



# News from the Creek

Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Visit our website at: [www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org](http://www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org)

Winter Quarterly 2021

Volume 24 Number 1

## President's Message

by Barbara Wingo

*Looking Forward*

*Looking Back*



I hope that everyone is doing well in these unprecedented times.

I am glad and, indeed, honored to report that even with the challenges we faced we had a virtual annual meeting that was a great success. Many thanks to Ron Haase – and to Scott Spaulding and Donna Green-Townsend – who developed the excellent presentation for our annual meeting. If you missed the meeting, please view Ron Haase's presentation on our website or our Facebook page. I know that I learned a great deal from the presentation.

In addition, a wonderful virtual holiday event was held in lieu of the annual holiday party at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. "Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Cross Creek Christmas" was presented through the efforts of Martha-lynn Allen Dilello along with Geoffrey Gates, Scott Spaulding and Donna Green-Townsend. Again, please view it on our website or Facebook page. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention – and these projects not only prove this adage, but also show that something even better and more lasting can come from adversity.

Although the park is open and limited tours have resumed, we are yet not able to have events at the park. Eventually one of these events will be the formal dedication of trail signs that celebrate quotations from Rawlings' works with illustrations by Robert Carson from Gordon Bigelow's *Frontier Eden*. In the meantime, in recognition of the illustrations on the markers, we are reprinting an article from one of the earliest Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm newsletters in this issue: an article from 1998 by Elaine Carson Spencer about her father, her family, and the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings farmhouse on page 4.

Previously in these newsletters we published a transcription of a 1970 guided tour of Rawlings' house given by Robert Carson. The house tours then and now tell Rawlings' story as well as the story of the house and what is in the house. Both the Ron Haase presentation and the Cross Creek Christmas video highlight the house itself as well as the furnishings in the house. We will continue to pursue these facets of the park in future newsletters and programs.

You will notice in this newsletter that we have reinstated a volunteer spotlight feature (page 5). We will be featuring park volunteers and Friends volunteers in this and future newsletters. And be assured that not only will we celebrate the new trail markers later this year, we will also fittingly celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park through programming that explores the history of the park itself.

In this newsletter Scott Spaulding mentions winter at the Creek, and, of course, in winter more time is spent indoors. Rawlings, who loved to cook and to entertain, wrote in *Cross Creek Cookery*:

In cold weather, we eat in the old-fashioned farmhouse dining room with its open fireplace. If there are only one or two guests, we are likely to have our winter breakfast on a small table in the living room by the roaring hearth fire, looking through the French windows out across the veranda to the fresh leafy world beyond.

This is an image that we can envisage at the park and from Rawlings' writings – an image that may give us comfort in these trying times.

We look forward to a time when events at the park may resume. Your membership means even more in these unusual times, and we thank you for your support. Please stay safe and stay well.

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**Park Manager’s Message**  
by Park Manager Scott Spaulding



Greetings Everyone:

Winter is here and as Marjorie wrote in *Cross Creek*, Chapter 21 - Winter - ***Ahead of us is the good season, when growth is slowed and a very little hoeing keeps clean the farm fields, the groves and the gardens. It is the tidy time. The lush exuberance of summer is forgotten and the hurricanes of the fall. All is neat and ordered.*** I couldn’t agree more. Weeds growing in the citrus beds are non-existent, the mower has been put away for now, and the crisp cold mornings remind us that Florida has more than one distinct season.

Getting Back to Normal - Well almost normal that is. On December 3<sup>rd</sup> we resumed guided tours of the farmhouse. In order to maintain visitor and staff safety we have reduced the number of tours given each day from 6 to 4 and are limiting the tour size to 20, with 10 or less entering the house at a time to provide ample space between the groups. Facial coverings are required inside the farmhouse, and most of the discussion takes place outside the farmhouse. The tours have been well received, and we are excited to be able to allow visitors in the farmhouse once again. When coming for tours, which are held Thursday - Sunday at 11am and 1, 2 and 3 pm, please bring exact change for the tour fee as change is not available and credit cards are not accepted at this time.

