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President's Letter

Dear MKR Society Friends,

It's a question I'd like to ask everyone: How did you come to Marjorie?

I became entranced with Rawlings as a child when *The Yearling* came to our Orange Park, Florida, theatre. There on the big screen were Hollywood legends like Gregory Peck walking under the tower pines and the oak hammock outside my door. The writer of the novel? A woman who lived in the Florida backcountry – *on her own!*

Now as a Flagler College faculty member, I have the pleasure of teaching Rawlings' short story "Gal Young 'Un". My students cheer Mattie's final act to overcome an exploitive relationship, recognize her own culpability, and take back her life.

Particularly gratifying, too, has been finding "my people," the Minorcans, who arrived in Florida in 1768 as indentured laborers, sympathetically depicted in Marjorie's work.

We've all come to Marjorie from many places and for many personal reasons. Her life and works have enriched us powerfully.

And while the Covid pandemic has prevented our ability to celebrate in person all things Rawlings, during our Trustee meetings and annual conferences, as has been done for 34 years in some of Florida's most wonderful settings – we will be together again soon.

Meanwhile the celebration of MKR continues – most immediately by the debut of a major new Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings biography by our own Ann McCutchan!

Ann gives the world a rich new appreciation of Marjorie in *The Life She Wished to Live. A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Author of The Yearling* (W.W. Norton & Co.) Her book debuted May 11, 2021. Google the rave reviews! Buy the book!

In other highlights, the MKR Society has posed a number of writerly questions to Ann McCutchan. You can find her replies inside (on page 3).

(Continued on page 2)



MARJORIE KINNAN RAWLINGS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Volume XXXV, Number 4 May 2021

President's Letter (Continued from page 1)

Congratulations are also in order for Anne Pierce. Anne, Trustee and Treasurer, was honored with the 2020 Adult Volunteer of the Year Award from the Florida Park Service.

One more high point, the late Carrie Johnson, MKR Society member, had a St. Augustine street renamed in her honor.

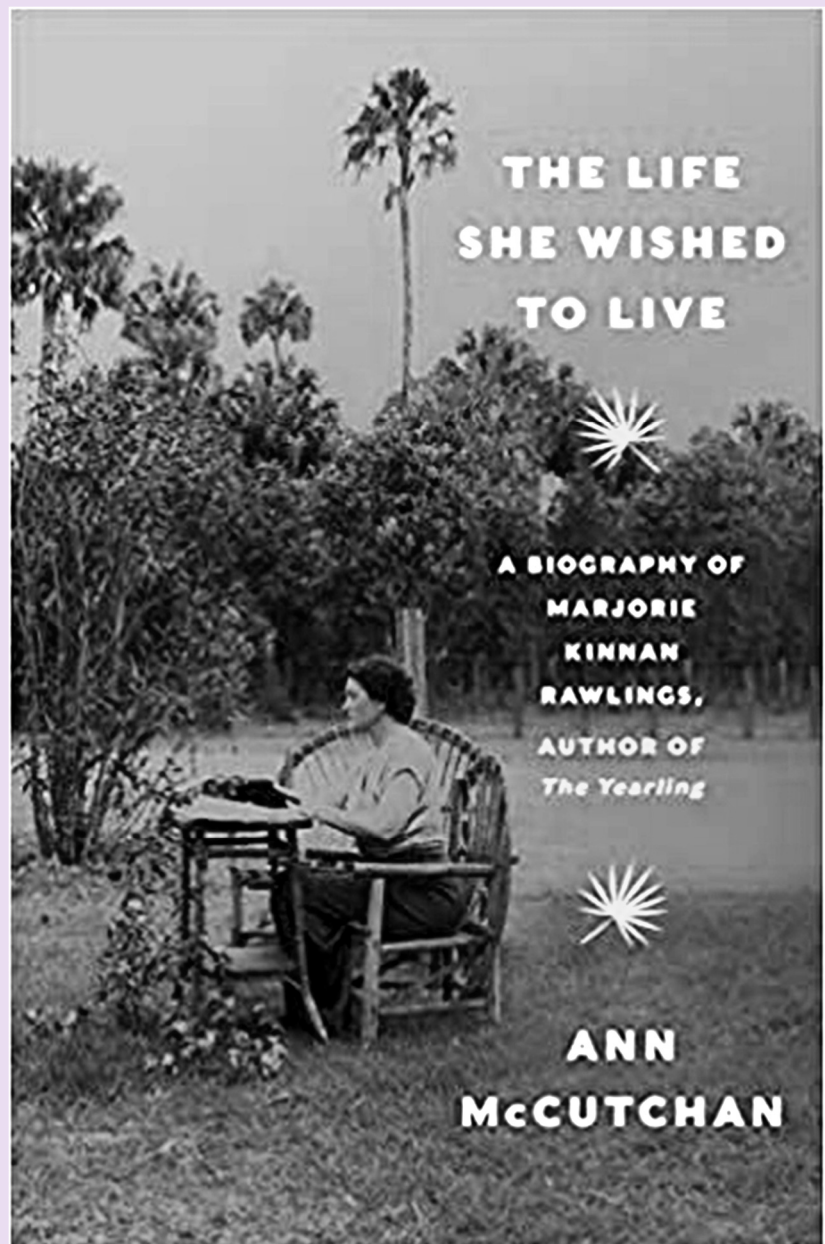
So, until we gather again in the spirit of Marjorie, you have my Florida best wishes as I write from the backyard, where the redbirds flit from tree to tree, and the foliage grows with green abandon.

