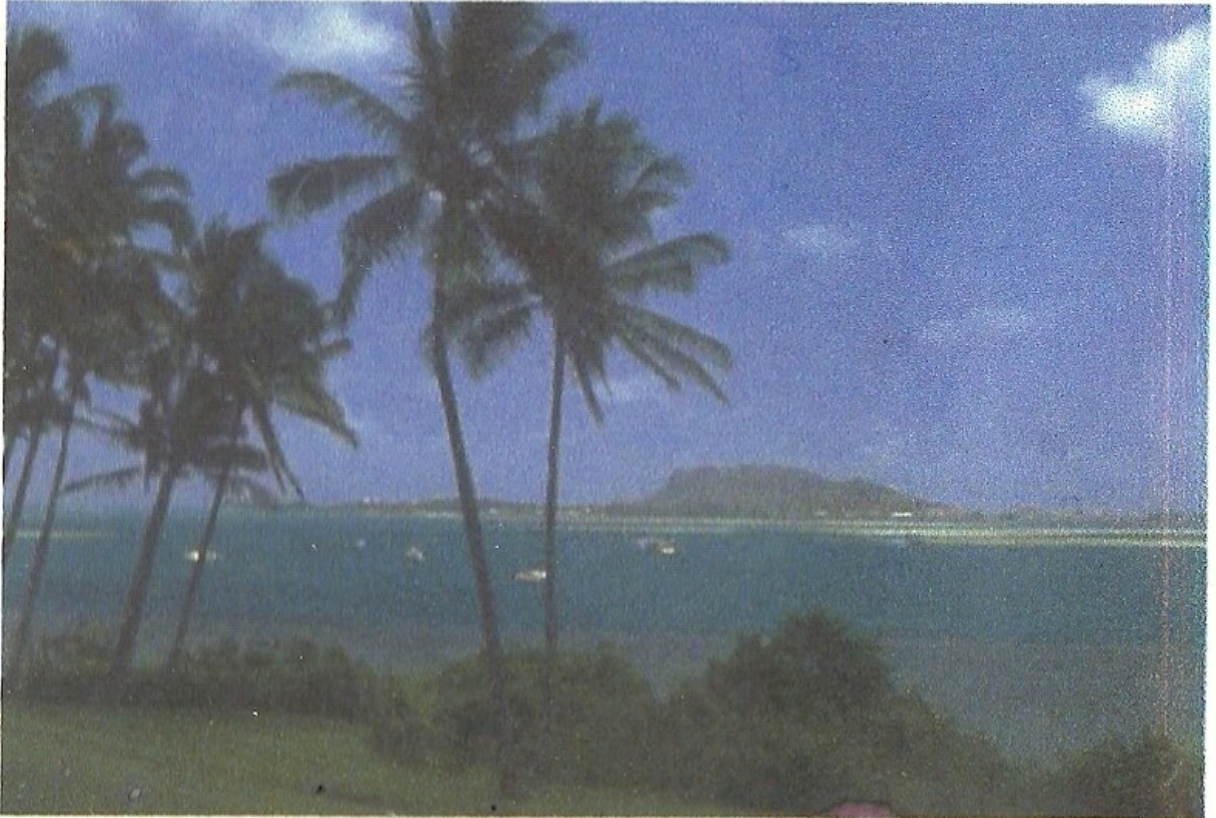


SUSAN'S KEY WEST ADVENTURE



Sept 13, 2000

Hello Everyone!!, I'm back. Whew!
I'm so tired and sore. Here is the report on my quick trip to
KEY WEST, FLORIDA.

I had to achieve this trip step by step.

- 1) Get time off from the boss. DONE!
- 2) Secure my truck at the truck stop in Miami, if they allow me to leave it there for a couple days. I even put a lock on the steering knuckle, and quarters in the glad hands. DONE!
- 3) Get a rental car. See if they will bring the car to the truck stop so I can rent it. NO! Sooo.....
- 4) Get myself to a car rental place. HOW?? Taxi.
- 5) Cost me \$18.75 stinkin bucks to go 4 stinkin miles to the car rental!! OUCH. No darn busses run there from the truck stop.

6) Get a car!! Is my credit card good enough?? NO. I only had \$60 avail on it. So, bye loser, now what are you going to do?? I had about \$300 cash. So I started to head for the Greyhound bus station a couple blocks from the car rental. BUT..... I saw a UHAUL moving truck rental place. AH HAH!! IDEA!!

