

Tuesday, January 27, 2009

The Springfed Arts Writers' Retreat

by John Jeffire

As a fellow of the Meadow Brook Writing Project, you're a teacher who takes writing seriously, and you don't just teach writing, you do it yourself as often as you can. In the project, you shared ideas and pieces of writing and immersed yourself in creativity and collegiality-but now what? Where can you turn to receive feedback on what you've recently created, engage in thought provoking discussion of literature with peers, and experience that sense of belonging only felt in the presence of other writers?

How about the Springfed Arts Writers' Retreat? I attended this year's session, which ran Oct. 9-12th in Harbor Spring near Petosky, and I can tell you I'm ready to go again next year. The bonuses? Well, the setting is gorgeous (we stayed at the Birchwood Inn overlooking Lake Michigan), right when the leaves are turning color and the air begins to bite back. Most important, though, is the chance to commune with some fantastic staff members and receive individual critique. I was teamed up with novelist Jack Driscoll for a 30-minute session, and I came away with a number of solid ideas for revision. Jack's comments were cogent, thoughtful, and honest, and the chapter of my novel he reviewed was covered with more correction ink than a tenth grader's first thesis!

The \$656 cost covers three nights and four days at the Inn and all but one meal (we did one fancy dinner on our own). The faculty included novelists Driscoll and Christopher Knight, poets M.L. Liebler, Cornelius Eady, and Maria Mazzagotti Gillan, playwright Sandra Seaton, and songwriter Michael Smith. Director John Lamb puts his heart into making the weekend a productive one, and I learned as much from my fellow students (some of whom were immensely talented) as from the instructors.

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SUMMARY

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