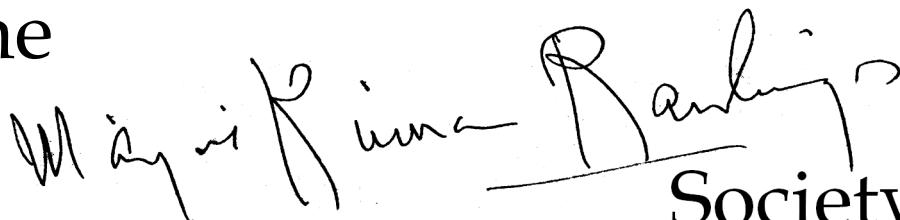


# The



## Society Newsletter

Volume XXVI, Number 2

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Newsletter

February 2022

### Officers

President Darien Andreu  
Vice President Gayle Prevatt  
Secretary Pam Davis  
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Roy Hunt  
Claire Koshar  
David Nolan



### President's Letter

The only dirt road my husband David Nolan will drive down is the one to Antioch Cemetery in Alachua County, so to visit the resting place of beloved Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Norton Baskin.

On a cloudy, overcast late November afternoon, we turn off Hwy 301, roll up and over the railroad tracks just before Zelma Cason's mother's rustic house. Then the pavement quits. For the next 15 minutes we bump down the narrow, dusty orange road. A corduroy road, my grandmother used to call such. It's only a 3 ½ mile drive, but it feels like traveling into yesteryears. The tunnel of oak canopy closes in around us.

This is maybe my fifth, sixth, or seventh trip. David's been coming for years, on Marge's birthday, on his birthday, on Norton's birthday.

He recounts Norton's funny story of how Marjorie was "mis-buried". That Norton had intended, as Marjorie has requested, that she be buried in a country cemetery near her friend Tom Glisson. But apparently there was a misunderstanding, only to be realized as the funeral procession turned toward the wrong country cemetery. But the grave had been dug, and, well, everyone was there.

This morning we drive up to the weathered chain link gate, lift the latch and head in. Things look a little desperate in the cleared scrub of turkey oak. David recounts the story of how Shirley Thompson with other Trustees spent a year planting azaleas around the cemetery. Marjorie had always told Norton she didn't want her grave to stand out. The workaround would be to give the whole cemetery azaleas. Unfortunately, that was a year of drought. Marjorie got her wish.

But as empty and forgotten as things seem, it's immediately apparent that people have recently been here before us. Many people. At the head of Marjorie's grave, there's a cluster of ink pens. Lots. Maybe 20. Placed in tribute? Maybe laid there by aspiring writers? Someone's also left a palm-sized Ocala stone. And two sweet deer figurines. One of a fawn resting on folded legs.

Marjorie and Norton's flat tombstones are still handsome. And today, somehow, the humidity has highlighted the lettering on the granite, darkening and outlining each section of words. On each grave marker, David places coins with dates that correlate with, say, the publication of *The Yearling* — 75 years later. Or Norton's birthday, 100 years later.

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# MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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*(Presidents Message continued from page 1)*

There's a reverential silence, and a misting rain begins. Then a crash of gunfire, from a north stand of trees. It's a sharp reminder of Jody's cruel initiation into adulthood.

Before leaving, we visit other graves, in particular looking for the ones marked by our Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society: among them Annie Slater, James Chester Crosby, Theresa and Berney Bass, George Fairbanks. And yes, even Zelma Cason, all with the permission of their families. All "immortalized in the writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings".

There's been so much very good work done over the years to share Marjorie's literary heritage. You'll read about more of it within.

With admiration and gratitude,  
Darien Andreu



## THE CONFERENCE IS BACK – SAVE THE DATE!

The 33rd Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference is being held together with the Florida Historical Society Public History Forum, May 19-21, 2022, at the Hilton Conference Center in Gainesville. The combined conference will include engaging panel discussions and presentations each morning, with tours of historic sites, museums, and archives each afternoon. There will be special performances, an Awards Luncheon, a banquet dinner with keynote speaker, Rawlings biographer, Ann McCutchan, and more. It's an event not to be missed! Registration information will be available soon at [www.myfloridahistory.org](http://www.myfloridahistory.org).

