

The



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings *Society*

Newsletter

Volume XXVII, Number 2

Winter 2023

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President's Letter

Plans have been in the works for holding our annual conference in St. Augustine since before Covid. This year it will come to pass – and it will be wonderful to meet in the Ancient City of Marjorie's second Florida home. It's the place of hers and Norton's betrothal, their (mostly) wedded bliss, their Castle Warden hotel, their Crescent Beach home, and the town of her passing.

On Thursday, April 27, the night before the Conference begins, David Drysdale, a Rawlings Society lifetime member and founding trustee, will host a special Low Country Boil for Trustees at the beloved, legendary St. Augustine Alligator Farm and Zoological Park. The Alligator Farm is one of Florida's oldest tourist attractions and the Drysdales have shared many years of friendship with Marjorie. David knew Norton Baskin from his childhood, and his parents accompanied Norton to the Cannes Film Festival for the showing of the *Cross Creek* movie.

On Friday and Saturday, April 28 and 29, we'll hold our conference activities at The Waterworks, a beautiful, historic brick building that is being provided to us by Christina Parrish Stone, Rawlings Society member and Executive Director of the St. Johns County Cultural Council.

Popular at earlier meetings, a trolley tour, narrated by historian David Nolan, will again take us past the residences of the many writers who have made St. Augustine their home.

Also much appreciated at a Rawlings Society conference some 30 years ago was a walking tour of Tampa's Ybor City, given by author and historian Gary Mormino. This year he comes to us as our Friday night banquet speaker to tell us about his latest books and studies of Florida.

Four-time Emmy-Award winning journalist, Bob Kealing, who's done so much fine work about Jack Kerouac will be our closing Saturday morning speaker. His book, *Kerouac In Florida: Where The Road Ends* (2004), led to the preservation of the Jack Kerouac House in Orlando, which is now available as a residence for writers.

As an evening encore, our new trustee, Deborah Dickey, plans to stage Zora Neale Hurston's short play *Color Struck* (1926), partially set in St. Augustine – and never before produced!

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So register *now*! (See form page 7.) Participant opportunities may fill quickly.

Before I attended my first Rawlings Conference in Lakeland, FL, my husband told me that the Society has some of the finest people there are. And it's more than true. So much devoted, noble work has been done that inspires the effort to continue. I have enjoyed my years serving in the role of President. And I've been honored by your trust. Thank you. As my term ends, I will continue to serve as newsletter editor, trustee, and one of our many members who carries forward Marjorie's and Florida's literary legacy.

My Rawlings Best,
Darien Andreu

"BOOK-TALKING" WITH MARGE AND JULIA

By Florence Turcotte

As library staff members, my colleagues and I are frequently drawn into conversations about books during social encounters with others. When I meet somebody new and I tell them where I work, I'm often met with the exclamation: "Oh, you have such a great job! I love reading!" This remark reminds me of one of those internet memes about "what I do/what others think I do," with an image of me reading with my feet propped up on my desk. But what also happens quite often is that people share details about their reading life with me, and I add to my own reading agenda. In turn, I can share some of my favorite titles with others and make connections.

I was reminded of this "book talking" phenomenon in my personal life during the editing process in my professional life of the book: *Marge and Julia: the Correspondence of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Julia Scribner Bigham*. Pulitzer Prize-winning author Rawlings was first introduced to Julia Scribner (later Bigham), daughter of publishing magnate Charles Scribner III, shortly after the legendary Scribner House published *The Yearling* to great success in 1938. Though Julia's New York City life was far removed from the rural world of Cross Creek, the two women remained close until Rawlings's death in 1953, after which Scribner Bigham served as Rawlings's literary executor. In this documentary edition of 211 of their letters, Rawlings's and Bigham's perspectives on the world are woven through over a decade of intimate discussion and advice about relationships, motherhood, mental health, politics, art, and literature.

The correspondence in this volume encompasses all of the extant letters between them from 1939 when they met, and 1953 when Rawlings died. This 530-page book is available on the University Press of Florida website. <https://upf.com/book.asp?id=9780813069289>. MKR Society members can receive a 40% discount by using the code "MKR40" when placing an order.

