



NEWSLETTER

President's Letter

Dear MKR Society Friends –

“But you are from Maine! How is it that you are so familiar with Marjorie Rawlings? Why do you have so many of her books and memorabilia? You are from Maine not Florida.” I am still hearing these comments from out-of-state visitors. Older Mainers easily understand my admiration, fascination, and enjoyment of her works and beautiful words. Now our goal is to remind younger generations of why we have strong MKR ties and introduce them to her volume of work.

Marjorie Rawlings was a popular author in Maine. I am easily annoyed when I hear her described as a “regional writer” by some critics. All older Mainers feel that had she lived, you would have seen a MKR “Maine book.” And, what a book it would have been!

Many folks do not realize that as a child, Marjorie spent summer vacations on the ocean in Harpswell Center, Maine. Harpswell is a long finger jutting out into the ocean. We lived two fingers over in Phippsburg. By boat, the distance is short, but by land, it is winding and long.

The last year of Marjorie’s life, she was fondly remembering and describing “the placid cove at Harpswell Center, the great rocks and granite shores, and the pine forests hugging the coast.” She went on to describe, “the sea roaring in with spray and tumult and a great angry sound.” Marjorie remembered “bathing in ocean water so cold it burned the skin.” She continued with descriptions of “walking to an island at low tide and picking wild strawberries, digging clams at low tide on the clam flats, picking and eating blueberries, and lobster shore dinners with lobsters, clams, and fresh corn.” She talked about visiting a local summer fair and seeing a beautiful handmade quilt, “surely the most beautiful thing ever made by the hand of a woman.” Fun Maine adventures with her father were also part of her fondest memories.

Marjorie spoke so fondly of her Maine memories to friends the last year of her life, we know with time, the “Maine book” was inevitable. Sadly, she died so young and the loss of future works devastating to all. Marjorie understood Maine and Maine understood and admired her. Nature, rural living, neighbors and local characters, farm living, hunting, fishing, orange groves instead of apple orchards, wild animals, cooking, and weather, all showed her incredible observations and understanding. It was all familiar and extremely recognizable to Mainers, always. She spoke clearly to the common man in all of us. Her words remind us of the beauty around us.

(cont’d on page 2)

President's Letter (cont'd)

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When haunting the Maine summer rural treasure troves and bookstores, you may find a pristine copy of her works. That is a treasure that is so exciting. I know it will be a winner at our annual society auction. But I also love to find the well-worn and well-read MKR volumes. These are treasures of a different kind. I picture them handed around the neighborhood, being read on dark cold Maine winters by a roaring fire. How many folks were warmed just by reading her words of a somehow familiar yet exotic land?

One of my favorite and treasured "Cross Creek" books is signed by Marjorie. But that is a story for the next MKR Society Newsletter, when I will discuss the close ties between Maine and Florida.

Sincerely,
Elaine Bradbury



Please join us in welcoming Scott Spaulding, the new Park Manager for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park at Cross Creek. Come out to meet Scott on February 23rd when the Farm will be hosting a campfire cooking demonstration and pie contest. Visit the park website for more information at www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/marjorie-kinnan-rawlings-historic-state-park.

In Loving Memory of Phil May, Jr.
1925 – 2019
by David Nolan

We have received word that Philip Stockton May, Jr., the founder and first president of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, has passed away in Jacksonville at the age of 94.

I have long and fond memories of Phil going back to the mid-1980s when I would see him at meetings of the Florida Library Association, the Florida Historical Society, the Florida Endowment for the Humanities and others, buttonholing people about the need to form a Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society—inspired by his own membership in the already-existing Thomas Wolfe Society, which promoted the legacy of Marjorie’s North Carolina contemporary.

Phil first met Marjorie when he was about ten years old. His father, Philip Stockton May, was a Jacksonville attorney who was also his generation’s leading expert on Zephaniah Kingsley (whom he tried to interest Marjorie in writing about), president of the Florida Historical Society, and of the Jacksonville Urban League. He handled many insurance cases, which led to a friendship with a Hartford insurance executive named Wallace Stevens (who, like Marjorie, would also win a Pulitzer Prize). It was natural that the senior May would become Marjorie’s personal attorney, and as such, he represented her in the landmark Cross Creek trial, and later drafted her will, which basically resulted in the establishment of the University of Florida Foundation.

It was on visits to Cross Creek with his father that young Phil first met Marjorie. Later visits there, and to her home in Crescent Beach, continued until her death in 1953—and the friendship with Marjorie’s husband, Norton Baskin, continued until Norton passed away in 1997.

