



News from the Creek

Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Volume 25 Number 2

Visit our website at: www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

Spring Quarterly 2022

Looking Forward Looking Back



Two years ago, at the beginning of the pandemic, I noted in this column that Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings wrote of spring flowers, plants, birds, and animals with impressive descriptive power and understanding, always with a touch of humor, wistfulness and philosophy. It is spring again, and let us enjoy Marjorie's farm in this wonderful season. As she wrote in the opening pages of *The Yearling*, Jody "was dizzy with Spring." "His head was swimming with the strong brew made up of sun and the air and the thin gray rain."

But sometimes the rain is not thin. We certainly experienced this at our recent Writer's Talk.

Thank you to the New Cross Creek Baptist Church across the way from the park for allowing us to use its fellowship hall when the event on April 2 was greeted with a deluge. Jack Davis' talk about his book *The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird* was enlightening and entertaining. I am sure all members of the audience were glad that they braved the elements in order to attend.

And speaking of eagles, in the same column two years ago I also quoted Rawlings on spring at the Creek:

The road goes west out of the village, past pine woods and gallberry flats. An eagle's nest is a ragged cluster of sticks in a tall tree, and one of the eagles is usually black and silver against the sky. The other perches near the next, hunched and proud like a griffin. There is no magic here except the eagles.

In addition to the welcome return of the Writer's Talks, we are also continuing with our oral history/interviews project. Recently at the park we were honored with a visit and interview with Sally Baskin Hooker and her husband. Sally is a niece of Norton Baskin, Marjorie's second husband. Our interview was wide-ranging, indeed - discussing Sally's childhood at Marineland and her visits with Aunt Marjorie among many other topics. Look for excerpts from the interview in our next newsletter!



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Manager's Message

By Ginger Nichols



“Spring...when the world is mud-luscious...when the world is puddle-wonderful.”

E. E. Cummings, American poet (1894-1962)

At the time of this writing, our world at Cross Creek is indeed puddle wonderful. We are blessed to have experienced a very nice spring rain through the previous evening and night. It certainly makes the ducks happy!

Park staff have been busy preparing beds and planting many of the vegetables that Marjorie grew in her summer garden, corn, roselle, okra, eggplant, tomatoes and hot peppers along with cutting flowers for the farmhouse.

Our orange grove is being carefully tended by the faithful park staff and volunteers. The mowing has begun and will continue in the evenings after closing so as not to interfere with our visitor's experience here at the farm.

We are so pleased to have two new volunteers join us! Welcome Ginger Carter and Ryan Worthington. We also welcome back Tish Kilpatrick! Resident volunteers Bob and Melissa Protomastro have returned for the spring, and Mr. James Wolf is a new resident volunteer to the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. All are as busy as bees and so appreciated. If you have any time to spare and would like to help at the farm, please contact Ranger Joy Cotton. Joy is our volunteer coordinator, and she would love to put you to work! She can be reached at 352-466-3672. Volunteers are needed for so many different tasks, and you are sure to enjoy learning from our very talented staff.

Thanks to our Friends group and Park Ranger Geoff Gates we have had several very successful Writer's Talks at the farm in the past months. Everyone really enjoys these events, and I encourage you to watch for the next one and join us. Thank you also to everyone who bakes and provides the very delicious cookies and refreshments for our guests and attendees. It is such a nice addition and truly appreciated.

We are often in awe of the brilliant blue skies and amazing sunsets over Orange Lake. Come out and enjoy this season with us!

Save the Date

Marjorie's 126th Birthday Celebration



**Saturday, August 6,
at 10 a.m.**

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Also, in our next newsletter look for details about Marjorie's Birthday Party at the farm on August 6. A special program is planned.

I need to remind everyone that we could not have these events if it weren't for volunteers. The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc. is a wholly volunteer organization. If you would like to volunteer for the Friends, please email us at MKRawlingsFarm@gmail.com



Finally, I hope to see some of you at the conference of our sister organization, the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society, which is being held in conjunction with the Florida Historical Society's Public History Forum in Gainesville on May 19-21. Please see information about the meeting on the websites of the two organizations. What a great spring event!

Please stay safe and stay well and see you at the farm soon.



Ann McCutchan



Dorothy W. Smiljanich

Photographs from
our recent
Writer's Talks



Jack Davis



Wanda Duncan



Lucy Forsting

Look for our next
Writer's Talk
in November.



