



NEWSLETTER

President's Letter

Dear MKR Society Friends –

The world is changing rapidly as I write this latest letter. Everything is more challenging. This will be a very different letter and tone as we find ourselves in these very unsettled times. We are living with almost daily drastic changes to our normal life and schedules. The unknown is always a little scary, especially not knowing the time frame. But soon we will be on the other side of this virus. It will be easier as our knowledge and medical treatments expand. Hopefully, by the time you receive this letter, much of the uncertainty will be behind us.

My heart goes out to all the medical and support staff. As many of you know, I was a trauma/ER/surgical charge nurse for years. So, I understand their issues and concerns. You never knew what would come in the door. Stabbings, shootings, car accidents, injuries, heart attacks, babies needing immediate delivery, emotional or other medical issues were all addressed. I had to assess and make rapid judgements on care. Lives depended on it.

The patient always comes first. The mantra, “Do no harm” is always with you. Staff breaks or mealtimes are never priorities. When you finally leave the facility, the patient and your care of them stay hauntingly with you. It is so hard to turn the emotions off. I cared deeply for each one.

I was meeting these folks at the worst time in their life. Anything you can do to alleviate their pain and stress has to be immediate. The quickest thing is just to put your hand on them and say, “We are going to help you.” Touch and calmness are the most important means to lower stress. You always saw an immediate change in the patient. Explain what you are doing to help alleviate fear of the unknown. Even when folks are unconscious, you use these tools. Hearing is one of the last senses to leave us.

After my sons were born, I gave up this career to go into health education, teaching, and counseling. I did group and individual grief counseling for all ages in my off time. These were rewarding but never held the same appeal. I still miss my first career. I loved the adrenaline rush, the uncertainty of the day, and helping others. But always being on call and irregular hours do not go well with motherhood.

My assessment skills have never left me. For example, if I am walking through a grocery store, or whenever I am around people, I notice how they move, breathe, their color, everything about them. It is automatic and always with me. You care and are always concerned. I tell you this to make you aware. Health workers are always on. They do not leave it behind at the health facility. I want to help you understand. Be thankful, that others choose these difficult and extremely demanding careers. They are truly heroes.

(cont'd on page 2)

President's Letter (cont'd)

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I know everyone was disappointed in the cancellation of our annual conference, but it was the right decision. When we get together next year, it will be all the more rewarding. Soon, this will only be a memory.

Like Marjorie, I can never leave you without mentioning a little of the nature around me. We remain in Florida until May before returning to Maine. Our pond here is a noisy place now with all the amphibian wildlife calling. Such a din! I love it.

My favorite birds, the chuck-will's-widows, are calling every night. In Maine, they are a little smaller and called whip-poor-wills, but both their call and the loons' call are my favorites. I understand the ice is out in Maine early this year, and the loons are already on the water. Take a walk and enjoy the beautiful life around us. It's a wonderful break and good exercise. Everyone, stay safe and keep those hands washed.

Sincerely,
Elaine Bradbury



Chuck-will's-widow

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings - Convalescence St. Augustine, Florida

In 1943, Rawlings experienced a lengthy convalescence at the Harkness Pavilion Medical Center in New York, suffering from diverticulitis and, ultimately, needing a hysterectomy. Her letters home to Norton Baskin during this time provide wisdom and humor to all of us as we suffer through our own self-isolation and anxiety, impacted by a pervasive virus whether we have acquired it personally or not. Here are some of her words from those letters, found in *The Private Marjorie*, edited by our own Rodger Tarr.

"I don't think flowers have ever thrilled me more than these ... There was no reason to send them—except your sweetness—but they were from you and I'm very happy."

"Well, after my first session with the psychiatrist ... he laughed at me!! ... He is having another session today, but I have an idea we'll just tell dirty stories—"

"Got rid of the night nurse, the old one, after 3 nights. She drove me crazy. I told Dr. Atchley you could sum her up by saying she was the kind of nurse who can't find the hole in your rectum."

"Wish I was home, and *drunk*."

