

News from the Creek

Friends of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc.

Visit our website at: www.marjoriekinnanrawlings.org

Volume 23 Number 1

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President's Message

by Barbara Wingo

Looking Forward Looking Back



2019 was an eventful year for the Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm. In October we held our most ambitious event, a presentation of Deborah Dickey's *Cross Roads: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Norton S. Baskin in Unguarded Moments*. What a wonderful reception and play! Thanks to all who made the event possible.

December marked our extremely successful Friends' Annual Meeting at the park with a fascinating presentation by board member Donna Green-Townsend. The presentation was an obvious labor of love, detailing Donna's years at the Creek and her neighbors there. A lovely evening holiday celebration followed just a week later.

That event reminded me of Marjorie's description of winter at the farm. Winter was the beginning of the hunting season, of which Rawlings was ambivalent, and of the fear of frost, which could be devastating to her orange groves. Her description in *Cross Creek* of freezing nights and the resulting "firing on a freeze" are compelling. As she wrote: "There is a healthy challenge in danger and a certain spiritual sustenance comes from fighting it. I would not choose to have lived without knowing the nights of firing on a freeze." Indeed, she wrote of the fires set in the grove to fight the effects of the freeze: "I have seen no more beautiful thing in my life than my orange grove by night, lighted by fatwood fires. It is doubly beautiful for the danger and the struggle, like a beloved friend for whose life one battles, drinking in the well known features that may be taken away forever." She wisely continued:

The round golden oranges are each lit with a secret inner candle.
My heart bursts with the loveliness of the grove and of the night.
If only, I think, I could watch such beauty unencumbered by my fears. Then I know that a part of the beauty is the fight to keep it, and that all good things do not come too easily and must perpetually be fought for. Our test is in our recognition of our love and our willingness to do battle for it.

In *Cross Creek*, fires that created beauty were indicative of danger, and Christmas was described as a muted event. At our holiday event the fires did not represent danger, nor was the holiday celebration muted. It was a memorable event celebrating the beauty of the season as well as the continued viability of Marjorie's home at the Creek.

More events are coming. In November the Writer's Talks series began with great success. A talk in January and one in February are planned. In addition Mimi Carr as Marjorie will be at the park on January 26. And Anne Pierce's annual Scrub Walk is scheduled for March 7. Please see the articles about these events in this newsletter.

Happy New Year and hope to see you at our events!

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Park Manager Message

by Scott Spaulding



At long last, Winter is Here . . . and as Marjorie wrote in *Cross Creek*: “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.”

The Christmas season has always been an exciting time at the Farm and this year was no exception. Ranger Geoff Gates and Tour Guide Sheila Holloway ventured out deep into the scrub of the Ocala National Forest, with permit in hand, to pick out not one but two sand pine Christmas trees: one for the farmhouse, and this year, one for the tenant house. After miles of driving to the point of feeling lost in the scrub, not far from the location Marjorie wrote about in *The Yearling*, they came upon the designated cutting area, a sea of sand pines as thick as dog hair. That’s when the hunt began.



This one’s too big . . . this one’s too small . . . Finally, this one is just right! Hopefully you were able to come out for the Holiday Open House.

Speaking of our Holiday Open House -- what a tremendous turnout we had. Over 450 visitors made the walk up the candlelit path, past the bounty of holiday refreshments and carolers, through the lamplit and decorated farmhouse and finally out the south porch where music filled the air. This year we lit a path to the tenant house so visitors could get a

peek at it before heading out. What a special time of year it is. We are thankful for everyone that helped put it on and for those that came out to enjoy this most festive event. Special thanks to the Cross Creek Baptist Church Carolers, musicians Lee Townsend and Jesse Armstrong and the Front Porch Back Steppers for providing the music for the evening.



Cross Creek Baptist Church Carolers

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm and Rawlings Society member Paul Dunn donated a flat screen TV to the park. In November, volunteer Andy Brightman built a display cabinet at the barn to house the TV, and it is now ready to use.

