

# News from the Creek

Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

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

Volume 22 Number 4

Fall Quarterly 2019

## President's Message

by Barbara Wingo

*Looking Forward*  
*Looking Back*



Welcome to fall at Marjorie's farm. Summer was, indeed, hot. But that did not preclude our having a wonderful time at Marjorie's 123<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Party. Over 90 persons joined in the party, which was enlivened by music, a house tour, and, of course, a birthday cake – not to mention the delicious mango ice cream and the watermelon sherbet.

September brings hurricanes, but eventually better weather. This fall also brings many events sponsored by the Friends.

The most important of these events is the presentation of Deborah Dickey's *Cross Roads: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Norton S. Baskin in Unguarded Moments* on Friday, October 18. The play is based on the correspondence between Rawlings and her second husband, Norton Baskin, from 1938 through 1944. Most of that correspondence comes from the period after Baskin joined the American Field Service during World War II, serving as an ambulance driver in the Burma/India theater of war. Both partners in the marriage were articulate and insightful. In addition to her writing and other issues, Rawlings was dealing with her doubts as well as her love. She was concerned about her ability to be a good wife, considering the failure of her first marriage, and her adjustment to life as the wife of a hotel manager, believing she could simply not live in a hotel. In the play the characters talk through their own letters. At one point Rawlings talks to the audience directly, and another section includes a video with photographs of Marjorie and Norton.

The play, which will commence at 7:30 p.m., will be preceded by a reception (for which tickets are more limited) from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. At the reception the playwright will join us for hors d'oeuvres inspired by recipes in *Cross Creek Cookery* and discussion. The location for both the reception and the play is the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at 4225 NW 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Gainesville. Tickets for the play are \$25 and for the reception, \$10 for Friends members and \$20 for non-members. The early distribution of this newsletter is to make possible the Friends' purchasing of tickets before the events are advertised to the general public. So please purchase your tickets as soon as possible at [cross-roads-reception.eventbrite.com](http://cross-roads-reception.eventbrite.com) for the reception and [cross-roads.eventbrite.com](http://cross-roads.eventbrite.com) for the play.

The play looks at the past, but the proceeds look to the future. We hope that we receive enough proceeds to purchase a much-needed utility vehicle for the park and to enhance the park's accessibility.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Cross Roads: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Norton S. Baskin in Unguarded Moments A Play by Deborah Dickey Friday, October 18th, 2019

6:00 p.m. Reception with the playwright, Deborah Dickey  
7:30 p.m. Performance of *Cross Roads*  
Location: Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 4225 NW 34th St., Gainesville, FL  
Tickets: [for reception: cross-roads-reception.eventbrite.com](http://cross-roads-reception.eventbrite.com)  
[for play: cross-roads.eventbrite.com](http://cross-roads.eventbrite.com)



**MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**Calendar**

**October 18th**

*Cross Roads* and Reception  
6 p.m. Reception;  
7:30 p.m. *Cross Roads*  
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
4225 NW 34th St.  
Gainesville (see page 1)

**November 2nd**

Writer's Talk and Literary Tour  
2p.m. MKR Historic State Park  
(see page 5)

**December 7th**

Friends' Annual Meeting  
2p.m. MKR Historic State Park  
(see page 4)

**December 14th**

Holiday Party  
5p.m.— 7p.m.  
MKR Historic State Park  
(see page 5)

**January 18th, 2020**

Writer's Talk and Literary Tour  
2 p.m. MKR Historic State Park  
(see page 6)

**January 26th, 2020**

"Marjorie" at the Park  
Writer's Alliance Visit  
details at <https://writersalliance.org>  
(see page 6)

**Park Manager Message**

by Scott Spaulding



Greetings Everyone,

It's hard to believe that fall will soon be here - - not that we might see cooler weather, but it is comforting to know that winter will soon follow. Marjorie describes fall brilliantly in her book *Cross Creek*. "Somehow 'autumn' does not seem properly used of Florida. There is a connotation in the word of flaming color, of sharp change, of hoar frost heavy on cornfields, of all of northern harvest. The sub-tropical fall is so impalpable, so much a protraction of summer, pendulous before the time of winter fruiting, that we might almost say that we have no such season."

