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Here's the link to the article about our first MKR dinner party. In fact, here's the article pasted below:

A banquet that would make Marjorie proud



Trent Weller serves Niyin Smith, 14, cookies during Carolyn Harrell's 8th grade language arts class at P.K. Yonge on May 31, 2013, in Gainesville

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Carolyn Harrell laid her grandmother's handkerchiefs neatly on the table.

Facts

Menu for the Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Cross Creek Banquet

Mrs. Chancey's Spanish Bean soup

Idella's Crisp Biscuits and Butter

Crab Salad

Mother's Sunday Night Salad

Hush Puppies

Fried Chicken

Hopping John

Corn Souffle

Green Beans Southern Style

Sweet Potato Souffle

Black Bottom Pie

Orange Icebox Cake

Sweet Potato Pone

Iced Tea

Source: "Cross Creek," by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

“They were of the same era of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings,” said the P.K. Yonge language arts teacher.

Harrell used the handkerchiefs as decorations for her eighth-grade class’ first Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Cross Creek Banquet on Friday.

The class held the banquet to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of Rawlings’ Pulitzer Prize-winning book “The Yearling.”

“The Yearling” traces the life of young Jody Foster and his pet deer, Flag.

For more than 20 years, Harrell has taught “The Yearling” to middle school language arts students.

Harrell said she begins reading the book with her students when they are in the sixth grade.

“The novel opens in April when Jody is the age of the sixth-graders,” she said. “As each month of the novel (goes) by, we’d read that section.”

Harrell said she takes her seventh-grade class to the Ocala National Forest to hike the Yearling Trail, and the sixth- and seventh-graders visit Rawlings’ home in Cross Creek.

Her hands-on approach to teaching “The Yearling” inspired the banquet.

“Cooking was just one of (Rawlings’) passions other than writing,” Harrell said. “She would have these big parties out at Cross Creek. No matter how poor you were, you had to put food out.”

The banquet helped show the relationship between Rawlings’ passion for writing and cooking, said Sierra Scott, 13.

“Since (writing and cooking) both have ingredients, you watch what you put in to have a good outcome,” said Scott, who added that the main ingredients for writing are imagination and soul.

Harrell, who has taught for 47 years, decorated her classroom to resemble Rawlings’ dining room.

The students sat around desks covered with traditional white lace Battenburg tablecloths and floral-pattern paper plates. Bouquets of sunflowers, snapdragons, lilies, cowslips and chrysanthemums in colorful mason jars were the centerpieces.

Harrell said the eighth-graders chose and prepared dishes from Rawlings’ “Cross Creek Cookery,” a compilation of recipes first published in 1942.

It is not common for students to make home-cooked meals, said Zariah Brown, 14.

“I was excited when I found out ... the students were going to make (the banquet) themselves, because I wanted making the food to be a bonding moment between my mom and I,” she said.

The classroom was saturated with the aroma of fried chicken, crab salad, sweet potato souffle and hush puppies.

The parents, who helped cook the food, served the hungry brunch guests.

Sandra Kennedy said she and her daughter, Murielle, 13, improvised some ingredients to accommodate the large class size.

For the icebox cakes, Kennedy said she grated three oranges and made custard.

“It was so much fun,” said Kennedy, 49. “This activity really brings to life a slice of history. (Harrell) is bubbling over with love for her literature.

“(Murielle) has become the kid whose door you have to knock on to get her attention,” she said.

George MacDonald, 14, said the field trip he took to Rawlings’ home in Cross Creek made “The Yearling” come to life.

“When we went on the field trip and saw the house where Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings lived ... I felt like I was with her when she was writing it, and I understood how Jody must’ve felt,” he said.

Toward the end of the banquet, the eighth-graders also showed a slide presentation they made on Rawlings.

Harrell said her students had a real learning experience.

“This is a class that can express themselves,” she said. “I love feeling like they’re happy and learning.”