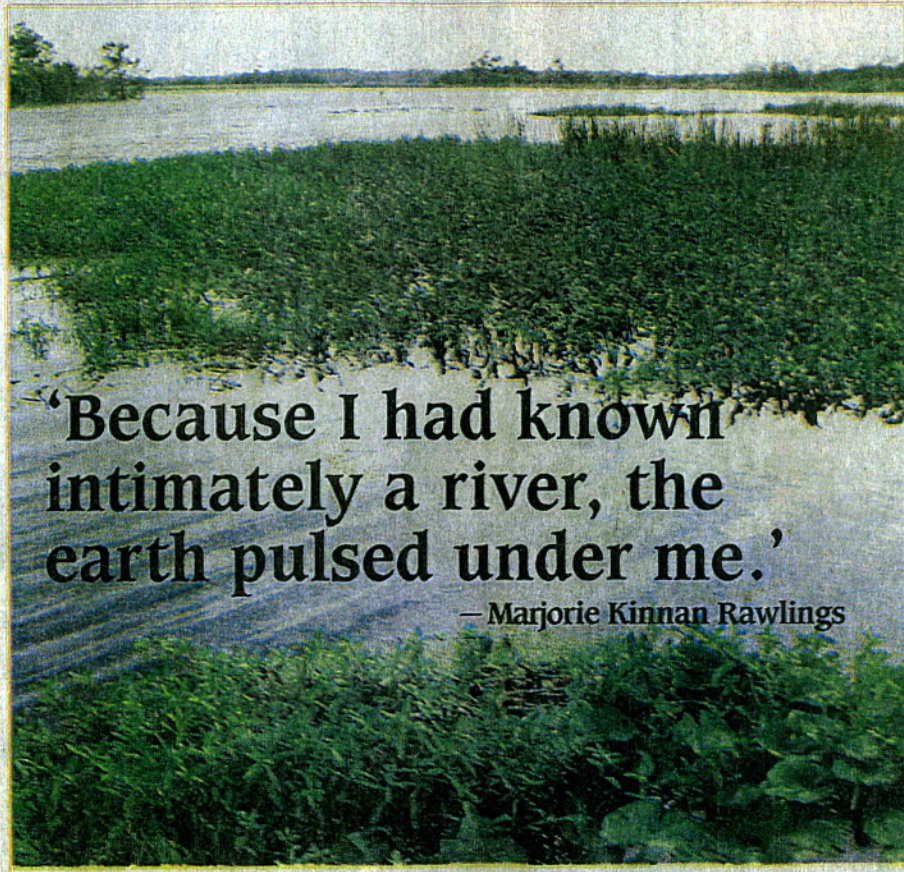


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**‘Because I had known
intimately a river, the
earth pulsed under me.’**

— Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

Yachts still dock in Sanford

Film crew stopped here Wednesday 'In Marjorie's Wake'

Two Florida women had met a few times before setting out on a five-day journey north on the St. Johns River Monday.

They knew each other, but not as well as Pulitzer-winning author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and her friend Dessie Smith, who made the original trip in the early 20th century.

Jennifer Chase of Jacksonville wanted to make a good impression on Leslie Kemp Poole, the pilot for the trip. So at the first sign of trouble Chase jumped out of the boat and helped free the vessel from the sandy bottom of Puzzle Lake.

Chase would leap into the water three more times before they exited the lake.

"I didn't want Leslie to think I'm a real woot," Chase said.

The women are the stars of a documentary retracing the journey of Rawlings. The author first shared the story called "Hyacinth Drift" in Scribner's Magazine in September 1933. She retold the story in her classic "Cross Creek," first published in 1942.

Equinox Documentaries, a non-profit organization devoted to environmental education, is producing the 60-minute film for PBS. The documentary will be called "In Marjorie's Wake," and should be ready for broadcast in fall 2007.

"We feel Florida is quickly losing its 'sense of place' and its touch with the past," said Equinox co-founder and producer Bob Giguere. "We hope this film will help remind viewers how nature has shaped our culture here over time."

He is working on the film with co-founder and Sanford resident Bill Belleville, who is scripting the film. The men won an Emmy for their previous PBS production called "Wekiva: Legacy or Loss?"

The producers also want viewers to sense the truths in Rawlings' work, most of which is based in Florida. Poole and Chase already



Leslie Kemp Poole, left, and Jennifer Chase said they have found a sense of spirit on the river while retracing Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings' journey down the St. Johns River.