Darien Andreu



About Ann McCutchan

Ann McCutchan grew up on Florida's Atlantic coast, trained as a clarinetist (FSU, U of Michigan, U of North TX), and performed with orchestras and chamber groups in Austin while developing a writing career. She took an MFA (U of Houston) and a post-doc in Cornell's Knight Writing Program. Ann was the founding director of the Creative Writing MFA program at the U of Wyoming, and a professor of creative writing at the U of North Texas. She is the author of five previous books. Website: www.annmccutchan.com





Interview with Ann McCutchan about her recent book, *The Life She Wished to Live: A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Author of "The Yearling"*. W.W. Norton, May 11, 2021.

How did you become interested in MKR?

Ann McCutchan: When I was in the fourth grade at McNab Elementary in Pompano Beach, my teacher read part of *The Yearling* to the class every day after lunch. Mrs. Chapman was an elderly lady with a Cracker drawl, and *The Yearling* seemed to come straight from a magical world she knew and loved. I, a transplant from Washington, D.C., was thoroughly enchanted by it, and the memory of Mrs. Chapman's reading stayed with me. Much later, I read *The Yearling* for myself, as well as *Cross Creek*. Then, about ten years ago, I re-read *Cross Creek* as inspiration for writing *Where's the Moon?* a memoir about growing up in Florida. As I was working on the memoir, the head of a private foundation, whose late husband had spent part of his youth near Sebastian Inlet and attended the University of Florida, suggested, out of the blue, that I write a biography of MKR. She knew I loved Rawlings, as her husband had. "This book needs to be written, and you're the one to do it," she said. What a great matchmaker she was. When one writes another person's life, that person had better be someone you want to spend several years with! The biography is dedicated to the memory of my benefactress and her husband: Joanne K. and Richard C. Bartlett. Joanne died suddenly when I was about three years into the project. I would give anything to bring her back to see the results of her faith and generosity.

What were your previous books about?

Marcel Moyse: Voice of the Flute (Amadeus Press, 1994) is a biography of the legendary French flutist (1889-1984) whose performing career in Paris, prior to WW II, included world premieres by composers like Stravinsky and Ravel. The war forced him to emigrate with his family to the U.S., where he co-founded the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont. Moyse taught flute and coached chamber music for decades; many of his students won seats in major orchestras or enjoyed solo careers. Flutist James Galway and pianist Peter Serkin are two examples.

The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak About the Creative Process (OUP, 1999) is a collection of interviews with prominent American composers about how they think and write in sound. Although the interviews took place in person, I removed my voice in the editing so each composer speaks directly to the reader, not to me. *The Muse* is considered a kind of bible for young composers, and inspires creatives working in other media and forms. That makes me very happy.