DVDs available:

***Life and Times in Cross Creek: Memories and Reflections and
Here is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek***

Life and Times in Cross Creek: Memories and Reflections produced by Donna Green-Townsend. This hour long presentation features unique historic video, audio and photos of friends and neighbors of Rawlings. The DVD is available to purchase by mail for \$19.00.

Here is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek, a short documentary produced by Sonya Doctorian. This 40 minute presentation is a documentary of the life and legacy of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. This DVD is available to purchase by mail for \$24.00.

Please make your check payable to Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm and mail to P.O. Box 337, Micanopy, FL 32667-0337. Postage and handling are included in the price.

GROWING UP LIKE JODY

By

Kathlyne McDonald Walkup Sheppard

A post-World War II youngster born to one of the Ocala National Forest pioneer families on Highway 314, I descended from my Georgia-born great great grandfather Robert Daniel McDonald, who in 1862 received a land grant of 160 forested acres in the Big Scrub. We were self-sustaining folk who drank water from a dipper drawn from a bucket down a well which had been hand dug by my father Shug McDonald and his brother Walter. If we had anything at all, it was because we grew it, raised it, shot it, built it, sewed it, or conjured up a way to make it. We fixed it too. Life was hard at times, one could say even brutal, for the early pioneers.

Penny Baxter's words ring true: "Ever' man wants life to be a fine thing, and a easy. 'Tis fine, boy, powerful fine, but 'taint easy."

For example, and there are many, my own Great Grandmother Sewell buried 5 of her 8 children in 1904 due to typhus. She was the one that neighbors called on to prepare their loved ones for burial. She would sit up late at night and sew a burial shroud for so many loved ones and neighbors. Tenderly she bathed, dressed the body, and brought comfort to the family as they prepared for the wake. They trusted her with their deepest sorrows and loss. Marjorie's words say it best:

. . .no man was spared. What all had borne, each could bear.
He shared their sorrow, and they became a part of his and
the sharing spread their grief a little, by thinning it.

Numerous family members related stories of the *The Yearling* film process in the Ocala National Forest at Pat's Island during the mid-forties. This gave me a great affection for Miz Rawlings' characterization of the native Florida Crackers and their ways. In the shadow of pines, scrub oaks, cabbage palms and palmettoes, I experienced the last remnants of real Florida Cracker life.

While I didn't know Marjorie personally, my Aunt Gertie and Uncle Henry Heinneman certainly did. For two and a half years they resided on Pat's Island and were caretakers of *The Yearling* set, garden and animals. Marjorie called my Aunt Gertie the "Mistress of Pat's Island." At five foot two inches Gertie was a woods woman who hunted the Big Scrub with my male relatives, and she was as good or better shot than any man. With the blow of her cow horn, which hung from her shoulder, she summoned her trained dogs, "Beau, Belle, Cadillac and Nero." She routinely hunted with my father, "Shug" McDonald, my brother-in-law Jack Owen, who as a teen caught most, if not all, the fawns for the 1946 movie *The Yearling*. Jack's brother Ollis Owen (who was married to Aunt Gertie's only child, Geneva Owen) was often in the hunt group. Because of their woodsmen's skills, these men and Aunt Gertie kept venison on our dining table. At 5 a.m. I would find them all in mother's kitchen eating a hardy breakfast and readying for the hunt. When they weren't in the piney woods, they were on Lake George net fishing, gigging and trapping crabs in Salt Springs, Silver Glen and Juniper Run. Their collective efforts fed us all bountifully from the land and the water.

I still have Ocala National Forest relatives who avoid big box grocery stores by living off the land. They shrimp and fish Lake George every Saturday morning, have cows and pigs in the pasture, grow their own sugar cane and have a syrup boiling every Thanksgiving. The men grow the cane; the young boys help to harvest and press the juice. Two generations of men and older boys take turns with the paddle at the kettle, and eventually when the juice turns golden, the taffy froth is skimmed to reveal a thick syrup, cooked to perfection. Then women decant the hot amber syrup into clean Mason jars, wiping each one. Even the children watch and participate in the intricate process, and the younger generations are taught by the doing. A bountiful table is set and all who "work the cane" enjoy homemade fresh sausage, hot buttered biscuits and the warm golden syrup that delights one's taste buds with chin-dripping lusciousness.