Here's what's been going on lately at the Farm:

**Ducks Galore** - In the summer newsletter I made mention of our growing duck population, which is now 18. The 10 ducklings have grown to adult size and with a few exceptions, it is getting hard to tell them apart from the rest of the flock. They sure enjoy the recent rains. It's easy to put the chickens up before or during a rain storm as they are eager to retreat to drier ground, but the ducks are insistent to stay out and play.

**Marjorie's Birthday Celebration** - Marjorie would have been 123 years old on August 8<sup>th</sup> and as tradition dictates, we celebrated her birthday the following Saturday. What a great turn out we had! Over 90 people came to join the celebration which included cake, homemade mango ice cream and watermelon sherbet



which is Park Ranger Geoff Gates' take on Marjorie's tangerine sherbet. Guests also enjoyed blue grass music from the very talented Front Porch Backsteppers and a special tour of the farmhouse. This year, thanks to Geoff's efforts, the garden produced two watermelons of a variety called moon and stars which were later transformed into sherbet. One look at the watermelon, and you will understand why it is so named.

Coming soon at MKR - Special thanks to Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm (FOMKRF) and Rawlings Society member Paul Dunn for the donation of a flat screen TV, which will be installed at the visitor greeting area of the barn. The TV will allow us to show the "Here is Home" documentary along with select videos created by FOMKRF member Donna Green-Townsend during non-tour days and upon request.

**Strength in Numbers** - In late August the Florida Park Service AmeriCorps sent a team of 16 individuals to assist with our annual archival cleaning and fertilizing of the orange grove. Shortly after arrival, we split into two teams. In three hours, one team was able to completely clean the living room, Marjorie's bedroom and the south porch while at the same time the other



(Continued on page 4)

## Excerpts from the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings House Tour with Dr. Carson, 1970, Part 2

*Among the archival material found at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park, is a recording of a house tour given by "Dr. Carson, 1970". Dr. Robert Carson and his wife Estelle were the first hosts at Marjorie's home, 1968-1971, when the University of Florida opened it to the public. Dr. Carson was a humanities professor at the University from 1946-1971. In his youth he worked as a professional musician. He also became a self-taught artist and illustrated Gordon Bigelow's *Frontier Eden: The Literary Career of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings* (University of Florida Press, 1966).*

*Dr. Carson is identified as the guide (G). The visitors are identified by the letter V. These transcription excerpts are minimally edited and annotated.*

G: See we open these doors like this. It gives us more air, and you put a brick or ball. This is the biography of Marjorie written by Professor Bigelow who is an authority about Marjorie's work. Notice that her name is Marjorie Kinnán Rawlings and not Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. This book was illustrated by . . .

V: Is her picture in there?

G: Yes, it's right here, which leads me to give you something about her life. She was born and raised in Washington, D. C. She was born in 1896 and finished high school there. While she was in high school she won her first prize for writing when she was 12 years old. Then she went to Wisconsin, the University, where she was a top honors student, Phi Beta Kappa, and there you see her in college. And she played opposite Fredric March there in those days and could have been a fine actress. This is Marjorie around 1946 and takes us through the time of her death.

V: What'd she do, just die a natural death?

G: No, I'm going to tell you about that. I thought, first of all, it might be good for you to know why she came here, how she came here. After she finished college she went to work for the Louisville newspaper as a reporter and then went to Rochester and worked on the Rochester paper. And then she met Charles Rawlings who was a reporter on the Rochester paper. [She met Rawlings when attending the University of Wisconsin.] Charles' mother bought some property at Island Grove, and Charles' brothers came down - that's at the time of the boom. And then Marjorie came down to visit. In 1928 she asked them to find her some property here, and they found this property right here. It is interesting to see why a woman who was city-bred, so elegantly dressed as she was, would want to come to . . .



