

News from the Creek

Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Visit our website at: www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

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Looking Forward, Looking Back

By President Barbara Wingo



In my last column I wrote that the perpetuation of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm at Cross Creek reflects the value of preserving the place and the story of the place as well as Rawlings' literary legacy. In this newsletter we look at the past and the future as changes are occurring at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' farm at Cross Creek. Valerie Rivers, who served exceptionally well as the park manager, has retired, and a new park manager, Scott Spaulding, has begun his duties. Please see the articles about both of them in this newsletter.

As we have done for many years, the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm again will be celebrating Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' birthday. The celebration will occur on Saturday, August 11, at 10 a.m. at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. We will have the traditional cake, ice cream and lemonade as well as a tour of the grounds conducted by new park ranger Geoff Gates. It will also be a chance to meet the new park manager.

The Friends are proud to announce the premiere of "Here is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek" with documentary filmmaker Sonya Doctorian on Friday, October 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Matheson History Museum in Gainesville. Please see Sonya's article on page 4 of this newsletter.

August and September are traditionally the months that the house has been closed for cleaning and repairs - and so it will be this year. Volunteers are always needed to help with this and other projects. Without volunteers contributing hours of service to the park and to the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm we would not be able to provide the level of preservation and interpretation that currently occurs. Please contact the park to express your interest. Whether it is serving on the board of directors of the Friends, helping to put on a special program, or refurbishing the house and grounds, there are many fulfilling ways to support the Creek.

Marjorie writes in *Cross Creek* how the Creek "satisfies a thing that had gone hungry and unfed since childhood days," and she describes walking "at sunset, east along the road":

Folk call the road lonely, because there is not human traffic and human stirring. Because I have walked it so many times and seen such a tumult of life there, it seems to me one of the most populous highways of my acquaintance. I have walked it in ecstasy, and in joy it is beloved. Every pine tree, every gallberry bush, every passion vine, every joree rustling in the underbrush, is vibrant. I have walked it in trouble, and the wind in the trees beside me is easing. I have walked it in despair, and the red of the sunset is my own blood dissolving into the night's darkness. For all such things were on earth before us, and will survive after us, and it is given to us to join ourselves with them and to be comforted.

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**Welcome to New Park Manager
Scott Spaulding**



Born in Syracuse, New York, Scott Spaulding moved to Florida with his family in 1977. After graduating from the Park Technology Program at Lake City Community College in 1986, where he met his wife Gina, he began his career with the Florida Park Service as a Park Ranger at DeLeon Springs State Park that same year. Scott has since worked at 7 other parks before becoming the Park Manager at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Scott has been in Park Management for over

21 years, and has managed such parks as Oscar Scherer State Park, Tosohatchee Preserve State Park, Colt Creek State Park and most recently, Lake Louisa State Park. His love for Cross Creek and the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park began 34 years ago when he and Gina visited relatives in the Cross Creek/Hawthorne area where she grew up. Scott has 3 years of his 35 year career left, and is thrilled to be able to spend it at MKR Historic State Park and become part of the team that makes the park so great. To Gina and Scott, it is like coming home. Scott and Gina have two children, Adam and Summer, and one granddaughter McKenzie. They are expecting their second granddaughter in October.



**Happy Birthday,
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings!**

Saturday, August 11, 10 a.m.,
at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
Historic State Park:
Sing Happy Birthday to Marjorie
with cake, ice cream and lemonade
— and a tour of the grounds.



State Senator Keith Perry with Tour Guides Sheila Holloway and Mary Anne Hilker on the front porch of the tenant house at MKR Historic State Park during a recent visit. Senator Perry who was raised in Gainesville represents Alachua County in the Florida legislature.

Congratulations to Valerie Rivers on her Retirement: Thank you for a Job Well Done!



Valerie Rivers recently retired as Park Manager of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. We asked her to tell us about herself and her time at the park.

