



# NEWSLETTER

## President's Letter

Dear MKR Society Friends –

I have always said, that “Every child needs a farm.” I, like Rawlings, had my maternal grandparents’ farm, in western Michigan, for my escape. As I reread passages of Silverthorne’s biography, I realized that my relationship with the natural world, just like Rawlings’s, began on that farm—strolling down the lanes, trekking through the woods, and building dams in the creek—all these taught me to love the sights, sounds and smells of the natural world around me. These first-hand experiences supplemented what I learned in the library about Boone and Crockett, Lewis and Clark. These memories from my childhood help me picture a young Marjorie, sitting at a breakfast table eating oatmeal, followed by eggs, bacon and toast, helping her grandmother

wash the dishes, following her grandmother to the chicken coop to pour grain into their feeding troughs and gathering their eggs, watching her grandfather read his Bible then napping after a breakfast made late by the morning milking. I’m sure that her face grimaced with the same sour delight as mine as she bit into a stalk of rhubarb pulled from the patch just as mine did. I’m sure that her face glowed with delight as her grandmother, holding her hand, led her to the garden to help pick green beans for supper. To kids today, experiencing nature might mean little more than walking from a car to the mall entrance and watching a grackle tear open a McDonald’s bag to get at the leftover French fries. More than ever, kids need to read *South Moon Under*, *Golden Apples*, *The Yearling*, and *Cross Creek*; they need to visit the Ocala National Forest and Rawlings’s home to form that special bond with nature that Rawlings had and wrote about. Education isn’t just about school and books or tramps through the woods, but a marriage of the pair.

—Steve Brahlek

### Announcements

- The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held at noon on October 5<sup>th</sup> in Lakeland at Harry’s Seafood, 101 N. Kentucky Avenue. Phone: (863) 686-2228.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Annual MKR Conference, March 21-22, 2014. Gainesville Hilton.

### Call for Papers

#### 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference

Gainesville Hilton  
March 21-22, 2014

We are seeking 20-minute presentations on any topics related to Rawlings, her works, art, or circle. Please send your proposal to Anna Lillios at [Anna@ucf.edu](mailto:Anna@ucf.edu). Deadline: February 15, 2014. Also, send banquet speaker recommendations.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hilton for \$129/night. Deadline for this rate is January 17, 2014.

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**The Year of *The Yearling*: Celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of a Literary Classic**



**October 12,**  
10:00 a.m. Matheson Museum and Grounds  
**Plants and Seasons of *The Yearling*: Presentation and Walkabout**

**November 16, 2013\***  
10:00 a.m. M. K. Rawlings Elementary, 3500 N.E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Gainesville  
***The Yearling* Run & Scamper**

**January 1, 2014**  
10:00 a.m. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park,  
18700 S. County Road 325, Cross Creek  
**Walk in the Park**

**January 11, 2014**  
10:00 a.m. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park  
**Marjorie's Garden**

**February 7, 2014\***  
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Smathers Library (East), Room 1A  
University of Florida campus  
**World of *The Yearling*: Florida in the 1870s**

**March 1, 2014\***  
8:15 a.m. Meet at MKR Historic State Park  
**Hike the Yearling Trail, Ocala National Forest**

**March 22, 2014**  
12:00 p.m. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park  
**The Baxters' Rations**

\*Pre-registration required—please see website  
[www.floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings](http://www.floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings)

## ***Excerpt from an Interview with Dongmei Zhang***

Lecturer at the School of Language and Culture,  
Nanjing University of Information, Science, and Technology  
Visiting Scholar at the University of Florida

*How did you first learn about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and what made you interested in reading more about her?*

I love nature. Scholar David Orr suggests that virtually all environmental activists are shaped early on by a relationship to a specific place. The childhood bond can exert a magical effect on the ecological imagination. And, without such an experience, few have ever become ardent and articulate defenders of nature. My love for nature originates from my childhood experiences.

