



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings  
Society Newsletter

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Letter from Sandra Birnhak

*Editor's Note: Sandra Birnhak was an executive producer of the 1994 movie, The Yearling. She is a trustee of the Society and has recently joined Shirley Thompson on the Society's Membership Committee. Below is a letter that Sandra wrote to Brent and Anna about her and Shirley's efforts to recruit new members to join the Society. She urges members to spread the word about the Society to your organizations and communities. The Society will provide materials for membership drives.*

July 29 The Membership Drive was an epiphany for me. Librarians, school teachers, farmers, waitresses and a few scholarly people who had traveled the world and settled in our community. Of course, Stetson Kennedy and Sandra Parks were there, politicians, and Rotarians. Several people signed up and paid for their memberships today—young people (who had come from Hawthorne), a Georgia Pacific worker who had just gotten off the night shift came with his wife (his grandmother was a friend of MKR's), the executive director of Habitat for Humanity in St. Johns County, head librarian for St. Augustine, head librarian for Hastings, a Ph.D educator/writer (world traveler) who recently became president of the Hastings Rotary, an attorney, a retired professor/now a painter who talked about hearing MKR's talks in 1940 at UF, the two waitresses at the Hastings Cafe (neither had ever heard of MKR but went home last night and got online), an eBay store merchant, a legal secretary, teachers—over 70 people—all showed up promptly by 7:15 a.m. to get a table.

We had two large displays of everything "MKR." I was humbled by the people who were born and raised in Hastings and were very matter of fact in telling stories about growing up next door to her over in Crescent Beach, particularly the Duponts who are getting up there in age! I've considered why the event was such a success—was it one thing over another? I believe it was the number of teachers, librarians, etc.—people who really want to let people know about MKR—show the films, read the books, talk about their history—I met a woman today who moved to this area 22 years ago because of her love of MKR.

MKR is about community, storytelling, history. I sense that people are searching for something that can bring them together these days. I assured them all that the Society has scholars who study MKR's work—write books, etc.—and a lot of our members just love MKR and Florida's rich history.

Many stayed to view the displays and talk together. New friends were made and I watched several sit down to breakfast together. One of the women, 71-year-old Eddie Saxby born and raised in East Palatka, saw the story in the *Palatka Daily News* yesterday and told her husband she had an engagement at 7:15 a.m. I felt like I was sitting across from Marjorie—she is a dead ringer—she told me that people often say that to her—it was very eerie. And, in giving some advice to another guest about how to get a Sebago Palm to stand up straight, I heard her say, "just bang it now and then with a fryin' pan—it'll straighten' right up"—in true Marjorie style.

I have been asked to speak to a legal group in Ponte Vedra, at the St. Augustine Library (they want to join as an organization), and to screen the film and give a talk at the Hastings Library. In the meantime, we are organizing an MKR Breakfast (*Cross Creek Cookery*)—in September—at the Hastings Cafe (farmer's breakfast/lunch diner—very well known), and I'm thinking of doing something with Johnnie Barnes at "Genung Fish Camp" over in Crescent Beach. I must say—I'm having a great time doing this, and Shirley will be with me for the next round.

I'm still thinking about the owner/waitress whom I overheard telling a farmer that she didn't know whom the woman in the picture was on the front door but there was a meeting about her on the 29th. Today, she asked me to auto-graph her DVD and had looked at the web site. Progress! Take care, Sandra

Renew Your Membership now! Your expiration date is on your label below.

Life \$1,000, Sponsor \$100, Sustaining \$50, Family \$40, Individual \$30.



Volume XXIII Number 3

EDITOR: ANNA LILLIOS

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society  
Newsletter

September 2010

President's Letter

Greetings fellow Rawlings Society Members:

The Dogwoods are blushing. The crisp nights tweak the figurative noses of warm glorious afternoons. All around me I see flip-flopping students, addled faculty, and administrating administrators. Fall in the mountains is indeed a glorious time, my favorite of the year. The biologists are expecting brilliant leaf display this fall and we can't wait.

