

News from the Creek

Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Volume 26 Number 2

Visit our website at: www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

Spring Quarterly 2023

Vice President's Message

By Scott Spaulding

Barney Dillard - Memories from his Namesake Barney Sullivan

"The sight of the mutilated sow sickened him. His father was looking beyond the dead animal. Old Julia had her sharp nose turned in the same direction. Jody walked a few paces and examined the sand. The unmistakable tracks made his blood jump. They were the tracks of a giant bear. And from the print of the right front paw, as big as the crown of a hat, one toe was missing. "Old Slewfoot!" Penny nodded. I'm proud you remembered his track." They bent together and studied the signs and the direction in which they had both come and gone. "That's what I call," Penny said, "carryin' the war into the enemy's camp."



VP Scott with mallard duck
Fodderwing

You may remember those words jumping off the page as you read Marjorie's Pulitzer-Prize-winning novel *The Yearling* or being played out by Gregory Peck as Pa Baxter and Claude Jarman Jr. as Jody when MGM turned the award-winning novel into an Oscar-winning movie of the same name.

As we know, Marjorie wrote with painstaking detail and often used stories from friends and acquaintances as an inspiration for her writing. *The Yearling* is no different. While spending many a day at Pat's Island in the Big Scrub of the Ocala National Forest with Calvin Long gave her the idea for the boy and the fawn story, it was another of Marjorie's acquaintances, Barney Dillard, that inspired the story of Old Slewfoot.

Several months ago, I was introduced to Robert Sullivan who had heard from my Aunt, Nancy Clifton, about my connection with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park as a former Park Manager and now Vice-President of the Friends of the Farm. He was delighted to share that he was the Great Grandson of Barney Dillard, Sr. The conversation we had that afternoon turned into an opportunity too good to pass up, an opportunity to speak directly to Robert's father and Barney Dillard's namesake, Barney Sullivan.

Prior to meeting in Astor, FL where Barney Dillard and his family lived on the bank of the St. Johns River, we did some research and learned quite a bit about the man behind the legend of Old Slewfoot and were surprised by how many articles and stories had already been written about Barney Dillard, Sr.

At their request, we met at the aforementioned home of Barney Dillard. When we met Robert and Barney Sullivan, we soon discovered that they were uncertain who owned the home at which our interview was soon to take place. Pulling into the driveway, uncertain if we were to be welcomed or shunned, Robert headed up to the house to ask permission to set up in the yard for our unannounced interview with the former owner's grandson. Sheer delight could be seen on Robert's face when he returned to announce that not only did we have the owner's permission, but the home was now owned by another member of the Dillard family, Stephen Mackall. In fact, the Dillard's were hosting a family reunion at that same location the following Saturday not far from the location of the "Dillard Oak" which Barney Dillard had work crews spare when the Astor Bridge was built in 1926. The oak itself is part of Florida's rich history, as it has been said to have been the location for the signing of the 1818 peace treaty with the Seminoles.



Barney Sullivan

So, with the stars aligned and everything going our way, Donna Green -Townsend (our well-equipped cameraperson) and I sat down with Barney Sullivan under the shade of an outbuilding to help block the wind and the noise coming from vehicles passing over the nearby St. Johns River bridge and began to chat.

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Park Manager’s Message

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Kevin Patton and I am the Manager of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park, Price’s Scrub State Park and the Gainesville-to-Hawthorne State Trail. Many of you may have heard of the recent merger of the parks under the umbrella of one management team. This management team will include myself, Joy Cotton and Ginger Nichols.



Please allow me to share my park experience. I started my career with the Florida Park Service in 1985. I was 18 Years old. My first job was with District 2 doing survey work on what is now, the Gainesville-to- Hawthorne State Trail. I transferred to Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park as a seasonal employee, where I assisted with maintenance as well as building some of the first enclosures for the reintroduced bison and cracker horses. My first ranger position was at Ravine State Gardens in Palatka. I served as Park Ranger there, two different times, for a total of four years. I worked briefly at O’Leno State Park as a Law Enforcement Ranger. In 1989, I transferred back to Paynes Prairie as a Park Ranger. I worked for 10 years in the Park Ranger role at the Prairie. I promoted in 1999 to an Assistant Park Manager at Stephen Foster Folk Culture State Park, Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park, Big Shoals Public Lands and the Nature and Heritage Tourism Center. In 2005, I promoted to a Park Manager and served at Ochlockonee River State Park and Bald Point State Park. After seven years, in 2012, I transferred to Gold Head Branch State Park and the Palatka to Lake Butler State Trail. I spent 10 years at Gold Head and loved the park, but the pull to go home where my family has been for well over 100 years was always present. So back to Paynes Prairie for the third time in September of 2021 is where I went.



