

## Bio - Marilyn R. Royal

Written by Flint Riverkeeper Editor-in-Chief

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"If given the choice, always go south" were the words of my Daddy as he advised me about my dilemma to stay in Illinois or move to Georgia. Now, these many years later I am proud to say I am a Georgian; and live in the most beautiful state east of the Mississippi.

I come from the Prairie State of Illinois. Salem, my home town, is a small rural community whose only notoriety is that of being the birth place of the great orator, William Jennings Bryan. This area of Southern Illinois is where I learned by example my Daddy's lessons about the out-of-doors. He was an avid bass fisherman and hunter and we lived close enough to the Kaskaskia River, Carlyle Lake, Rend Lake and the Shawnee National Forest to find and enjoy their offerings. My siblings and I were encouraged by our Mother to be involved in Brownies, Girl Scouts, Church Camp, 4-H Camp, swimming and life guarding and camping. All these activities provided an outside arena where we learned to love the out-of-doors and all of nature.

My life journey includes moving from Illinois to Atlanta. While in Atlanta I worked by day as staff for the Georgia House of Representatives and attended night school at Georgia State University obtaining a BS Degree in Urban Planning and Community Development.

I now live in Camilla which is located in Southwest Georgia with my husband, Richard Royal. I am retired from the Mitchell County Development Authority where I was the Executive Director for approximately 9 years. During my tenure we focused on both growing local businesses and also finding new businesses to locate in our community; while not sacrificing our abundant natural resources. The wise use of our water was always in the conversation!

Projects of Note as Director of the Mitchell Co. Dev. Authority:

- "Escambia" Federal Superfund Site Reclamation Project located in Camilla. The re-use of the property is now a park and soccer field.
- Involvement in the early concept and project development of the \$189 million dollar ethanol plant located in Camilla.
- Partnered with the Four County Development Authority to recruit new business and industry which resulted in over \$60 million dollars being invested in our Southwest Georgia

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Area.

- Wrote and successfully received grants from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to build Kiosks at two county owned river properties explaining the natural flora and fauna of the river to visitors.

### **Other Activities Include:**

ACF (Apalachicola, Chattahoochee Flint, Stake Holders Group); UGA, Stripling Irrigation Research Park, Advisory Board; Georgia Quail Hunt; Riverway South; Historic Mitchell County; Camilla Easter Seals; Camilla Chamber of Commerce; Camilla Rotary; Mitchell County Auditorium Alliance; Pianist/organist, Pebble City Baptist Church

### **Interests:**

Environmental Issues affecting our quality of life; helping people; paddling; photography; genealogy; and music

It is an honor and a privilege to be a board member of the FLINT RIVERKEEPER organization. I treasure the opportunity to be a voice and advocate for all of the Flint basin but especially for the 45 river miles that run along Mitchell County's western border here in southwest Georgia.

I think my Daddy would be proud that his love of nature and his example have impacted my life.

And given the choice... I did "go south" way south!!!