(Continued on page 5)

Calendar

January 18th, 2020

Writer’s Talk with Mallory O’Connor
 1:30 p.m. MKR Historic State Park

January 26th, 2020

“Marjorie” at the Park
 Writer’s Alliance Visit
 details at <https://writersalliance.org>

February 16th, 2020

Writer’s Talk with Susie Baxter
 1:30 p.m. MKR Historic State Park

March 7th, 2020

Scrub Walk

March 20-21, 2020

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Society Conference
 St. Augustine, FL
 See rawlingssociety.org for details



Mimi Carr to Portray Rawlings January 26, 2020

Mimi Carr will portray Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings on Sunday, January 26, 2020 from 4 to 5 pm at the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Historic State Park. This is part of the Sunshine State Book Festival's Literary Tour featuring famous writers that lived in Gainesville and the surrounding area. The festival is January 24-26, 2020 and is free and open to the public. For more information, please go to their website: sunshinestatebookfestival.com.

Carr, born in Gainesville and raised next to the Wewa Pond near Micanopy, says she learned from her parents at an early age to love the writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. After several years of working as an actress in regional theaters around the country, Carr returned to Gainesville, where she does readings of works by Rawlings. This has been both thrilling and edifying, she says, citing in particular Rawlings' short stories, her book *Cross Creek*, and letters to Maxwell Perkins, her editor at Scribner's.



Mimi Carr and Park Ranger Geoffrey Gates

Yearling Trail Walk Saturday, March 7, 2020

The Friends of the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Farm, Inc., will sponsor a guided walk of a portion of the Yearling Trail in the Ocala National Forest on Saturday, March 7. Anne Pierce will read passages from *The Yearling* and tell the story of the Long family in the Big Scrub. The walk is a 3-mile loop trail that includes the sinkhole mentioned in the Rawlings novel. The area is rather flat through a mostly pine forest, and the trail is well maintained but sandy in places.

A reservation is required. Call the Park Farmhouse (352-466-3672) by Friday, February 28, 2020, leaving your name, number in your party, and a contact number; please indicate where you will meet us (Cross Creek or Silver Glenn Springs). The group will meet at the Rawlings County Park adjacent to the MKR Historic State Park in Cross Creek at 8:15 am to carpool to the trail. If you live over that way, you may meet us at the Silver Glenn Springs parking lot at 9:30 am.

Please don't plan to bring children younger than twelve or dogs with you. You might consider wearing closed shoes that allow you to walk a sandy or woody trail, sun protection including a hat, water for the trail, and lunch or snacks. We hope to be on the trail by 10:00 am and back to the cars by about 1:00. Since we will be near Silver Glenn Springs, we will lunch at the springs (\$5.50 admission), and walk the "boils" trail (about 1 mile) with another reading from *The Yearling*. We hope you come on this part of the adventure to enjoy your picnic lunch and even a swim if you don't mind the cold water.

For the last two years, we have not been able to get into the Juniper Wilderness Area that contains the Yearling Trail because of closure due to bear activity. Last year we hiked another trail along the Salt Springs Run. We will consider some alternative trail this year if necessary. For this reason, it is very important to have a good contact phone number to contact you at the last minute.



An Appreciation: Carol Fiddia Laxton

by Sonya Doctorian



Carol Fiddia Laxton was a natural storyteller. Likely she inherited it from her father, Leonard Fiddia. She shared this gift in my recent documentary, “Here Is Home: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Cross Creek.”

Born near Fort McCoy, Florida, in 1934, she died there in May of 2019 at age 85, surrounded by her children and grandchildren.

Over the past couple years, I came to know and deeply appreciate Carol. We often traded letters and phone calls, just catching up. I was proud to introduce her to the crowd at the premiere of our documentary in Gainesville last fall. The next morning, we took a boat ride up the Ocklawaha River, thanks to Anne Pierce, to visit Fiddia’s Landing. Carol hadn’t been on the river in decades, she said, though she drove across its high bridge every time she went to town. She recalled her dad’s boats drawn up on the river banks.



Carol with her sister, Grace, and brother, Elmer

In 2017, I had the privilege of recording Carol’s bright memories of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, the Fiddia family’s longtime friend. She knew her as “Marj,” which is how her dad referred to the famous author. In 1930, Rawlings lived with Leonard and his mother, Piety, for two months while researching her novel *South Moon Under*, set in the Big Scrub. Leonard was the prototype for Lant, the protagonist. Rawlings took care to describe Lant, who made moonshine, very differently from Leonard, who made moonshine in real life. She didn’t want to get him in trouble with the Marion County law, Carol said.