7) Rent the Uhaul for \$19.95 a day instead of over \$40 a day for a car. but...(downside), I had to pay .39 cents a mile for the uhaul. I laid down \$200 cash deposit. He asked where I'm taking the truck. I said I'm moving from Hialeah to Miami, so I'll be going "back and forth". (He asked me like 5 times!!)He saw on my license, Melrose, Florida. And asked "Where is that?". I said it's about 50 miles north of Miami. (But it's really about 350 miles north of Miami!! hee hee). It had a full tank and I had to return it with a full tank. No problem. It's a funny way to get to the keys, but hey, it's wheels and has working air cond so I'm off to KEY WEST!! If there's a will, there's a way!!

So putt putt down the road I go. Carrying only a gym bag stuffed with some clothes, shower stuff, camera and film. Traveling light. I'll worry about sleeping arrangements when I get there.

TUES 2:15pm, I'm off. Rolling down I-95 towards US 1 to KEY WEST. This uhaul is a junk heap. The brakes want to come loose when you hit the pedal and rattle and pull you into other lanes. And there is this tapping funny noise when it's running. Well, I hope this heap doesn't self-destruct on me. I hope it makes the trip!!

MILES: From Miami to Key West, approx 164. I fought through a little traffic, then....hit the long stretch.

Key after key. They are little towns with alot of water between them. Little islands connected with one long road. Beautiful water. I want to pull over and go swimming. But I'm excited to get to the "end of the line" KEY WEST. Drive no further. I don't stop much. I started out with a full tank of gas.

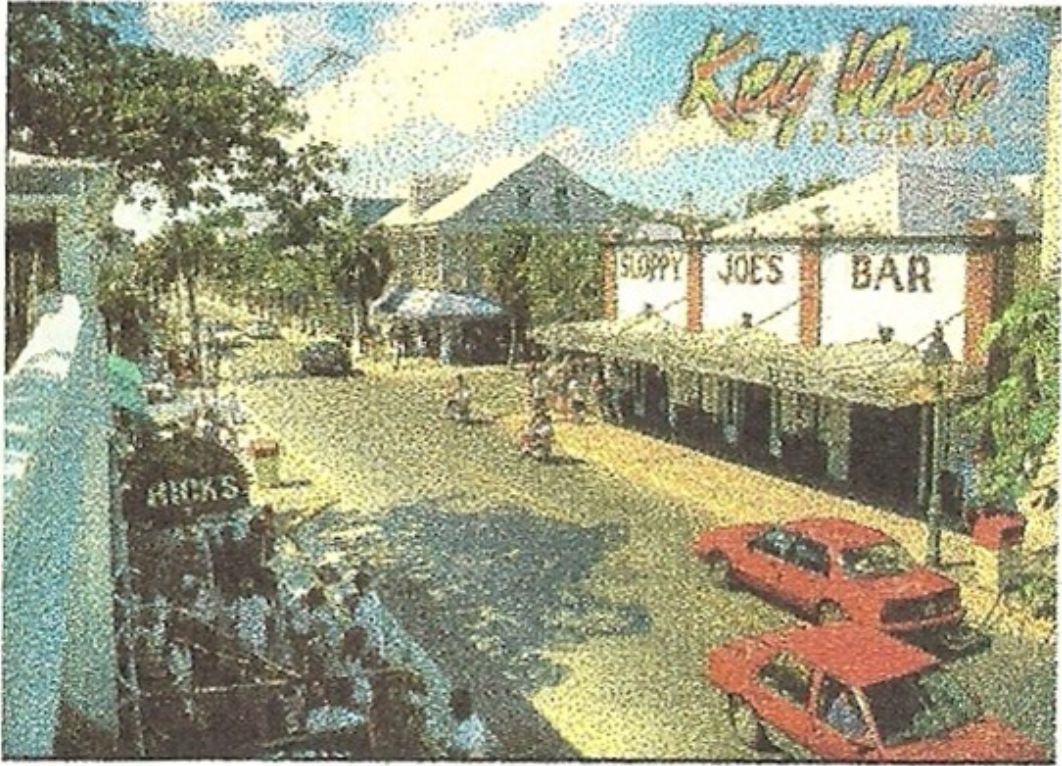
FINALLY HERE!! After about 4hours and 3/4 tank later, I made it. Time is: almost 7pm. Sun is going down soon. Hmmm? Where to go first?? I know....