Bobby Randall, my blonde-haired, blue-eyed lanky cousin, at age 10 was the double for Claude Jarman, Jr. who played "Jody Baxter" in the classic MGM film. Bobby jumped and leapt his way through the beautiful scrub hammock as Claude's double in the running scenes. Lying down by "The Glen" stream, Jody is seen daydreaming, watching Uncle Oliver "Son" McDonald's handmade flutter mill, carefully described in the first chapter of Marjorie's Pulitzer Prize winning novel. Bobby and Claude



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became fast friends on the set during filming where they were tutored for their elementary school lessons between filming the scenes. My heart nearly burst when I saw Claude and Bobby meet once again on December 11 and 12 at our *Yearling* weekend reception at the Dancing Cows Ranch and at the Marion Theatre movie showing of *The Yearling* movie – after 75 years had passed!



Alva Kinsey, another relative in attendance at *The Yearling* weekend, was the son of the double for Gregory Peck in the movie. At a distance, with his dark hair and eyes, his deeply tanned skin, Uncle Al Kinsey was a dead ringer for Gregory Peck. Kinsey family members are able to spot him in the far distant buggy driving and some running scenes. The film opportunity meant so much to Uncle Al that his son Alva played *The Yearling* film in the background of his memorial service.

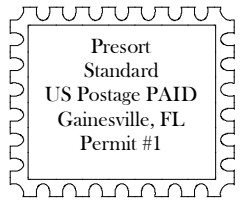
Al's brother, Uncle Lawrence Kinsey, was a set builder, along with many other relatives, friends and neighbors from the area known then as Camden (now called Cedar Creek with a historical marker designating it officially as "Scrambletown"). This last name carried a direct reference to the moonshine era during which there were scores of private moonshine stills hidden back in the woods near flowing creeks. These "shine" adventures along with the hardships of the Cracker people were chronicled in Rawlings' novel *South Moon Under*. Thanks to Lawrence, in 2014 when I wrote an article for the East Marion School Reunion, I viewed his original world premiere booklet and fortunately also made a great color copy of it. Lawrence's original has subsequently been destroyed in a fire.

Because of the East Marion School Reunion Committee (of which I am a member) and the 2014 annual reunion booklet and memorabilia display, I am deeply indebted particularly to Cousin Bobby who for the first time shared and entrusted his photo collection for others to see. I interviewed and preserved as much personal narrative from those still living then. I give praise for these providential moments which brought Donna Green-Townsend and me together and have resulted in the making of the present "Filming *The Yearling* in Florida" documentary. It was that 2019 visit to Cross Creek taking Sheppard family members to tour Marjorie's estate which allowed me to cross paths with Park Ranger Lee Townsend one fate-filled winter day. I thanked him for his lecture, which taught me things about Marjorie's life I had not previously known. It was then and there that I told him there were things I could tell him about *The Yearling* film which he did not know. The rest, (and so much more), thanks be to God, is now preserved for history through the documentary. It is enough, as Pa Baxter says, "to get fantified!"



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Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.
 P.O. Box 337
 Micanopy, FL 32667-0337



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. Visit www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org to join or renew or you may fill out and send a check with the form below. If your membership is current, we thank you!

Mark Your Calendar!

Saturday, August 6th	Marjorie's Birthday Party, 10 a.m. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park
Saturday, December 3rd	Friends' Annual Meeting
Saturday, December 10th	Holiday Party at the Park

www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

<i>Membership Information</i>					
Effective September 1, 2021 new membership dues are as follows					
Type	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	Lifetime
Individual	\$30	\$85	\$140	\$270	\$ 500
Family	\$35	\$100	\$165	\$320	\$ 600
Educational	\$35	\$100	\$165	\$320	\$ 600
Corporate	\$60	\$175	\$290	\$570	\$1,000

Effective 9/1/2021

Please circle type of membership and send with your check to:
Friends of the MKRawlings Farm, Inc.
P.O. Box 337
Micanopy, FL 32667-0337

or visit our website at marjoriekinnanrawlings.org to join or renew your membership online

Membership in the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

We invite you to join or renew your membership in the Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Florida Division of Consumer Services by calling 1-800-435-7352 (toll-free within Florida). Registration does not imply endorsement, approval, or recommendation by the State.

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Please Note: Our dues structure was updated September 2021