

Author Marietta McCarty Returns to the Area

By Barbara McCreary

You may recall that Marietta McCarty visited the Crystal Coast two years ago when she spoke about the role philosophy plays in our everyday lives. Her work with diverse populations, from youngsters to college students to incarcerated women, resulted in the publication of three books of philosophy.

Ms. McCarty will be the guest speaker at The Country Club of the Crystal Coast in March about another subject dear to her. Her most recent book, and the first to be self-published, is an intimate memoir in which she invites readers to accompany her as she packs up her childhood home following her mother's death. *Leaving 1203: Emptying a Home, Filling the Heart* is a book with which many of us "of a certain age" can relate.

Following my dad's death, I was tasked with emptying his house. The house he had bought in 1969 was completely filled, not in a hoarder's kind of way, but in a child-of-the-Depression kind of way. Need I really say more? Nothing was ever thrown away. It wasn't clutter, but more like Dad saw the potential "re-value" in every possible thing, from his bird feed sack strings to empty tuna fish cans. And he did find new purposes for many items. That being said, there was an accumulation of over 40 years of living and saving. It was a laborious and overwhelming job.

I can't help but compare my experience with that of McCarty when she cleared out her parents' home (the one in which she grew up) during the summer of 2013. What could have been a depressing topic and a depressing book is anything but depressing—and is actually delightful.

I had the good fortune to visit 1203 on several occasions myself. I remember lingering at the back gate because I didn't want to leave. Time spent with McCarty's mother, June, was precious. She had such a *joie de vivre* that it seemed to seep into the very crannies of the house, lingering there even after she was gone.

Over a few months, McCarty traveled back and forth from her home in Charlottesville to Richmond to prepare the home to sell, and in so doing revived that lingering enjoyment of life. She wanted to spruce up the house to look its best for a new owner. Her faithful companion was Billy, a Westie with dark, twinkling eyes who could work a crowd like nobody's business.

A tin milk box, a broom, and a painted heart on 1203's back porch beckon. McCarty invites us to explore with her, walking from room to room, revisiting cherished items, bringing back memories of growing up in a family that valued education, laughter, music, holiday celebrations and love. Each chapter features a different collection of items that evoke the sounds, smells and textures of growing up there. A messenger bag filled with her dad's college and military past, a picnic basket for transporting her mom's famous potato salad on outdoor adventures, work gloves worn from tending a beautiful garden, and a tennis racquet that provided the swing and rhythm of McCarty's teenage years all become fully developed characters that help her tell her life story.

That summer of cleaning out taught her invaluable life lessons—the importance of being still, maintaining a sense of humor, relying on the help of friends, and knowing that what you give away, in the end, is what you keep. I only wish I had read her book before I emptied Dad's house. I would have approached the

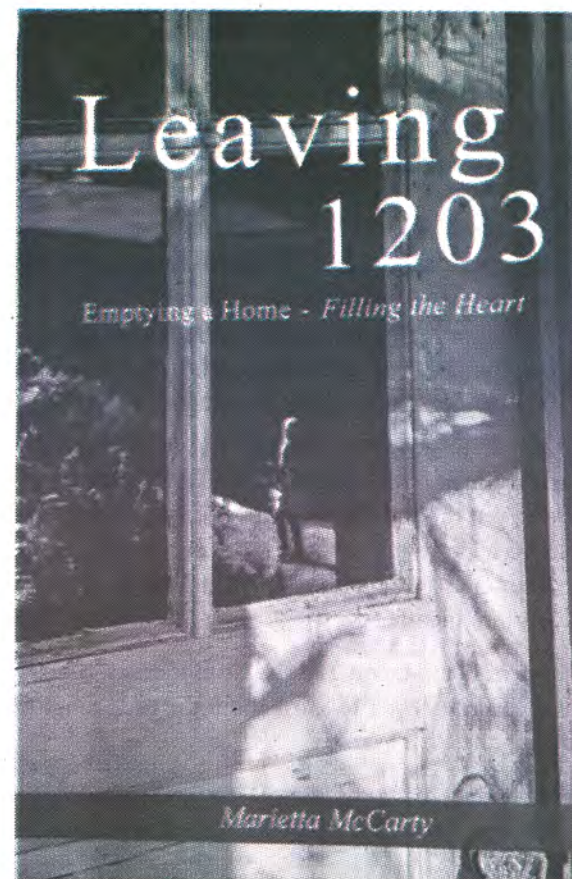
task with a different heart.

This is a slim volume, but only because McCarty is such a strong writer. Another writer may have taken 300 pages to say what she says in half that number. Every sentence is as tightly jam-packed, in a good way, as my Dad's work basement.

Marietta McCarty will speak at The Country Club of the Crystal Coast, 152 Oakleaf Drive in Pine Knoll Shores, on Thursday, March 14. Cocktails with a cash bar will be available at 5 p.m., followed by a picnic-themed dinner at 6 o'clock. Ms. McCarty will speak after dinner. Reservations may be made by calling 252-726-1034, ext. 17. Dinner is \$19.95, and this event is open to the public.

Ms. McCarty will also speak at the New Bern Library at 400 Johnson Street on Sunday, March 17, at 2:30 p.m.

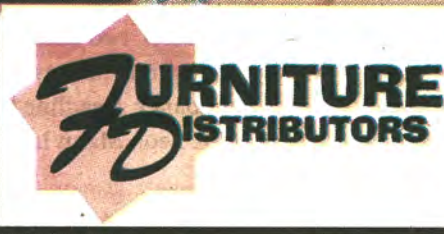
Books will be available for purchase and autographing at both events.



Get ready for March Madness!



Make sure you have plenty of seating for family and friends to cheer on your favorite team. We have a large selection of sectionals to choose from, so come in and see us soon



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252-317-0414

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