**Silent Auction Fundraiser** – Elaine Bradbury continues to collect items for our next Silent Auction Fundraiser. Any MKR books or memorabilia you are willing to donate will be appreciated. The auction also includes books, crafts, foods, or memorabilia with a Florida theme. If you have published a book, please consider contributing a signed copy to the auction. All contributions must be in good, condition. Contact Elaine at [loon44@icloud.com](mailto:loon44@icloud.com) with questions and/or to donate.



## MARJORIE IN OPERA FORM!

Contributed by Claire Koshar

On the evening of December 17, with its touch of Central Florida coolness, opera goers arrived at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts in Orlando and found themselves in the Alexis and Jim Pugh Theater. This was the perfect warm and intimate venue for the World Premiere of *The Secret River* based on the book of the same name by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

The opera played for four performances with Rawlings Society members in attendance at each one. It can be enjoyed by all ages, by opera enthusiasts as well as those new to opera. *The Secret River* opera will bring new readers to this story and an appreciation for all of Rawlings' works.

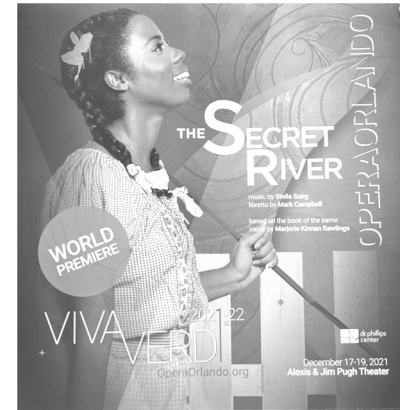
In his introduction to the opera, Gabriel Preisser, General Director, Opera Orlando, applauded all of those working together over a three-year period to be able to present this world premiere. He specifically thanked Flo Turcotte, MKR Society Executive Director and archivist for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings papers at the University of Florida, for her extraordinary technical and literary support in the creation of the opera.

The opera is composed by world acclaimed composer, Stella Sung. Rawlings Society Trustee Emeritus Roy Hunt writes, "Stella Sung has been a dear friend since her high school days. Her parents were among the earliest friends I made when I arrived in Gainesville in 1962." We are glad she brought her music home. At times, in this opera, her music is bright and fearful and happy.

Librettist Mark Campbell, a multiple Pulitzer Prize winner, tells Rawlings' lovely and poignant story of the little Black girl in Florida's scrub who, through her optimism and perseverance and courage, "follows her nose" and finds the Secret River. Set during the Depression, Calpurnia has enough fish for her father to sell and helps to "make hard times into soft times." Using some direct Rawlings' material and his own suitable humor, his blend produces an engaging and tender story.

The opera is faithful to Rawlings' book. There is respect for Rawlings' wishes as told to her editor, Max Perkins. There would be no stereotyping of the Black characters. There would be no vaudeville Black accents. Calpurnia is even corrected by her mother for using incorrect English in a poem.

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## WE ARE GRATEFUL!

When the MKRS had to cancel its Annual Conference in Spring 2022, the following people donated their conference fees. According to MKRS Treasurer Anne Pierce, the gifts placed \$3,630 in the Society's treasury.

Darien Andreu	Lisa Kerr-Dunn	Ann McCutchan	Rodger and Anita Tarr
Anne & Frank Bellissimo	Claire & Martin Koshar	David Nolan	Shirley Thompson
Elaine Bradbury	Ashley Lear	Margaret Anne Pierce	Terri Urquhart
Patricia Ann Davis	Antoinette Libro	Joan Sage	Tom Delaino and Frances Carrol
Harriette "Bunny" Kerr	Ann Masters	Teresa J. Sopp	



# MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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At the opening, Marjorie Rawlings, sung by Emily Pulley, is seated, struggling at her typewriter. She finally settles on her title, *The Secret River*. She can "write what she knows." She portrays Rawlings' impatience, frustration and, finally, satisfaction in knowing that her story is worth telling. Ms. Pulley was sponsored by the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society.

