

## Hemingway called man for all regions

By Shelley Deneau  
News Special Writer

WALLOON LAKE — Benjamin Alexander teaches *Southern* literature at Hillsdale College. But the first works his students study are the *Northern Michigan* stories of Ernest Hemingway.

The students may express initial surprise, but Alexander believes Hemingway's work is an effective teaching strategy.

Once students read Hemingway's Michigan stories and identify with his regional writing style, Alexander said, they carry that over to Southern literature, which is also regional.

ALEXANDER'S interest in Hemingway's writing led the South Carolina native to Walloon Lake recently to reflect on the author's work while experiencing the northern woods so prominent in Hemingway's Michigan stories.

Alexander believes Hemingway's talent as a regional writer has been largely ignored by a "timid academia" which has tended to identify with Hemingway, the man, and not Hemingway, the writer.

"What I'm saying is that (Hemingway's private life) is none of their business," he said. "I think it has gotten out of hand."

"The Hemingway that needs to be promoted is the stories, don't you see? Not these ridiculous images."

BEFORE HE introduced Hemingway in his class, Alexander said he had difficulty making the students understand the regional identity inherent in such Southern writers as Mark Twain, Flannery O'Connor and Andrew Lytle.

"I ran into a problem because the students had no regional identity," Alexander said.

Most of Alexander's students are from Chicago, Detroit and other Midwestern towns and, he said, hold stereotypical images of the South. Their experience was confined to the television movie *Roots*, the movie *Gone With the Wind* and Fort Lauderdale beaches.

In reading Hemingway's Nick Adams' stories, with their Michigan background, Alexander found a remarkable resemblance and theme to literature regionally associated with the south.

"WHAT BECAME the unifying theme was the treatment and love of the land," he explained.

Hemingway, Alexander said, was a man who loved all facets of nature. "He doesn't try to conquer the land," he said. "He interacts with nature. He practiced what he preached."

Through the character of Nick Adams, Alexander said, Hemingway expressed his protest modern civilization. He was also able to capture the meaning of land to Indians and absorb these feelings in his fiction.

Alexander would like to help restore a balanced memory of Hemingway, so that the general public and the academic world would recognize the contributions of Hemingway as a literary hero, not a folk hero.



ALEXANDER