

The



Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings *Society*

Newsletter

Volume XXXIV, Number 1

Summer 2025

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President's Letter

I wish to thank everyone who presented, attended, and volunteered for our 36th Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference. It is quite an accomplishment to have held 36 conferences. We owe a lot to the founding members who started the society. The conference was a big success with interesting talks and interviews. We had about 60 people attend each session, and we reached the break-even point financially. I hope all of you will be able to attend our next conference April 17 & 18, 2026, in DeLand.

Members will want to know about several major events that took place at the conference. Flo Turcotte, who has been our outstanding Executive Director, has retired after six years. Fortunately for us, Ashley Lear has agreed to be the new Executive Director. Ashley Reese will take over as Webmaster. Anne Bellissimo has retired as Secretary and Sandi Dunnivant has volunteered to serve. Elaine Bradbury has retired as our Auction Director after 15 years. Angela Territo has volunteered to run the auction with help from Ginger Mower, Ruth Streeter, and Jane Weizmann. Keep the auction donations coming. We now have an active Publicity and Social Media committee. It's great to see more people get involved and volunteer.

There are a number of events of interest. Our website will have additional information. On May 15, Deborah Dickey presented a program on Norton and Marge's correspondence while he was serving in India during the war. Peter Cannon has organized a series of events celebrating Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings at Palm Harbor Library in August.

There was a large fire covering the Big Scrub in March 2023. Just prior to our conference, my sister and I walked The Yearling Trail to see how it was recovering. This was not a prescribed burn, which is managed by the Forest Service. These fires imitate the natural process by burning slow and at a lower temperature due to limited fuel. This natural process occurred every 3 to 5 years over thousands of years until fire suppression became the norm. Consequently, the fuel load has increased and fires are fast and hot, burning the crown of trees and killing them.

Nearly all the trees in the scrub were dead. The palmettos and brushy oaks are returning well from the root. Pat's Island, where the scenes from *The Yearling* took place, is substantially damaged, but better off than the scrub. About half the pines are dead and there are downed trees everywhere. The Long Family Cemetery is damaged and partially covered by a downed tree. The graves appear to be undamaged. The U.S. Forest Service and trail volunteers have done a great job clearing all the dead limbs from the trails so

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you can walk it, but there are dead branches all along the route. While the Florida scrub-jays and the red-headed woodpeckers, once common, are no longer in the area, happily the sinkhole is undamaged.

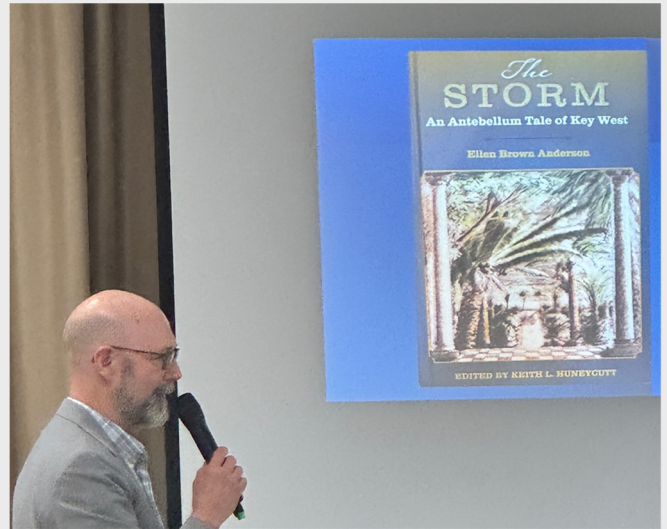
Paul Dunn, President
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society

View the presentations of the 36th Annual Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Conference here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmf5axXSdP3qeLFjjaFNgZeCr1ES3eeiU>

View more Conference Photos here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/2PJPHacXc6LiF55L6>



(Dr. Kenneth Kidd, of the University of Florida, discusses "Green Kid Lit: Environmental Writing for Young People"; photo by Peter Cannon)



(Keith Huneycutt, of Florida Southern College, presents Ellen Brown Anderson's newly published Florida pioneer manuscript *The Storm*; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, played by Nancy Grote, and Phil May, her lawyer, played by Jerry Dickey. They performed a scene from *My Friend Zelma*, written by Michael Gannon, directed by Deborah Dickey; photo by Peter Cannon)



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Longtime Trustee Claire Koshar interviewed by David Nolan; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(L to R: Incoming MKRS Executive Director, Ashley Lear with Outgoing MKRS Executive Director, Flo Turcotte; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(Jennifer Campbell, Ginger Hooker Mower, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Elaine Bradbury, Claire Koshar, and David Bradbury; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(L to R: Ellen Giallardo, Marsha Phelts, Teri Sopp; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(L to R: Paul Dunn, President; Ann Pierce, Treasurer; & Chris Dunn, essential supporter! Photo by Jennifer Campbell)

(Christina Parrish Stone with the Pippi Longstocking House in the background; photo by Jennifer Campbell)





The Winning Poem from the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings High School Writing Contest

"Where the Cypress Weeps"

Florida hums in the hollows of me,
A low endless song, thick as honey.
The air swells, damp and golden —
Too much water, too much light —
Like a mouth pressed against my ribs,
Breathing me whole.