Story by Steve Paradis
Photos by Tommy Vincent
Herald Staff

noticed the effects of being on the river.

"We saw no one," Chase said of the trip's beginning. The women talked with *The Herald* Wednesday during a stop in Sanford, which was a key point in the Hyacinth Drift story.

The women said much of the river up to Sanford has remained the same, but they knew as they ventured north that the changes would become more apparent. "There are still bits and pieces out there," Poole said. "We can find our sense of spirit."

It happens naturally, Chase explained. "You begin and your problems fall behind," she said.

The women and the film crew arrived in Sanford Wednesday morning.

"Sanford was one of the most epic stops on their journey," Poole said of Rawlings and Smith.

In Cross Creek, Rawlings speaks of hardships that life has brought to her. Sometimes life becomes overwhelming and as Rawlings puts it: "The difficulties were greater than the compensations."

Her friend Smith, who Rawlings said did not understand her torment, still saw that the author needed help and right now she needed a friend.

It was Smith who suggested the river trip that apparently they had mentioned to each other previously, but never acted on it.

Rawlings and Smith pulled up to Sanford behind a yacht from Long Island Sound. Chase and Poole noted right away that there are still a couple of yachts docked in Sanford.

Rawlings and her companion needed gas as did the contemporary travelers.

Poole and Chase went into town and had lunch at The Willow Tree. They visited Maya Book Store and separated to visit some more peo-

See Marjorie, Page 12A



Herald photo by Tommy Vincent

Documentary script writer Bill Belleville shares a laugh with Jennifer Chase during filming in Sanford.

Marjorie

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ple.

They conduct interviews with locals at each stop for possible inclusion in the documentary. They even interviewed Herald photographer Tommy Vincent.

Poole graded papers at the restaurant. Chase, an artist and songwriter, stopped to admire some landscapes at a downtown folk art gallery.

"Some of the land resembled what we've seen on the river," Chase said.

Chase also shared a story about an encounter with three men of the river that may be the subject of a song in the near future.

They pulled up to their planned campsite and were surprised to find three large burly men and their airboat. The women admitted they were somewhat nervous at first, but the men were pleasant and even answered questions for the film.

They told the women they were going hunting and fishing and would return later that night.

A state fish and game officer had arrived before Chase and Poole heard the loud engine of the airboat making its way back to the St. Johns River Water Management District camp.

"We were worried the guys would get in trouble," Chase said. The men had two deer that they had taken legally with bows. Someone made a crude joke about The Yearling.

Rawlings Pulitzer winning story about a boy who tries to care for a young deer.

"It was a really interesting exchange," Poole said.



Herald photo by Tommy Vincent

Leslie Poole, right, and Jennifer Chase share tales from their journey.

"They were a living folk song," Chase said. "They'll be the Ballad of the Boys from Brickyard Slough."

Rawlings does not tell of meeting any hunters in airboats. There are some other differences as well.

Rawlings had a jonboat with two motors. Chase and Poole are in Poole's 19-foot center console boat. Rawlings toted guns, Chase and Poole brought cell phones.

"We did have the sunrise to our left and the sunset to our right," Chase said.

Asked why she wanted to take this trip, Chase replied: "Why wouldn't you want to do it?" She is more of the free spirit, and she called the trip so far a great experience.

Poole, the teacher, is very familiar with Rawlings' account.

"I'm a Rawlings fanatic," Poole said. She still assigns Cross Creek in her classes. The trip will allow her to describe in her own words the "beauty of the river."

The crew walked behind the Rivership Romance and used a large white yacht as the background for a scene in which the women discuss Rawlings' tale of the Sanford landing.

"We do need gas," Poole said. They looked at the yacht and took themselves back to the time when Rawlings and Smith talked with the boatman from Long Island.

"It's fitting that we found it," Chase said.

Speaking to all of us, they recalled what Smith said as they left the Sanford harbor so many decades ago with the yacht owner calling "Good-luck!"

Here is Rawlings' account: "The poor bastard," Dess said pityingly and indignantly. "I'll bet he'd give his silk shirt to go down the river with us instead of with Pink Petticoats."

To visit the film maker's blog site or to find out more information about the documentary, go to www.equinox-documentaries.org.