"Dangling is a new hospital ritual, and means that the day or so before being allowed out of bed the first time, you sit on the edge of the high bed and dangle your legs in space."

"Please don't let anything happen to Moe [Rawlings's dog]. Moe would write every day if he could write."

"If you don't write to me pretty soon, I'm going to make love to the nicest of the three nice interns— And when you come up, I shall hide the cute blond nurse I've been saving for you— ...Come up when convenient, and write me—
OR ELSE!!!"



The Harkness Pavilion, part of the Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, is part of Columbia University Irving Medical Center, a global leader in responding to COVID-19

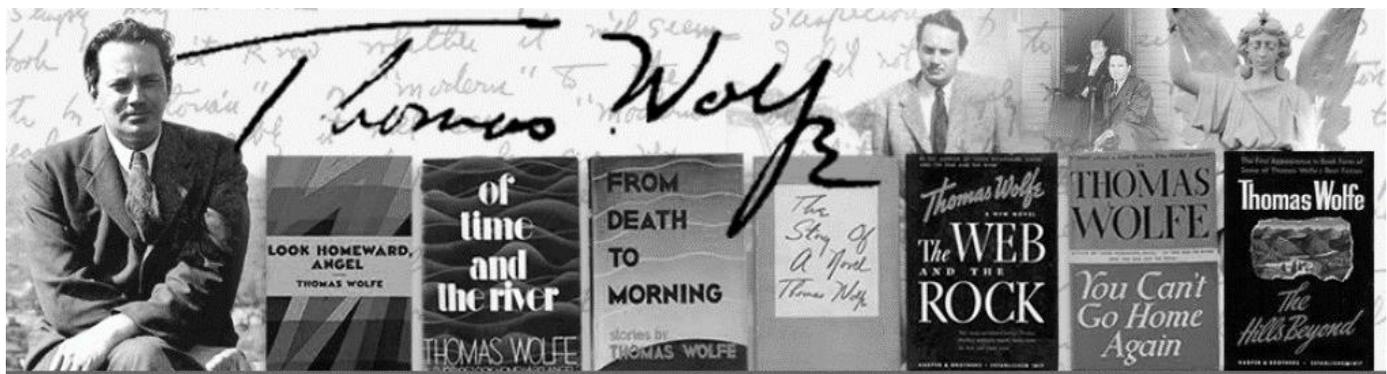
Memories of Phil May by David Nolan

The late founder of the Rawlings Society, Phil May, always said he was inspired by his membership in the already-existing Thomas Wolfe Society. An article in the Spring 2020 newsletter *The Ledger*, put out by the Thomas Wolfe Memorial in Asheville, NC, might interest Rawlings Society members with its description of the first meeting of the Wolfe Society—in some ways the little acorn from which we grew:

40 years ago in Asheville ...