Valerie grew up in pre-Disney Orlando with Boston parents. She received a B.A. from Florida State University and an M.A. from Pepperdine University as well as completing a year of graduate work in history at the University of Florida. She served as an officer in the United States Navy (communications and port operations) and then Reserves; she retired with the rank of Commander. She was also an assistant editor at the *American Artist Magazine*.

Valerie is the proud mother of two daughters. Her younger daughter just graduated from FSU (civil engineering with an environmental engineering specialty). Her elder daughter graduated from the University of Florida and is now a full-time videographer in Japan.

Valerie has traveled widely. She noted some of the more interesting places she has visited: extensive college work in London, England; visiting the Soviet Union in 1973; teaching school in Eritrea (when part of Ethiopia)); traveling through most of western Europe -- especially Spain and Italy); also traveling the Pacific including Hawaii (lived there 4 years), the Philippines, Saipan, Guam and Japan. She has driven across the United States twice. Valerie avers that traveling, in addition to art and writing, have been generally neglected in later years -- but we can hope that that is rectified in her retirement years.

Valerie served more than 28 years in the Florida Park System, most as Park Manager at Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Some accomplishments on her watch, which she notes were never accomplished alone but required the input of teams, including staff, volunteers and the Friends CSO were: full grant restoration project on the historic house, including foundations and roof; annual care of facilities and historic structures; addition of an historic tenant house historically placed and developed; the creation of the CSO; maintenance of the relationship between the park and the Alachua County Park system; and routine care for the historic structures, grove and gardens, including a CSO-funded irrigation system. Other accomplishments were the addition of water and electricity to the barn, with CSO help; and new interpretative research and materials including African American history and the War II years along with other topics. In addition, she noted that during her years of leadership that the traditional tour schedule and ticket method at the historic house were maintained, instead of the ahistorical addition of computer wiring and machinery; adjacent land was purchased on which maintenance and administrative areas were developed, including two full-service campground host sites; and the original Rawlings 4-poster bed was acquired with CSO assistance.



Valerie's retirement farewell bash. She's holding her hand carved duck presented by the staff and volunteers as a lasting remembrance of her years of service at MKR Historic State Park.

We congratulate Valerie on her accomplishments and wish her well in the years to come!

Here Is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek

By Sonya Doctorian



Sonya at Marjorie's gravesite

I've visited the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings home several times over the years, thanks to my first job as a Tampa Tribune photographer and later on, as director of photography at The St. Petersburg Times. Last year, I toured the home again, this time as an independent short-form documentary filmmaker based in Colorado. The person and the place have been a source of inspiration to me since my first stint in Florida newspapers.

Before I visited the Rawlings home in 2017, my online search revealed several biographies about the author, but a dearth of professionally-produced online documentaries. After a house tour led by Rick Mulligan, I was gripped by this idea, standing right there on the bedroom porch. Why not me? I could shoot and edit a short video, regardless of living 1,700 miles away. What are commercial planes for? My two-part motto is: 1) "Why dream small when you can dream big?" and 2) "Get going."

Rick introduced me to then-park ranger Carrie Todd, who happened to be in the Rawlings kitchen. She had just taken a "roly poly" out of the wood cookstove, using a recipe from *Cross Creek Cookery*. The dessert was for that afternoon's celebration of the book's 75th anniversary.

Our documentary project came to life the next week when Carrie and I began our long-distance collaboration. She alerted me to a University of Florida Travel to Collections grant, which I was awarded that summer, thanks to her excellent editing suggestions. The grant paid my way to the University's George A. Smathers Special and Area Collections, which houses Rawlings' archive of manuscripts, photographs and voluminous correspondence. My two weeks of research there last fall laid the foundation for my short-form documentary. I'm grateful, too, for invaluable guidance from Flo Turcotte, the University's Literary Manuscripts Archivist. Her depth of knowledge of the Rawlings Archive leaks out in every thoughtful answer when you ask about the author.

