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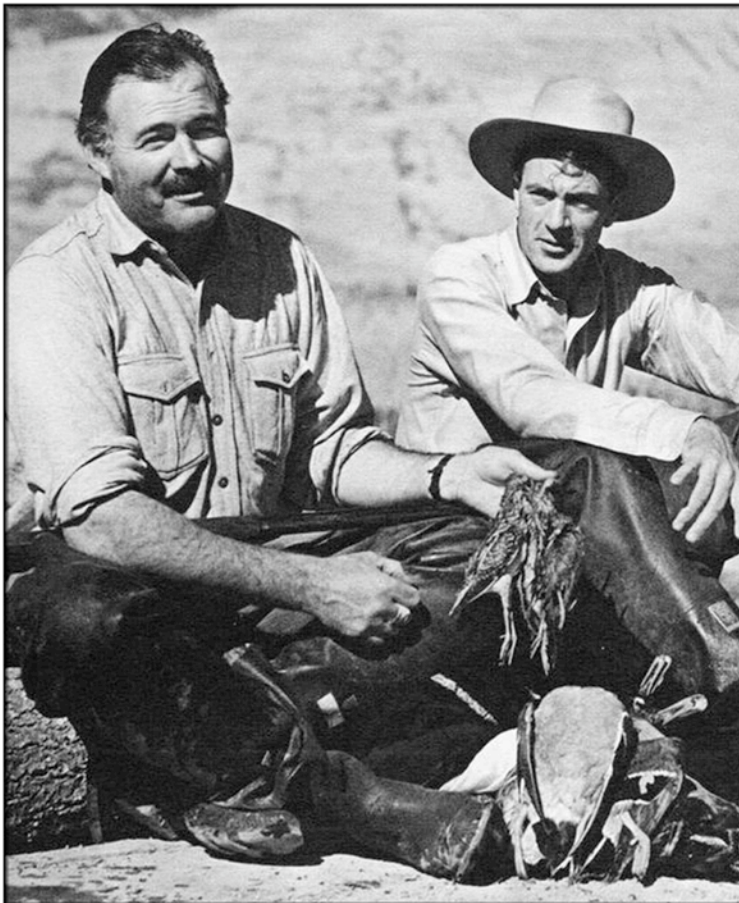
# In Touch

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## The Odd Couple



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Ernest Hemingway, left, and Gary Cooper hunted together near Sun Valley in the early 40s.

Hemingway, Cooper's unlikely friendship was filled with irony.

*Editor's note: The following is excerpted from author John Mulholland's article "Cooper and Hemingway: A 20 year Friendship". The entire article, with additional pictures, may be found on our website at [idahopress.com](http://idahopress.com)*

**By John Mulholland**

Screen legend Gary Cooper died at the age of 60 on May 13, 1961. Though

Cooper's extraordinary 35 year film career has been very well documented, less thoroughly examined has been his fascinating twenty year friendship with the equally legendary Ernest Hemingway.

On paper, it might seem impossible that the tight lipped man from Montana and this centuries best-known

writer would become friends. Utter opposites... nothing uncommon....the liberal intellectual artist and the ultra conservative movie star.

### Exhibit in Boise

"Picturing Hemingway: A Writer in His Time" will be on display at the Idaho State Historical Museum from Friday to July 12. The Traveling exhibit will explore, with insightful text and images, Hemingway's life as a writer.

The Museum is open from 9 am to 6 pm Monday through Saturday and 1 pm until 5 pm Sunday. It is located at 610 Julia Davis Drive. Admission is free.

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# Friendship: Role fit perfectly

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Sun Valley, 1940 A mutual friend described their first meeting: "They were like strange schoolboys sizing each other up, a line scratched in the dirt between them, until they "got'er done" Then they were like old buddies from that moment on."

The first afternoon they hunted together near Sun Valley in 1940. Hemingway knew that he had found in Gary Cooper a kindred spirit. He immediately understood that Cooper was no celebrity hunter. This was no movie star out to prove his manhood by firing a rifle. Indeed, when Cooper found out his cancer was terminal and rejected colbalt treatments - in today's parlance, opting for "death with dignity" - he made sure he and "papa" went hunting one last time around their beloved Idaho.

