

# Hemingway Is Still

By John Virtue

HAVANA, Dec. 26 (UPI) The memory of the late novelist Ernest Hemingway is probably more revered today in Communist Cuba than that of any American with the possible exception of Abraham Lincoln.

Hemingway's bust looks out over the Bay of Cojimar, the tiny fishing village near Havana where he spent much of his time and where the film version of his novel, "The Old Man and the Sea," was made.

Another bust reigns over the bar of the Floridita, the birthplace of the daiquiri and the novelist's favorite restaurant in Havana.

An armed militiaman sits on a chair in the doorway of the Ambos Mundos Hotel in Old Havana, Hemingway's home in the 1930s and now a historic site in his honor.

The gold medal he received

with his 1954 Nobel Prize for literature lies in the shrine of Our Virgin of Charity in El Cobre, a gift of the author to the Cuban people.

Hemingway's own shrine is his beloved farm, El Vigia, in nearby San Francisco de Paula. The farm, which Hemingway bought in 1938 with the profits from "For Whom the Bell Tolls," was given to the Cuban government by his widow several weeks after the novelist died, believed by his own hand, in 1961.

The one-story, white colonial house is now a Hemingway museum, looked after by the two Cubans who knew him best, journalist Fernando G. Campomar and Rene Villareal, his house manager. But it took the intervention of Premier Fidel Castro to get the project under way.

When Hemingway died in the United States, Villareal,

who had been "adopted" by Hemingway when he was 12, was too saddened to stay in the house.

"He was like a father to me," says Villareal, now 35. "I learned much from him. I learned about fishing and hunting and about many other things."

Villareal remained in the house until Hemingway's widow, "Miss Mary," came to Cuba to pick up a few personal effects and turn the farm over to the government. Then he went to work in a factory.

The rolling, eight-acre farm was in a state of disrepair when Castro came out with crew members of the ship African Pilot, which brought medicine to Cuba during the Bay of Pigs prisoner exchange. He sought out Vil-

## Revered in Cuba

lareal and told him to return to the farm and keep the main house the way it was when Hemingway was alive.

Campomar, who oversees the entire operation, decided to go one step further. He wants to build a memorial house near the main building. "The memorial would contain his pictures, guns, etc.," said Campomar. "There would also be a projection room to show all the films made from his works. And there would also be a library with all his work in all the languages into which they have been translated."

Campomar, a handsome man in his 50s, said Hemingway and Castro had met only a few times but that they hit it off together. "Both were men of Spanish temperament, big men who liked danger and adventure," he said.

Between 700 and 800 persons now visit the farm monthly, about half of them foreigners.

The farm is a block off the main highway down a narrow street lined with poor peasant houses. "These were his people," Campomar said during a recent visit. "When anyone was sick or died, 'Papa' was always there."

The bedroom is laid out as if Hemingway were about to return. Beside the bed is a bookcase on top of which is a worn typewriter. He wrote standing up in his stocking feet, said Villareal, because he felt restrained with shoes on.

Down by the empty swimming pool lie the graves of two of Hemingway's dogs, their names, Negrita and Blacky, on wooden markers. He also liked cats, and once had 47 of them.