

# HEMINGWAY ON BEING SHOT, AGAIN

“Trying to become a more casual traveler, your correspondent finally ends up by shooting himself through both legs with one hand while gaffing a shark with the other. This is as far as he will go in pleasing a reader.”

Esquire magazine, 1935

---



In contrast to later exploits, Hemingway's first trip to Bimini was a complete failure. It was April of 1935 when Hemingway and party, including the famous writer John Dos Passos, set off from Key West with the intention of fishing their way over to the obscure little island. There they hoped to chase the giant tuna and marlin reportedly swimming in the nearby

waters. A few hours into the trip the party hooked up with a shark, most likely a large bullshark, one of two or three species that can legitimately be called man-eaters. After a spirited fight, the flailing beast was finally hoisted into the

cockpit. Hemingway pulled out his Colt revolver to silence the shark once and for all. That he did, but not before first shooting himself in both legs, which may

---

**As the large shark was being manhandled in the cockpit a shot rang out. Ernest Hemingway, the acclaimed author, had shot himself in the leg.**

---

Marine Marketing & Advertising by Dave Kresge

davekresge@aol.com © all rights reserved

# HEMINGWAY ON BEING SHOT. AGAIN



Hemingway at the helm of his beloved Pilar

explain why posterity records Hemingway as a legendary angler, not marksman. Of course sudden metal poisoning was not new to Hemingway. He was seriously wounded while driving an ambulance in World War I and had 227 metal fragments removed from his legs. In any event, the

---

**“Trying to become a more casual traveler, your correspondent finally ends up by shooting himself through both legs with one hand while gaffing a shark with the other. This is as far as he will go in pleasing a reader.”**

**Esquire magazine, 1935**

---

boat was forced to return to Key West where Hemingway received treatment for his wounds. The incident would go on to form the basis of a humorous article he wrote for Esquire magazine appropriately titled On Being Shot Again.

Once fully recovered, Hemingway and crew again set off for Bimini on the Pilar, his 38-foot Wheeler sportfisherman. In marked contrast to the first trip, this crossing was entirely uneventful and the party arrived in Bimini as planned - unscathed and with no gunshot wounds reported by captain or crew.

The famous writer would go on to call the island his home for the next two years and do his best to make his rowdy presence known, not that there was a shortage of such antics on the island. Oft repeated is the story of Hemingway's standing offer of two hundred dollars to any Bahamian who could go three rounds with him in the ring. The prize was never won - or at least it was never paid out, there being a distinct difference between the two. Hemingway did not limit his punching to the ring. In one widely reported dock brawl, he knocked out the wealthy magazine publisher Joe Knapp, who then had to be rushed back to Florida. The fight was immortalized in an equally ram-bunctious song by Piccolo Pete called “Big Fat Slob”.

The big fat slob in Bimini

Is the night we had fun.

Mr. Knapp called Mr. Hemingway

A big fat slob.

Mr. Hemingway balled his fist

and gave him a knob.

Despite these diversions, or possibly because of them, Hemingway was quite productive while on the island. He wrote the novel *Islands in the Stream* using Bimini as the backdrop for the story of Thomas Hudson, a fictional painter during the 1930's. In addition he worked on the manuscript of *To Have and To Have Not* and wrote a number of notable magazine articles, including *On the Blue Water*, a starkly passionate account of running small boats far out to sea in pursuit of gamefish.

