

Ernest Hemingway was smitten.

Nineteen years old and convalescing in Italy after being struck by a mortar shell during World War I, he fell in love with his nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky.

She did not love him back.

But for a photograph taken in Milan in 1918, Hemingway and von Kurowsky locked eyes and smiled. Both were dressed in their uniforms and stood with their hands behind their backs.

For the first time Saturday, Hemingway's sole surviving son, Patrick, saw the photograph during a private tour of a new exhibition about his father at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

"Oh that's a nice picture," the 87-year-old Hemingway exclaimed. "Where did they find that?" The answer filled the gallery with laughter.

"Well, right here at the Kennedy Library," said Stacey Bredhoff, the museum's curator.

Beginning Monday, the public can see the exhibition, which is considered the first major museum display of the legendary writer's work and life.

The show, "Ernest Hemingway: Between Two Wars," drew heavily from the JFK Library archives. The library has been the principal repository for Hemingway's papers since 1972 but has never displayed them for large audiences.

The papers were given to the library after President Kennedy helped Hemingway's widow, Mary, retrieve her husband's belongings from Cuba after his suicide in 1961.

At the time, Americans could not travel to Cuba, but Kennedy arranged for Mary to enter the country and claim papers left at the Finca Vigia, the home the Hemingways left during the Cuban Revolution.

Patrick Hemingway said in an interview that he was familiar with many of the items on display, but he had never seen some artifacts from his father's relationship with von Kurowsky. She is considered to be the inspiration for Catherine Barkley, the heroine in "A Farewell to Arms."

"It really was his first love and, you know, I don't care what you say, I think people do fall in love the first time differently," said Hemingway, who lives in Bozeman, Mont., and manages the intellectual property of his father's estate.

"It's a unique experience that people should have. And it made him perhaps a harder-minded person afterward," he said.

The exhibition opened in September at The Morgan Library & Museum in New York City, drawing about 71,000 visitors over three months, the curator said. It is at the JFK Library through Dec. 31.

"Nobody had done an exhibition like that on Hemingway before," said Declan Kiely, who curated the show at the Morgan. "All these original drafts and so on, they'd never been seen by the public and it was just sort of unleashing the power of the archives."

The exhibition tracks Hemingway from 1916, when he wrote for "The Tabula," a literary magazine at his high school in Oak Park, Ill., through World War II, which he chronicled for Collier's magazine.

It includes manuscripts and letters as well as ticket stubs from bullfights, a fishing log, the trophy of an impala shot by Hemingway in Africa, and a war medal he received for rescuing an Italian soldier. The soldier had been injured in the same shell explosion that wounded Hemingway.



JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Patrick Hemingway paused to admire a portrait painted of his father by artist Waldo Pierce in 1929.

The first letter displayed in the exhibition was written by Hemingway to his father, Clarence, in March 1925. The young writer set out his artistic credo for Clarence, who was skeptical of his son's writing career.

Susan Wrynn, the retired curator of the Hemingway collection at the JFK Library, said the letters bring Hemingway to life.

"The letters make you more aware of the man -- give you a picture unto him as a father as well as a hunter and a fisherman and all his other interests," she said. "They show you a little bit more of the person."

In his manuscripts, Hemingway often wrote in pencil, scrawling stories that became literary masterpieces on whatever paper he could find, including stationery from an American Red Cross Hospital and telegraph office.

Many times he crossed out words or sections, once chopping entire chapters from his first novel, "The Sun Also Rises," after F. Scott Fitzgerald critiqued them for their "elephantine facetiousness." Hemingway also famously wrote 47 endings for "A Farewell to Arms."

The section devoted to "A Farewell to Arms" includes excerpts from Hemingway's introduction to the book, in which he recalled writing the first draft in 1928 as his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, gave birth to Patrick.

The display conjured up memories for Patrick, who is in Boston for the presentation Sunday of the PEN/Hemingway Award at the JFK Library.

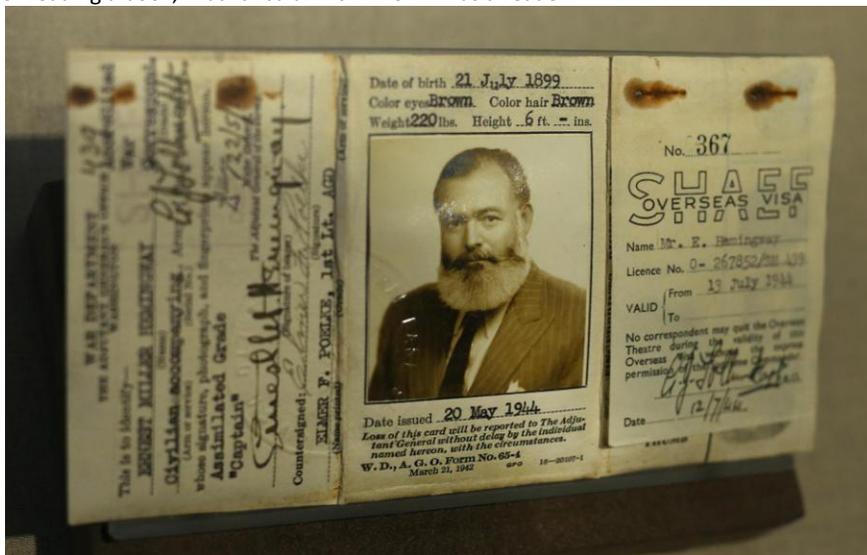
"I remember one time my dad forgot my birthday," he said. "He wrote [Pfeiffer], he said, 'Well, I always remembered it as more a day for you than for him.' "

Patrick Hemingway said he cherishes "A Farewell to Arms." "It's so perfect. It really is," he said.

Hemingway has emerged, his son said, "as one of the real masters of the English language."

Patrick said he remembers his father as an avid consumer of his native tongue.

"He was a real serious reader. My memory of him is not so much the active person. It's just seeing him in bed with a newspaper or reading a book," Patrick said. "I think of him as a reader."



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Hemingway's visa (top), issued for his job as a World War II European correspondent for Collier's magazine.

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