Having fun at Sloppy Joe's

SLOPPY JOE'S BAR: They have a net cam (sloppyjoes.com)The "sloppycam". I park the uhaul, feeling kinda funny driving this jalopy. Maybe they'll think I'm a local?? hee hee. Sloppy's is on Duval street. The heart of KW. And that's where the famous author ERNEST MILLER HEMINGWAY hung out. The place is hopping. Great energy. There will be some live bands a little later. Before getting to KW, I stopped at a gas station, shaved my legs in the stinky sink, and changed clothes. I was dirty from work. I wore my ROBERT URICH VEGA\$ tshirt that my mom#1 Karen made for me. I looked stylin. And my surfer shorts, my black Florida State baseball hat. With my hair in a pony tail, my goofy glasses, and beach sandals.

I sat down at the bar. Time is: about 8pm. What to do?? I think I'll just hang out here till I get tired, then go sleep in the front seat of the uhaul. Sounds good. I take a sloppy joe's beer for \$3.75 and look around. I ask somebody to take some pictures of me. I decided after that one beer, to just drive around town a little. It's a little town. You can see it all in about 10 city blocks!! I get a little feel for the lay of the land there. Then head back to Sloppy's.



This time I get a table. I have conch fritters and another sloppy's beer (my 2nd beer). I have 3 extra chairs. The place starting to fill up. There is 2 guys up on stage, one is barefoot. They sing goofy songs. One about "scrotum", another about female hygiene, and then they bring up a hand puppet of boxing nun, and proceed to sing and box about their time in "provocial school". Nuns beat them up. It's really funny. The toast us, we all toast them. It's a party. There is a couple near me looking for a place to sit. I offer them 2 chairs at table. They gladly accept.

MEET RICHARD & HIS WIFE CATHY: 2 white folks, they look in their 30's but are really in their 40's. They've been drinking most of the day. It's their first day in KW too. As it turns out, Richard drives a truck too. Super nice people. We drink and party there for many hours. I had one more beer (that makes 3). Then Richard & Cathy buy me a beer (the 4th and final one for me). I'm getting a really good buzz going here. I'm a lightweight, I don't hardly drink very much. (job and health reasons). I whistle loud at the bands and it's so loud in there. You have to scream to talk. Richard & Cathy dance some songs. I think the lead singer in this 2nd band is cute. I may myself noticed!! hee hee. I give him a dollar donation. I'm feeling very festive here. I'm having a great time.

RICHARD & CATHY



As Richard, Cathy & I talk throughout the eve, they find out I'm just going to crash out in the front seat of my uhaul. They say "hey, we are camped a couple blocks over at this rv park, we have a motorhome. You're welcome to sleep on our foldout bed". I accept their offer. After staying up a little and talking in their rv, we hit the sack. Ah...finally some sleep.

MORNING: Cathy cooks scrambled eggs, potatoes and yummy bacon. We have coffee and nurse our hangovers. I forgot my rule....TUMS & IBUPROFIN if I'm going to drink. OOppps So Cathy & I head to the supermarket just up town so I can stop suffering. When we got back, we decided we'd check out that "conch" (pronounced "conk") train and see the sites. It's a really small place to it won't take long to see it all. That darn train and another tour train both charge \$18 bucks for adults!!! We say NO WAY. And decide to walk some. We walked to MALLORY SQUARE and paid \$8 to see the shipwreck museum. It was neat. And they have a couple actors guiding us. I climbed to the very top of the lookout tower there, where, in the 1800's when a ship hit the reefs, they would yell "WRECK ASHORE!!" And run like mad people to save the people on the ship and get what cargo they can.



ME AT HEMINGWAY'S HOUSE

Alot of the buildings built at that time are still standing today. Including that lookout tower. They built them so strong and to survive the mighty hurricanes that happen there. After walking, and climbing, while still nursing my hangover, my legs started shaking. From fatigue. It was also about 97 degrees with 100% humidity. So we were cooking!!

We decided to take the air conditioned-styling ride-uhaul and see more sites. They can't drive around in their rv, it's all hooked up to electrical & toilet. So it's better to take my little uhaul. Next stop.....