---

**“There is no danger from the fish, but anyone who goes on the sea the year round in a small powerboat does not seek danger. You may be absolutely sure that in a year you will have it without seeking, so you try always to avoid it all you can.”**

**Esquire magazine, April 1936**

---

# HEMINGWAY ON BEING SHOT. AGAIN

## Novels and Stories By Hemingway

- The Old Man and the Sea
- The Sun Also Rises
- To Have and Have Not
- A Farewell to Arms
- Death in the Afternoon
- For Whom the Bells Toll
- A Moveable Feast
- The Snows of Kilimanjaro

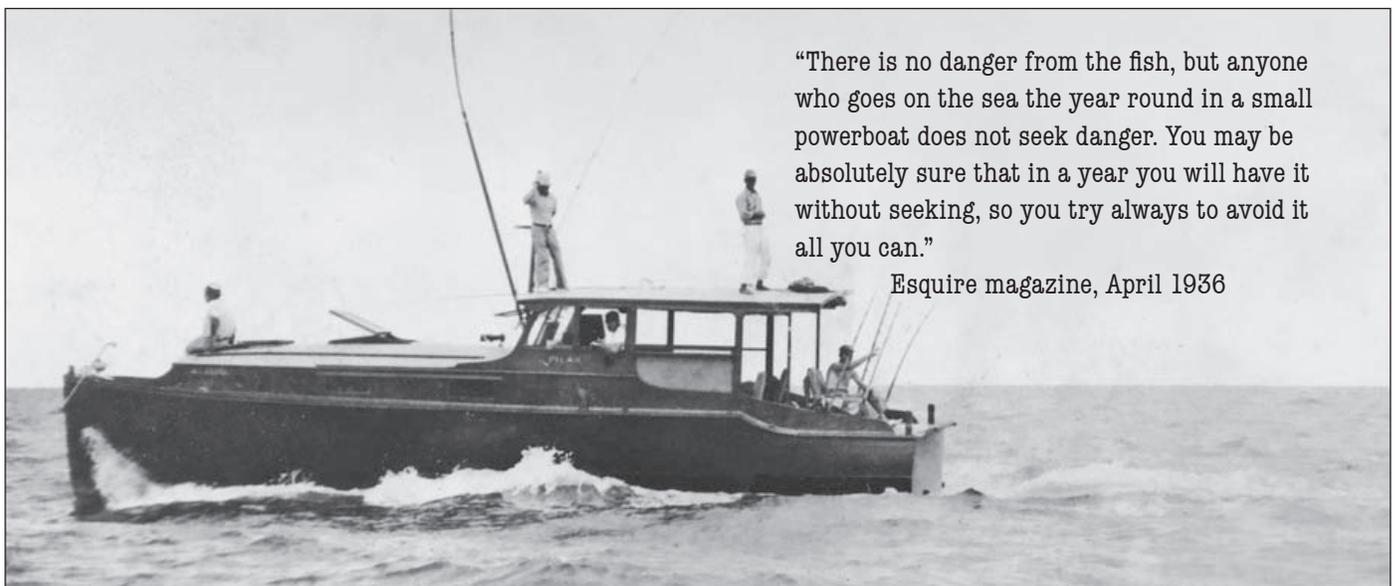
His devotion to deep-sea fishing is well known - chasing marlin and tuna was a fervent pastime for Hemingway and friends. Considered a pioneer in the sport, he was the first angler to land a giant tuna on rod and reel in one piece. In those years the nearby waters were teeming with sharks who made quick work of any tuna unlucky enough to find itself locked in battle with an angler. Hemingway accomplished this extraordinary feat by employing a new, intensely aggressive fighting style that would go on to become the de-facto method used by anglers worldwide. These exploits, along with his popular writings, would do much to publicize the young sport. Just as important, Hemingway and a small group of fellow pioneers founded the Bahamas Marlin and Fishing Club, the ancestor of the current day International Game Fish Association, or IGFA.

As is often the case with mythic figures, observers gravitate towards extremes, be it adoration or aversion. But regardless of which camp you belong, the fact remains



On Weechs docks

that Hemingway was to forever intertwine this small speck of an island with the magnificent fish prowling the nearby waters of the Gulf Stream.



“There is no danger from the fish, but anyone who goes on the sea the year round in a small powerboat does not seek danger. You may be absolutely sure that in a year you will have it without seeking, so you try always to avoid it all you can.”

Esquire magazine, April 1936