Circular Breathing: Meditations from a Musical Life (Sunstone, 2011) is a collection of personal essays first published individually in literary journals such as *Boulevard*, *Image*, and the *Florida Review*. (It's probably clear by now that I was a classical musician when this writing thing started.) One of the essays in the collection was included in *Best American Spiritual Writing*, 2007.

(Continued on page 4)



Interview with Ann McCutchan (Continued from page 3)

River Music: An Atchafalaya Story (TAMU Press, 2011) has been described as an eco-biography. It is a cultural and environmental history of Louisiana's Atchafalaya River Basin (aka "Cajun Country") told through the life of composer/naturalist Earl Robicheaux, a true son of the Basin who spent years recording the vanishing natural sounds and voices of the region (wind, weather, animal life, humans) and weaving them into soundscapes, documentaries, and instrumental compositions. Earl's health was compromised by a rare cancer associated with petroleum industry waste in his hometown. His situation imparts a sense of urgency: save our environment.

Where's the Moon? A Memoir of the Space Coast and the Florida Dream (TAMU, 2016) explores the history and development of the so-called Space Coast, especially Titusville, where my family lived during the '60s run up to Apollo 11. It is a book I *had* to write, even if it wound up in a drawer. My dear parents perished in a car accident outside Titusville shortly after I graduated Florida State. Life took me elsewhere. But after many years, I had to go back and try to understand that time and place, and who my parents were, and who I was.

How did you manage to finance the work and find a publisher?

Joanne Bartlett offered generous support for the most critical years of research and writing, enabling me to leave teaching and work on MKR full-time. My agent successfully pitched the book to W.W. Norton a week after the proposal was ready to go.

Where did your research travels take you?

Gainesville, Gainesville, Gainesville, and please, let's be sure to mention Gainesville.

Cross Creek. St. Augustine. Crescent Beach. Atlanta. Athens, GA. Columbia, SC. Washington, D.C. Rochester, NY. Alna, ME. Van Hornesville, NY. Anywhere the MKR Society met. Did I mention I spent a little time in Gainesville? For verification, ask wonderful Flo Turcotte.

How do you promote a book in the age of Covid?

My publisher sent press releases and galleys to likely reviewers, booked podcasts and online events. There will be no tour, of course. I have been more active on Facebook, posting publication announcements, and the like. A university has inquired about a visit in late June; a Denver bookstore may host me in early summer. All notions for a big blow-out in Gainesville died with the rise of the pandemic. We are all improvising.

Is there some "Holy Grail" you wish you had found or hope to find in the future about MKR?

I would like to find more letters MKR wrote to friends and associates, and which might exist in archives or private collections I didn't get to. For this book, I was able to locate letters MKR wrote in conversation with several important figures, such as sculptor Malvina Hoffman and author Sigrid Undset, but letters to Marcia Davenport and Pearl Primus, for two examples, eluded me, as there were none from MKR to them in the archives I contacted. I turned a lot of stones, but there are more, less obvious ones, out there.

What would be your best hope for the effect of the book?

That more readers will seek, read, and appreciate MKR's work. That readers will understand the passion that drives and shapes the life of a gifted writer like Marjorie.

