

This Day in History... November 8, 1908

Happy Birthday, Martha Gellhorn

One of the world's first female war correspondents, Martha Ellis Gellhorn, was born on November 8, 1908, in St. Louis, Missouri.

After graduating from high school in 1926, Gellhorn attended Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. However, she left the school the following year to work as a journalist. Her first articles were published in *The New Republic*.

Gellhorn wanted to work as a foreign correspondent, so she went to France and spent two years working at the United Press Bureau in Paris. She then returned to the US in 1932 and was hired as a field investigator for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. In this role, she traveled the country reporting on the effects of the Depression. She later assembled these into a collection of short stories in *The Trouble I've Seen*.



From the 1944: Road to Victory sheet

Gellhorn traveled to Spain to report on the Spanish Civil War. She then went to Germany and witnessed and covered the rise of Adolph Hitler. Gellhorn followed the war, reporting from Finland, Hong Kong, Burma, Singapore, and England. She didn't receive the proper press credentials to follow the Normandy landings, so she hid in the bathroom of a hospital ship and posed as a stretcher-bearer to go onshore. Gellhorn was the only woman to land on Normandy on D-Day.

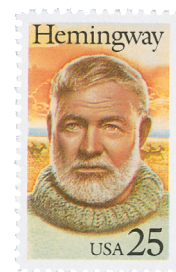
What set Gellhorn apart was her insistence on going into the action to interview ordinary soldiers and civilians. She rode with the British RAF on night bombing raids over Germany. Traveling with the US 82nd Airborne, Gellhorn reported on the Battle of the Bulge and was one of the first to enter Dachau Concentration Camp. The respected reporter once remarked that she "followed the war wherever I could reach it."

Gellhorn reported on the Vietnam War and the Arab-Israeli conflicts of the 1960s and 70s for the *Atlantic Monthly*. She also covered the civil wars in Central America and the invasion of Panama when she was 81 years old. That would be her final assignment, as she turned down the next offer to cover the Bosnia War. She did however, make one final trip in 1995 to Brazil, to report on the poverty there for the journal *Granta*.

For more than five decades, Gellhorn had covered wars in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Vietnam, and Central America. In addition to this, she also wrote fiction, including five novels, fourteen novellas, and two short story collections. In her final years, she had an unsuccessful cataract surgery that left her partially blind. She died in London on February 15, 1998.



Gellhorn stamp from the 2008 American Journalists set



Gellhorn was married to Ernest Hemingway for four years.

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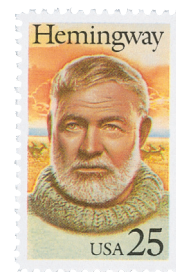
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