The trustees will soon gather once again, this time in DeLand, the site of next year's annual meeting. The gathering will be at the Museum of Florida Art in DeLand on 16 October, beginning at 12:00. I sincerely hope that as many of you as possible can make it. Unfortunately, for the first time since I became the president of the Society, I will be unable to make a meeting of the trustees. I am very sorry because I will not get to see my Rawlings friends, but scholarly duties call me to Washington, DC. I want to thank Anna Lillios and Flo Turcotte for taking on the duties of running the meeting in Deland. I am certain of its success and that everyone will enjoy getting together. I will see you in January.

I want to take a moment to thank Shirley Thompson and Sandra Birnhak for their recent efforts at bringing in new members, to whom I extend a hearty welcome. I also want to thank everyone for all they continue to do for the Society, so many of you and in such myriad ways that it is beyond my capacity not to forget someone (addled faculty, remember), so please accept my collective and heartfelt thanks.

The Rawlings Society has come to mean a great deal to me over the years, in particular because of our annual meetings. I have never been disappointed in a Rawlings conference I've attended. Each has had a unique flavor, and each has provided me with many sacred memories. The Society is a diverse, remarkable set of individuals who have lived remarkable lives, all connected by the common thread of love and respect for the life and works of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. It has been an honor to serve as your president, and it is a much greater honor to call you friends. I am indeed looking forward to DeLand next spring.

One word more. As the trustees plan to gather in October, I urge all of you to take a moment to consider an important issue. What do you want this Society to be like ten years from now? More literary? More Social? More Academic? We need to clarify the way we answer a question that prospective members often ask: What does the Society do? As we approach the prospect of celebrating the Rawlings Society's twenty-fifth anniversary, it is time to think of the future, together. I look forward to hearing all of your ideas in the coming months. For now, with very best wishes for the fall, I will look forward to seeing you in the new year.

*Brent*

Brent E. Kinser, President Email: [bkinser@email.wcu.edu](mailto:bkinser@email.wcu.edu)

Trustees Meeting

Saturday, October 16, noon

Museum of Florida Art

600 North Woodland Blvd.

DeLand, FL 3272

<http://www.museumoffloridart.org>

Cost of lunch \$22 (please send check to Anna Lillios by October 11)



SPECIAL DATES

- October 16  
Trustees Meeting
- October 24  
MKR Friends of Farm Fundraiser
- December 20  
MKR Farm Citrus Picking Day
- April 15-16, 2011  
XXIV Annual MKR Conference, St. Augustine, FL

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# XXIV Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference DeLand, Florida April 15-16, 2010

The next Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings conference will take place in the lovely college town of DeLand. Sessions will be held across from Stetson University at the Museum of Florida Art, 600 North Woodland Boulevard, DeLand 32720 (<http://www.museumoffloridaart.org/>)

The Society hotel is the University Inn, 644 North Woodland Boulevard, DeLand 32720. Phone: (386) 734-5711 or 1-800-345-8991. (<http://www.universityinndeland.com>). The hotel is conveniently located a few steps from the Museum of Florida Art. The Society has reserved nearly all the rooms in the hotel. The hotel is delightful, with rooms located around a pool and near a cheery breakfast room. Rates are \$65 per night (\$73.13 all-inclusive). Please call now and make your reservations. The cut-off date is April 1.

The conference-planning committee (Walt Grampp, Dennis Bowden, Janice Arinson, Ellen Giallonardo, Claire Koshar, Victoria Woods, Ernest Bass, and Jacque French) has met and is trying to arrange another interesting conference. There will be a boat tour (on the St. Johns River, starting at Blue Springs State Park); a picnic lunch before the tour; great speakers, including artist Jackson Walker (see below); and a theatre fundraiser on Saturday night, April 16 (more details to follow).

If you'd like to present a paper or give a presentation, please send a note to Anna Lillios as soon as possible. Highlights of the program will appear in the next MKR Newsletter.

## Jackson Walker

Jackson Walker was born in Panama City in 1946, and grew up in Stuart. After high school, he served two tours of duty in Vietnam. When he returned home, he became a graphic artist, musician, singer, and songwriter. He is known for his beautiful historical paintings, entitled collectively as "Legendary Florida," of iconic Floridians, including Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. His work has been featured on the A & E Network and the History Channel, among many media networks. Jackson Walker has also been awarded the Florida Commendation Medal and other awards for his work in documenting the military history of Florida.