HEMINGWAY HOUSE: We paid our \$8 and went in. His 2 story home was beautiful. With balconies all around both stories. And all the lush tropical foilage you have ever seen. We went room to room with the tour guide. Learned some interesting things. Maybe someday, I'll be a famous writer and people would tour this eccentric house and learn of my funny & curious ways. hee hee I took lots of pictures and petted some of the 62 or so cats that live there. Decendents from Hemingway's cats that he loved so much. I especially perked up when I saw his private writing room. It was off from the main house, and he had a bridge going from his bedroom in the main house, to his writing room.



Hemingway's writing room

In his writing room where some of his library of books, his table, his old "royal" typewriter, his wooden chair that ooked to me would be uncomfortable to sit in for 5 minutes let alone for hours. And his bathroom. His room looked out over the garden and his swimming pool.

There were cats all over inside and outside of the house. There was no air conditioning in the house, or ceiling fans. One of his 4 wives replaced the ceiling fans with chandeliers. She had a fetish for chandeliers. I thought only one of them was only slightly cool, the others were ugly. I'd take ceiling fans over chandeliers any time. The tour people had portable fans blowing full blast on the floors of all the rooms. His bedroom was nice, and simple and his bed was the shortest I've seen. What was he, 5 feet tall??? If he was over 5'5", his feet and legs would dangle off the edge. I thought that was a uncomfortable bed!!! Nice bedframe though.

Basically, his house was pretty nice, and simple. Not too extravagant. There was some nice tile, oh....and a cat sculpture made by his friend "Picasso" in a glass case in his bedroom. That sculpture was found in boxes of stuff in his basement after his death. His wife at the time was just going to throw it out. Not realizing it's value. But his children saved it.



I took lots of pictures. I liked his bathroom on his 2nd floor. That design is 20's, chic, the tile there on the floor was from Paris, and rare at the time. It was rare at the time to have a bathroom on the 2nd floor of a house. Or in the house in KW. They usually had outhouses!! The bathtub and shower head are really cute.

It was painted a cool light yellow, with green trim. I stopped at the little gift shop they had on the first floor, right under his writing room. I bought some cards and a little Hemingway house magnet. After that....we drove to...

THE SOUTHERNMOST POINT: This marker just south of Hemingway's house. I got some pictures made of me, and took some pictures of Richard & Cathy. I jumped into the water there at that point. I just wanted to get in the water, it was so hot out. They took pictures of me in the water. A little ways up from there, is the southernmost house. It's a beautiful Victorian home built in 1912. I have pictures and postcards of that house. Next...

Richard & Cathy wanted to take a nap. So I walked around Mallory Square a little more. Looked at the Aquarium and called my friend John. He had been there before with his wife. I think, one of the best ways to see the keys is by boat.



Relaxing on Smather's Beach

Land is good, but boat...you can travel out a ways and see the reefs and go snorkeling. I decided I wanted to see Smather's Beach, so I drove over there. I wasn't that impressed with it. Sure, nice sand, palm trees, hotels across the way. But...when you walk up to the water, there is about 4 feet of dead grass on the sand you have to walk through, then in the water is more grass. You walk through that for about 10 feet or so, then you reach a tiny 10 foot stretch of sand. The water is clear, and warm. But not the blue/green like I expected here. But mainly it was because of the grass.

The blue/green water is other places in the keys, I have to explore more. So I took a dip in the water, got my hair wet, and sat on my butt in the water for awhile. I looked up, and saw black, menacing clouds over head. I left before I got caught in rain. It didn't rain, but it looked like it would. I went back to Mallory Square and bumped into Cathy.

Richard wasn't feeling too good. He had the runs. And I did a little bit that day too. We were trying to figure out what did we eat and/or drink to make us this way? For me, it must of been the drinking. I did eat a fresh coconut that a local gave me when I walked past him and his dog, and commented on his coconuts. But my runs didn't last as long as Richard's.

Poor Richard. Cathy & I decided to watch the sunset at Mallory Square. It's the thing to do when you are there. Every night, they have a sunset festival. There are performers of various kinds. Jugglers, tightrope walkers, magicians, and people selling handmade goods on tables. I had a brainstorm of an idea:

SELL MY BOOKS at Mallory Square. I didn't notice any writers there. My plan is to have at least 3 books written before I'm 40. Which, I'll be 37 on the 28th of this month, so I better get crackin. I will sell my books while on my big 5-6 month long vacation. I talked to the locals, and they said they have to pay \$7 for a little space to sell their stuff, and the goods have to be handmade, original stuff. Not mass produced, commercial items. I thought, "just \$7 bucks??, what a deal!!" At home in Hermosa Beach, Calif, they have a big festival twice a year, and charge you \$350 bucks for a space to sell your handmade goods. And for Venice Beach, Calif, you have to have some business license, and pay like \$50 or more. And you can only be on one side of the walkway. KEY WEST here I come!! I'll sign my books for my happy customers. I'm a big dreamer, and why not?!!