The creek stirs in its restless sleep,
Its voice tangled in the cypress roots,
Spilling secrets into the dark.
Palmettos shiver like something just vanished,
Like something just born.

A deer ghosts through the underbrush,
Its ribs strung with moonlight,
Its breath rising in silver ribbons —
Gone before I can name it.

Here survival is a fever dream.
Blood salt-warm, hands torn on rust and wire.
The river takes its tithe,
The thunder sings its hunger.
I know the heat like I know the hush before lighting,
Like I know the taste of wind before the sky splits
open.
Nothing is given. Nothing is free.

But still, I love it —
The oranges, bright and bitter as longing,
The cranes crying their grief into the drowning sun,
The nights thick as velvet, wrapped around my skin.
I wake with Spanish moss caught in my breath,
Dusk pooling in the hollows of my hands.
The land does not let go.
The land does not forget.
And neither do I.

Lila Choudry,
Longwood, FL



(Dr. Ashley Lear, of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and her student, Desirae Walton, Winner of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society College Essay Contest with "The Flutter-Mill and the Fall of Innocence: Jody's Journey to Disillusionment"; photo by Jennifer Campbell)



(Betty Jean Steinshouer, long-time Florida Humanities Council presenter, toasts Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings & Devotees; photo by Peter Cannon)



Congratulations to Dr. Leslie Poole! Her Florida Writing is Twice-Awarded

We're thrilled to share that Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society trustee **Dr. Leslie Poole** of Rollins University has won the **Bronze Medal in the 2024 Florida Book Awards** in the Florida Nonfiction category for her book *Tracing Florida's Journeys: Explorers, Travelers, and Landscapes Then and Now*.

Chosen from over 190 entries across eleven categories, Leslie's book offers a rich, insightful look at Florida's evolving landscapes and the people who have journeyed through them.



Learn more about the Florida Book Awards here: <https://www.floridabookawards.org/>

Additionally, Leslie's book has received a second award *for Outstanding General Interest Book on a Florida History Topic from the Florida Historical Society!*

Exploring the Majesty of Cross Creek— in August at the Palm Harbor Library

In August, the Adult Services Department for the Palm Harbor Library will be celebrating Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Yearling*, with several events that explore her life, her friends, and her community of Cross Creek, located in the heart of north-central Florida.

The library's August book clubs will feature two works by Rawlings. On August 11th, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm, PHiL's book club will discuss *Short Stories*, a collection of hers that includes "Gal Young 'Un," a story published in *Harper's* and awarded the O. Henry Memorial Prize for best short story. On August 14th from 6:00 pm-7:00 pm, the Ales & Tales book club will discuss her semi-autobiographical collection of stories in *Cross Creek* that explores life in the hamlet of Cross Creek, Florida, where she had her 72-acre farm.

On August 12th, the library's monthly cooking program, Let Us Cook, will feature a selection from *Cross Creek Cookery*, the best-seller and Florida culinary classic by Rawlings.

On August 16th, the library will host an event sponsored by the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society entitled *An Afternoon with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings*. Moderated by Dr. Peter Cannon, this program will feature a fascinating conversation with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society expert and Society *trustee emerita* Claire Koshar about Rawling's life, friends, community, and cooking.

The library will host two DIY craft programs on August 13th and 14th. Participants will create crafts using materials highlighting the diverse ecosystems of Old Florida. The August 14th program will feature local artist, Micaela Lydon, in the creation of a shadow box. This event will be a fun and eco-friendly way to foster creativity while learning about one of Florida's most important authors.

Finally, on August 30th, join award-winning wordsmiths Cathy Salustri and Shana Smith for *Celebrating Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Through Music, Poetry, and Prose* as they embrace the sounds of Cross Creek, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and her life there, with stories, poems, and songs.

—Peter Cannon



Summer Reading, Summer Scrolling:

Our Rawlings Society Social Media Team has not-to-be-missed posts!