Jackson Walker describes his work:

*"My blood runs through this place. For many generations, my clan has survived this intemperate and sometimes deadly place. This evolution of family, among them cattlemen, lawmen, and the occasional soldier when events of history required, along with their women companions who were both brave in the face of the pioneer struggles and bountiful providers in the comforts of the home, the trail that they blazed leads directly to me. Their bones lie buried in the sand the length and breadth of this land known as Florida—they rest in the very earth that provided their every need in life and that will forever embrace them in its history.*

*"When I determined that I had finally evolved in my studies of painting pictures to the point where I felt I had attained the ability to create a convincing portrayal, I began the task that I believe every artist must address—I sought a sense of purpose. I endeavored to find the way that presented both a challenge to my skills and a true personal satisfaction. After many tentative starts and faltering ends in this quest, I had but to realize that I should heed the advice I had once been given and which I have often related to others: That is quite simply, 'Paint what you know.'"*

--Jackson Walker

[source:<http://www.museumoffloridaart.org/legendaryflorida/artist.html>]



# History of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

By Kevin McCarthy and Claire Koshar

When the MKR Society meets for its 25<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in 2012, it will have a history of the society for sale for a modest price to cover the cost of printing and binding. Archivist Claire Koshar and former executive director Kevin McCarthy are teaming up to produce the first history of our group. It will consist of approximately 30,000 words, be about 125 printed pages long, and have 250 black-and-white photographs throughout the large format: eight inches wide and ten inches long.

Claire and Kevin have been poring over all the minutes of the meetings, including the quarterly trustees' meetings, and the annual conference notes. Each chapter will have notes about that year's conference (site, papers presented, side trips), publications about MKR during that year, and news items about the society. The co-authors also hope to have introductory words by the president of the society, its executive director, and Phil May Jr. (our founding father). They will have sample chapters for review by trustees and members at our DeLand annual meeting.

Below are early photos of the society. The one on the left shows David Warriner, Bill Goza, Kevin McCarthy, and Anne Jones at a very early meeting of the trustees in the MKR House when they were discussing the creation of the society. The other photo shows Phil May Jr., Shirley Thompson, and David Nolan, three long-time society members.



## ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY

Philip S. May Jr., the son of Philip S. May Sr., the attorney for Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (MKR) from 1935 until her death in 1953, was the founder of the MKR Society. As a member of the Thomas Wolfe Society and based on his personal recollections of Mrs. Rawlings, Mr. May decided to create a similar organization to honor, create, and preserve interest in the life, works, and words of Mrs. Rawlings. He discussed the formation of a society with Norton Baskin, MKR's widower, who liked the idea and suggested that Mr. May meet with Dr. Samuel Proctor, noted historian and Rawlings enthusiast at the University of Florida. In the mid-1980s, Dr. Proctor suggested having a Rawlings festival in 1988 to coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *The Yearling* (1938). Mr. May discussed the idea of forming a society with Dr. Melvyn New, chairman of the University of Florida Department of English. Dr. New supported the idea and expressed interest in having the department participate in the development of the organization.

On March 10, 1987, the first official meeting of the society was held in the conference room of the Rare Books division of Library West at the University of Florida (UF). Those present: Philip S. May Jr., Gordon Bigelow (professor of American Literature at UF and the author of one of the first books about Rawlings), Michael Gannon (professor of Florida History at UF), Sidney Ives (curator of rare books at UF), Anne Jones (professor of American Literature at UF), Kevin McCarthy (professor of English and Florida Studies at UF), and Sam Proctor (professor of Florida History at UF). Officers were elected and the by-laws were approved.

The first officers were as follows: President: Philip May Jr.; Vice President: Kevin McCarthy; Secretary: Gordon Bigelow; Treasurer: Melvyn New; Archivist: Sidney Ives; Editors of newsletter: Anne Jones and Samuel Proctor; Chairman of the Board of Trustees: Michael Gannon. Co-editors of the newsletter and journal: Anne Jones and Sam Proctor