As artists (a word both men scoffed at), the writer and the actor were masters of minimalism. Hemingway observed to friends that he and Cooper had the same spare approach to their craft. Both were minimalists, leaving much that was important unwritten/unsaid.

Hemingway saw the actor behind the movie star in Cooper long before the critics caught on. He wrote in a letter to Cooper "So much finer actor than anybody knows, including you."

Hemingway's youngest son Gregory, offers this insight into the bond between Cooper & Hemingway. "They really did enjoy each another. You could tell by the resonance of their voices and the way their eyes smiled. And there was nobody around to impress, that was the beauty of it, just their wives and kids. Both of them were great actors — yes, my father was one, too, — who had forged, consciously or other wise, two of the most successful hero images of the century. There was never any rivalry between them, and there was no reason for any."

Both Cooper and Hemingway were suffering career slumps in the early 50s. And then came the summer of 1952. In late July "High Noon" opened. Hailed as an instant classic, it put Cooper back on top. He won his 2nd Academy Award and became the number one box office draw.

Six weeks later Hemingway's "Old Man and the Sea" appeared full-length in Life Magazine. It was hailed by critics and sold 5.5 million copies of Life before becoming a best-seller in best seller. He went on to win Hemingway's only Pulitzer Prize, and was instrumental in earning him the Nobel prize in 1954.

Gary Cooper and Ernest Hemingway were back on top. What is fascinating about this is that "High Noon" and "Old Man and the Sea" are essentially the same story. Both tell of a man, shunned and mocked by friends, who is forced to face alone an impacable enemy and when finally he triumphs, discovers only a bittersweet.

There was one final role for Cooper. The ironic part is that it wasn't bases on a Hemingway work. First-time novelist Glendon Swarthout's "They came to Cordora" was published in 1958.

Many reviewers noted Swarthout's lean, Hemingway style. The story of a man's attempt to understand the true meaning of courage. "They came to Cordora" promised to be the definitive analysis of the heroic mystique Cooper had embodied for over three decades on the screen.

Unfortunately, the film was taken from director Robert Rosen and re-edited by the studio (Rosen died while in the midst of trying to buy the detailed film beck from the studio to restore it to it's original vision, perhaps it will yet happen). The existing film is both brilliant and flawed. But his shattering, late-career, pull out all-the-stops performance as would-be coward Major Thomas Thorn. Gary Cooper gave us a brilliant and definitive depiction of the Hemingway hero: the man who gains self respect by comporting himself with courage in the face of impossible circumstances.

The final chapter: Suffering from terminal cancer, Cooper spoke with over the phone in the spring of 1961 with Hemingway, tight-lipped and uncomplaining right to the end. Cooper told Hemingway: "I'll bet I beat you to the barn,"

He did.

On May 13, 1961, Gary Cooper died. Seven weeks later, on the morning of July 2, Ernest Hemingway took his own life at home in Ketchum, Idaho.

There is an appropriately dramatic irony to the fact that the lives of two men, whose artistic-legacies had offered a moral compass to a nation groping for values during the Depression and the dark war years, should suffer untimely deaths at the dawn of the erupting 60s. Their final, poignant chapter closed at the beginning of a decade which would challenge many of the very ideals and precepts which both men so prominently represented.

It was as if remaining true to their own code of conduct, i.e. comporting themselves with courage, dignity and self-respect, they were passing the torch of masculinity to a new generation. A new generation with new ideas about masculinity and heroism. And yet, with the popularity of "Saving Private Ryan" on film and Stephen Ambrose's "Citizen Soldiers" on the page - and all that that popularitv says about about a new look at heroism and masculinity - perhaps Cooper & Hemingway hadn't so much passed the torch, as merely lent it.

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• For more information on Gary Cooper & Ernest Hemingway go to the website [cooperandhemingway.com](http://cooperandhemingway.com). The new website will launch today and will showcase Cooper and Hemingways as individuals, with special focus on their friendship.