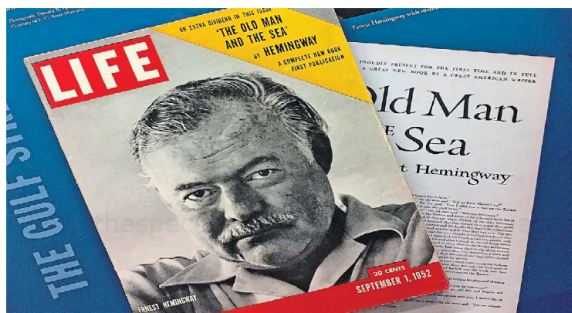


Hemingway's greatest turns 70



THOMAS FROESE

A September 1952 Life magazine with "The Old Man and the Sea" at the Ernest Hemingway Collection. The archives are kept at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. The celebrated story reminds us we're not alone in our struggles, writes Thomas Froese.

This fish story is for anyone, a reminder of how we're not alone in our struggles



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

If we were all old men we could do worse than land in Ernest Hemingway's classic novella "The Old Man and the Sea." The story, among the most loved of the 20th century, just turned 70.

The old man — his name is Santiago — is an outsider. He's impoverished. Has horrible luck. Hasn't caught a fish for 84 days. Is he cursed? People think so. Still, his eyes are cheerful and undefeated. He often dreams of his boyhood and lions on the white beaches of Africa.

One morning after such dreaming, he drinks coffee with his only friend, a faithful Cuban boy, Manolin. The boy loves the old man, and his stories about baseball. The old man then sets out, again, to fish. He'll be wise. Skilled. Precise. Patient. This will be his day.

Naturally, a fish comes along. And what a fish. What then unfolds is important. Even today. Especially today, when we can so easily amuse ourselves to death. So is the story about youth and old age? Love and kinship? Beauty and violence? Luck and skill? Yes. More so, it's about the human spirit.

"A man can be destroyed, but not defeated," is one of Santiago's thoughts. It's grasped especially by Ugandan students when I've taught this story in that part of the world. Grace and composure in the daily fight of life is understood there because, as you might imagine, Ugandan lives are often more like the old man's life.

But this fish story is for anyone, a reminder we're not alone in our struggles. That's why when it first appeared in Life Magazine on Sept. 1, 1952, five million copies sold in two days. It went viral, so to speak. Santiago, pursuing the catch, beating back the sharks, becoming the everyman, characterizing me, or you, or the neighbours.

Hemingway said it's "the best I can write ever for all my life." After some career lows, it helped bring him the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature, a lifetime honour. Validation. Destroyed, but not defeated. Earlier that year, speaking of Uganda, the writer suffered head injuries and a near-death experience — the press had written his obituary — after back-to-back plane crashes in that East African nation. Then declining health.

The American writer had started as a correspondent for the Toronto Star before writing literary fiction for more than 30 years from experiences in Europe, East Africa and the Gulf Stream. That's where he created the character Santiago.

Hemingway also, you may know, fought his personal demons. Even so, his voice remains. "All you have to do is write one true sentence," he once said. "Write the truest sentence you know. So finally I'd write one true sentence, then go on from there. It was easy then because there was always one true sentence I knew, or had seen, or had heard someone say."

This is when art transcends, when you tap into something larger than yourself. In this the artists, the good ones, look past the headlines (and the world has seen some hard headlines in recent years) to what's now possible. They reimagine things. They help the rest of us mourn what's been lost, but then also invite new things. New life.

Of course, the work is never finished. Hemingway himself left thousands of pages of unpublished work. Making peace with what's unfinished is also part of this.

"The Old Man and the Sea" isn't a long read. It took just 20 pages, with illustrations, in that 1952 Life Magazine. Today you can easily listen to it on your phone, or search its title with "free text version" to find it online. It's a way to say, "Hey, old man. Happy birthday!"

No, really. Isn't this weekend a good time to pause? To recalibrate? In some chair, or better, at some nearby beach? Soon, after all, it's back to school.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

LETTERS

Protecting coyotes

Several years ago when coyotes first became evident in Burlington and several attacks on dogs occurred, I wrote to this newspaper and the Burlington Post warning groups like Coyote Watch and like minded politicians that it would only be a matter of time before humans, and specifically a child, was attacked and that prediction is now a fact. Coyotes have no natural enemies in an urban environment and despite the warnings to not feed them, they will find food in the easiest place.

Why do these groups protect them? Is it because they remind them of their dogs? In this environment they are vermin and need to be exterminated. The "exist with nature" cry is frankly nonsense. Do we put up with rats? Would we tolerate black bears in an urban environment? The answer is no, because in both of those examples there is potential and/or real harm to humans. In urban society we make the decision to value human well being above animals, perhaps sad, but necessary fact.

I want to make it clear that I am not a hunter, nor do I believe in hunting except for food, but this is not the wild, it is the city. It is time to take action.

Wayne Madveer, Burlington

Cheering Roma

Loved the article about Roma (Aug. 30), a family institution in Hamilton! I am honoured to be the niece of my amazing Uncle Phil who started it all in North Hamilton with all its wonderful memories and my cousin Phil

and his son who have kept this tradition going. Great work, Dad would have been so proud!