Calpurnia, lyrically and joyously sung by Kyaunnee Richardson, brought to her character the wonder, the delight and the indestructible nature of childhood. She goes to Mother Albirtha, richly sung by Kimberley Milton, who is both mystical and strong. In her journey, Calpurnia finds the river, brimming with fish. She is confronted with the creatures of a Florida forest, the alligator, the bear, the owl, the panther, the heron. The creation of these held-aloft puppets added enchantment to the story. Finding her way home, she is embraced by her parents. Father, Augustus, sung by Geoffrey Peterson, and mother, Cassandra, sung by NuGuanda Nobles, keep the intrinsic dignity of the characters intact. The father shows that kindness and strength can co-exist. Cassandra, deals with all of the fears, the responsibilities and the joys of parenthood.

Calpurnia overcomes her challenges, understands the gift of generosity and learns that

"A secret river,  
Flows through us all,  
Young and old,  
Big and small."

*The Secret River*, once published in sepia tones in order to minimize the idea that the protagonist was a little Black child, was played in beautiful and vivid color to a full house. It received a standing ovation.

Thank you to the MKR Society  
from Emily Pulley, Orlando Opera's Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

Dear Members of the Society,

It is my sincere pleasure and privilege to portray the wonderful Marjorie in *The Secret River* and I'm very grateful for your sponsorship. I can only hope that I can make you proud and honor her memory. I'm so glad to be a part of this show which you helped to make possible!

All my best,  
Emily Pulley

**CHECK OUT OUR UPDATED RAWLINGS SOCIETY WEBSITE!**

<https://rawlingssociety.org/>

You can now renew your membership either by form/check or electronically on the site.

You can also find copies of the classic newsletters, and more resources will be coming to the website each month! A schedule for the upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference will be posted there soon.

Please send website information to Ashley Lear: [andrewsa@erau.edu](mailto:andrewsa@erau.edu)



## CLAUDE JARMAN, JR. VISITS FLORIDA

Contributed by Rick Mulligan

It's not often that we tour guides at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park get to tour an Academy Award winning movie actor through the house. We did exactly that in December and, moreover, the award winner was cited for his magnificent acting debut at the age of 12 in the film version of Rawlings classic novel *The Yearling*.

Claude Jarman, Jr, immortalized as Jody Baxter in the 1946 film, was in Cross Creek with his wife Katherine for a series of events celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the film's release. A walk through the Rawlings farmhouse was just one of the weekend's events that culminated in a private screening of the film in the historic Ocala movie house which was a sold-out event.

I introduced myself and welcomed him to the house and farmstead. "Welcome to Marjorie's home, Mr. Jarman," I said. "Please call me Claude," was his response. He puts you at ease with his natural charm and self-effacing and generous persona. He said he had never been in the home before; in fact, he had never met Rawlings.

We stepped into the front porch and stood before the writing table and chair she used when she wrote the famous novel. After a long pause he said aloud to no one in particular, surely to himself, "This is where it all started." From where he stood, he could trace his story-book life from a 10-year-old boy in Nashville, Tennessee, when he was selected for the role of a lifetime, a role that Hedda Hopper told him any actor would kill for, right up to that moment. What a moment it was.

Jarman has retained his boyish countenance even at the age of 87. He is tall and angular and erect and carried himself with ease as we walked through the old farmhouse. We stopped in the display room to learn of Rawlings' larger body of work and to see the pictures of the people who inspired Rawlings to write *The Yearling* and other works. There was old Cal Long who told her the story of his younger brother Mel who as a boy adopted an abandoned fawn, the model for the character Jarman brought to life on the screen.