That's me sitting next to the pirate.



Key West Aquarium

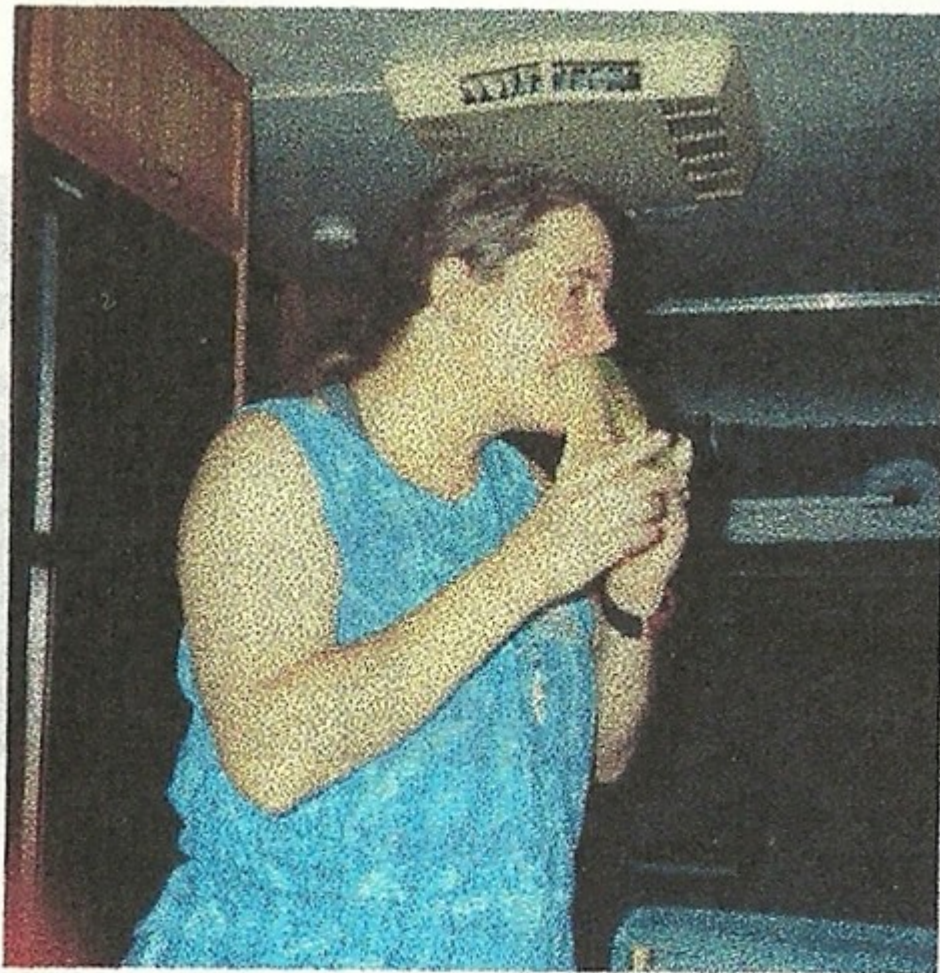
This morning, I had a idea pop into my head about another story. Don't you just love it???

After the sunset, Cathy & I walked around the square. I had a hotdog & soda for under \$4 and Cathy had a cute tropical drink that I took a picture of her with, and palm tress and ocean in the background. Then we meandered to Sloppy Joe's. She had a drink & some Key West shrimp (super yummy. The batter they soak the shrimp in and cover the shrimp with, and the dipping sauce...nothing like it anywhere I've found - in L.A. anyway. Yummy sweet taste) I had a diet soda.

Afterwards, we headed back to the rv. We were all sore and tired. It was about 9pm. We went to sleep. Before sleep, I hugged them goodnight, and wouldn't see them when I leave. I'd leave really early in the morning, while they were still asleep. I really appreciate their hospitality. I GOT LUCKY!! meeting them and having a good time with them. I wasn't totally alone. I had FRIENDS with me. It was really nice. We did exchange phone #'s and address's. They are from Wichita, Kansas. And next time I'm there, I promised to take them out to dinner. I owe them.



