



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Letter

William Adair

The Hemingway Review, Volume 28, Number 2, Spring 2009, p. 158 (Article)

Published by The Hemingway Foundation and Society

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/hem.0.0041>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/265123>

· LETTER ·

To the Editor:

In the Fall 2008 *Hemingway Review* Bert Bender begins an article by writing of his having been in one of Harry Burns's English classes at the University of Washington in the Fall of 1964. Professor Burns of course is part-model of the MacWalsey character in *To Have and Have Not*.

I also took a class from Professor Burns, sometime in 1958 or 1959. Perhaps my few memories can provide a footnote to Bender's article.

Professor Burns was somewhat tall and rather slender, always very neatly dressed; he had a moustache and was quite bald on top. One of his nervous and frequent habits was to blow or puff out his lips in a manner suggesting another character from *To Have and Have Not*, the crooked lawyer "Bee-lips." He also had the habit of concluding many of his statements with "Is that not so?" As in, "Is that not so, Mr. Blair?" He never got my name straight.

I knew something of his being "a character in a Hemingway book" from my roommate, Pat McEligot, now a lawyer in Washington D.C., who was in the same class. Pat used to sometimes foregather with Professor Burns and other students at the Blue Moon Tavern near the U-District. Not being a drinker, I didn't foregather, and thereby missed an opportunity—though at that time I had no special interest in Hemingway. I remember Pat's telling me that Professor Burns was a bachelor and lived with his mother in suburban upscale Mercer Island.

In our classroom there was a girl, or woman, with very thick glasses who sat in the front row, and during class Professor Burns was especially helpful to her. She was losing her eyesight—a fact that I must have got from Pat.

My total impression was that Professor Burns was slightly comic but obviously knew his stuff. He had a rather dry wit, and, especially, he was very well liked and well-respected by our class.

*William Adair*