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## Hemingway's Lost Friend: Norton S. Baskin

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### Abstract

The friendship of Ernest Hemingway and Norton S. Baskin has until now escaped notice. Baskin once owned the posh Castle Warden Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida, and later managed the Dolphin Restaurant and Bar at the famed tourist attraction Marineland. Hemingway and Baskin became friends after first meeting in 1940, and on a number of occasions Hemingway visited with Baskin on his way north. Baskin described one such visit in a letter, dated 24 September 1947, to his wife, the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who also knew and admired Hemingway. The letter displays the respect Baskin felt for Hemingway and provides some valuable information about Hemingway's life in Cuba during this period.

• NOTE •

HEMINGWAY'S LOST FRIEND:  
NORTON S. BASKIN

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BIOGRAPHICAL ANECDOTES about Ernest Hemingway are myriad. After all, his friends and acquaintances were legion. There is, however, one friend who has gone unnoticed, Norton S. Baskin, the second husband of Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. An hotelier, Baskin first met Hemingway in September 1940, when Baskin, Rawlings, and their guest Julia Scribner were having dinner at the Dolphin Restaurant, part of the famous Marineland (now defunct), located south of St. Augustine, Florida. As the story goes, Rawlings noticed Hemingway and Martha Gellhorn, later his third wife, at a table across the room. Rawlings sent him a note: "Are you Ernest Hemingway?" Hemingway responded: "If you are Marjorie Rawlings, I am." Rawlings wrote to Maxwell Perkins on 19 September that it was a "very jolly meeting," that Hemingway was in a "better frame of mind" than when she had first met him in Bimini in 1936, and that they all liked Gellhorn "immensely." After dinner and drinks the five of them went to Rawlings's oceanfront cottage at Crescent Beach, where the "drunken hospitality" continued. Hemingway and Gellhorn stayed "much later than was wise for them" (qtd. in Tarr, *Max and Marjorie* 469).

Hemingway clearly liked Baskin, originally from Alabama and a raconteur among raconteurs. His wry humor and dapper demeanor made him especially appealing. Baskin was careful never to presume or take advantage of his friendship with Hemingway. He would say to those who asked, "Hemingway was my friend, not my close friend." The two of them simply enjoyed each other's company. Hemingway, of course, knew Rawlings well

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