Linda Ferrie, Waterdown

Embedded racism

Regarding the letter writer using the words equity and equality trying to make a point against woke: I've feel he's overlooked the crux of the issue, and that is critical race theory. This is the idea that racism is embedded into the foundation of society, not just the problem of individual racists. This underlying bias affects policies, governing and laws. There can be no equality of opportunity in this scenario.

Heather Campbell, Hamilton

Verbal backlash

Regarding "No degrading" (Aug. 29): I agree that there is no place for degrading comments from readers who disagree with an opinion expressed in a letter to the editor.

Following the Pope's visit to Canada in July, I expressed my disappointment that a full apology was not given for the Church's role in the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of Indigenous children at residential schools. I received an email from a reader stating "your pompous, sanctimonious comments about the lack of a full apology from the Pope reflects your general arrogant comments... The Pope is a true leader and for you to mock and criticize him for not giving, in your arrogant view, a full apology doesn't speak well for your level of integrity or intelligence."

Not only was I hurt and insulted by his criticism, but I also felt that his disparaging comments were out of line. After all, freedom of expression is a democrati-

right to which everyone is entitled without any verbal backlash or disrespect.

Andrea Rado, Hamilton

Rosy viewpoint

Regarding "Is Ontario embracing clean power?" (Aug. 28): Far from moving toward a low CO2 system, the province is steaming ahead with a huge ramp up in the use of gas-fired power plants and that is going to be much more than a short-term blip. If things go according to plan, we will see a more than 600 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions from power production by 2040.

The "difficult situation" facing our electricity planners is largely due to their own failure to embrace alternatives like aggressive deployment of solar and wind, deep energy efficiency and, most of all, co-operation with our renewable energy superpower neighbour, Quebec.

The province's procurement efforts remain far too focused on gas and far too little on building a smart, green grid. This must change for our economic — and planetary — survival.

Jack Gibbons, chair, Ontario

Clean Air Alliance

What, me, worry?

Should I be concerned? A newer, smaller COVID-19 science advisory table? A more constrained role? A veto role for Public Health Ontario? No provision for outside scientists to collaborate? New terms of reference not based on the original mandate and prepared by PHO and Kieran Moore, chief medical officer of health — the same Kieran Moore who was missing in action, like the premier, at critical times? Yes, I'm concerned!

Paul Fralick, Dundas

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How we can embrace tech entrepreneurs

MARY WELLS

When I graduated with a bachelor of engineering from McGill in 1987, the best engineering students went to big Canadian companies like Pratt and Whitney, IBM, Nortel, CAE Industries, Dofasco and Alcan. In 1987, our naive impression was that it was those engineering students no one wanted to hire that started their own companies.

In those days, there was little discussion or support for engineering students to take the bold step to become entrepreneurs or founders, to forge their own path. Fast forward to 2022 and the landscape has completely shifted.

Today, an engineering student who decides to become a founder is heralded as courageous and brave and admired by their classmates. Today, there are many supports in place for entrepreneurship — from mentorship to seed funding to free startup space, and more.

We have Communitech and the Accelerator Centre in Waterloo, Creative Destruction Labs in Toronto and Vancouver and Volta in Halifax. Across the country we have invested in helping people start companies in an effort to pave the way for innovation and Canada's

economic future.

A recent report, Startup Genome, listed the Waterloo-Toronto Region Corridor as Canada's leading tech ecosystem, with the highest concentration of AI startups in the world. Nearly half of the venture capital deployed in Canada in 2021 — a record \$7.7 billion — went to companies based in the Waterloo-Toronto corridor — now one of the most concentrated tech workforces in North America with 15,000 tech companies and 5,200 tech startups employing over 200,000 workers.

Canada's investments in the tech entrepreneurship space are paying off and our prominence on the world stage in this sector is growing. We need to keep up the momentum.

It's as important to mark what we are doing right as it is to critique what's missing from our strategy, so we can continue to build on it.

One of the reasons for our tech success is attracting and forging a depth and quality of talent in the Waterloo-Toronto corridor that ranks alongside the globe's elite tech regions. More broadly, Canada continues to attract a steady influx of diverse, ambitious immigrants from across the globe that add significant value to our talent pool.

The University of Waterloo in particular has had outsized success as a university that spawns entrepreneurs. Why?

It has a unique entrepreneurial culture that includes a policy permitting creators to own their ideas. The university was designed to be industry-relevant right from the start, and the diversity of experiences students acquire from multiple co-op opportunities in different sectors brings new ideas back to the university.

This fall, University of Waterloo will also offer a Canadian first: unique entrepreneurial PhD fellowships to support outstanding business-minded doctoral students who are interested in commercializing their research. This will allow students to enroll in a Master of Business, Entrepreneurship and Technology (MBET) part-time program while completing their PhD.

Other universities across the country have had similar success with directly fostering and embracing tech entrepreneurship in creative ways. We need to continue to encourage and broaden this support to sustain Canada's startup success.

MARY WELLS IS THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO.

