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PAPA Hemingway in Key West

James McLendon

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Ernest Hemingway first came to Key West in 1928. From his first days on the island he came to know and love fishing and the sea. For the next twelve years the famed author called the island his home. His years in Key West became the most crucial and prolific years of his life. During that period he wrote Death in the Afternoon, Green Hills of Africa, numerous important short stories, To Have and Have Not, and began For Whom the Bell Tolls. He also created and became his own living legend, self-consciously constructing the swaggering image known to the world as Papa.
In the early 1970s journalist James McLendon seized the opportunity to interview Ernest Hemingway's Key West friends who remained alive. A Key West resident himself, McLendon wrote this book by combining his knowledge of the island with his conversations and with the extensive Hemingway-related material held by the Monroe County Public Library. McLendon recreates the slow-paced, sub-tropical setting, the island's Depression years, and the people and places that infused and inspired Hemingway. These were the years that saw his love affair with Martha Gellhorn and the crumbling of his marriage to Pauline Pfeiffer.
Beyond letters and legal documents, too little of the Hemingway era in Key West is found in biographical studies. Because this book was first published in 1974, much of what exists in those studies today is derived from this manuscript. This book gives us a penetrating look at the significance of the Key West era in Hemingway's career.
James McLendon was a columnist for the Key West Citizen, a creative writing instructor and a freelance writer. His dispatches and articles appeared in various U.S. newspapers and magazines, including UPI wire services, the Christian Science Monitor and Writers Digest.

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