Charles and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

V: And educated too.

G: Highly educated - would want to come here to live. She gives some reasons for this, and I think the reason is a desire to return to nature, get away from urban confusion, keep back the hectic pace one lives in the city. Besides she did have some love of country because her maternal grandparents lived in Benton, Michigan, where they had a farm where Marjorie visited. That is the Traphagan family. In her last book *The Sojourner* centers around that part of Michigan. So she had some love of country, love of the farm. When she came here though, life was tough, especially in '28.

V: It was even tough for me when I first come here.

G: And she had to struggle, and she didn't get much money in until she wrote her first successful short story, "Jacob's Ladder". It's in this reader. I think she got \$700 for that . . .

G: I may say, when she wrote Marjorie was very faithful to the facts. She knew trees, she knew shrubbery, she knew weeds, she knew the animals, she knew the flowers, she knew how to hunt - she'd gone bear hunting - she knew how to fish. So she was familiar with all of the aspects of this country here. Not only that, she became a sort of Cracker herself. She dressed like them, took up their habits and understood their language and came to love them.

(To be continued.)

*Presidents Message (Continued from page 1)*

And more events: please see the article on page 5 concerning the first in a series of writer's events on Saturday, November 2, at the park. The annual holiday party will be Saturday, December 14, at the park from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The Friends Annual Meeting will be Saturday, December 7, 2:00 p.m., at the park. We are very pleased to feature Friends board member Donna Green-Townsend who will present pictures, videos, and reminiscences about her last 35 years at the Creek. I, for one, particularly look forward to hearing about her interview of Rip Torn when he was in the motion picture, *Cross Creek*. This event is free and open to the public.

We look forward to seeing you at our events and thank you for your support of the park!

*Park Managers Message (Continued from page 2)*

team removed the weeds and fertilized about 19 citrus trees. Following the work projects team member enjoyed pizza, left over watermelon sherbet and a special tour of the farmhouse. What a great and productive day we had. Thanks go out to all the AmeriCorps members and park staff that helped with this endeavor. Special thanks to District 2 AmeriCorps Member Tyler Byrd for organizing this work detail for us.

**Carport Repair** - Over the years, the cement piers that were installed in 1984 to support the carport have deteriorated. Under the guidance and leadership of Park Ranger Rick Mulligan, a few of the piers were replaced a while back utilizing the experience and manpower of long-time park volunteer Bob Protomastro. Bob came back in August to assist with replacement of the remaining concrete piers. We are now confident that the carport, built by Marjorie's good friend Moe Sykes, will remain intact for many years to come. Thank you, Rick and Bob, for seeing this project through to completion.



Until next time, we wish you well, and hope to see you out at the park real soon!

## Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm: "Life and Times in Cross Creek"

The annual meeting of the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm will be held on Saturday, December 7, at 2:00 p.m. at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Friends board member Donna Green-Townsend will be the featured speaker. She will share inside stories drawn from her life at Cross Creek for the past 35 years. Her talk will include pictures and short video clips she has recorded through the years with figures such as Rip Torn, J.T. Glisson, and Snow and Ella Mae Slater.



Donna Green Townsend and  
Lee Townsend

Donna is an Edward R. Murrow Award-winning journalist with 45 years of experience working with multimedia in Missouri, Kansas and Florida. She moved to Cross Creek in August of 1983 when she fell in love with "the creek" after working on a business feature about the area when the community came together to fight off a proposed large development. Donna is married to Lee Townsend, a park ranger at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. Lee is the son of Dorsey Lee Townsend, Sr., one of Marjorie's neighbors during her time in the creek. She mentions Dorsey and his siblings in her book *Cross Creek*, even dedicating an entire chapter to the Townsend family called "The Pound Party."

### *Here is Home: MKR and Cross Creek*



A DVD version of *Here is Home: MKR and Cross Creek* will be available at Friends events for \$20. It is also available by mail by sending a check to Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm for \$23.40 (to include postage and handling) to P.O. Box 337, Micanopy, FL 32667.