Phil’s parents divorced, and he lived with his mother. Any worries he had about being overprotected vanished when, a year after his 1943 graduation from Lee High School, he followed the path of the D-Day invaders as a U. S. Army infantryman. The day after Thanksgiving in 1944, his femur was shattered in an artillery barrage, and he spent the next 40 months in Army hospitals in three countries, eventually undergoing 35 surgeries. He always remembered a morale-boosting visit in a Georgia hospital from Helen Keller. He survived his injuries—to a ripe old age—but always carried the visible physical reminders of them. In his later years he wrote many letters to the editor of his local newspaper, the Florida Times-Union, and on at least one of them he wrote, after his name, “wounded World War II vet.”

Back home he was able to use the GI Bill of Rights to fund a college education at Princeton University, Class of 1952. He was surprised—but pleased—that he was able to get in, with as undistinguished an academic record as he had posted in high school. Phil majored in history—and, by his own account, partying. His Princeton roommate was George Garrett (1929-2008), a fellow Floridian whose subsequent literary career included a stint as Poet Laureate of Virginia—and screenwriter for the 1965 science fiction cult film “Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster.”

Phil headed back south and spent a quarter of a century as a stockbroker, marrying at age 40 his beloved Gloria, a Navy widow with three young children, to whom they soon added a fourth, Philip S. May III, known as “Tiger.”

A self-described “book nut”—I always remember that he had two houses: one to live in, and one to hold his books—he was one of his generation’s outstanding collectors, particularly of material dealing with Florida and South Carolina. The inspiration for the latter was in early family vacations at the higher—and cooler—elevations of the south when they struck up a friendship with Charleston novelist and historian Herbert Ravenel Sass (1884-1958). Phil had in mind to write a book about a literary doctor from South Carolina, but I don’t know if it ever became more than just a thought.

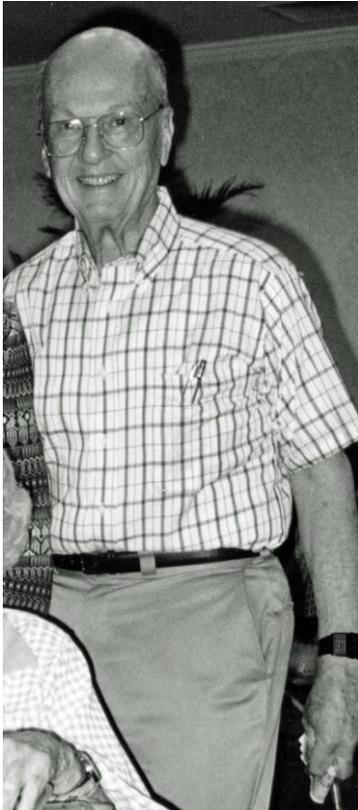
Selling stocks did not stir his soul, so in the 1980s he launched another career with Mumford Books—a place described as a “paradise for librarians,” and he retained his affiliation with them, part-time, til long past any normal retirement age.

Phil’s travels and buttonholing did eventually result in the formation of the Rawlings Society in 1987, and since then it has continued through multiple presidents, many newsletters, conferences, and journals, and several (God Bless Them!) devoted executive directors. There are many organizations that start, then die out with their founders. This Society has been able to continue from generation to generation, organizationally speaking, and it is a tribute to Phil May and his hard work and his connection with the Rawlings era in Florida literature and the love of history and culture that he was able to pass on. He will be missed and long-remembered.

--David Nolan
St. Augustine, Florida
January 17, 2019

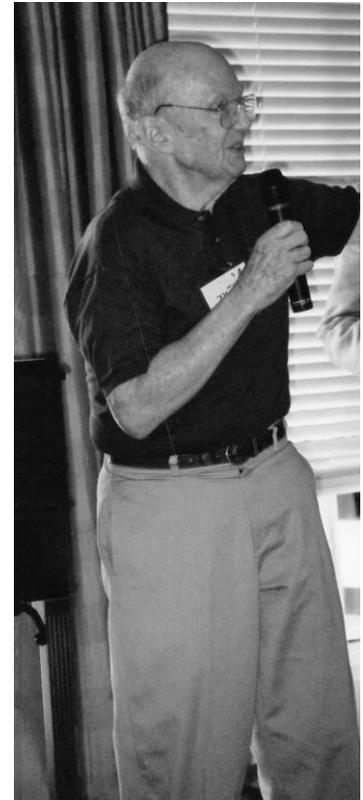


My Time with Phil May, Jr. **by Kevin McCarthy**



I first met Phil May, Jr., in 1987, when he and others (Michael Gannon, Sam Proctor, and William Goza) invited me to join them in the founding of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society. For the next thirty years, I had many pleasant interactions with Phil as he helped lead the Society to a firm foundation of scholarship about and interest in the writings of Mrs. Rawlings. His southern charm, good common sense, and clear vision guided several hundred of us in the pursuit of better knowing the works and life of Mrs. Rawlings and of other Florida writers. Through his vast network of literary friends, whom he had befriended with his book collecting, he was able to provide the Society with such outstanding speakers as Connie May Fowler and William Least Heat-Moon. All of us who knew Phil May were privileged and honored to know the one person who perhaps did more than any other single person to spread the word about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