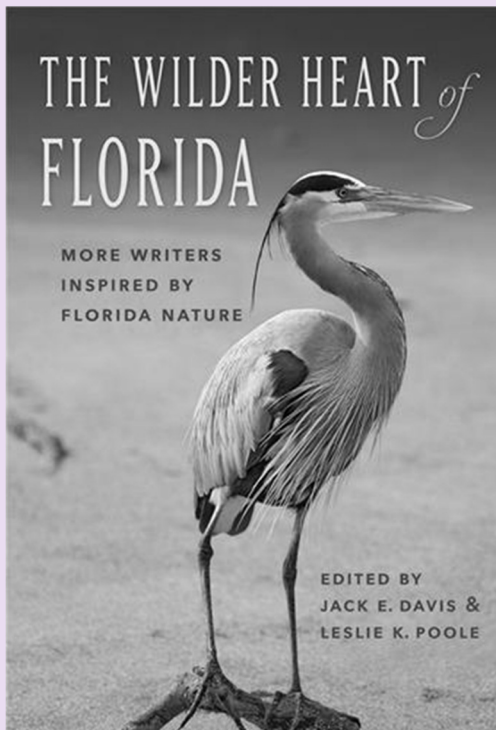
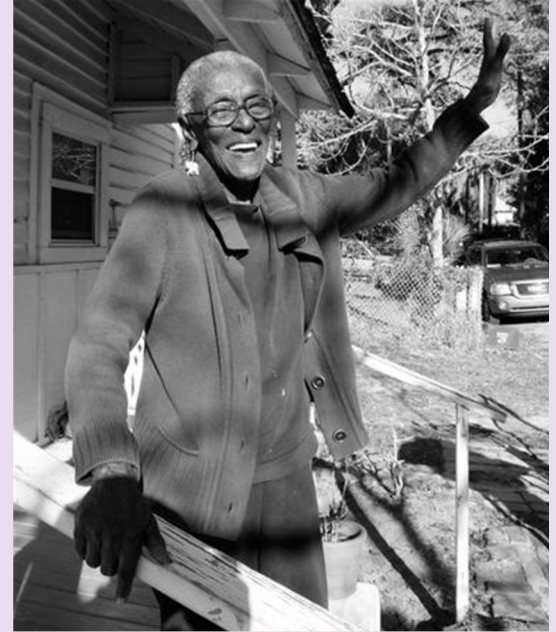


Carrie Johnson Way

St. Augustine: The newest street name in the Nation's Oldest City honors longtime Rawlings Society member Carrie Johnson. At a well-attended ceremony on February 20 (which would have been her 86th birthday), city officials and family members unveiled markers which changed the old name of Bravo Street to "Carrie Johnson Way." The street runs by both her first and last homes in the Lincolnville neighborhood, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Well-known as a singer, folklorist and community activist, the beloved Johnson (1935-2018) was called "the Voice of Lincolnville." Former Rawlings Society president David Nolan, a long-time friend, mentioned her enthusiastic interest in writers like Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Zora Neale Hurston – about both of whom she kept extensive scrapbooks. Carrie attended many Rawlings Society meetings, and performed her one-woman show "History Through Song" at the Sanford meeting two decades ago. At our St. Augustine Beach meeting in the 1990s, she sang the class song that Marjorie wrote for her 1914 Western High School graduation in Washington DC – the first time it had been performed in 85 years!

Now Carrie Johnson will be permanently remembered on the map of St. Augustine.



The Wilder Heart of Florida

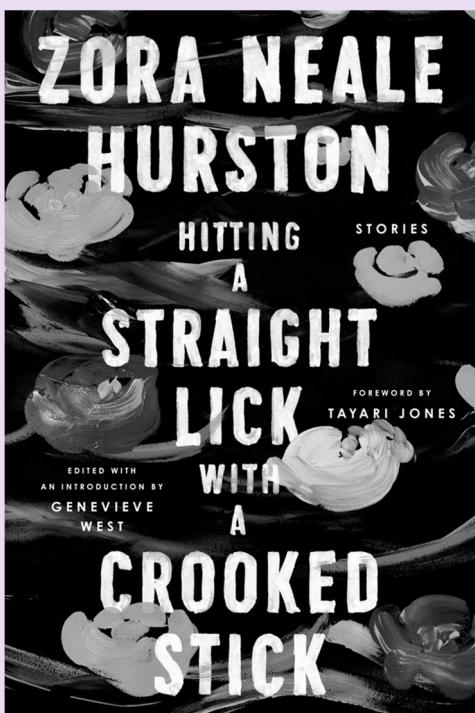
Edited by Jack E. Davis and Leslie K. Poole

In this new collection from University of Florida Press, Florida's most notable authors, poets, and environmentalists take readers on a journey through the natural wonders of the state. Continuing in the legacy of the beloved class *The Wild Heart of Florida*, this book features thirty-four pieces by a new slate of well-known and emerging writers, including *New York Times* bestselling author Lauren Groff and environmentalist Cynthia Barnett. The collection was edited by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jack E. Davis, professor of history and the Rothman Family Chair in the Humanities at the University of Florida and our own Leslie K. Poole, associate professor of environmental studies at Rollins College and former executive director of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society.