Leonard and Piety Fiddia

Carol grew up on the old home place with her parents, Leonard and Margaret, her younger brother, Elmer, her younger sister, Grace, and her grandmother, Piety, in the Ocala National Forest. Rawlings wrote about a visit with the Fiddias in a May 14, 1946 letter to her friend, Norman Berg:

The Fiddia family was having supper in the twilight kitchen of the cabin, old Miss Piety eating biscuits and honey with the slowness of age, Leonard talking of the bear that is eating all his hogs and he can’t take time to lay for him, his wife quiet, ladling out beans and venison on the children’s plates when she saw them empty, and the three children as lovely as flowers. The baby, Gracie, and I fell in love, and she clung to me, and a little black kitten kept patting her bare toes with its soft paws. Moe (Rawlings’s dog), of course, peeking in the door from the breezeway, wanting to come in, too.

Here is Home: MKR and Cross Creek



A DVD version of *Here is Home: MKR and Cross Creek* is 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.

Park Managers Message (Continued from page 2)

Andy worked his magic on the cabinet, and if you didn't know any better, you would think it has been there all along. The TV will allow us to show videos during non-tour days, special events and upon request.



Something else is new this season. The Friends are selling select MKR books, note cards and the *Here is Home* DVD. This is a very low-key operation that takes place out in the yard by volunteers. In fact, volunteers Terry Brightman and Mary Anne Hilker have done a fantastic job assisting with this venture.



How does your garden grow?? Well at the farm, due to the tender loving care of volunteers Tom and Sue, it grows extremely well. Be sure to stop by the garden on your next visit out. Marjorie herself would be proud.



We are so thankful for our wonderful Friends, Staff and Volunteers, and it is extremely nice when they are recognized for the work they do. It is with great pleasure that we announce that Sheila Holloway, MKR Tour Guide was chosen for the Annual DEP Public Service Award. This award is presented annually to an employee that consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty in their every day work life. I can attest that she is very deserving of this award. Way to Go Sheila!



Speaking of recognition, in October, Park Ranger Lee Townsend was presented with his 10-year service pin and certificate. During the event we celebrated long time volunteer Jack Nelson's 90th birthday. Lee's Mother, Marietta was there during the special occasion. She said she is very proud of her son. Marietta turned 94 earlier in the month and has fond memories of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings.

We are also thankful that we were able to have the farmhouse painted this year. The work began in late October and was finished in early December. It doesn't make the 135-year-old cracker farm house look new, but it sure looks nice!

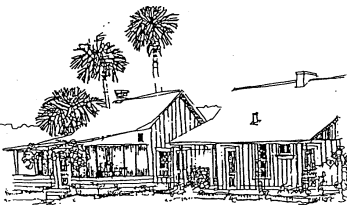
Finally, it is hard to believe that this is my last Manager Message written in 2019. Where did the year go? It was a productive year, but we can't wait to see what 2020 has in store. We wish you all a Happy New Year, and hope to see you out at the park real soon!

LIFETIME MEMBERS

- Ginny and Gunter Arndt
- Danny and Judy Baker
- Sheila Barnes
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- Arden Brugger
- Dan Cantliffe
- Ginger Carter
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- Alan Palmer
- Spence Perry
- Marsha Dean Phelts
- John Henry & Margaret Anne Pierce
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- Dana Preu
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- Tom and Luisa Sheer
- Angela Territo
- Shirley Thompson
- M. List Underwood, Jr.
- Pamela Lydick Whiting
- Colleen Whitlock
- Barbara Wingo

Corporate Members

- Blue Highway Restaurant
- The Pardee Company, Inc.



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 Or floridastateparks.org/marjoriekinnanrawlings

Upcoming Writer's Talks
 by Park Ranger Geoffrey Gates

Saturday, January 18, 2020, 1:30 pm - Author Mallory O'Conner presents *Epiphany's Gift*. Part mystery, part paranormal thriller and finally an environmental call to arms, "from a writer well worth watching."

Sunday, February 16, 2020, 1:30 pm - Author Susie Baxter presents *Pumping Sunshine*. Memories of a Suwannee River childhood which one reviewer calls "a treasure . . . touching and honest, leaving its mark indelibly on the heart."

Light refreshments will be served prior to each talk, followed by a special literary tour of Marjorie's beloved orange grove and old cracker house.



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.

Membership Information					
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 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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Comments: