

# The



# Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

# Newsletter

Volume XXXVIII, Number 2

Summer 2024

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## President's Letter

I am honored to be given the opportunity to serve as your president. The Rawlings Society has been such a rewarding and enriching experience. I have met so many nice people and made such dear friends that it is a pleasure to be able to give something back. There is no other place where people interested in Rawlings, Florida literature, history, and culture can meet with and learn from the outstanding scholars, authors, and artists we are fortunate to have as members and speakers.

One of the best benefits of your membership is our annual conference. Thank you to all who presented and attended this year. If you could not make it, we hope to see you at future conferences. This year's conference was a big success with over 60 people attending. We managed to break even financially. There is a lot of planning involved. Elaine Bradbury, Anne Pierce, and Flo Turcotte deserve all the credit for the beautiful venue and great speakers. The other best benefit is *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*. Anna Lillios does exceptional work putting it together every year.

It's always interesting to hear members' stories about how they became interested in MKR. I grew up in Orlando when Rawlings was very popular. Let's not forget that she outsold Maxwell Perkins's authors Fitzgerald, Wolfe, and Hemingway. *The Yearling* was taught in public schools, but I was never required to read it. I was one of those people who never read it nor watched the movie because I knew how it ended. Decades later my sister Martha took me on a hike on The Yearling Trail in the Ocala National Forest. The Big Scrub and Pat's Island were so fascinating. So close to the abundance of the St. Johns yet so far. The adaptation of the plants to the arid environment reminded me of the Chihuahuan desert. After that I had to read *South Moon Under* and *The Yearling* to find out what it was like to live there. How could anyone not want to read MKR? As my mother-in-law used to say, 'there's no zeal like the newly converted.'

If you missed the conference, you may be interested in knowing about the books by our speakers. Rick Kilby spoke about early tourism in Florida and has written *Florida's Healing Waters, Gilded Age Mineral Springs, Seaside Resorts, and Health Spas*. Cynthia Barnett wrote *Rain, A Natural and Cultural History*. I look forward to reading them. Marsha Dean Phelts spoke about American Beach and growing up in segregated Jacksonville. She signed copies of *An American Beach For African Americans* and *The American Beach Cookbook*. Leslie Kemp Poole has a new book out, *Tracing Florida Journeys*. You won't want to

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miss her chapter on recreating Marge's "Hyacinth Drift" trip. I have read Marsha's and Leslie's books and highly recommend them. We were treated to a showing of Donna Green-Townsend's *From Novel to Movie: The Yearling in Florida*. You can buy your copy from The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm.

I am looking forward to the coming year and our conference in Fernandina Beach.

--Paul Dunn

## A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING: A 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY TO CELEBRATE

### FLORIDA AUTHOR'S MANUSCRIPTS GIVEN LIBRARY

GAINESVILLE, Fla., June 29 (AP) — Original manuscripts of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' "The Yearling" and "Cross Creek," together with notes prepared for writing of the books, have been presented to the University of Florida library by the noted Florida author.

"The Yearling" was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1938. "Cross Creek" is a study of a section of Florida located only 18 miles from the university campus.

The presentation was made with the stipulation that the manuscripts be available to students of creative writing.

This year we should remember to thank our lucky stars that 75 years ago Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings donated her holograph manuscripts with notes to the University of Florida library. According to Flo Turcotte, Literary Manuscripts Archivist and Curator of the John D. MacDonald, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and the Zora Neale Hurston Papers at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries, this gift was named "Mss Group 001" and began one of the library's most beloved archives. Rawlings also encouraged her friends and colleagues to contribute to what is now the Creative Writing Collection at UF.

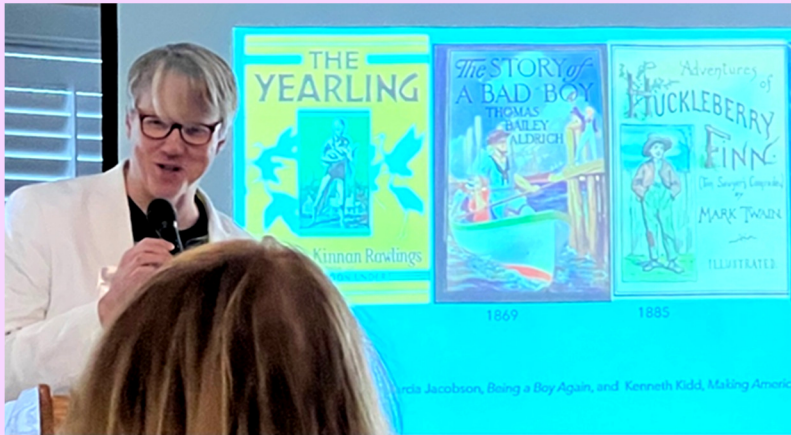
Here is how the gift was reported in the *St. Augustine Record* on June 29, 1949. In her remarks at the March 30, 1950 dedication, Marjorie said,

"I'm both grateful and comforted that the University of Florida Library is going to accept as part of this new collection my manuscript materials. I feel that I found a useful home for my illegitimate children, to use a euphemism. And, of course, it is very important that all serious Florida writers contribute manuscript materials of all sorts to this collection, because there must be a mass of it to be of use."

(from *The Uncollected Writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings*, edited by Rodger Tarr and Brent Kinser.)

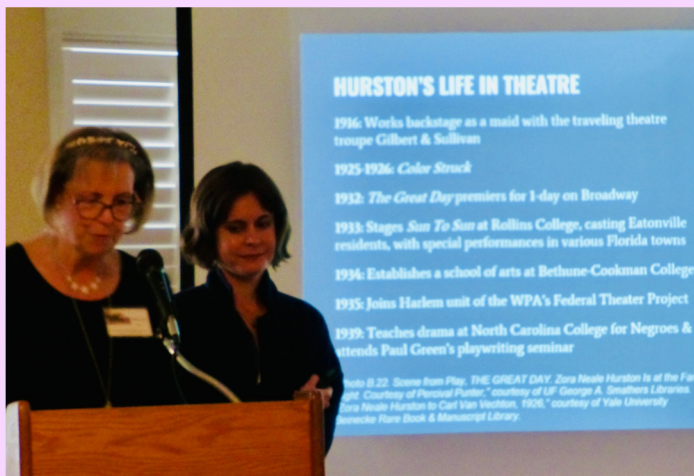


## FROM THE CONFERENCE



**Dr. Kenneth Kidd**, of the University of Florida, brought into focus the writing for children done by Rawlings and Zora Neale Hurston

**Joy Dickinson**, longtime history writer for the Orlando paper, and Rawlings Society trustee, spotlighted the inspiring life of Mabel Norris Reese (1914-1995), editor of the *Mount Dora Topic* newspaper during the Jim Crow era. In 2021, a bust of the fearless civil rights journalist was unveiled just a few steps from the Lakeside Inn where we met in Mount Dora.



**Deborah Dickey** and **Casey Wooster** discussed "It Takes a Village: Bringing Zora Neale Hurston Home," the 2023 stage production of Hurston's award-winning one-act play, *Color Struck*, set in St. Augustine.





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The Rawlings Society proudly presented four students prize money for their award-winning essays submitted from classes taught by **Dr. Leslie Poole** at Rollins College and **Dr. Ashley Lear** at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.



Left to Right, Dr. Leslie Poole with her graduate students Mohammed Forero Bucheli and Hind Berji. Undergraduate award-winner, Samantha McConaghy, stands next to her professor, Dr. Ashley Lear.



Dr. Ashley Lear congratulates her student, undergraduate award-winner Simon Cole.

During the acceptance ceremony, students read an abstract of their papers and added very moving remarks as to the moments of illumination that sparked their essays. You can view these presentations on our society's YouTube channel: <https://rawlingssociety.org/past-conferences/> or the available link on the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society website. You can also read their published work in the latest issue of *The Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Journal of Florida Literature*, edited by Dr. Anna Lillios (University of Central Florida), with the assistance of Dr. Keith Huneycutt (Florida Southern College ).