Kevin McCarthy, Gainesville, FL



The Gift of Reading



The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society recently supplied copies of *The Yearling* to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park at Cross Creek. These books are part of our outreach program, directed by Ellen Giallonardo. We were delighted to receive this picture of a young guest receiving her copy of *The Yearling* from Rick Mulligan at the Farm. The photo arrived in the mail from the family to thank the Farm for the book. According to Rick, books are presented to young visitors who show an especial interest in Rawlings and have not yet received their own copy of the book.

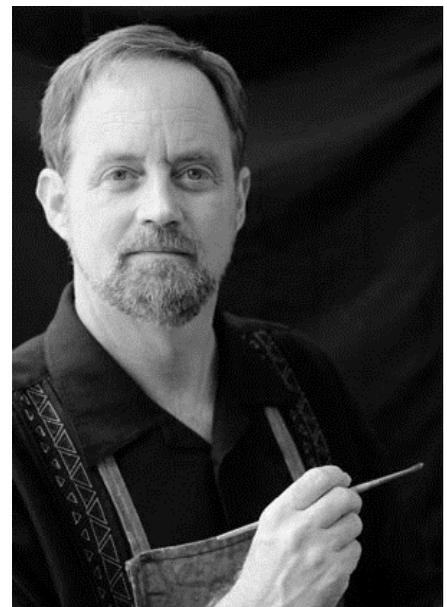
32nd Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference

**St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Tarpon
Springs
March 29-30**

Please join us on March 29-30 for the MKR Conference in Tarpon Springs. This year's conference will feature a gallery tour by renowned artist Christopher Still and a tour of the historic St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, where the conference will be taking place. A block of rooms has been reserved at the Hampton Inn for a reduced rate of \$156.40/night, but you must call the hotel directly to receive this rate. The direct line for the hotel is 727-945-7755. Be sure to tell them you are with the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society. Trustees for the Society should plan on meeting Thursday, March 28th, 7 pm, at Catches Waterfront Grill in nearby Port Richey. Registration form with costs is included in this newsletter. Please bring auction items to the conference if you can!

Conference activities for Friday, March 29th, will begin at 8:30 am and end with a tour of the cathedral after lunch. An evening cocktail hour and banquet will begin at 6 pm. Conference activities for Saturday, March 30th will begin at 9 am with student awards and conclude with a luncheon.

One day registration is available on-site for \$40.



Rawlings in the News

“Southern Literary Trail: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park by Ashley Shaw was featured in the January/February 2019 issue of *Southern Lady*.



Check out your local newsstand for an issue!

“Crab Newburg à la Cross Creek” by Sam Sifton was featured in *The New York Times Cooking*.



cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1014872-crab-newburg-a-la-cross-creek

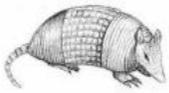
State of Inspiration

The *Florida Humanities Council Forum* (Fall 2018) celebrated the writing life of contemporary Florida authors with an introductory homage to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, quoting her, “I do not understand how anyone can live without some small place of enchantment to turn to.” The article features Jeff Klinkenberg, alongside eight Florida Book Award winners.

floridahumanities.org/what-we-do/media/forum-magazine-2017



From the Society



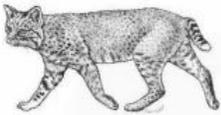
Armadillo (*Dasypus*)



Beaver (*Castor*)



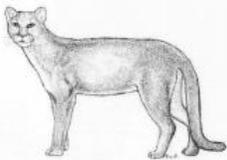
Boar hog (*Sus*)



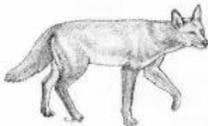
Bobcat (*Lynx*)



Coral snake (*Micrurus*)



Cougar (*Puma*)



Coyote, western (*Canis*)



Deer, whitetail piebald buck (*Odocoileus*)



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote her famous Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Yearling*, from her home and farm in Cross Creek, Florida. Two of her main characters were 12-year-old Jody Baxter and his close friend, Fodderwing Forrester. Jody had a pet yearling deer named Flag, while his little crippled friend, Fodderwing kept several wild animals as pets. Marjorie called Fodderwing's animals, "Fodderwing's Creeturs".