Kevin with his son Luke

I feel a real connection with the MKR historic site. I grew up in Windsor Florida, in the same landscape, culture and type of people that Marjorie wrote about. My sister was married for 50 years to the late Jean O’Quinn, who is Beatrice Townsend’s son. I personally knew Judge John Murphree, who presided over one of the court cases against Ms. Rawlings. Many of the Townsends and Beckham’s have been friends and associates of mine for most of my life. My parents even gave me my middle name of Gregory after actor Gregory Peck (who starred in *The Yearling*). A personal experience related to Marjorie’s stories was: I was visiting Scotland in 2019 and we did a side trip to Carlyle England to see Hadrian’s Wall. We went in the cathedral in Carlyle and an English woman asked me where I was from. She stated that I had the most unique accent that she had ever heard. When I told her and her friend, “North Florida,” they shrugged their shoulders. So, then I said, “have you ever read the book, *The Yearling*?” One of them said “yes, written by Rawlings.” Then I said, “I am from right there.” My point is, that the MKR historic site is world renowned and that it is a destination for people from around the world.

The merger between Paynes Prairie Preserve and the MKR management teams is a wonderful opportunity for a sharing of resources and staff. Each park is unique and a standalone unit, each with significant cultural and natural resources. Paynes Prairie has a large quantity of equipment used for maintenance and resource management. This equipment can now be used to supplement the lack of equipment assigned to the MKR park. By sharing resources, people and equipment, we can streamline both operations more effectively and efficiently. I look forward to the input and expertise

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of the people who have for years poured their hearts and efforts into the house and farm. I am excited to start working with the community to continue to restore and interpret this uniquely Florida historic site!

Marjorie's stories represent an old Florida culture which is diminishing with time. If not for her stories, much of this would have already been forgotten. Part of our mission in the Florida Park Service is to preserve this rich cultural history. I feel like this is part of my story, my past and my culture. I wanted to take this moment to thank all of you who have worked so diligently to preserve the site that inspired Marjorie's stories. I very much appreciate all that you have done and continue to do. I believe that Marjorie's stories will continue to be read far beyond our lifetimes into the many centuries to come.

Thank you,
Kevin Patton

Meet the new park ranger at the MKR Historic State Park



Hello all! My name is Austin Crawford. I am originally from Huntsville, Alabama and moved to the Gainesville area with my family when I was 16 in 2011. I have lived in and out of the Gainesville area and spent three years in Tampa while I attended the University of South Florida where I earned my Bachelor's degree in environmental science and policy. After graduation I joined the Florida Conservation Corps and worked throughout Florida for many different state parks. I am excited to be here and learn about the impact and legacy that Marjorie left behind. I hope to help the park grow and share Marjorie's stories with the many people who visit the Marjorie Kinman Rawlings Historic State Park.



2023 CSO and Park Managers meeting January 24-27 held in Altamonte Springs, attended by President Donna Green-Townsend, Vice President Scott Spaulding and Assistant Park Manager Ginger Nichols

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Barney Sullivan, grandson of Barney Dillard, Sr. was born in Sebring, FL. His mother Mary was one of 15 children born to Barney and Alice Dillard who lived in the house next to us which was built in the 1930's. He described the house in full detail and proudly showed us a painting of the house drawn and painted by his sister about 30 years ago. He said little had changed when comparing the actual house to the painting.

With a twinkle in his eye Barney spoke with deep affection of his grandparents. His earliest memories began when he was about three years old, walking the road with his granddad, which is now a highway. "I walked with him and his little dog and we would go next door to the sulfur well and drink some water which was good, and afterwards we'd sit on the front porch and swing." With a smile he said, "Sometimes me and my brother would go into the kitchen and act hungry and get a biscuit, take a bite but use the rest for fishing off the dock. We would catch little bream and perch. We didn't have any rod and reel; we just used a cane pole or throw line...Sometimes I got to milk the cow or gather eggs for grandma. It was a thrill in a way and an experience."