I was born and grew up in a remote village, which is surrounded by continuous green mountains and a limpid creek with all kinds of big trees and birds on one side of the banks. I have many sweet memories of my childhood featuring my affinity to nature. During that time, I, together with my elder brothers and children of our neighbors, would go and pick up mushrooms, wild jujubes, and hickories on the hills when they were in season. We would go to the creek nearly every day in summers. We would wash clothes, catch small fish, and build a stone bridge across the creek. The fun there was limitless.

However, the Garden of Eden of my childhood has been seriously ruined since I left my hometown for boarding school. One day when I came back, I sadly found that the creek had become dark, large amounts of trash was dispersed on the banks, and those lovely big trees had all disappeared, with only some newly grown saplings dotted here and there. In the vicinity, some small industrial plants sprang up. They discharged waste water into the creek without any treatment, restraint or supervision day and night. Those big old trees were chopped down for money. Meanwhile, the surrounding hills became more and more bare and desolate. Whenever I stood on the bank, I would feel my heart bleeding. My childhood Garden of Eden had vanished—but, my environmental awareness began sprouting.

Then, I felt excited to find about the advent of the new literary theory of eco-criticism in 2005, the first year of my graduate study. It is a new theory speaking in defense of nature. I read a lot of books and papers on environmental ethics and eco-criticism in the following years. I came to realize that it is a scholars' duty to speak for the earth. In 2008, I finished my thesis on Canadian writer Margaret Awood's *The Handmaid's Tale* from an eco-critical perspective. I was thirsty for more books on nature; therefore, I often went to library to look for those related books, only to find Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's great book *The Yearling*, which has stimulated my keen interest in the writer and her other works. This novel was translated into Chinese in 1980. The front cover of the book is green. The title of the novel consists of four very poetic Chinese words. My reading of *The Yearlings* never lacked excitement, happiness, and admiration. I was really engrossed in the vivid description of the wilderness of Florida. What's more, I found the eco-consciousness in the protagonist, Penny, who, of course, expresses the writer's notion of nature. It is a classic book!

I went on to check out Rawlings's other works. But, I was disappointed to find that there was only one Chinese translation of Rawlings's work in China up until then, the Pulitzer prize-winning *The Yearling*. (*The Sojourner* has since been translated into Chinese and was published in 2012). I searched Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings on Google, and her most classic words jumped into sight:

“It seems to me that the earth may be borrowed but not bought. It may be used, but not owned. It gives itself in response to love and tending, offers its seasonal flowering and fruiting. . . . Cross Creek belongs to the wind and the rain, to the sun and the seasons, to the cosmic secrecy of seed, and beyond all, to time.”

I love these beautiful words so much! I fully embrace Rawlings's ideas. They have delivered what I want to express about the relationship between human beings and nature. I have realized that this is a neglected great writer and that she is badly in need of being re-discovered. I am eager to know more about her and her other works. After a lot of fruitless searches in China, I asked one of my friends in America to buy all Rawlings's works for me. Her other works, *Cross Creek* in particular, do not fail me. My determination to study Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings has taken root since then.



## Review of Sheila Sondik’s *Fishing a Familiar Pond: Found Poems from The Yearling*

In *Fishing a Familiar Pond*, Sheila Sondik writes a series of “found poems,” originally published for the *Found Poetry Review*’s Pulitzer Remix project, aimed at producing found poems from Pulitzer Prize-winning works of literature. The poetry consists of lines from *The Yearling* reconstructed into thematically driven verse that celebrates the natural poetry of Rawlings’s language. In one of my personal favorites, “Something was ended,” Sondik begins with the lines: “The world had discarded



Sheila Sondik reading

him. / He lay in a stupor of weariness. / An early magnolia blossom, / wax-white roused him” and ends with “He walked west. / There was no other direction / in which to go.” Reading this description of Jody’s intense resignation, it is hard for the reader to believe the words were not originally intended to be part of the poem in which Sondik places them. The collection will tug at the heartstrings of *Yearling* fans.

—Ashley Lear

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

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### IS IT TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Please check your address label. The date that you see on the label is the date your dues are due. If your membership is current, we thank you!

