

# The



Marjorie  
Kinnan  
Rawlings  
*Society*

# Newsletter

Volume XXVII, Number 4

September 2023

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## President's Letter

In Maine, September is known as the "Month of the Long Goodbye." The days grow shorter and evenings have a little nip as they grow cooler. Fall has always been my favorite time of the year. Long shadows creep across the landscape, and everything turns golden in late afternoon and early evening. Monarch butterflies dance and skip around my gardens. The nights are noisy with the unending drone of crickets. The sound comes from the males trying to attract females, and to deter other males.

Wildlife becomes very busy in the fall. Some run back and forth constantly, as they store food for the winter. I have seen paths worn into the lawn, as squirrels take the same quick path to their winter tree storage, over and over again. Our hickory, black walnut, and beechnut trees are a ready source of food. Chipmunks scurry along the stone walls to hide food in their dens. Woodchucks and bears just eat as much as they can in preparation for hibernation.

The deer are an endless parade as they head to our apple orchard. Most eat the apples that have dropped to the ground. But some, more adventurous, jump on hind legs to reach apples still on the trees. The fawns run, jump, and chase each other around the trees. They entertain us nightly with their antics. When the bucks appear, the does and fawns ignore them. But the young males will flatten themselves on the ground to almost disappear when the dominant males appear. I always think they look like a pancake.

Sadly, the deer also visit my flower gardens and nibble the late lillies and sedum in the fall. I caught one with a blossom hanging from her mouth. But wild animals have a hard life, so I do not begrudge them an easy meal.

The deer are not the only visitors to the orchard. Coyotes enjoy the apples too. They slink in at night like ghosts, only showing on the trail and blink cameras. They appear much more hesitant and alert. Turkeys may visit anytime. The males move in one group. The females appear later with their grown chicks.

Mating season will soon be here for deer and moose. The gentle male moose bulls and deer bucks of summer become more aggressive as the fall colors start to appear. My wood walks become more cautious as I become more alert to their moods.

Most insects die off as the air grows colder. So the insect-eating birds gorge on berries before gathering to head south. I have seen 12 male bluebirds all lined up in a row. Beautiful! Usually males of all breeds head south first, followed by the

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females later. Soon, David and I will join them. He will return to Maine for winter sports. I stay and enjoy my Florida nature, gardens, and warmth. My walks in the woods change in Florida. In Maine, I step quietly to see as many animals as I can. In Florida, I step heavily to let snakes know I am coming.

Watching nature never grows old. Looking forward to seeing my Rawlings Society family.

Sincerely,  
Elaine Bradbury

## MUST VIEWING!

Donna Green Townsend, President of The Friends of the Farm sends an update on showings of *From Novel to Movie: The Yearling in Florida*.

The wonderful hour-long documentary provides a unique look back at the classic Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Yearling* by the late Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and the subsequent classic MGM Oscar-winning film by the same name. It has been shown on stations in at least 27 states and cities including New York, Boston, Chicago, Las Vegas, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Albuquerque, Nashville, Topeka, Salt Lake City and Joplin. In Florida, the program has aired on nearly every PBS station, including Pensacola, Panama City, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Gainesville, Tampa, Naples, Fort Myers, and will air in Orlando in October. We are hopeful that the Miami station will carry the program soon.



In Gainesville anyone in the country can watch the documentary. Go to the **PBS app** on their television and in the search box type the word "Yearling" or the title of the documentary, and it will come up.

If people don't have the PBS app on their television, they can still go online to **PBS.org** and look for the search box and type the word "Yearling" or the documentary title, and it will come up that way no matter where a person's location is.

Here is a link as well: <https://www.pbs.org/video/from-novel-to-movie-the-yearling-in-florida-vukhuo/>



## MORE MUST VIEWING – ZORA IN ST. AUGUSTINE

New Rawlings Society Trustee Casey Wooster, and Collection Assistant for Governor's House Library, in St. Augustine, FL, has curated an excellent online exhibit: *Zora Neale Hurston's St. Augustine*, presented by George A. Smathers Libraries at the University of Florida. This exhibit explores the impact of the Ancient City on the life, correspondence, and work of Hurston, which includes sites and letters associated with Hurston and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' literary friendship. You can also find a link at our Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings website <https://rawlingsociety.wordpress.com/> under the "Resources" tab. Check it out!



## IN FLORIDA NEWS

Trustee Margaret Harris sends news that upon returning from the Rawlings birthday party at Cross Creek with a carful of friends, they stopped by the beautiful, historic Chinsegut Hill Retreat and Conference Center, just north of Brooksville, FL. The park was closed, but they took photos of the bronze marker on the highway with Marjorie's name on it. Margaret remembers that Marjorie Rawlings and her friend Dessie Prescott had once signed the guest book at Chinsegut, when it was home to the colorful Col. Raymond Robins (1873-1954), a crusader and reformer and friend of presidents.

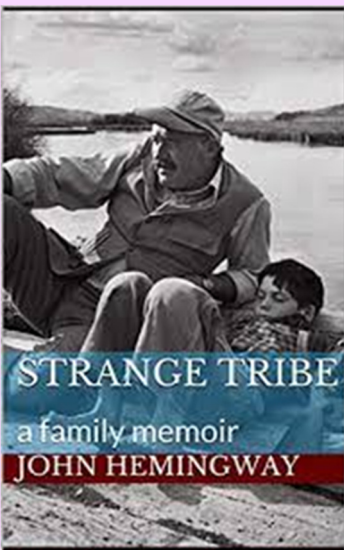
Margaret Harris also included a clipping from the *Tampa Bay Times*, Sunday, August 6, 2023. Gary Mormino, our 2023 Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference evening speaker, had an article focusing on the important role in the development of 72 narratives of the enslaved. Zora Neale Hurston was one of the interviewers who worked on the New Deal project, and Mormino notes that the state received "high marks for using African Americans to interview former slaves." Copies of the Florida narratives are now located in the University of South Florida's Special Collections.

## 60 YEARS LATER

Marsha Phelts, Lifetime Member and former Rawlings Society President, was quoted in a recent Associated Press article that appeared in newspapers around the country. Asked about the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington (where Dr. Martin Luther King gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech), the American Beach resident said, "I often look back and look over to the reflection pool and the Washington Monument and I see a quarter of a million people 60 years ago and just a trickling now. It was more fired up then. But the things we were asking for and needing, we still need them today."

## UPCOMING TALKS

The Friends of the Farm would like to share two writers' talks scheduled for Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park.



**Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup>.** John Hemingway, *A Strange Tribe, a Family Memoir*. His book is an intimate chronicle of the tumultuous relationship between father Gregory Hemingway and grandfather Ernest.

Book signing at 1:30

Presentation with questions and answers at 2:00 pm.

**Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.** Marisella Veiga, *Famous Florida Recipes. Centuries of Good Eating in the Sunshine State*. Her book is a modern revision of Lowis Carlton's beloved classic. Marisella Veiga, an award-winning journalist and short story writer, is also the author of *We Carry Our Homes with Us; a Cuban-American Memoir*.

Book signing and food sampling at 1:30

Presentation with questions and answers at 2:00 pm.

P.S. Marisella Veiga's *We Carry Our Homes with Us; a Cuban-American Memoir* has been designated by HipLatina as one of the [15 Must-Read Books About the Latinx Immigrant Experience](#)

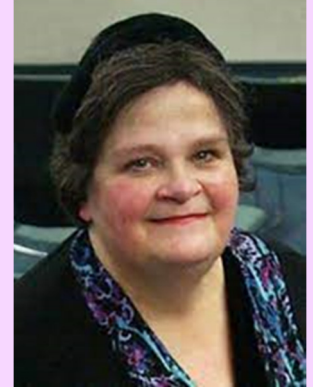






## A BETTY JEAN PERFORMANCE!

YOU ARE INVITED to a special event on Sunday, October 8, 2023, to celebrate our rich history of “Scribbling Women in St. Augustine” at the W.B. Tatter Studio Gallery, 806 Anastasia Blvd, St. Augustine, FL. Doors will open at 2:30 with the program beginning promptly at 3 p.m., when literary historian Betty Jean Steinshouer will present behind-the-scenes stories and photos of Harriet Beecher Stowe visiting Native American prisoners at the fort; Constance Fenimore Woolson being censored by Harper Brothers for writing too much about Reconstruction; Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Fields finding hidden treasures in the “lonely corners” of coquina-walled streets near the Hotel Ponce de Leon (and taking the horse trolley to go camping on Anastasia Island); Zora Neale Hurston and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings flouting Jim Crow and enjoying one another’s company at the Florida Normal School as well as the Castle Warden Hotel; Rachel Carson writing famously about Marineland, years before she made her first trip to Florida; and concluding with homage to St. Augustine’s most famous alive-and-well scribbling author, Connie May Fowler; with a special finale inspired by *Sugar Cane*, and everyone’s favorite scribbling man-about-town, David Nolan. Arrive early to see Wendy Tatter’s beautiful gallery and be sure of a seat. Free and open to the public, with discussion to follow.



## NEWS FROM THE FAR EAST

Paul Dunn, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Vice-President, sends this news from India, by way of his Google Alert for “Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings”:

*Theatre troupe Prachyanat recently staged two shows of its production of A Mother in Mannville at the Studio Theatre Hall of Bangladesh, Shilpakala Academy. “A Mother in Mannville,” a short story written by Pulitzer Prize-winning American fiction writer Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.*

“A Mother in Mannville” is considered one of Rawlings’ more autobiographical works. In 1936, Rawlings moved to Banner Elk, North Carolina, to work on a manuscript that would become *The Yearling*. There she developed a friendship with a 12-year-old boy who lived at a nearby orphanage. Rawlings hired Dale Wills, much like the story’s young boy, Jerry, to chop firewood. Jerry spoke kindly of his mother who had given him up for adoption, only for the narrator to learn as she left the mountains that the boy had no mother after all.

Rawlings’ story debuted in *The Saturday Evening Post* on December 12, 1936, and was included in *When the Whippoorwill* (1940). After the success of *The Yearling* movie, she expanded the “Mother in Mannville” story to a multi-part series called “Mountain Prelude” in *The Saturday Evening Post* — and it was then turned into the MGM movie *The Sun Comes Up* (1949), starring Jeanette MacDonald, Claude Jarman, Jr. and Lassie!



## BOOK UPDATE

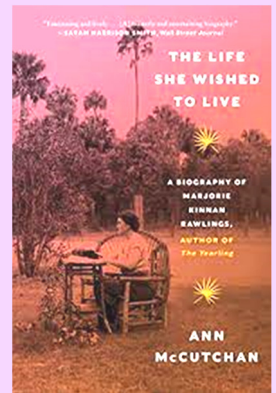


Our own Rawlings biographer Ann McCutchan continues to be in demand. On September 14, at Florida Southern College in Lakeland, FL, she discussed *The Life She Wished to Live: A Biography of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Author of The Yearling* (2021).

Earlier this summer, she spent time in residency at the Lillian Smith Center, a retreat for writers and artists in Clayton, Georgia, contemplating her next book.

Last year at this time, Ann presented talks about Marjorie and *The Life She Wished to Live* at The Mount, Edith Wharton's grand home in Lenox, MA. She wrote then, "The mansion was modeled on a 17<sup>th</sup>-century English country house in Lincolnshire; the terrace, on the east façade, was Italian-inspired. The property is now a National Historic Landmark and cultural center offering programs throughout the summer; I was part of a summer author lecture series. Because of rain, the usual outdoor tent was abandoned in favor of the large Georgian Revival stable, which was packed for both presentations. Marjorie was present in the form of photographs projected as I spoke.

"The talks went well, but what I remember best is the number of attendees who were eager to tell me about their Florida connections. Five were born in Florida; one gentleman is a native of High Springs. Several divide their time between Florida and the Berkshires. One woman's brother worked with Marjorie Harris Carr to stop the Cross Florida Barge Canal. The Mount's executive director, originally from Jacksonville, plans to retire in north central Florida. And so it went. While I was there, I attended a concert at nearby Tanglewood, and was offered a ride by a friend of a friend who lives in Tallahassee. How lovely – all of it! I felt right at home, and grateful for the opportunity to bring Marjorie to the mountains."



## PUT ON YOUR CALENDAR

- The next Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Trustees meeting is October 28, 2023, at 12:00 pm. at The Yearling Restaurant, Cross Creek, FL.
- Auction Items? 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 [hfhfarme@gmail.com](mailto:hfhfarme@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 preparing the bid sheets ahead if she has this information. Thank you in advance for any donations.
- The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference will be held May 3-4, 2024, at the Lakeside Inn in Mount Dora, FL
- Check your mailing label for the renewal date. If your renewal is past due, please take care of it today by renewing with a credit card on the web site ([www.rawlingssociety.org](http://www.rawlingssociety.org)) or by mailing the included membership form with a check to the address indicated on the back page of this newsletter.



## RAWLINGS COUNTRY, BEFORE RECORDED TIME

by Janet Pesicka Watson

As I researched material for my coming-of-age novel, *Sons of The People*, relating the story of two boys who lived in a time before written history, I found myself walking through a part of Florida that I have long-considered "Rawlings country." Although the Early Archaic culture of central Florida predated, by some 7,000 years, the Cracker culture that Rawlings immortalized, the primitive wilderness would have been recognizable to her. It was the same Florida that captivated me when I read *The Yearling* as a junior high school student in Ohio.

My book was inspired by discoveries at the Windover National Heritage site near Titusville. The archeological excavation there has revealed much about the hunter-gatherers who were among the first Floridians. While Rawlings wrote about the Cross Creek people she came to know, I had only the knowledge gleaned from an abiding interest in indigenous people all over the world and a respect for their ability to adapt to challenging environments. The hunter-gatherers of prehistoric Florida left no deep footprints on the land, other than the disappearance of large mammals that had been hunted into extinction. No descendants had kept their story alive, but the Windover burial site, in a bog not far from Titusville, preserved their remains, and through the study of their bones and brain matter, stone and gourd artifacts and even stomach contents, a surprising amount of information was gathered.

I was writing about two brothers. One of them actually existed – an adolescent, whose body was found among 160 others and bore the signs of spina bifida. Such a birth defect would have been a difficult disability in a migratory lifestyle. He and others interred in the burial pond had been wrapped tenderly in shrouds which are the oldest woven textiles ever found in the Americas. The unique chemistry of the pond had preserved them, along with the structures that were built to shelter the bodies. Long before the Egyptians built their pyramids for dead pharaohs, these people lived in Rawlings country and displayed loving care as they prepared loved ones for their final resting place.

In writing about boys who were about the age of Jody Baxter in *The Yearling*, I was describing the challenges which all young people face in some way or another. Much the way that Fodderwing saw Spaniards riding black horses through the palmettos, I imagined the brothers in my story, finding their way home through similar surroundings. Some of their adventures were ones that I had experienced myself, after moving to Florida, for the state's beautiful and unique environment lends itself to excitement. Their time and mine shimmered together as a shared memory, but there were some differences. Obviously, Florida was emptier then. People were few and far between. The climate was drier, more temperate. The peninsula was larger, its landmass reaching farther into the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, so that Windover, near Cape Canaveral today, was much farther inland. Similar burial sites have been discovered on the west coast of Florida, but what had once been freshwater ponds now lie beneath the waters of the Gulf.

Although I had to invent much about a prehistoric culture, there is much about the human family that never changes.

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JANET PESICKA WATSON lives on five wooded acres in rural Pasco County. Having written and edited for local newspapers, she is also an award-winning poet, whose poetry has been published in many journals and anthologies. Several of her poems have been featured in *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*. For 12 years she chaired a statewide poetry competition for middle and high school students, which was sponsored by the Florida State Poets Association. She has published a book of collected poems – *Eyes Open, Listening*, as well as the novel, *Sons of The People*. (Both are available on Amazon and Barnes and Noble.)

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## TASTEBUD ALERT

Rawlings Society member Becky Greenberg noted that *The New York Times* mentioned Marjorie in their Cooking section on July 28, 2023. Reporter Sam Sifton wrote:

“A very long time ago, the novelist Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings came up with a great recipe for Crab Newburg, based on the lobster version once served at Delmonico’s in New York. It’s a highlight of *Cross Creek Cookery*, her memoir of cooking life in backcountry Florida before World War II: a shockingly rich amalgam of crab and cream and sherry, best served over toast points or in a puff pastry shell. [The Creamy Crab Dip with plenty of Old Bay and heavily spiced Chapli burgers with tamarind ketchup] is high-WASP nursery food, not terribly difficult to prepare, an old-school preparation that is like a black-tie version of this excellent baked crab dip.”

## IN MEMORIAM

On June 13, 2023, the literary world lost Cormac McCarthy, shortly before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The great American writer gave us acclaimed novels like *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *No Country for Old Men* (2005), and *The Road*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2007. Little known is that McCarthy had tried out for the part of Jody in *The Yearling* movie. He was a finalist—not as “Cormac McCarthy,” but under his original name “Charles”—not to be confused with Edgar Bergen’s famous ventriloquist dummy!

The ultimate winner, Claude Jarman, Jr., is also an author—of the interesting memoir *My Life and the Final Days of Hollywood* (published by Covenant Books in 2018).

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

### 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.

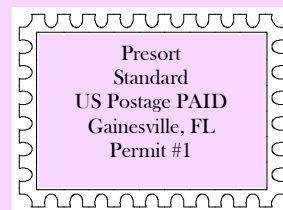
In addition, the Journal welcomes submissions of short fiction and poetry, especially those works, which reflect Rawlings’s own deep affection for Florida and Florida life.

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  
anna@ucf.edu



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### 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](http://www.rawlingssociety.org)**