NEA Funding "The Secret River"

The National Endowment for the Arts has approved a \$10,000 grant to Opera Orlando that will help fund its production of "The Secret River," based on the 1955 Newberry Honor winning children's book by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. The opera will be the first commission from the company to feature a female composer and will feature a Black cast. The funding from NEA is earmarked specifically to help with an outreach program to local schools. The opera is set to premier in December 2021. For more information, visit operaorlando.org/the-secret-river.



Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick

Time magazine included Zora Neale Hurston's new collection, published 60 years after her death, in their top 100 must-read books from 2020. The collection features eight "lost" stories set in Harlem, where Hurston lived in the '20s.



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park Update by Park Manager Scott Spaulding

Greetings Everyone:

Spring is here and as Marjorie wrote in *Cross Creek*, Chapter 18 – Spring at the Creek: **Spring is as definite and as exciting as in Greenland. We have not had snow behind us, but we have had an un-growing period, as have they, and life now stirs and sap rises and the creatures mate and the snakes come out of their winter's lethargy. Because it is familiar and beloved, we watch every gradation. It is dear to us because knowledge of it is necessary to recognize its variations. There is no one sign of spring, but several spontaneous burstings.**



For us, the first sign of spring is the bursting of blossoms on the citrus trees, gone now, but replaced by tiny green oranges. They are so small they are hardly noticeable, but they will grow, remaining green throughout the summer, which always suggests the question from visitors “are those limes?” To which we reply no, those are immature oranges. Our hard work of fertilizing, trimming, composting and applying micronutrients is paying off as the trees continue to look better and better.

Speaking of citrus trees, the Friends are going to fund the replacement of 15 trees lost to disease over the past few years. The varieties of oranges will include Pineapple, Hamlin and Parson Brown along with Duncan Grapefruit. We are grateful for this and look forward to getting the stumps removed and new trees in the ground.



During recent research of old photographs, we noticed that Marjorie once had wooden roll-up shades on her front porch. Through additional research we were able to find a company that still produces them. With funding from the Bureau of Natural and Cultural Resources in Tallahassee we were able to purchase custom made roll-up shades. This will help tremendously by keeping direct sunlight off the porch in the morning and help keep rain from blowing directly in, which will further protect Marjorie’s writing table and other furniture on the porch. In addition to that, they sure look like they belong there...

which they do!

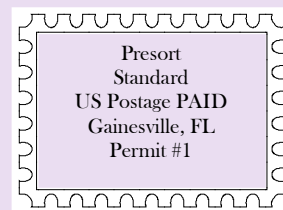
Speaking of improvements, and due to a generous donation, we will soon be getting a new entrance kiosk near the front gate. It will be complete with an updated interpretive panel and larger display cabinet where we can share current Park and Friends information. The kiosk will be built in-house by volunteers, and the interpretive panel will be professionally designed and built. We can’t wait to complete this much needed improvement.

Well, if you haven’t been out to the farm for a while, now is the time to visit. It is still on the cooler side and the greenery is looking great, especially in the garden, which has had a lot of tender loving care. Keep in mind that house tours are Thursday through Sunday at 11am and 1, 2 and 3pm. Tours are limited to 20 with 10 inside the house at a time. Facial coverings are required inside the house. We are also taking reservations for groups up to 20 on non-tour days and before scheduled tours begin on tour days. So keep us in mind if you have a group that is looking for something fun and educational to do.

It was so nice to see our very own Anne Pierce receive the Volunteer of The Year award for 2020. Anne does an amazing job as treasurer and we are so glad to have her with us. She was also recognized for 20 years of dedicated service!

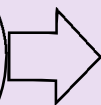
Until next time, we wish you well and hope to see you at the farm one day soon.

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>



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 by mailing your check (\$15 Student, \$30 Individual, \$40 Family, \$50 Sustaining, \$100 Sponsor, \$250 Patron, \$500 Benefactor, or \$1000 Life) to MKR Society, c/o Anne Pierce, 249 Herman Drive, Hawthorne, FL 32640. We are always looking for new members. Just ask Anne for membership cards.

The person who registers the most new members wins a FREE Registration 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;
- Local groups such as historical societies, book clubs, garden clubs, or libraries are always looking for guest speakers. MKR's work offers so many areas for discussion such as literary, cooking, gardening, history, travel, and wildlife.

**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>