

*Marjory Stoneman Douglas recounts how she was asked to write for The Rivers of America series, the beginnings of "Leaves of Grass," and proving that the Everglades was indeed a river*

Interviewer: (31:30) How did you come to write your book "*Everglades: River of Grass?*"

Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Well, that was an entirely different thing. That... I had friends... the Rinehart and company, the publishers of New York, who Mr. Stanley Rinehart used to come down here in winter, and I knew him and the editor of the series at the moment was Hervey Allen, who had written his great book *Anthony Adverse* was down here and they're friends of the Rineharts. The Rineharts... Herbie Allen came in and asked me to write a book about the Miami River for the Rinehart series "*Rivers of America.*" Well I said, "well Herbie, goodness, you can't write a book about the Miami River, it's only... its very little river." But I said hastily if you could get up and show that it was part of a series of rivers, part of the Everglades, then you could do that, so he said, "okay, so you can do that." Well then, as I investigated the Everglades, investigated the Everglades and studied it, from the point of view of the water system, that's when I saw that it was not a swamp, but it was a river, because Gerald Parker, who was our great hydrologist, told me. I said, "What's a river?" and he said, "A river is a body of freshwater moving more in one direction than the other. And he gave me a map and I had it on the back of my door where I generally have some kind of a map. And the more I looked at it, I thought, "well, why isn't it a river?" There's the source, there's rainfall in the Kissimmee River and the Okeechobee. There's the east bank, there's the west bank and there's the delta, the Ten Thousands Islands and the Cape Sable country and all that. So, I went back to Mr. Parker and said, "Why isn't it a river?" and I talked to him about it and he said "It is, it is" and I said "Do you think I'd get away with calling it a river of grass?" and he said "yeah, why not?" So, years later I said, "Well Mr. Parker, we got away with calling it the river of grass" and he said "yeah, you know why?" and I said "no, why?" Cause he says its true! It is a river of grass. So I was the one, which was really the only smart thing I did about that book, was to decide that the Everglades was a river, and that has made all the difference in understanding it. So we've been able to understand it better because we understand now that it's a flow of water, as we call it, a sheetflow of water, which must be maintained. So that, and the book came and was kind of an auxiliary to all that.

Interviewer: And before that the common perception was that...

MSD: It was swamps.

Interviewer: That it was a swamp

MSD: Mysterious swamps that nobody knew anything about. And incidentally, my book was published at the same year that the Everglades National park was dedicated, in '47. So they were going at the same time.

Interviewer: And it became an enormously popular book.

MSD: Yes, and I'm happy to state that it's still selling, although its now only in paperback.