Reflection - Although things have slowed down quite a bit since the pandemic hit last year, I was amazed when I removed last year’s calendar from the office and

counted how many programs we had accomplished during January 2020 alone. During that month we conducted over 90 guided tours along with 18 private group tours. Makes me wonder how we ever did it, but of course I know how we did it: our wonderful staff and volunteers. Hopefully one day soon we will be back to normal operations, but until then you can rest assured that busy or not, visitors will always have a memorable experience when they visit the farm.

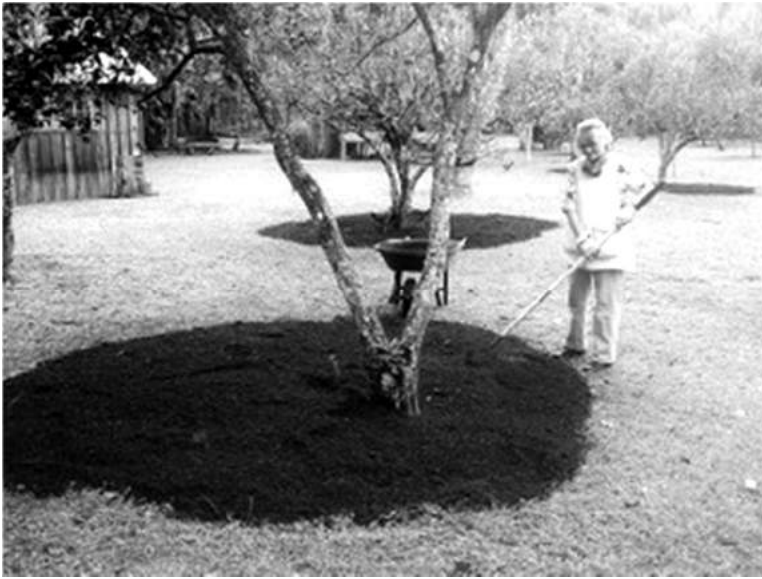
Composting the Citrus - 54 cubic yards of compost known by its market name as Life Soil’s *Command* was delivered to the farm in November and carefully spread 4” deep around most of the park’s 90 plus citrus trees. The compost made primarily from ground yard waste, and pre-consumer food waste has been used on thousands of University of Florida citrus trees and has been proven to benefit the citrus by supplying stabilized organic matter, creating a better root environment, improving water holding capability and supplying beneficial microorganisms. Special thanks to Pierce Jones, Ph.D., with the Program for Resource Efficient Communities, Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences with the University of Florida, and Ryan McMeekin with Life Soils for working with us to provide the product at no cost. Special thanks to the Friends for paying the cost of trucking the compost and special thanks to our volunteers, District 2 AmeriCorps and park staff for spreading it out under the trees.

Marjorie’s Quotation Trail Sign Project - Continued- As discussed in the last newsletter, the Friends funded the quotation signs which are being installed as I write this message. What a wonderful addition to the historic state park and just another way to inspire visitors to read Marjorie’s books. What makes it even more special are the Robert Carson drawings that accompany each sign. Be sure to walk the trail, which is also wheelchair accessible, the next time you visit the park! Special thanks to volunteers Andy and Terry for installing the signs.

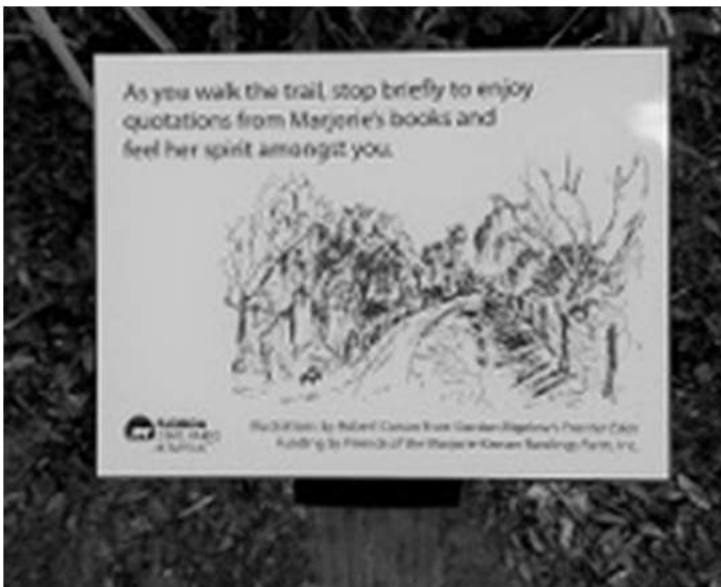
Maggie the Cat - If you have visited the farm in the last few months, you may have already met Maggie. Maggie is a Tonkinese, which is a cross between a Siamese and Burmese. She has become a great ambassador, and loves to greet visitors to the farm. Marjorie had many cats and dogs including Siamese cats, so Maggie fits right in and makes the cultural landscape of the farm even more special. Say hi to Maggie the next time you visit.