We moved from room to room pointing out the various things she wrote about in *Cross Creek* her memoir which Max Perkins, her editor and confidant with Scribner's Publishing, called a minor classic. The stories and artifacts were striking chords with Jarman and his wife and names of associates and recollections were passing back and forth.

As we left Rawlings bedroom to head into her famous dining room, we were told that a group of visitors on a regularly scheduled tour were in the living room. Jarman suggested we stop for a moment to greet them. So we diverted to the living room to surprise a group of about eight unsuspecting visitors to the house. They reacted in disbelief at first then quickly recognized it was indeed Jody standing before them chatting, taking questions and graciously giving his sincere responses. They were overwhelmed. Jarman, who does not seek the limelight and defers requests for public appearances, was enjoying this opportunity to meet with Rawlings' fans in this most natural of all settings. It was one Rawlings fan to other Rawlings fans.



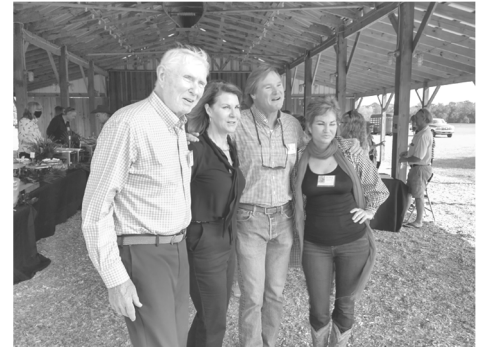
Claude Jarman, Jr. and wife Katherine speak with a fortunate group of visitors to the historic home who were surprised by meeting Jody himself.

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(Continued from page 5)

There was a bit of wonder in his eyes and on his face as we continued through her dining room filled with priceless artifacts and the period kitchen where Rawlings' passions were released. We gathered for a group photo on the steps of the south porch. It was time for him and his small entourage including his wife Katherine; Barbara Wingo, president of the Friends of MKR Park who organized the weekend; and Park General Manager Ginger Nichols to head to the next stop which was a visit to Silver Springs State Park near to filming location. The following day, the Jarmans were guests of honor at Dancing Cows Ranch in Cross Creek for a lunch and program. There he would be presented original artwork by Kate Barnes and view the first run of a documentary featuring interviews of several surviving locals who assisted in the making of the movie. The documentary was produced and created by Donna Greene Townsend of Cross Creek, who is also a board member of the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm group.



Claude Jarman, Jr. and wife Katherine with Claude Jarman III and his fiancée at the picturesque Dancing Cows Ranch in Cross Creek.

Jarman gave a few remarks after the documentary thanking all for their hospitality and their attendance. I think he summarized his true nature when he said he didn't have any special qualities that earned him the coveted role. He said "I guess I just looked right."

## MEET OUR MEMBERS:

Anne Gardepe, Rawlings Society Trustee, is a graduate of Florida Technological University (now The University of Central Florida), B.A., 1970 and U.C.F., M.Ed., 1990. She retired in 2007 after teaching 37 years in 2 elementary schools in Orange County. She soon became involved in volunteer work including tutoring with the Adult Literacy League and working as a docent at the Orange County Regional History Center where she also performed a cameo role as Marjorie Rawlings. She took on several roles at her church including leading a book club, drama director, adult Bible teacher and other volunteer tasks. Her husband says she is a "born teacher."

Anne and her husband John, married for 54 years, have a daughter who is also an elementary school teacher and 4 wonderful grandchildren. Anne and John live in Orlando and love to travel, especially cruising and visiting historic sites and national parks. They are 10-year members of L.I.F.E. at UCF. (Learning Institute for Elders). A few years ago, Anne presented her *Florida's Three Marjories* at LIFE.