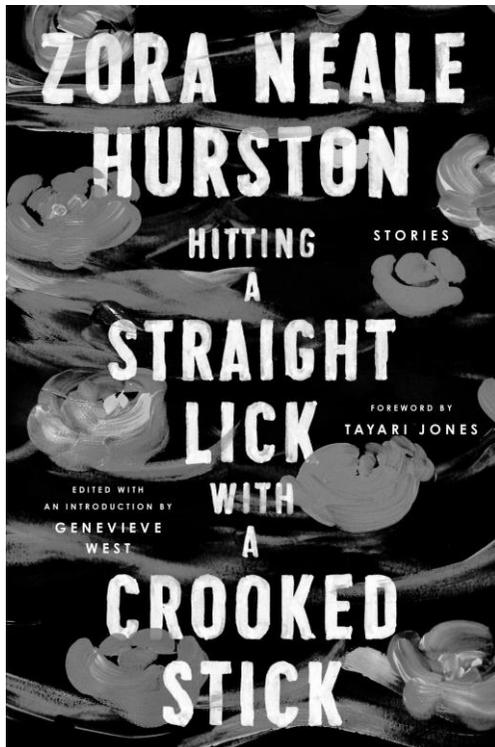
Citizen-Times staff reporter Tony Brown described the first Thomas Wolfe Society conference held Saturday April 12th, 1980, at Asheville as a day-long Wolfe festival. Among their local coordinators was Miss Myra Champion of the Pack Memorial Library. Memorial employees led by Steve Hill prepared for the visitors. 75 scholars made reservations to attend along with distinguished guests Kadashi Kodaira, a professor from Yokohama City University in Japan, and Pulitzer Prize winning author Dr. David Herbert Donald. Highlights of the festival planned to include a Saturday evening program at the Sheraton Motor Inn, a visit to Pack Library to view the Wolfe Collection, a bus tour of Asheville historic places and a house tour at Thomas Wolfe's mother's boardinghouse, both conducted by employees of Thomas Wolfe Memorial State Historic Site. Unexpectedly, early in the week in a convalescent center at Spartanburg, SC, came the passing of Fred W. Wolfe, age 85. He was "Luke" in *Look Homeward, Angel* and the last surviving member of the immediate Wolfe family. His funeral was rescheduled for 11 a.m. that Saturday at Riverside Cemetery, and in spite of heavy rains many members of the society attended the graveside service.

The Thomas Wolfe Society is still a very active community with their next conference scheduled for this May in Asheville. They could very well be facing the same cancellations that our society and so many other academic organizations have faced in recent weeks. You can learn more about this society at thomaswolfe.org.

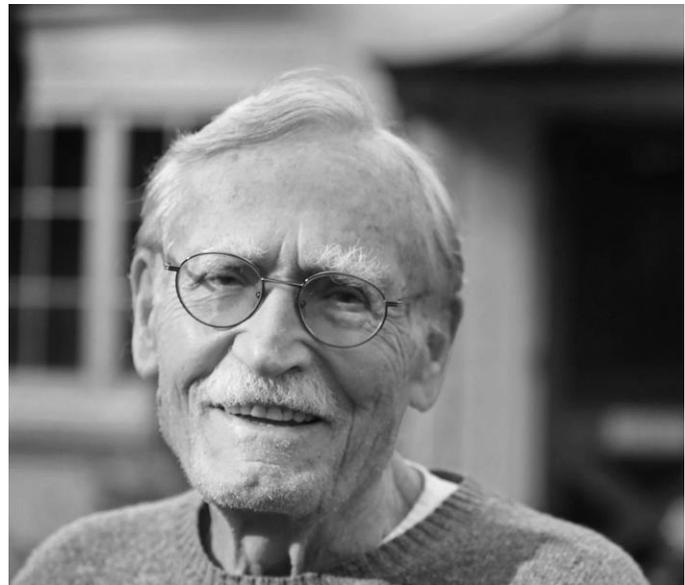


MKR—In the News!

Before each newsletter we publish, I am so grateful to receive an envelope of newspaper and magazine clippings from our own Trustee, Margaret Harris, who enjoys searching for items that would be of interest to our Society. This month, she found two especially notable pieces I'd like to share with you.



Released in January 2020 by HarperCollins, this new collection of Hurston's short fiction includes eight "lost" HarlemRenaissance stories.



Peter Meinke, who was the guest speaker at our Lakeland conference was recently honored with the Florida Humanities writing award for his influential work as a Florida poet.

Annual MKR Society Membership Prize

We are continuing our membership 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. Anne can provide extra forms to you!

The winner who registers the most new members will receive FREE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION for 2021.

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;
- Local groups such as historical societies, book clubs, garden clubs, or libraries are always looking for guest speakers. Our President tailors her talks around these groups to encourage membership. MKR presents so many areas for discussion such as literary, cooking, gardening, history, travel, and wildlife. Always offer some kind of incentive as a door prize, a MKR book, local honey, soap, plant for example. This is always a big draw.

**Note: MKR Society Membership Year is from July 1-June 30. Consult the mailing label for your renewal date.*

To learn more about the society and information on the annual conference, 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/>

