



NEWSLETTER

President's Letter

Dear MKR Society Friends –

As most of you know by now, we lost a beloved member of the Rawlings Society family recently. Idella Parker passed away peacefully on Saturday, November 21st at the age of 101. She is survived by her niece Gail Bowens, who has communicated regularly with the Society to update us on Idella's health over the years. Idella Parker worked for Rawlings from 1940 and 1950 and was most notably referred to by Rawlings as the "Perfect Maid" in *Cross Creek*. The two women shared a long and complicated relationship as close companions but also employer and employee in a Florida that was beset with racial tensions. In 1992, Idella Parker published her own memoir, co-written with Mary Keating, to give her impressions of life on the Creek with Rawlings and her life following that period.

Announcements

- 29th Annual MKR Conference, Florida Yacht Club, Jacksonville, April 1-2, 2016.
- "A Tea with Zora and Marjorie," Feb. 18-20, 25, Gamache-Koger Theater at Flagler College's Ringhaver Student Center. For more information: <http://www.aclassictheatre.org/> 904-501-5093

In this memoir, Parker opens with the following description of Rawlings and herself: *"Mrs. Rawlings was one of the kindest persons I have ever known, but she could also be very hard to get along with and impossible to reason with at times. In other words, she was a human being, with human faults and troubles, and so am I."*

Over the years, the Society has kept up with Idella Parker's life and offered our support through cards and gifts and visits with members of the society. To memorialize her passing, we will be discussing plans to erect a headstone in her honor and begin a scholarship fund at Bethune Cookman University, a school Idella loved and of which she proudly displayed a photograph in her room. Please join us in remembering Idella Parker's legacy. If you would like to donate to the scholarship fund or headstone, you may do so by contacting our Executive Director, Anna Lillios at Anna@ucf.edu.

Ashley

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Remembering Idella Parker

By Robert Curtis Davis

What a privilege for me to have the opportunity to attend and participate in the funeral service [on Monday, November 30, 2015] honoring our beloved Idella Parker there in her charming hometown, the hamlet of Reddick, Florida, just north of Ocala, and not far from Cross Creek itself. Idella's HUGE family and MANY friends turned out in an impressive sign of respect for Idella. I met MANY members of her extended family and friends at the funeral service location there in Reddick at the United Missionary Baptist Church.

Idella's only surviving sister, Eliza Bickers, was there with her daughter, Gail Bickers Bowens, from Ft. Lauderdale, FL, along with Gail's wonderful husband, John Bowens, and with Gail and John's three handsome, impressive sons, affectionately known as the "J Brothers," since all their names begin with a "J." Gail has been my main connection (via Facebook) with Idella and her family for quite some time now. THANKS, Gail!

It was great for me to see a number of my MKR Society friends at the service. (Please, Heaven, HELP me to not leave anyone out, and to not get any names wrong—corrections appreciated). I was part of the following group: David Nolan, Marsha Phelts, Claire Koshar, Jim Stevens, Janice Arinson, Frank Orser, Valerie Rivers, Another Cross Creek Ranger (SORRY, I did not get a name), and Bob Davis (yours truly)

As a good friend of Idella within our Society, I believe she would have been quite PLEASED with ALL the arrangements for her "Going Home" celebration there in her hometown amongst the people she loved and who loved her in return.

SO, I have only this left to say: FAREWELL, my good and well-loved friend, Idella Parker! THANKS for ALL the memories! You enriched my life immensely to know you. May you Rest in Eternal Peace!

Bob Davis

The 29th Annual MKR Conference

The Florida Yacht Club, Jacksonville, FL

April 1-2, 2016

Plans for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society's 29th Annual Rawlings Conference are now set, so the Society would like to invite you to attend. The Friday and Saturday morning sessions will take place at the beautiful Florida Yacht Club in Jacksonville. A complimentary continental breakfast will be served each morning. The locale was chosen in honor of Rawlings Society founder, Phil May, who lives a few miles from the club.

Hotel

The Conference hotel is the Hilton Garden Inn, 145 Park Avenue, Orange Park, FL 32073. Phone: (904) 458-1577. A block of rooms has been reserved under the name, "Rawlings Society." Cost is \$109, plus tax. Please note that the cut-off date is March 16, 2016.

Activities

Activities at the conference will include a Friday afternoon boat ride. Local historian Wayne Wood will accompany us and point out the highlights of Jacksonville harbor. The tour will be followed by cocktails and a banquet dinner at Timuquana Country Club. The Saturday, April 2, luncheon will be held at the historic Club Continental, on the St. Johns River. This locale was the former estate of Caleb Johnson, heir to the Palmolive Soap Company.

Speakers

The banquet speaker will be Ben Green, who is currently the Director of the Florida Center for Public Management. He is also a well known author, who has written four non-fiction books, including *Finest Kind*, *The Soldier of Fortune Murders*, *Before His Time: The Untold Story of Harry T. Moore*, *America's First Civil Rights Martyr*, and *Spinning the Globe*. He has also served as a primary consultant on a half dozen documentaries and TV broadcasts based on his books.

Wayne Wood, who will accompany us on the boat tour and will be the luncheon speaker, is the founder of Riverside Avondale Preservation and the Riverside Arts Market. His contribution to the community has been honored with the Art of Caring award from HandsOn Jacksonville. Wood moved to the Jacksonville area in 1971 to join his uncle's optometry practice. It didn't take long for him to recognize the beauty and potential of the old houses and buildings falling into disrepair or being torn down around him. Along with a group of friends, Wood founded the preservation group in 1974 with the goal of restoring and saving Riverside's architectural history and culture. "I felt that the urban environment was just as fragile as the natural environment and here it was being destroyed," Wood said. He is the author of *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage*, one of the University Press of Florida's top-selling books.

CFP

We are still seeking speakers for the conference. If you'd like to present a 20-minute talk on any aspect of Rawlings's life or works, her circle of friends, Cross Creek or her other landscapes, the Cross Creek trial, her political/social/economic/gender/literary views; please send a title and brief description of your talk to Anna Lillios at Anna@ucf.edu. Deadline is March 1, 2016. Please respond asap, because our sessions are limited.

Auction

Elaine Bradbury and Claire Koshar are preparing to hold the third annual silent auction fundraiser at the conference. Some truly amazing items have been donated so far, including first editions of Rawlings's works. If you have any special items that you would like to donate to the Society, please contact Elaine Bradbury at hhfsouth@embarqmail.com

For more information about the conference, please contact Anna Lillios at Anna@ucf.edu

Call for Papers

The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature seeks articles, creative fiction and poetry, book reviews, and notes in the spirit of or regarding the life and work of Rawlings, her circle, and other authors who use the state of Florida as a source of creativity. The *JFL* is a peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society.



Leave a Legacy

Ensure the future of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society by including the Society in your will. The following language may be used to name the Society as a beneficiary:

"I [your name], of [city, state, zip code], bequeath to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society [written amount of percentage of the estate or description of real or personal property]."

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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! Renewal card at:
<http://rawlingssociety.org/>