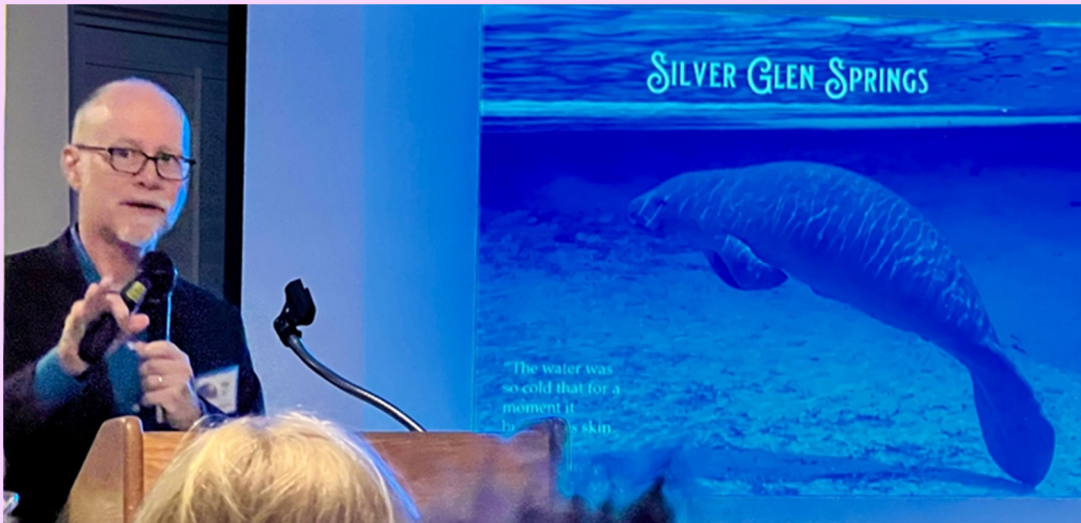


One of two boatfuls of Rawlings Society members taking the cruise of Lake Dora



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**Rick Kilby** gave our Banquet and Keynote address, discussing writers' connections to Florida springs. He comically asked the assembled diners several times if he had remembered to mention that he's related to Harriet Beecher Stowe, "one of Florida's first influencers."



Trustee **Marsha Phelts**, former Rawlings Society president, fondly recalls her pioneering books on Jacksonville and American Beach, and her memories of Rawlings Society founder Phil May.

She was interviewed by David Nolan in a third oral history for the Rawlings Society Conference, following earlier ones with Sally Baskin Hooker and Kevin McCarthy.

Saturday's Luncheon speaker was **Cynthia Barnett**, "Environmental Journalist in Residence" at the University of Florida, whom her colleagues call "Rain's Biographer." Her presentation "Writing Rain: A History of Stormy Times" spotlighted the newer trope of climate writing that—as does Rawlings' work—often blends keen nature observation with lyricism.







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Incoming Rawlings Society President Paul Dunn, already leaning into work on next year's Conference in Fernandina Beach, next to outgoing president Elaine Bradbury.



The Rawlings Society gathers in the lobby of the Lakeside Inn, Mount Dora, FL.  
Executive Director Flo Turcotte (front and center) always floors us!

You can find video recordings of the Mount Dora Conference sessions at <https://rawlingssociety.org/past-conferences/> courtesy of the Rawlings Society and Donna Green-Townsend's Multimedia Productions.

Photos contributed by Jennifer Campbell, Allison Crawford, and David Nolan



## SHE IS A GIFT



On behalf of the entire Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, let's give an enthusiastic thank you to outgoing, second-term Rawlings Society President, Elaine Bradbury! We are grateful for Elaine's leadership, her beautifully written *President's Letters*, her absolute management of the robust and delightful Rawlings Society Auction each year, AND her dedication to the thousands of details that led to a resoundingly successful 2024

Annual Conference. We recognize Elaine's significant contribution to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society and look forward to continuing to work with her in the coming years!



## NORTON BASKIN'S HOTEL COMING BACK?

When Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings first met her second husband, Norton Baskin in 1933, he was the new manager of the Hotel Marion, the tallest building in downtown Ocala. He was a career hotel man who had worked in Atlanta, Valdosta, and Lake Worth, Florida. His new hotel was publicly owned, and there, as in previous jobs, he had a chance to hone his storytelling skills and listen to his customers—many of them traveling salesmen—swap tales as a form of entertainment in the pre-television age.

In his later years, Norton would regale others with memories of the time he had actor W. C. Fields and novelist Sinclair Lewis at the hotel—and watched an endless stream of bellhops carrying drinks up to their rooms.

The Hotel Marion closed long ago—a victim of the motel age. In the 1980s, it was remodeled as a bank and office building. The Friends of the Library sponsored speakers there in a bow to its literary heritage.

Now it is possible that it will once again become a hotel. Developer David Midgett envisions 58 rooms and suites, with the ballroom converted to a grand lobby and bar. A café will serve breakfast and lunch, with a fine dining restaurant open in the evening. An agreement has been signed with the Hilton chain, which has a "Tapestry Collection" consisting of older buildings.

Plans include roof access to watch sunsets. Hopes are to open in the fall of 2025.

Who knows—maybe the Rawlings Society will have one of its future meetings there!

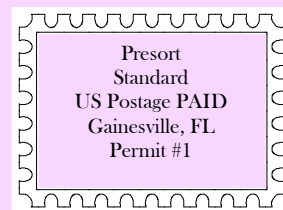


--David Nolan





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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)**