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Florida's Roving Reporter and

Miami Herald Columnist

"Eulogy Tribute to Marjorie Harris Carr"

First Presbyterian Church, Gainesville, Florida, October 16, 1997

Marjorie Harris Carr was one of the miracle folk of Florida. Her life was as easy to describe as that. She loved the Florida that came to us naturally, the one with all those intimidating swamps and those nights that fell black without the interruption of halogen lights, the one with free-flowing rivers and great stretches of forests whose silence was broken only by the wind or the cry of an animal. The real Florida – not the created facade.

She was a woman who wanted the native and natural things of Florida to be honored. She wanted this state to be a place that could acknowledge its great gifts by being true to itself.

She knew the great Florida treasures would not fit into a museum or a vault; they needed the setting of open vistas and the influences of seasons and currents and natural life. Her vision was to keep the best things of Florida alive, vital, and responsive, not merely preserved.

Marjorie understood that it is senseless to gild something that is natively golden. She knew that beauty is not the same as convenience and cosmetics. She loved natural Florida and all its necessary parts, the heat and the thunderstorms, as well as the free-flowing rivers, clear springs, and uncluttered beaches. She believed that the good life and a buoyant marketplace depended on good surroundings. She believed them to be mutually dependent.

She loved with an understanding that Florida's beauty and charm included a native efficiency that requires a full range of complexities for balance and completion.

The miracle folk of Florida, like Marjorie and her husband, Archie, take their cue from the nature of the state, from the wonders that occur so naturally and perform so efficiently that they easily can be misunderstood or under-appreciated – the mangroves that anchor the shore against storms and tides,

the elegantly slim sea oats that spread their roots into the sand and keep those wind-rippled dunes in place, and the alligator wallows that create waterholes which nurture other creatures during droughts.

Marjorie had a conviction that the answers to Florida's problems could be found in Florida itself, by researching and building upon the state's natural responses.

Marjorie managed to combine civility and love with survival instincts. She and other miracle folk in Florida perform their services for no other reason than service. They perform without first calculating how their deeds might fill their pockets in the marketplace. In this day, that is truly a thing wondrous enough to be called a miracle.

I always remember what the national *Audubon Magazine* said about Marjorie and Archie in 1982. It said the Carrs were people who had managed to identify "what matters most" in life. "They have coped with the realities of the modern world, brought up their children decently, and had the guts to make some enemies along the way," the article said.

Now, today, on this occasion, it seems astonishing that these two gentle people so dedicated to public service could ever have had enemies. If so, we can only assume that those were enemies of natural Florida as well.

Marjorie once marveled at Archie's ability to find compelling drama in life all around him. "It's not that more happens to him," she said. "It's just that he's extra perceptive. He sees more...."

Something different might be said of Marjorie. More did happen around her. She elevated the wonders of Florida into the public conscience. She made things happen.

Few other names ever will enter Florida history with such a distinguished aura.

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