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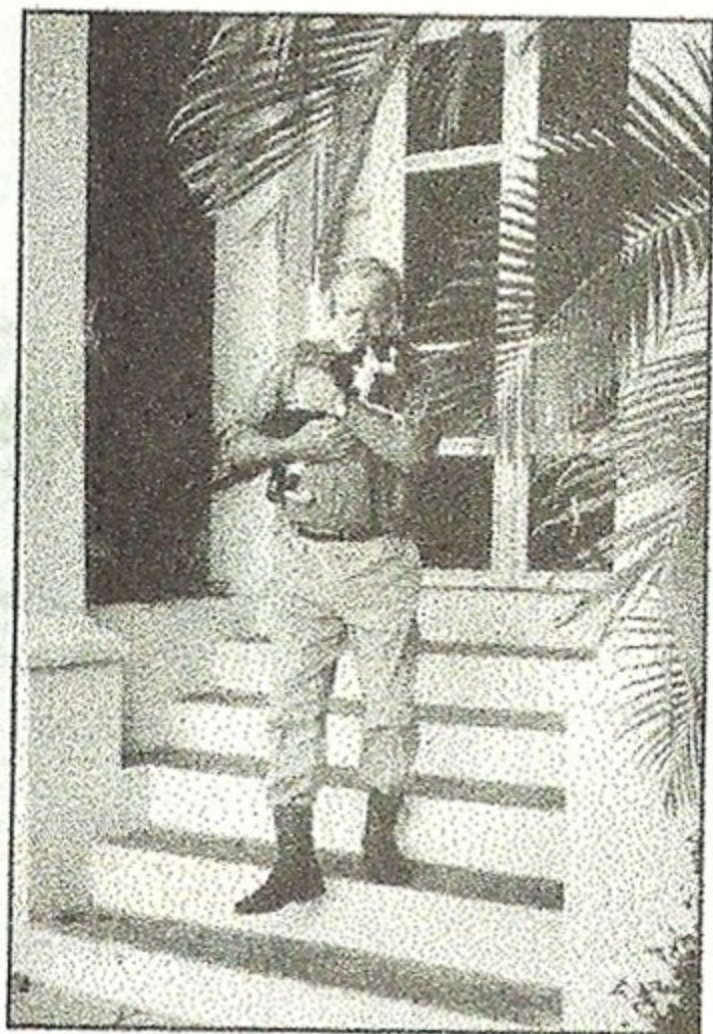