Until next time, we wish you well and hope to see you at the farm one day soon.





Volunteers Terry Brightman (left) and Tom Teets (right) spreading compost under citrus.



Volunteers Andy and Terry Brightman install the first trail sign (left) which reads, "As you walk the trail, stop briefly to enjoy quotations from Marjorie's books and feel her spirit."



**DVDs available: *Life and Times in Cross Creek: Memories and Reflections* and *Here is Home: MKR 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: MKR and Cross Creek**, a short documentary produced by Sonya Doctorian. This 40 minute presentation is a documentary of the life and legacy of Marjorie Kinman Rawlings. This DVD is available to purchase by mail for \$24.00.

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

## Memories of Visiting the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Home 1968 - 1971

by Elaine Carson Funk

It is difficult for me to realize that 30 years have passed since my parents, Bob and Estelle Carson, were weekend hosts at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings home, back in 1968.

Upon Marjorie's death in 1953, her home went to the University of Florida, along with her books and writings. It was the wish of the UF Foundation that Marjorie's home be restored as it was when she lived at the Creek and where she wrote her Pulitzer-prize winning novel, *The Yearling*.

From 1953 to 1968, the University, along with other interested parties, was busy trying to preserve her writings and document her life. University of Florida English professor, Dr. Gordon Bigelow, was one of many who wrote about Marjorie. Published in 1966, his book, *Frontier Eden*, was a biographical sketch and critique of her literary production. Dr. Bigelow had asked my father, Dr. Robert Carson, also a UF professor and a self-taught artist, if he would be interested in doing some pen-and-ink drawings for his book. The rest is history. The book was a great success.

I can still remember the book-signing party at Marjorie's Cross Creek home in July of 1969. There were many people present from all over, especially the media folk. A journalist from the Tampa Tribune covered the party and photographers were everywhere taking pictures of all of the rooms in Marjorie's cracker-style home.

It was finally announced that the MKR house was going to be opened to the public and that local artist and UF Professor Robert F. Carson and his wife, Estelle, were going to be "weekend hosts" at Marjorie's house. For the next two years, my parents would leave Gainesville on Friday afternoon and drive to Cross

Creek and set up housekeeping in Marjorie's restored home.

At that time I was living in Ft. Lauderdale with my husband and two daughters. From time to time, we would make the six-hour drive to visit my parents in Gainesville and then go with them to the Creek. It was great fun to see them welcoming visitors and conducting tours of the house.

These two years were very special to me and my family. We always looked forward to coming to Gainesville, and



Pen and ink drawing from *Frontier Eden*  
drawn by Dr. Robert F. Carson

especially to going to Marjorie's home. We would drive out early before the house was opened for tours and have a home-made breakfast in Marjorie's kitchen with my folks. I remember my mother telling me that she found a snake in the toilet and that she was never quite the same afterwards. From then on, she always looked first!

My daughters, Shannon and Kelly, were about 6 and 4 years of age when they visited the Creek. They loved Marjorie's home with its open walkway that made it easy to go from master bedroom back to the kitchen without entering the main living room. They would play "hide and seek" and hide in closets, behind chairs and even under Marjorie's bed! They never realized until later in life that they

were playing in a famous house! They also remember my father, their grandfather, with either a sketch book in hand or playing his hand-made violin for the guests and friends who visited Marjorie's home.

I really believe that as a result of my parents' involvement with Marjorie's home, Cross Creek became much better known among the Gainesville community than it had been before. More and more people came to visit the famous writer's home and then stay for dinner at The Yearling Restaurant. The restaurant owners, Ben and Lillian Wheeler, became good friends with my parents and their restaurant business flourished. Every Friday and Saturday night at the restaurant, you could count on being entertained by a strolling violinist: my dad. He was good! Everyone loved his playing. He could play any song, any tune, and he knew all of the oldies. Consequently, the Carson family never paid for a meal at the Yearling Restaurant.

