



## The Writer's Desk: A Tribute to Rolfe Neill

by Larry Kirkland, 2005. Marble, granite, concrete and gold leaf.

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*Quotations from The Charlotte Observer columns, 1977-1997*

Let us celebrate the emancipation of energy and minds that occurs when equal opportunity is no longer a credo but an exemplified commitment.

To hold a man down, we must be down with him. When he rises, so do we.

Why should we have so much difficulty understanding that lesson of human relations?

You taught me independence, to value truth above all, to be responsible for my own life, to keep my word, pay my debts, to esteem knowledge, the dignity of all people and all occupations, the nurturing of beauty and the balm of humor.

If reading one good book is fun, reading four must be quadruple the pleasure. Two hard covers and two paperbacks carelessly snuggle about me in the hammock.

On its worst days, the world is full of much more good than evil, more kindness than contempt, and more hope than resignation. Otherwise, we could not long continue the struggle called Life.

We didn't inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrowed it from our children.

What a confused society that buys war toys for its children but denies them knowledge about the exciting process through which they came into this world.

I am uncomfortable judging the worthiness of another's religion.

Why do the less well-off give disproportionately?

Maybe it has something to do with being closer to the level of need.

Thinking is strenuous work. If it weren't, more people would take it up.

Religion and the arts share a common spirituality. Both strive to illuminate, and inspire.

Be compassionate for the weak. The strong don't need their help but you might some day ask for theirs.

Do not be afraid to cry. It is natural and therefore good. Do not be embarrassed by the tears of others. Their needs are the same as yours.

Practice forgiveness. It is an elixir. Vengefulness is strychnine.

Simplify your life. True wealth is found in the head.

There's something in us that craves discipline, that responds when exhorted to do our best.

If we listen carefully, our critics instruct us better than our friends.

Avoid pre-judgments. What do I know; how do I know it; what of it?

A printing press is an unlicensed deadly weapon.

Some of history's greatest rogues have draped themselves with either the flag or scripture.

To each of our children I wish to bequeath two characteristics: The capacity for independence.

The ability to love. Much of life is lonely. Most decision-making is lonely.

Independence of mind is the best insurance for a rewarding journey.

The best newspaper people are those who wear a path to the dictionary, encyclopedia and other books of reference. That is why they write down in note form or record what is said to them.

That is why they use the telephone to double-check.

If the three most difficult words to say in the English language are, "I was wrong," then perhaps the next in line is, "I don't know."

Our biggest struggle with ourselves isn't knowing what is right, but doing what we know to be right.

The strongest people I know, men or women, are those able to discern good advice and act on it.

We have slipped our moral moorings. We esteem fame instead of achievement. We confuse notoriety with importance. We are drenched in vulgarity but have lost the capacity for moral outrage.