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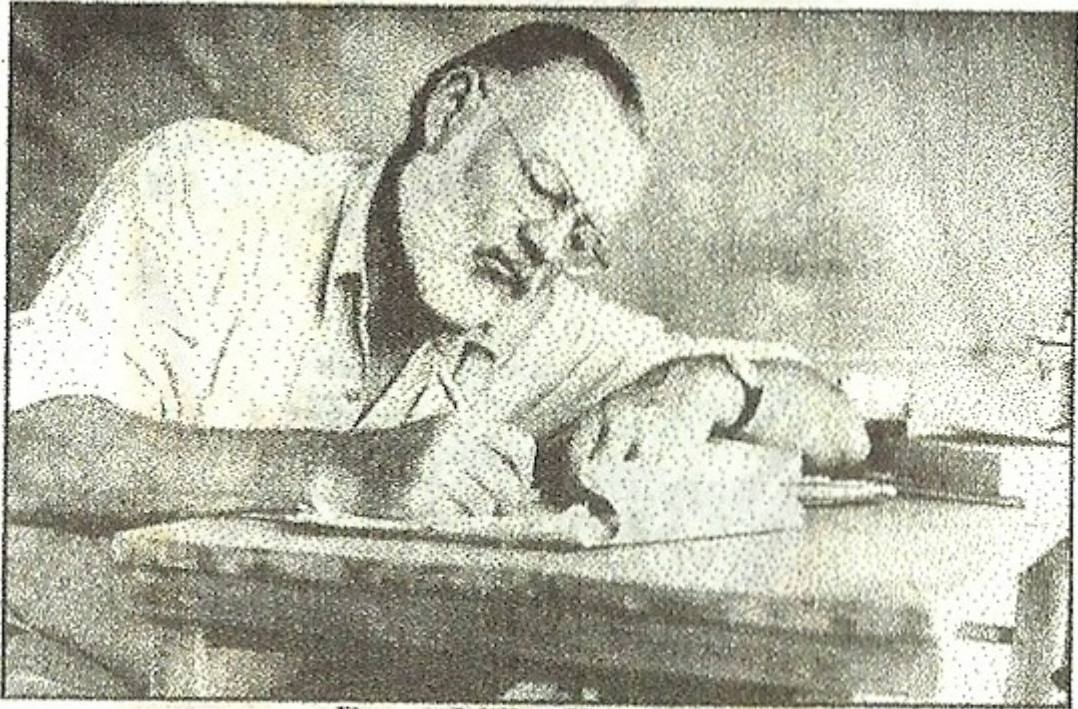
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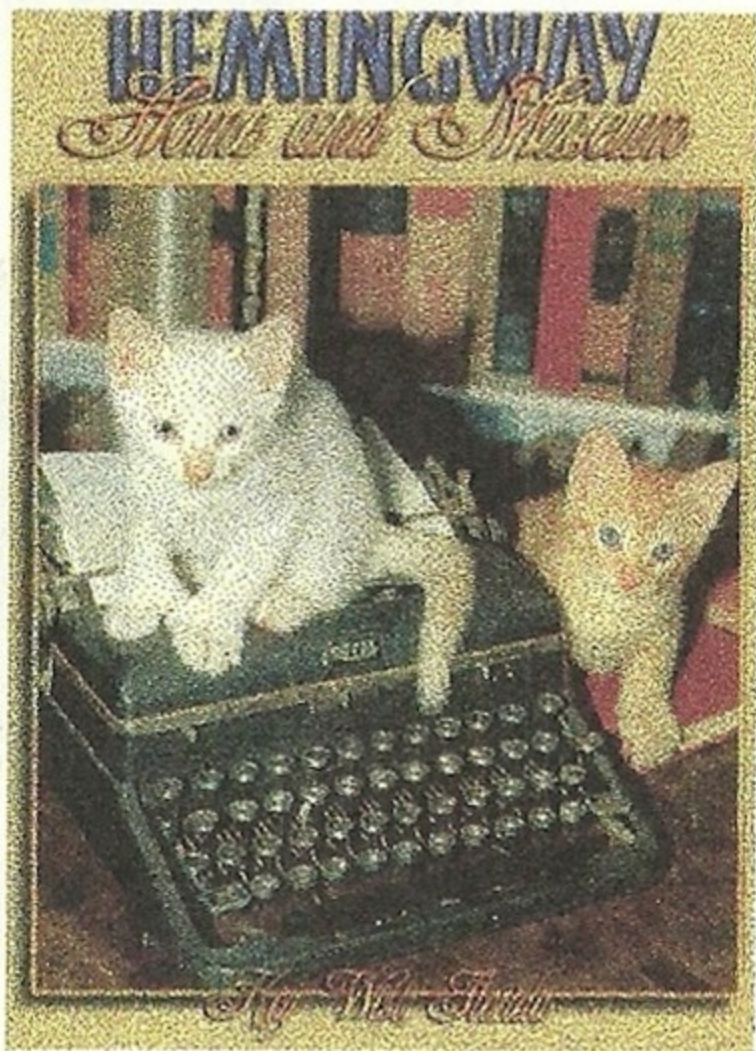
You can rent these cute cruisers



Ernest Miller Hemingway
1899 - 1961



Ernest Miller Hemingway
1899 - 1961

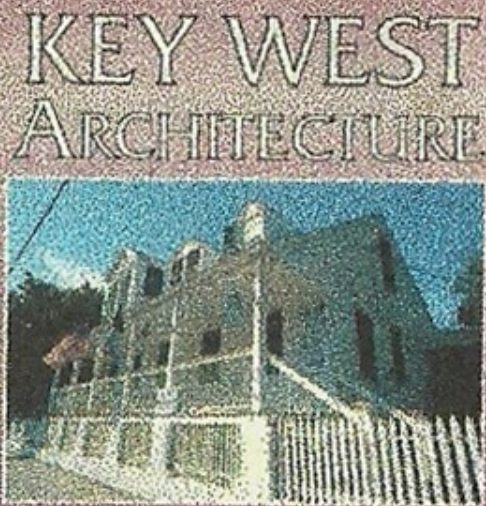




KEY WEST



Southernmost Home



KEY WEST ARCHITECTURE

While Richard drives a truck from Kansas to Florida and back, Cathy works for a big company, she's been there 23 years. She works in the office with a computer all day. They are not on the internet at all. They don't have a computer at home. When she gets home, she doesn't want anything to do with computers. They have 2 daughters, and 3 grandsons.