Then Carrie presented our documentary idea to the Board of the Friends of the Farm. With their key support, we applied for and the Friends were awarded a grant from the Florida Humanities Council, which has mostly underwritten my travel to Florida for video production.

I've been compelled to visually record this early 20th century working farm, from a time before interstates and air conditioning forever altered Florida. And I have a sense of urgency to record oral histories of those who grew up in the 1930s and '40s knowing Mrs. Rawlings. Years later, her impact is apparent in their bright memories of her. Her neighbor, J.T. Glisson, considered Mrs. Rawlings his buddy throughout his youth. He happily recalled adventure after adventure. Bobby Townsend and Roy Bass remembered the sound of Mrs. Rawlings' Oldsmobile barreling down their sandy lanes as she delivered Christmas baskets to Cross Creek families, year after year.



Park Ranger Carrie Todd with "roly poly"

(Continued on page 5)



**Premiere of “Here is Home:
Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek”
Friday, October 12, 6:30 p.m.,
at the Matheson History Museum in Gainesville:**

Short-form documentary filmmaker Sonya Doctorian will premiere “Here is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek,” produced for the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm under a grant from the Florida Humanities Council. The event will include a viewing of the documentary, a discussion by the director of her methods, as well as highlights of video interviews with Cross Creek residents who share their 1930s and '40s memories of their neighbor, Mrs. Rawlings. Those who were interviewed for the project will be invited to attend as honored guests.

(Continued from page 4)

Carol Fiddia Laxton, daughter of Leonard Fiddia, grew up in the Ocala National Forest knowing “Marj,” a longtime friend of the family. Rawlings had become close with the Fiddias in 1931 when she lived a couple months with Carol’s grandmother, Piety, and Leonard in the Big Scrub, handwashing heavy quilts, hunting, fishing, observing—and taking notes. Leonard Fiddia, not married yet, became the prototype for the protagonist in *South Moon Under*, published in 1933.

“Marj” brought Christmas dinner to their home after the death of Carol’s little sister just days before. Rawlings roasted a turkey—whole, not cut up—in their wood cookstove, which was a novelty to young Carol. She was famous then, Carol said, and could have been anywhere that Christmas Day. Now 84, Carol treasures the memory of that act of kindness.

Hettie Ross, granddaughter of Martha and Will Mickens, witnessed her grandparents’ grief in 1953 when a messenger from Norton Baskin brought news of Mrs. Rawlings’ untimely death in St. Augustine. They had worked for Mrs. Rawlings for many years, from the Depression to World War II, right up to that sad, unexpected day in 1953. Their sorrow was profound.

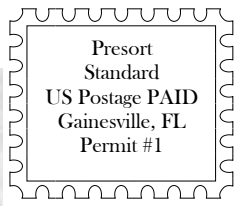
This documentary project has been a community effort from the beginning. Friends of the Farm Treasurer Anne Pierce devoted many volunteer hours to shepherd the requirements of the FHC grant. Donna Greenwell Townsend connected me to longtime Cross Creek families. Michaelyn Luttge generously hosted me in her Cross Creek home for several days. Steve and Anne-Marie Orlando also opened their Gainesville home to me. I’m grateful to each person, named and unnamed who helped me.

After three decades of reading and re-reading *The Yearling*, *South Moon Under* and *Cross Creek*, I’ll be pleased to present this documentary, a labor of love and respect, to the community on October 12 at the Matheson History Museum in Gainesville. In addition to its range of educational uses, it is intended for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park website and the Friends of the Farm website.

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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!

Save the Dates!

- August 11th, MKR Birthday Party
 Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park
- October 12th, MKR Documentary Premiere
 Matheson History Museum, Gainesville

Be sure to visit us at www.floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings

<i>Membership Information</i>					
Effective July 1, 2014 new membership dues are as follows					
Type	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	Lifetime
Individual	\$25	\$70	\$105	\$200	\$ 450
Family	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
Educational	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
Corporate	\$55	\$155	\$255	\$500	\$1,000

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

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

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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