In later years, as a teenager, he would hitchhike from where they lived in Jacksonville to stay with his grandparents over the weekend. When asked how far away that was, he said, "Oh about 100 miles...over the weekend I would play with my cousins and hitchhike back on Sunday afternoon to get ready for school on Monday." He would sometimes walk down the road and meet his cousin. "We would go out in the woods and catch gophers, a lot of people call them land tortoises, and sell them to workers at the sawmill that his daddy owned. Then we would take the money across the river to the store and buy a moon pie and RC cola." He commented on how much bigger those moon pies were back then. Much fun was had while staying with his grandparents including riding the waves made by barges being pulled by tugboats up the river as they floated along in an old boat.

He said his granddad was a great hunter. "From the stories I got, Marjorie used to stay with him for days and go hunting and camping and all that stuff in the woods." When asked about his memories of Old Slewfoot, he remembered hearing stories about that bear, "They called him Slewfoot ...he was the biggest black bear ever been killed in Florida and he was killed across the river and there used to be a swamp over in there and that's where he killed the bear... From what I understand, the story I got, they caught him in a trap or the trap got him, but he was so powerful he got out of the trap and he broke his foot or something, twisted it and it made him what they call a slew and that's where they got his nickname from." His granddad skinned the bear while it hung from the oak tree in the front yard. He showed us the very tree which is still alive and well. A picture of that scene hangs in the display room of Marjorie's farmhouse. He said that the hide is still somewhere, not sure where.

He said Marjorie signed and gave his granddaddy the first yearling book off the press. That book is on display at the museum in Barberville.

He also reminisced about the filming of *The Yearling*. He recalls that a portion of the film was shot in front of his granddaddy's house along the bank of the river. "It is the scene where the boy Jody chased the fawn down the river. You can see the tree he ran behind still growing over there... while the cast was here grandma cooked for them and they all ate here in the kitchen...somebody once made the comment that my granddad made money off of that scene and stuff, but granddad said no, there was \$50 exchanged to have the garage on stilts moved over to the side of the house out of the way so they could get that one scene of the boy running beside the river."

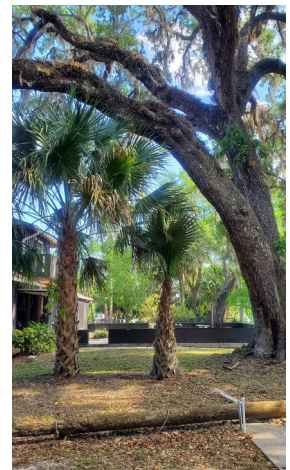
You can tell that he cherishes the time spent with his grandparents and the memories from those years and stories passed down through the generations. At age 16 Barney Sullivan joined the Navy and later the Civil Service as an "aeronautical doctor" he said with a smile later proclaiming he was an aircraft mechanic. He retired from the Civil Service many years ago and has lived in Jacksonville ever since.

When asked if he could describe his granddad in just a few words he said, "To my knowledge he was wise, and he was generous and he got that from his Daddy...he was pretty alright, sort of comical." Chuckling he said, "I can remember sitting in the living room with him listening to that old radio. When the news came on you shut up because he wanted to listen to Edward R. Murrow.



Above: Barney Dillard with Bear

Below: That same tree today. Named "Dillard Oak"



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He used to sit there across from that big fireplace, and he chewed tobacco, and he would spit and never missed, he would hit the fireplace every time.”

Although our time with Barney Sullivan was short, we could tell how proud he is of his ancestry, and rightly so. In closing he said, “I am very proud and thankful that the good Lord put us together and am so thankful that our treasured house is still here and in the family. These memories will probably go on for another 100 years.”

We are also thankful that his granddad inspired a tale that will forever be remembered in the writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Marjorie’s relationship with Barney Dillard, whom she lovingly called “Uncle Barney Dillard” was a special one indeed as she wrote about him in her book *Cross Creek*.

I think it fitting to close this article with a poem written by Barney Dillard himself...yes besides being a great hunter, woodsman, granddad and friend, he was a poet too...