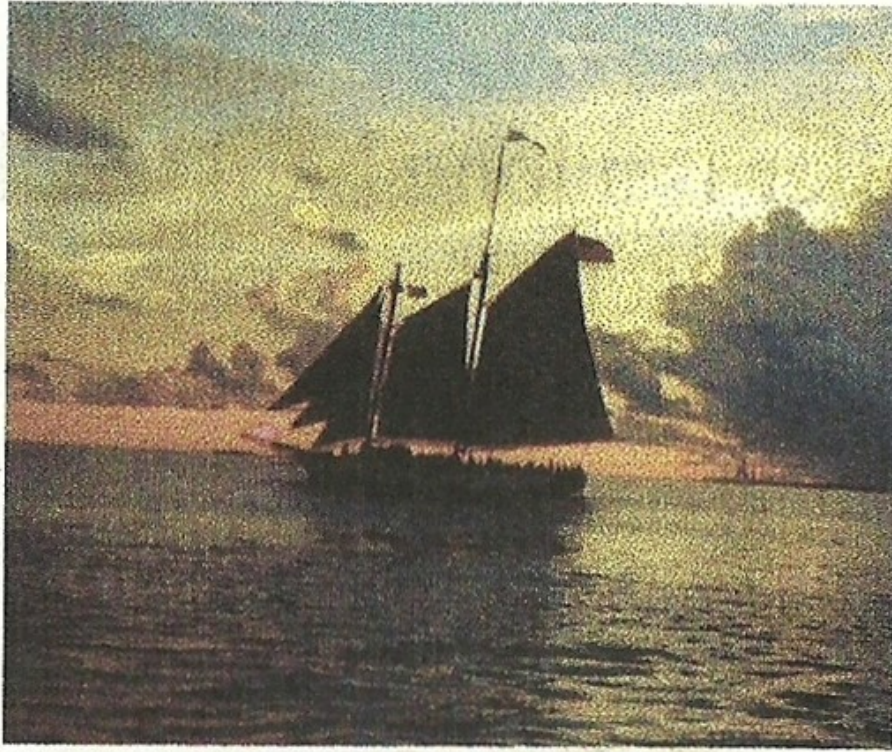
3AM KEY WEST: Some hard core locals still out, at the bars. It's dark out. I walk to my uhaul, and climb in and take off. I arrived at my truck first. I was worried about it and wanted to make sure it was ok.

All is well. I drop off some of my baggage, and leave to return to the uhaul. It was an expensive little trip. The cost of the uhaul nearly took up all my \$200 cash deposit!! And with fuel I spent a painful amount to fill it back up, about \$50. It was \$1.49 a gallon, the cheapest I could find anywhere. For someone that has put gas in a tank, something like 3 times in the past year & 1/2, THAT HURT!! You can go broke just driving your car anymore these days!!! Jeez! I'm glad Swift pays for all its fuel!! I make my way back to my truck. I try to start it, to get the air cond going and take a nice, cool, nap. NO START.

In my haste to leave, I forgot to unplug my fridge, and it drained the battery. It cost me \$35 to get a jump. Now I can take a nap. I'm sore, I'm walking like I'm injured. I'm limping. I'm hungry. I get a bite to eat and sleep. About 4 hours later, my qualcomm beeps and I've got a preplan. Pick up a load up the I-95 in Jacksonville (just below the border of Georgia). It's 350 miles. I better get going so I can get there as fast as I can, so I can get at least 6 more hours of sleep before I deliver in 2 places in Jacksonville in the morning. From there, I take the rest of the load to Columbia, S.C. and deliver on the 18th, monday. So, I get to rest this weekend. I'm surprised I even made it from Miami to Jacksonville in the sore, tired state I was in. I had some strength reserves, and used them all up. I felt much better the next morning making my deliveries. And much better this morning. I can see better now, my eyes aren't burning and I'm not so sleepy, fatigued, tired. But my calves are still hurting alot. I had a nice, long shower last night and that felt good. I really needed that.

So today, I will finish some paperwork, rest, and fart around on my pc. Thanks for reading my little adventure, and I'll talk to you soon,

LOVE, SOOZ. :-)



The Schooner "Western Union". You can sail with her daily.

The End