The book is partially based on a gift of letters to Julia from MKR that arrived at Smathers Library in December 2018. Rodger Tarr, Brent Kinser and I first discussed publishing them at the MKR Society meeting in 2019. Pairing them up with Julia's letters to Marjorie's already in the archive created an epistolary conversation that we found exciting and fascinating. Many, many topics were covered in the letters, but I'd like to focus on their discussions about their reading lives, aka "book-talking."

As a literary archivist and historian, I have read a great number of letters back and forth between writers. But none have as much book-talking as the letters between these two women. When they first met, they

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discovered a mutual interest in outdoor activities. Marjorie found in her young protégée a companion for hunting and fishing expeditions, exploring her local lakes, forests and rivers. As the correspondence between them developed, however, Julia's background as the daughter of Marjorie's publisher begins to emerge. A host of authors' names and book titles from the 1930's and 40's soon pop up everywhere in the letters.

As the daughter of a famous publisher, you can well imagine how Julia would have grown up surrounded by books. For her part, Rawlings was always a voracious reader. It is understandable that they should seek to share their reading habits and lists with one another. Rawlings's editor at Scribner's for much of this period was the renowned Maxwell Perkins, who nurtured Marjorie's creativity and literary career. Perkins sent Rawlings hundreds of titles published by Scribner's during this period, and many of these books are discussed in the letters.

Julia introduced Marjorie to many books about religion, notably *Diary of A Country Priest*, by Georges Bernanos, and *The Idea of the Holy*, by Rudolf Otto. *Moral Man and Immoral Society* by Reinhold Niebuhr had a profound impact on Julia, and she went on and on about it. Same thing with Julien Green. Poetry was also an obsession with Julia, especially Charles Peguy. Her letters have a decidedly leftist bent and reveal a precocious young woman with a passionate interest in music, visual arts and a budding interest in photography. She enjoyed novels set in Europe and considered herself a cosmopolitan. Marjorie had similar tastes in fiction, and both women disliked Henry James intensely.

Book-talking, then and now, helped to strengthen the bonds of friendship between these two women, and helped Rawlings find her own voice as a writer. So, don't hesitate to strike up a conversation about your reading with a fellow book lover: it may end up resulting in a future Pulitzer Prize!

Florence M. Turcotte is Literary Manuscripts Archivist at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries and curator of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Papers. She also serves as Executive Director of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society.

The publication of this book was assisted by the Rawlings Society in the form of a grant in honor of our founder and first president, Philip S. May, Jr.

HOME SWEET HOME

Paul Dunn, our Society Vice-President, reports that the Maxwell Perkins house in New Canaan, Connecticut, recently went up for sale. Perkins was, of course, Marjorie's editor and friend, and oversaw as well the manuscripts of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, and, briefly, Zora Neale Hurston. You can find photos of the Perkins home and more of its history here: <https://www.cottagesgardens.com/publishing-legend-maxwell-perkins-former-greek-revival-home-lists-in-new-canaan/>. Those who attended our 2015 conference in Lakeland will recall the fascinating presentation on the Perkins House by the architect who then lived there.



WE HAVE A NEW LOGO!

At last year's Conference in Gainesville (where we partnered with the Florida Historical Society), we became acutely aware that the Rawlings Society did not have a logo! Rawlings Society member, Jennifer Campbell, daughter of Lifetime Members Claire and Marty Koshar, and chair of our Publicity Committee, in collaboration with Regine de Toledo of Graphics Ink, created an exquisite logo that Jennifer debuted January 28, 2023 at the Rawlings Society Trustees Luncheon, held in the President's Dining Room, Flagler College, St. Augustine, FL.

You'll now find the Rawlings Society logo on our Newsletter masthead, our website, and possibly on some items for sale at the Annual Rawlings Society Conference auction!

AN ADDITION FOR OUR RAWLINGS BOOKSHELF

In recent years, the Rawlings Conference has been regularly able to debut the publication of a book that contributes to the Rawlings legacy. And this year we'll be gifted with another!