## The First "Writer's Talk at Rawlings' House" Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2:00pm

It was quite typical of Marjorie Rawlings. In the spring of 1939 she served as a judge of a writing contest at the University of Michigan. One particular piece impressed her so much so that she could hardly wait to get back to Cross Creek and fire off a letter to her great friend and editor in New York, Maxwell Perkins: "Paragraph after paragraph, sentence after sentence brought the tears that come in response to anything so beautiful . . . Max, do trust my reaction to the book to the extent of having the manuscript sent to you for reading."

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' passion for fine writing and her commitment to new writers is very much on our minds as we launch our new literary programs. Our first featured author in our Writer's Talks is Elizabeth McCulloch. She first had a vision of Paynes Prairie and the human settlements around it as a world of magic realism more than thirty years ago. The story went through many incarnations over all that time, but never died and now it is Liz's acclaimed first published novel—*Dreaming the Marsh, an environmental fable*. Liz cannot put into words how excited she is to be reading from her own work in the shadow of Rawlings' house. Her special guest will be Lars Anderson, author of the local classic *Paynes Prairie—The Great Savanna*. Live music and refreshments follow.

The program continues at 3:00pm: "The Writer's Life—a literary tour." The focus will be on the career of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings: the transformation of style upon her arrival at Cross Creek; the all important collaboration with her "magnificent editor" Max Perkins; remarkable encounters near and far with legends of the Golden Age of American Literature; and finally, how the old Cracker house reflects Marjorie's life as a writer.

## The Holiday Open House by Park Ranger Geoff Gates

A sweltering day, who keeps any count anymore, the weeds outside the window collapsing again, a moment to think of that evening last December. The fireplace cuts the light chill in the air. The glow from oil lanterns reflected on fruits freshly picked, strewn on mantles and tables, nestled in the pine boughs and magnolia branches gathered from the hammock. Drifting out from the kitchen come smells suddenly remembered—molasses, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger—trays carried out and laid on the groaning tables. Cakes, cookies, fudge and pies in the shimmering light of torches. From somewhere unseen, like a cricket, the fiddler strikes up his joyous tune, a carol heard ten thousand times but maybe never quite like this. They are coming, by the dozens now, toward the warm glow of the house, up the path lined by candles, through an orange grove lit suddenly by bonfires, once again "a place of ancient magic...each orange tree outlined with light. The green leaves shine like jade. The round golden oranges are each lit with a secret inner candle. My heart bursts with the loveliness of the grove and the night." Children dance around the fires, neighbors recognize each other and embrace. It is suddenly, for a moment, the essence of Rawlings' prose, of an old Florida mostly lost, of the season itself.



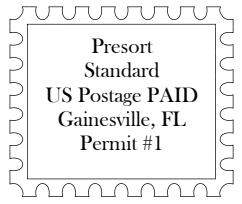
Mark your calendar now for the Holiday Open House, Saturday, December 14, 2019 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the park.

## LIFETIME MEMBERS

Ginny and Gunter Arndt  
 Danny and Judy Baker  
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Friends of 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)

### Next on Writer's Talk Schedule

The second Writer's Talk will be January 18, 2020. It will feature local author Mallory O'Connor and her most recent novel *Epiphany's Gift*, which is set in Florida. The talk will begin at 2 p.m. with a house tour to follow.

And the Sunshine Book Festival will be held in Gainesville, Florida, from January 24 through 26, 2020. One of the field trip opportunities will be a visit to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park on January 26 where visitors will be greeted by "Marjorie" herself. For more information visit the Writer's Alliance Gainesville website at [writersalliance.org](http://writersalliance.org).



*Like us on Facebook* at The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm. Our Facebook page shares photos, videos and events related to the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm.

<i>Membership Information</i>					
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
<b>Educational</b>	\$30	\$85	\$130	\$250	\$ 550
<b>Corporate</b>	\$55	\$155	\$255	\$500	\$1,000

Please circle type of membership and send with your check to:  
**Friends of MKRawlings 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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