but that wasn't enough. To say I had the outdoor adventure bug would be an understatement. Enter Ernest Miller Hemingway. My earliest introduction were the short stories like *Big Two Hearted River*, but then along came *The Old Man and the Sea*. "Can we go marlin fishing dad?" I remember my first trip to Key West when we visited his beautiful, well-preserved home purchased in 1931 with the help of his second wife, Pauline's uncle. His birthday is July 21st so I thought it would be timely to reflect on one of my favorite authors, Shakespeare being the other.

I've long wanted to host a Hemingway look-alike contest in Yuba-Sutter like they do each year in Key West. With the proliferation of full white beards seen hereabouts, it would make the judging tough for the "older Hemingway" division. As a young man, he was mostly clean shaven and quite handsome so we could cover that demographic hereabouts as well. In addition to Key West, I've been to most of the other U.S. sites associated with the author including his birthplace, Oak Park, Illinois, the site of the Hemingway family summer home at Walloon Lake near Petoskey, Michigan, his last home with 4th wife, Mary, in Ketchum, Idaho and the nearby cemetery where he is buried alongside her. I've even been to the Ernest Hemingway Room at the JFK Presidential Library and Museum in Boston and viewed some of his original manuscripts and other artifacts.

Hemingway remains one of those writers whose influence goes far beyond literature. Even people who have never read a word he wrote recognize his name, trademark beard, and larger-than-life reputation as a war correspondent, adventurer, outdoorsman, and award-winning author. Yet beneath the carefully cultivated image was a writer whose greatest achievement was his extraordinary ability to say more with fewer words. Hemingway came of age during one of the most turbulent periods in modern history. His experiences as an ambulance driver during World War I left him seriously wounded and forever changed his perspective on courage, suffering, and loss. Those themes influenced his writing, whether he was chronicling expatriates wandering post-war Europe, bullfighters in Spain, soldiers on the Italian front, or an aging Cuban fisherman battling sharks and the sea. His bibliography includes some of the most enduring works of the twentieth century; *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea* which earned him the Pulitzer Prize and helped secure the Literature Nobel Prize in 1954. Decades later, these books continue to appear on high school and college reading lists.

Like many artistic geniuses, however, Hemingway's personal life was complicated. Married four times, he pursued danger with remarkable enthusiasm and struggled with depression and declining health in his later years. The mythology surrounding his adventures from African safaris to deep-sea fishing in Cuba sometimes overshadows the quieter reality of a man who spent countless disciplined hours revising sentences until they achieved the clarity he demanded.

Perhaps Hemingway's greatest lesson for artists of every discipline is that authenticity matters. Whether wielding a paintbrush, a camera, a violin, or a keyboard, the challenge is not to impress audiences with complexity but to communicate something true. Sixty-five years after his death, Ernest Hemingway continues to remind us that the simplest words, honestly chosen and carefully arranged, often carry the greatest emotional weight. The fascination for me still holds. Guess I'll renew my membership in the Hemingway Society.



Happy Birthday, Ernest Hemingway, born July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois. This is the famous portrait by Canadian photographer Yusef Karsh.