In 2015 Anne and John attended their first class at Rollins Lifelong Learning Center which they enjoyed very much. Soon after, Anne joined the "volunteer faculty" and over the next few years taught 6 courses: *The Life and Literary Works of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings*, *Colonial American Life from A to Z*, *Florida's Three Marjories* (inspired by a class taught originally by Leslie Poole), *Four Henrys of Florida*, *For Women's History Month: Eight Great of the Sunshine State* (including 3 Marjories) and *Florida: A Land Remembered*, featuring the novel by Patrick D. Smith. Those classes allowed Anne to share some of her passions: drama, literature and history.

Anne has also been in touch with [Audible.com](https://www.audible.com) about a possible audible version of *Cross Creek*.

Welcome, Anne!



## A SUCCESSFUL SPEAKING TOUR

Thank you so very much to our sponsors who made possible Ann McCutchan's Florida Book Talks in November 19-21, 2021:

Rothman Family Chair in the Humanities, The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, the South Anastasia Community Association, and the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm.

Matheson History Museum, Gainesville, FL

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings State Historic Park, Cross Creek, FL

Lohman Auditorium, Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience, St. Augustine, FL

## The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings *Journal of Florida Literature*: Call for Papers

The editor of the JOURNAL, Anna Lillios, would like to invite submissions of critical articles that focus not only on Rawlings but also on issues that fit within the broader contexts of Florida writing, regionalism, feminism, race, eco-criticism, literature of place, domesticity, and southern culture. Papers in these more general areas should in some way connect with Rawlings and/or contemporaries of Rawlings.

In addition, the Journal welcomes submissions of short fiction and poetry, especially those works, which reflect Rawlings's own deep affection for Florida and Florida life.

Please submit an electronic copy to the editor by the January 1st deadline. All manuscripts should be no more than twenty-five double-spaced pages in length.

Dr. Anna Lillios  
Department of English  
University of Central Florida  
P. O. Box 161346  
Orlando, FL 32816-1346  
Anna@ucf.edu

## OUR OLD FRIEND

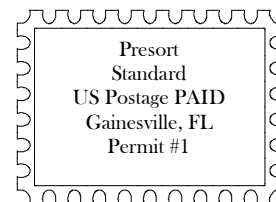
Members of the Rawlings Society will remember our longtime Trustee, Vicky Woods, a familiar figure at the Society meetings over the years

Now as one of our senior members, she has moved in with the families who take care of her. She is still in Ocala. They have more room: 10 acres and a pond. Vicky would like to hear from her friends in the Society – maybe a “Thinking of You” and/or a “Miss You” card. Her new address:

4520 NE 36th Ave  
Ocala, FL 34479

If you prefer to phone, call Brian or Shanna at (352) 362-7870.  
Or Pamela at (352) 229-0458, [psmeekins@gmail.com](mailto:psmeekins@gmail.com)

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: [www.rawlingssociety.org](http://www.rawlingssociety.org)

**Membership and Conference Registration Prize**

The Membership Year for the MKR Society is **July through June** corresponding with our programming, conference and publication cycle. ***Please take a good look at your mailing label to see if your renewal date has passed.*** If so, please consider renewing today using the membership form below.

The person who registers the most **new** members wins a FREE Conference Registration for our next conference.

Here are some ideas to solicit members:

- Encourage friends and adult children to join;
- Give a gift of a student membership (\$15) to children, grandchildren, or other students;
- Speak to neighbors and those at your local library or historical society about joining.

**Membership Application for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society**

Name: _____	Student	\$15	Sponsor	\$100
	Individual	\$30	Patron	\$250
Address: _____	Family	\$40	Benefactor	\$500
	Sustaining	\$50	Life	\$1,000
City/State/Zip: _____	(Please circle membership level)			
E-mail address: _____	Mail to: Rawlings Society c/o Anne Pierce 249 Herman Drive Hawthorne, FL 32640			

To learn more about the society and information on the annual conference, visit our website, [www.rawlingssociety.org](http://www.rawlingssociety.org)