- ⇒ On Facebook, follow with 1.5k members at **Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Group** (Administered by Ginger Hooker Mower)
- ⇒ On our new Instagram, follow: **mkr society** (Administered by Casey Wooster)
- ⇒ Mike Miller, a new Rawlings Society member, has a wonderful daily Florida heritage post. Subscribe for free at FloridaBackroadsTravel.com Did you know that DeLeon Springs State Park's beloved pancakes have returned? Miller has insider advice for getting a table! Ever heard of Paisley or Ozone, FL? Miller provides the scoop. It's a great Florida way to start your day. Here's an excerpt from one of Mike Miller's three Rawlings posts:

My Personal Cross Creek Story

I have been to Cross Creek many times, but the trip I remember most clearly was on July 20, 1969. That was when the Crew of Apollo 11 made their historic landing on the moon.

I had been returning to Tampa from Jacksonville on a business trip and parked my car by the side of the road among huge old oaks draped with Spanish moss.

The historic moon landing was being broadcast from my car radio. I stood next to my car and listened to the voices.

The full moon was in the eastern sky. The darkness of this Florida place made the lunar surface seem eerily bright and close.

The moonlight bathed the old Florida cracker house across the road, the house where Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings lived when she wrote *South Moon Under*, *The Yearling* and *Cross Creek*.

As I looked at the moon and heard the crackling words of Neil Armstrong, I imagined I could hear the faint clicking of Marjorie's typewriter coming from the front porch of her house.

The throaty croaking of frogs and the squawking of fishing night birds drifted in the sultry night air.

The contrast between the modern accomplishments of the space program and the unchanged old natural feeling of Cross Creek has remained in my mind as the turning point in Florida's headlong rush into development and over population.

These beautiful little old Florida towns and places are a vanishing species. Cross Creek remains Old Florida — a place of fish camps and cypress trees, oaks and Spanish moss.

Marjorie's house is still the big attraction in Cross Creek. It is lovingly preserved by dedicated people and looks much like it did in Marjorie's time. It has been preserved forever as Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park.

— Mike Miller

Rest in Peace in Yearling Country in the Sky

Just as we go to press, we received word of the passing of Bobby Randall at the age of 93. As a 12-year old, Randall was the "body double" for Claude Jarman, Jr., in the filming of *The Yearling*. In late 2021, 75 years after the movie first appeared, the two had a reunion in Florida, captured in Donna Green Townsend's documentary *From Novel to Movie: The Yearling in Florida*, which has been seen across the country on PBS. Claude Jarman passed away on January 12, followed by Bobby Randall on May 22, 2025.



(The Whole Gang at the Women's Club of Fernandina Beach, FL; photo by Peter Cannon)

We Lose Another Rawlings Friend

The *New York Times* recently ran a long obituary for Kathan Brown who died on March 10 in the San Francisco Bay area at the age of 89. Her Crown Point Press, founded in 1962, has been hailed as "the most instrumental American print shop in the revival of etching as a medium of serious art." The Museum of Modern Art featured an exhibition of the press' work, and a single print was auctioned off for more than half a million dollars!

Kathan Brown grew up in Daytona Beach, Florida and was the granddaughter of Louise Powis Brown who in 1937 married Owen D. Young, the chairman of the board of General Electric, founder of RCA, and *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" for 1929. As a wedding present, Young gave his new wife what is now Washington Oaks Gardens State Park--which made them neighbors of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who used some of the money she made from *The Yearling* to buy a cottage at Crescent Beach, and of her husband Norton Baskin who ran the famous Dolphin Restaurant at Marineland in the decades after World War II.

Washington Oaks was beautiful naturally, but remote in those pre-development years. Kathan Brown wrote, "They lived with no electricity until – after a visit from a General Electric colleague – the Florida electric grid was extended to reach that portion of the coast."

Kathan Brown came to know Marjorie during that time, and in her 2012 memoir *Know That You Are Lucky* she wrote that Rawlings "gave me a copy of *The Yearling*, autographed to me, and in 1946, when I was eleven, I saw the movie *The Yearling*, starring Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman. Rawlings was also a famous cook – you can buy her cookbook on Amazon – but she never cooked when she ate dinner with us."

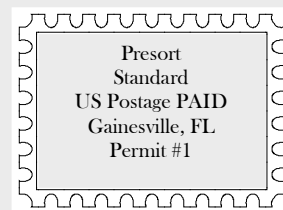
Louise and Owen Young also owned several historic buildings in his ancestral hamlet of Van Hornesville, New York (about 15 miles from the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown). When Marjorie was looking for a northern location to absorb atmosphere while working on her last novel, *The Sojourner*, the Youngs made available one of their unused houses. Marjorie fell in love, and bought another just like it nearby, which became the "Yankee House" of her last five years. (The Rawlings Society, under the leadership of trustee Claire Koshar, has placed a historic marker on that house.)

The passing of Kathan Brown diminishes the circle of those who knew Marjorie Rawlings, and we extend our condolences to her family and friends.

—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**