

'Influencing Hemingway' explores the author's inspirations

BY MOLLY WILLIAMS

Paradise Staff

Ernest Hemingway is a man long associated with the city of Key West. People come from far and wide for this week's annual Hemingway Days festival to celebrate not just the writer, but his reputation.

The legend and Hemingway's exuberant talent continue to fascinate readers and literary critics alike. Well-known photos show Hemingway hunting big game in Africa, drinking in Cuba and fishing the



Nancy Sindelar is in Key West for Hemingway Days and will host a book-signing at 10 a.m. today at the Hemingway Home and Museum, 907 Whitehead St. Books will be available to purchase on site. Sindelar's "Influencing Hemingway," is also available at amazon.com for \$31.50.

waters of the Keys, but his passion for life was deeply seeded in his ability to write.

He became the epitome of masculinity in American culture, but what made the man?

Author Nancy Sindelar celebrates that question in the biography "Influencing Hemingway: People and Places That Shaped His Life and Work." Through words and rare photographs, Sindelar introduces the reader to Hemingway as a child, teenager and troubled man battling with his inner-self while trying to stay on top.

"So much stems from Hemingway's childhood," Sindelar said. "A lot falls back on your childhood when you're an adult, and I think the same happened with him. It's easy to connect the dots in his life from within his writing."

"Influencing Hemingway" is a compact work that explores Hemingway's life from a unique perspective of personal inspiration: What locations and individuals inspired the author personally? And how did those factors affect him until his final days?

Beginning with Hemingway's birth and youth in Oak Park, Ill.,

the book takes the reader through his first writing job in Kansas City and into his infamous adventures in Italy, France, Spain, Key West, Cuba and Sun Valley, Idaho.

The effort to make the book a reality was an adventure as well.

Sindelar was teaching at Hemingway's alma mater, Oak Park and River Forest High School, when she decided to write "Influencing Hemingway." Armed with knowledge from her teachings, Sindelar started on her own adventure to compile and finish the book.

"I was teaching Hemingway to my students, and even though they thought his life was exciting, they failed to see the excitement in their own lives," Sindelar said. "So I started teaching what Hemingway was like in his youth. He was the editor of the high school newspaper, a high school athlete and even participated in school plays. He was just as involved in his life in his youth as he was in his adult years and that's something that's not common knowledge, but should be."

"Influencing Hemingway" paints a clear picture of Hemingway's time in Key West and how

the city allowed him to rise to a high point in his career. In Key West, Hemingway could focus on his fiction — with welcome distractions aboard fishing boats or in local watering holes.

"While in Key West, Hemingway was married to Pauline," Sindelar said. "By then he had three children, but he was still able to work on 'Farewell to Arms,' 'To Have and Have Not,' 'Green Hills of Africa' and 'Death in the Afternoon.' He could afford to travel to South Africa to go on a safari and he could go to Spain and see the bull fights. His time in Key West was definitely a higher point in his life."

Hemingway lived through the highs but suffered immensely through the lows.

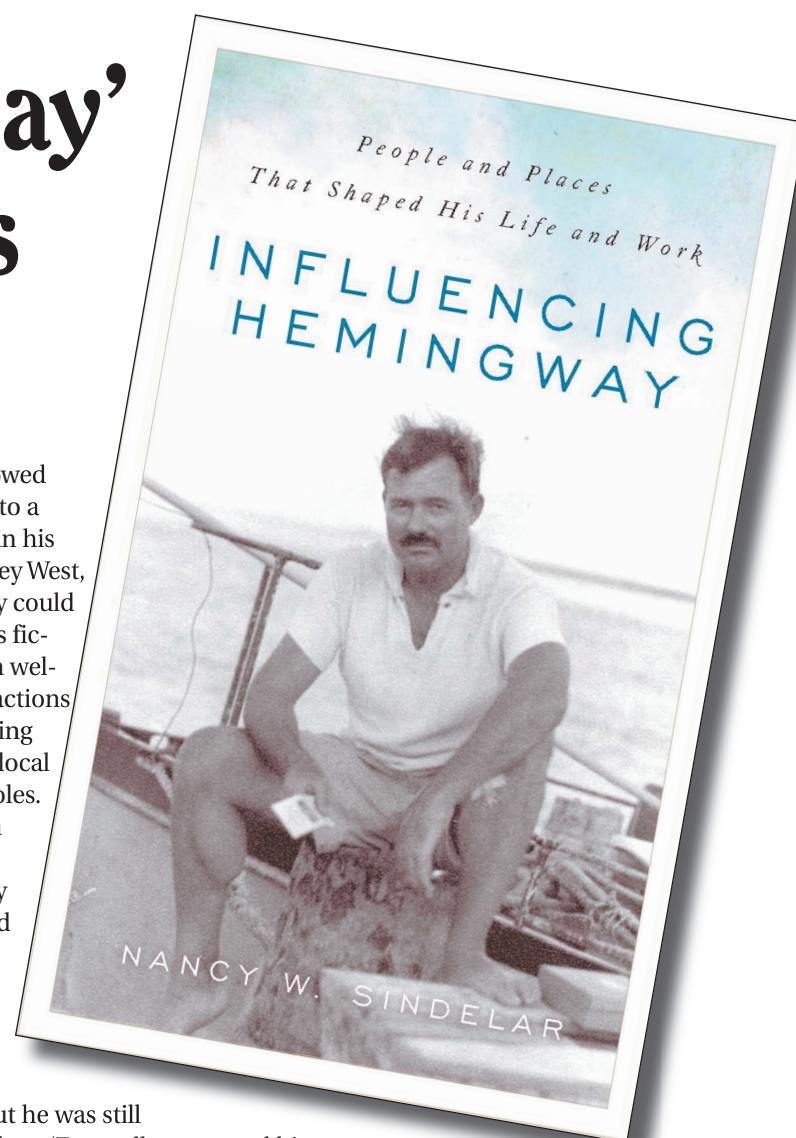
Sindelar deals strategically with Hemingway's well-known suicide.

"He was suffering from depression and received electro-shock therapy at the Mayo Clinic," Sindelar writes. "The shock therapy

erased his memory, leaving him nothing to draw from in his writing. He couldn't go back to Cuba and his best friend, Gary Cooper, passed away. A month after Cooper's passing, Hemingway committed suicide."

Despite the passage of time, themes in Hemingway's work remain relevant for the current age, and books like Sindelar's and event like Hemingway Days will keep his legend from falling through the cracks of collective memory.

"Hemingway's message is still relevant and will continue to be relevant," Sindelar said. "The



'Hemingway Code' of behavior is something we can all learn from. This is where his fascination with bull fighting and hunting must stem from. He lived with 'grace under pressure.' Instead of blaming religion, he took things as they came at him and dealt with it."

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