Florida Crackers James Stephens and artist Gayle Prevatt

Our own James M. Stephens and local artist Gayle Prevatt have created a brochure on the Wild Animals of Florida. To help distribute this brochure, please contact Jim directly: 352-372-7288 or sloughfootcreek@aol.com

The documentary *Here is Home – Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek* has been reedited and will be available for purchase at this year's conference for \$20 per DVD. The film is 40 minutes long and was premiered earlier this year at the Matheson Museum. Filmmaker Sonya Doctorian produced the film with a grant from the Florida Humanities Council.

Ms. Priscilla M. Arinson would like to thank the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society for its condolences and heartfelt stories about her mother, the late Janice Arinson, Treasurer of the MKR Society. She would love to hear more stories from members of the Society who knew and loved Janice. Feel free to send them to her at pmaaaa@gmail.com or 547 NW 4th Ave., Gainesville, FL 32601.

Scrub Walk – Join Anne Pierce on Saturday, March 2nd, in Ocala for the annual Scrub Walk, if no bears are in the area. Reservations must be made to the Farm office at 352-466-3672. When making reservations, include your name, the number in your party, contact phone number, and an email address.

Press Release from University of Florida

George A. Smathers Libraries announces a major gift of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings - Julia Scribner Bigham correspondence

A collection of personal and professional correspondence between Pulitzer Prize-winning author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1896-1953) and her literary executor Julia Scribner Bigham has been donated as an addition to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Papers in the Department of Special and Area Studies Collections at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries. Also included in this gift is a collection of letters concerning the literary estate and the posthumous publication of some of Rawlings's works.

Julia Scribner Bigham (daughter of Charles Scribner, Rawlings's publisher) was the close friend and intimate correspondent of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings from the late 1930s until the author's death in 1953. She served as literary executor of Rawlings's estate until her own death in 1961. There are approximately 130 items in this carefully preserved archive, rich in personal detail. The correspondence regarding the estate is even more extensive, totaling approximately 240 items. Many of these letters reference the various books the two correspondents were reading, providing details about the literary landscape of the time. This correspondence will shed light on the cultural, literary, and publishing trends that shaped American letters in the early to mid-20th century.

One of the particular strengths of the collection is its depiction of the friendship between Bigham and Rawlings. In the early years of their relationship, Rawlings was a mentor to Bigham. As the friendship matured, Bigham became Rawlings's confidante and editor, and the depth of their complex relationship is revealed in full here. Subjects of their discussions include the creative process, music, religious faith, politics, mental health, marriage, motherhood, and professional employment. They also discussed many writers one or both of them knew personally, such as Margaret Mitchell, Sigrid Undset, Robert Frost, and legendary Scribner editor Maxwell Perkins.

Rawlings's biographer Ann McCutchan highlights the importance of this acquisition, saying: "This collection of letters completes a significant epistolary conversation begun in 1939, and lasting until shortly before Rawlings's death in 1953. Reading both sides of the exchange illuminates each woman's character and the nature of their close relationship." McCutchan's work, entitled: *The Life She Wished to Live: A biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, author of The Yearling*, will be published by W.W. Norton in 2020. McCutchan was granted permission to consult these letters during her research, before they were donated to the University of Florida. For scholars, the collection provides a remarkable window into American literary politics and publishing after World War II. Along with seminal insights into the careers and lives of Rawlings and Bigham, the collection casts light on fundamental questions such as the relationship of author and editor and the broader arc of an American female author's journey of discovery, apprenticeship, and maturation.

This collection was donated by Nicholas Meriwether, the son of the late James Meriwether, a literary scholar who had purchased the collection from a dealer in 1988. The Libraries are very grateful to add this latest accession to the more than four thousand pieces of correspondence in the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Collection.

Florence M. Turcotte
Literary Manuscripts Archivist, George A. Smathers Libraries

Annual MKR Society Membership Prize

We are starting a campaign to double our current membership. To win, please have your name written on the bottom of the new members' registration forms or let Anne Pierce know the names of your referrals.

The winner who registers the most new members will receive FREE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION for 2019.

Here are some ideas to solicit members:

- **Encourage adult children to join**
- **Give a gift of a reduced price student membership to children, grandchildren, or other students you know**
- **Speak to neighbors and members of your community library or historical societies about joining**

Be creative! Claire Koshar and Elaine Bradbury recruited 12 new members by hosting an MKR Breakfast party with gifts and prizes one year. Help keep our society strong!

**Note: MKR Society Membership Year is from July-June. Consult the mailing label for your renewal date.*

To learn more about the society, visit our website, <http://rawlingssociety.org/>, or check out our Facebook page and Yahoo Group.

Rawlings Society
PO Box 117005
Gainesville, FL 32611-7005

**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/>