After living at the Creek on weekends, my parents decided to move to Cross Creek after my father's retirement from the University. They had even purchased property at the Creek close to Marjorie's home. Unfortunately, it was not meant to be. On a Sunday afternoon, returning from Marjorie's home at Cross Creek, my father was injured in a tragic car accident. He died at Shands Hospital on November 17, 1971.

For us, the Creek was never the same. But those wonderful memories still remain.

This article is reprinted from *News from the Creek*, Volume 1, Number 4, Summer 1998.



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## Volunteer Spotlight

by Park Ranger Geoffrey Gates

### Volunteer Marthalyne Allen Dilello

I can't forget the day she arrived, someone rushing to me with the news: "You won't believe who's here! Ross Allen's granddaughter! And she wants to volunteer! You have to meet her."

Marthalyne Allen Dilello is most certainly the direct descendant of the legendary reptile collector, showman and old friend of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Some of her earliest memories are of cleaning alligator pens in Ocala National Forest, the huge and fearsome animals all around. For visitors who tour with her she is a living link to the great Florida writer. But almost from that first day Marthalyne has also been a whirlwind of enthusiasm and creativity.

Marthalyne took after her grandfather, she was drawn to the theatrical, to the big shows. After graduating from the University of North Carolina with degrees in art and theater, she was off to London, studying acting at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. And then she was a student of art and poetry at Ezra Pound's mountaintop castle in the Italian Alps.

She would have loved to have been a great actress, but "you need a lot of money to live on while it happens" and she certainly didn't have a lot. So instead she became a prop master and then a set designer, working on productions of *Steel Magnolias*, *Crimes of the Heart* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* among many others.

Fifteen years ago, as she puts it, "I picked up a camera," immersing herself in photography and returning to painting as well. To survive she took a job with a native plant company, learning much about collecting and propagating seed as well as marketing. In this past year many of the different strands of Marthalyne's life came together in wonderful ways at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park.

Marthalyne's knowledge of both the seed business and photography met in the summer garden. So many of our visitors ask about the flowers and vegetables we grow, wishing they could grow them at home, and about the lovely photos Marthalyne had taken of the garden, in all kinds of weather and light. So why not package seed for sale? And why not design colorful art for the packs using the photos and paintings? The results are charming, whimsical, unique—Marjorie's shoes casually tossed off beneath a vase of Will Rogers Zinnias, our cat Maggie lurking under a blanket of Four O'Clock flowers, a pig very much like Mr. Martin's swamped in fluffy-ruffle petunias.

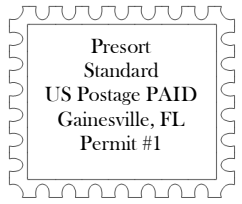
When we were asked to create the experience of a Marjorie Rawlings Christmas on film—who other than an imaginative set designer could have brought the house to such dramatic life for an elegant holiday party from long ago—the luminous mounds of fruit and flowers, gleaming china, the champagne about to be poured, the live crabs and quail in the kitchen about to be cooked? Who other than a gifted photog-



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- Corporate Members**  
 Dancing Cows Ranch

(Continued on page 6)



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. If your membership is current, we thank you!



Be sure to visit us at [marjoriekinnanrawlings.org](http://marjoriekinnanrawlings.org) Or [floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings](http://floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings)

*(Marthalyne Continued from page 5)*

rather could have captured the beauty of candle glow playing over crystal and mirrors or a bonfire reflecting on ripe oranges in the grove, just as Marjorie Rawlings described it?

We say every volunteer brings their own gifts to this place. Or the place has a way of bringing out their gifts. With Marthalyne it has certainly been a bountiful harvest—for me, an exciting, unpredictable, rewarding adventure.



An example of Marthalyne's artwork for seed packets

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Effective July 1, 2014 new membership dues are as follows					
Type	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	Lifetime
<b>Individual</b>	\$25	\$70	\$105	\$200	\$ 450
<b>Family</b>	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
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We invite you to join or renew your membership in the Citizen Support Organization (CSO) for the MKR Historic State Park. Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc., is a 501©(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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