Kevin McCarthy will bring into print a long-needed book that features Sally Baskin Hooker, niece of Norton Baskin and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who spoke of them, and her life growing up at Marineland, at our last annual meeting in Gainesville.

Additional Recent Publications:

2022 *Marge and Julia: The Correspondence between Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Julia Scribner Bigham*, edited by Rodger Tarr, Brent E. Kinser, and Florence Turcotte

2021 *The Life She Wished to Live: A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Author of The Yearling* by Ann McCutchan

2019 *Dessie Smith Prescott* by Kevin McCarthy

2018 *The Remarkable Kinship of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Ellen Glasgow* by Ashley Lear

2010 *Crossing the Creek: The Literary Friendship of Zora Neale Hurston and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings* by Anna Lillios

And, of course, the many wonderful "Marjorie" books by Rodger Tarr, at times with the collaboration of Brent Kinser.



A LAST LINK

One of the last people to interview Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings has passed away at his Washington area home at the age of 100.

Bernard Kalb was particularly famous as a CBS newsman in the Golden Age of network television, but he did his apprenticeship in print journalism during World War II. His editor was the celebrated detective novelist Dashiell Hammett, author of *The Thin Man* and *The Maltese Falcon*.

After the war, and into the 1950s, Kalb wrote frequent columns about authors for *The Saturday Review of Literature*. In the January 3, 1953 issue, a review of Marjorie's last work *The Sojourner* by Ohio novelist Louis Bromfield was published with this sidebar by Bernard Kalb, where Marjorie acknowledges that the problem of writing was "attempting to attain a mastery over facts in order to create fiction".

Seventy years later (almost to the day), Bernard Kalb had a fall in his house and died a few days later. Survivors include his collaborator in writing books, fellow TV newsman, and younger brother Marvin Kalb, 93.



THE AUTHOR: Writing, someone must have once said, is hell, and one writer who'd agree faster than you could say Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings is Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, despite the fact that she wrote five books in the nine years following the appearance of her first, "South Moon Under," in 1933. "Several years ago John Steinbeck asked me," Mrs. Rawlings recalled the other day in St. Augustine, in that part of Florida which has been her workshop since 1928, "Do you find that the writing goes any easier as time passes?" I said, "Each book seems more difficult than the last," and he said, "That's the way I find it." "The Sojourner," it turns out, was begun way back in 1943. "I encountered several strange complications in the writing and rewriting of this book," Mrs. Rawlings said after noting that she had junked half a dozen starts. One complication was something she had faced in writing her first novel — "the problem of attempting to attain a mastery over facts in order to create fiction." Of Mrs. Rawlings's important novels "The Sojourner" is the only one that is not set in the Florida scrub country, full of crackers, moonshiners, and jungle hammock. "The reason," she explained, "was that the struggle of Ase Linden could only be laid against a sterner background, with snow and ice and hail." In pursuit of winter, Mrs. Rawlings journeyed to central New York, where she devoted her summers to "The Sojourner." Some of these summers lasted until mid-December. Winters she worked at Cross Creek, Florida, her home for the last twenty-five years. It wasn't until Mrs. Rawlings, after a decade as a newspaperwoman and as a serious writer on-the-side, left the Rochester (N.Y.) Journal for Florida that she began to strike literary pay-dirt. After ten years at Cross Creek "The Yearling" appeared. It won a Pulitzer Prize. Today, at fifty-six, Mrs. Rawlings is at work on a biography of Ellen Glasgow. "It seems," she said, "as much of a challenge as any novel." —BERNARD KALB.



—Erich Hartmann.

HUNGRY?

Long-time MKR trustee, Margaret Harris, sends news that *Southern Living's* January-February issue features a familiar face — former Rawlings Society president Marsha Dean Phelts!

It highlights her 2008 *American Beach Cookbook* (one of several books she has written about that historic community on northeast Florida's Amelia Island).

In addition to information about the area and its culinary traditions, the article includes Marsha's full recipe for "Savory Crab-and-Shrimp Gumbo Exotica." Mmm!

FAREWELL, OLD FRIEND

An honored citizen of St. Augustine, Mrs. Janie Price, passed away on January 7, 2023, at the age of 96. One of the patients she cared for in her nursing career was Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, when the author recuperated from a heart attack at her Crescent Beach home in the 1950s.