A Poem of 50 Years Ago – Composed by Barney Dillard

*Oh memory bring back the scene
Where youthfulls shining glow
Where once we walked shady ways
Of Fifty Years ago*

*What youthfull lovers seek
I guess you all know
It was a promise to ever keep
Over Fifty Years ago*

*I have heard the tramp of children’s feet
the bliss you will never know,
the happy smiling face’s you meet
Over Fifty Years ago*

*But few you meet who used to smile
and shake your hand galore
are living now to recall the time
Of Fifty Years ago*

*I fail to recall worry day
That naturally come and go
I fondly embrace that lovers pain
Of Fifty Years ago*

*When our bodies come to rest
that dreamless sleep we know
where none of our love is lost
Of Fifty Years ago*

*And when we climb the hill above
where the river of life will ever flow
we will find no love is lost
Of Fifty Years ago*



Scott Spaulding along with Barney Sullivan, grandson of Barney Dillard Sr.



Three descendants of Barney Dillard, Sr. (L to R) Barney Sullivan, Stephan Mackall, Robert Sullivan along with Scott Spaulding holding photos of the original Barney Dillard, Sr. home in Astor, FL

From Novel to Movie: The Yearling in Florida



In 1928 Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings brought her dreams of becoming a great writer to Florida. After a series of short stories, sketches and a short novel she penned a coming of age story about a young boy and his pet deer called, *The Yearling*. The novel which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1939 has become one of the most beloved stories in the world. MGM bought the movie rights to the novel and began filming in the “Big Scrub” of Florida in 1941.

MKR Friends of the Farm President Donna Green-Townsend has produced the documentary, *From Novel to Movie: The Yearling in Florida* which examines the inspiration for creating the classic film.

The documentary shares home movies recorded in 1945 during the filming in Florida by Oscar winner Gregory Peck as well as one on one interview segments with Claude Jarman, Jr. who played young Jody Baxter in the movie. Also featured are interviews with Marion County residents who worked as stand-ins for the key actors or who worked on the movie set back in the 40's. The screening of the documentary will be announced soon. Stay tuned.

Wanted: 1940 Oldsmobile

If you have been out to the park lately you may have noticed that the Oldsmobile parked under Marjorie's carport has been removed. This decision was made because the vehicle is finally in need of replacement and was becoming a safety concern. Just so you know, the vehicle was not owned by Marjorie but it was put there in the early 1990's as a replica of the vehicle Marjorie owned. We are now searching for a replacement 1940 Oldsmobile 2dr Sedan. If anyone has any leads for us or if you might be interested in helping to fund a replacement, please reach out to Scott Spaulding, Vice-President at (352) 978-2273



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.



Writer's Talk on February 18th with Charlie Hailey on his book, *The Porch—Meditations on the Edge of Nature*



Saying Goodbye to a Dear Friend

We would like to extend our deepest sympathy to the family of Neal R. Spencer who passed away on February 24th of this year. Neal and his wife Elaine Carson Spencer were dedicated board members of The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm. Elaine served as president for a number of years.

Neal spent most of his childhood in Gainesville. He graduated from Gainesville High School and went on to complete his undergraduate studies at the University of Florida with a degree in agriculture/entomology. He earned a Master's degree at the University of Missouri and completed all of the classwork necessary for his Doctorate. Neal went on to a more than 30 year career with the Department of Agriculture which took him and his family all over the United States and overseas. Neal's celebration of life was held at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Gainesville.

Neal is survived by his wife Elaine Carson Spencer, her daughters Shannon Meade Maccioli and Kelly Meade Schiffler both of Gainesville, FL and by his three children Quentin Spencer of Raleigh, NC, Creighton Spencer of Selbyville, DE and Lisa Spencer of Laurel, MT. He was preceded in death by son Nathan. He is also survived by 11 grandchildren.



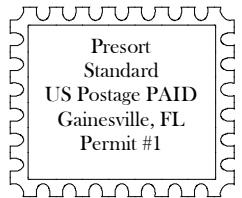
Neal and Elaine

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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!

(updated regularly, please check website www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org)



Saturday, August 5th	11am—1pm	Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Birthday Celebration
Saturday, December 2nd	2pm	Annual Meeting of the Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.
Saturday, December 9th	TBA	Annual Holiday Event at The Farm

All events will be held at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park unless otherwise noted

Membership Information

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.

Name _____

Address _____

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Comments:

Please Note: Our dues structure was updated September 2021