Mrs. Price's home is often pointed out by tour train drivers because it is where Martin Luther King stayed in 1964. He and Mrs. Price had first met in Atlanta in the 1940's when he was a student at Morehouse College, and she was taking her nurse's training at Grady Hospital. A Freedom Trail marker in front of her home at 156 Martin Luther King Avenue tells the story.



CALL FOR RAWLINGS SOCIETY CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Do you have a presentation you would like to make? Each year the annual conference of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society presents speakers on topics of interest to its members. We are always open to suggestions, and there are still a couple of open slots at our upcoming conference. Submit your proposals to Flo Turcotte at floturcotte@uflib.ufl.edu and/or Darien Andreu at andreude@flagler.edu

ANY EXTRA FLORIDIANA?

Elaine Bradbury would love to have auction items for the conference. Anything from MKR, art work, Florida items, and history. Local art work and pottery, notecards, and books have always been popular. Please contact Elaine at hhfarme@gmail.com if you have items to donate. It helps to have a suggested value and the donor's name with the item. She can save time by doing the bid sheets ahead if she has this information. Thank you again for any donations.

WILL YOU SERVE?

Are you interested in serving as a Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Trustee? We have several open seats. Trustees bring valued new energy, talents, and more!

Trustees serve a three-year term. The duties include, ideally, attendance at the Trustees' meeting in the fall and winter seasons, and at the annual spring Conference. Our meeting sites are a moveable feast. Trustees meet for lunch at Cross Creek's Yearling Restaurant, and other wonderful Florida locales.

We need your enthusiasm and ideas! Contact Flo Turcotte at floturcotte@uflib.ufl.edu, Darien Andreu at andreude@flagler.edu, or any Rawlings Society Board Member.

BROWSE OVER TO OUR MKRS WEBSITE! <https://rawlingssociety.org/>

- ◆ You can renew your membership electronically on the site, or by mailing a check.
- ◆ You can also find copies of the classic newsletters. More resources will be coming to the website each month!
- ◆ A detailed schedule for the upcoming 34th Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference will be posted soon.

Please send website information and updates to Ashley Lear: andrewsa@erau.edu



MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume XXXVII, Number 2 Winter 2023

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: ANNUAL RAWLINGS SOCIETY CONFERENCE! April 28-29, 2023



XXXIV Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference

St. Augustine, FL, April 28-29, 2023

Pre-registration Form – Due April 19

Name(s) _____

Badge Name(s) _____

Street Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Renew now if you wish: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society (*July-June membership year*)

Your due date can be found on the address label of your newsletter.

Patron	\$250	Family	\$40	Individual	\$30
Benefactor	\$500	Sustaining	\$50	Student	\$15
Life	\$1,000	Sponsor	\$100		

Conference Registration Fee: On/before Apr 19 After Apr 19

	Members	\$50	\$60
(Includes 1-yr mem.)	Non-Members	\$70	\$80
(Includes 1-yr mem.)	Student	\$20	\$20

One-day Reg Fee:	Members	\$30
(Includes 1-yr mem.)	Non-Members	\$50
(Includes 1-yr mem.)	Student	\$15

Friday, Apr 28, 12:30 PM Bag Lunch at Waterworks \$15 x _____

Select one below for each reservation:

(Sandwich) Cuban _____ Roasted Chicken, Apple, Cheddar _____
Mediterranean Platter (greens, tabouli, olives, cuke, tomato, pita) _____

Friday, Apr 28, 1:30 PM Red Train Trolley Tour \$20 x _____

Meet at Waterworks

Friday, Apr 28, 6:30 PM Banquet, at Waterworks \$40 x _____

Select one for each reservation:

Braised Chicken _____ Salmon _____ Penne Pasta _____

TOTAL AMOUNT (dues + conference fees) _____

Please make checks payable to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society and mail to

MKR Society, c/o Paul Dunn, 2111 Oak Bluff Court, Fernandina Beach, FL 32034



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!

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 or you can now renew on our website.

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

Here are some ideas to solicit members:

- Encourage friends and relatives 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**