

Just in case you missed out on the 2007–2008 Writing Retreats...

Reflections on the 2008 MWP Writing Retreat

By Sheila Cunningham, T-C '04
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I drove as quickly as I could through the Friday afternoon traffic toward the west. I had waited all year for this weekend and I did not want to waste a single moment. I arrived at 5 p.m. on the dot. I was assigned a room then I unpacked my car. This was my fourth year coming to the retreat, so I have learned from experience that it is beneficial to bring any and all things that make you comfortable. So I brought my green, fuzzy body pillow, my hand made quilt and tons of paper and different colored pens, so I would be ready when inspiration struck.



The first thing I did, after tossing my stuff on the couch in my room, was to throw the windows open wide. I wanted fresh air right away. I sat on the edge of my bed for 15 minutes or more and just let myself be. I let the stress of the week melt away as I listened to the birds and the rustle of the breeze through the trees. Now I was ready to get down to the business and joy of writing.

There were eleven writers at this year's retreat. Nancy was creating poetry. Linda was entering a piece to a *Guideposts* competition. Angela, Anita, Amanda and Valerie worked together on an MWP site coordination proposal. Beth worked on a piece that she will be taking to the National Writing Project Retreat. Stephanie has a memoir focusing on living with her pets. Suki was organizing her writings and Judy was writing a personal essay. I focused mostly on my young adult novel, but I wrote a new poem as well.

As with all things MWP, the time at the retreat was spent writing and eating, then sharing and eating some more. The food was delicious, the meal conversations were thought provoking and the weather couldn't have been better. Everyone was glad to have the opportunity to come together as a group of like-minded people to focus on a project or a passion. I believe that I can say for the group that we are grateful for the opportunity provided by the MWP for this weekend and that we hope that there will be other weekends just like it in the future.

I drove back to my house tired, because I had stayed up way too late Friday and Saturday night, but energized too. I had been waiting an entire year for this weekend and it did not disappoint. I met some new people, caught up with some old friends, and most importantly, I wrote, which is, after all, what the Maryland Writing Project is all about.

An Ode to MWP's May Writing Retreat at Shepherd Springs

Stephanie Leddy T-C '90, bled@att.net

A time alone, a time for me,
No on-time place I must be.
I listen to songs the birds make.
I actually passed on the chocolate cake.

Walked the trails, wildflowers to see,
From a maggotted skull and bones, I quickly flee.
Over a hill and under a tree,
Ford a stream, explorer me.

Along the canal path, I steadily tramp
All alone—no phone, hope for no cramp.
See the iron pump, my viewing task,
Take celebratory drink from my water flask.

Next must wend my tired way back,
Lean on a walking stick—please don't crack.
I feel an accomplishment, I feel a thrill,
I can see the lodge at the top of the hill.

On the shady deck, I lounge in a chair,
Writing an ode my only care.
Nothing can compare to MWP's retreat.
Is it five o'clock, I am ready to eat.



Thinking on the Lady Sarah: Reflections about the St. Michael Day Cruise

By Cheryl Foreman T-C '02, cforeman@towson.edu

As I stood on the deck of the Lady Sarah, I focused on both the outer and inner landscape presented to my senses. Thoughts traveled through my mind like the water that slipped under the center of the bottom of the ship, creating a triple wake which morphed into one or more water creatures, depending on the tilt of my brain. My

body rocked and bobbed with the waves, as the bay spray danced through my nostrils, down into my throat, along the outer portions of my body, leaving a light dusting of salt. Energy that has birthed centuries of life forms now became part of me, birthing thoughts grainy and light.

(continued)



Cheryl Foreman (author) is pictured on the left with her arm around her son, Christopher.

Thinking on the Lady Sarah: Reflections about the St. Michael Day Cruise *(continued)*

I considered the expanse of my thoughts, my potential, endless or defined depending upon the slant of my thinking. Nature and movement provided writing prompts that steered my thinking, as the rudder did the ship—the way assignments, goals, directions can steer one’s journey. Still the open opportunities, the expanse to do whatever came to mind or stirred the emotions existed. And so I thought about the words shared among the Writing Project passengers throughout the day; words that shouted about freedoms imagined and goals almost within reach. I listened to thoughts from those who’ve weathered storms to reach safe harbors, through faith, understanding, or just plain stubbornness to be laid low by wild winds and occasional lightning flashes.

And, when the afternoon storm hit, when it struck time and again passing over land masses and water, letting go of the water it had gathered earlier; making go the air that blew open

my thinking, I wondered again about writing in a harbor compared to the expanse of an ocean. The swelling space desired by all, yet truly embraced by those who allow their thinking to expand like the waters as we pulled away from the shore; from the solid, known quantity, and into the expanse where anything is possible.

The weather calmed as we reached the home shore. I was physically grounded but mentally inspired. My eyes caressed the moored Lady Sarah then swung upward, affirming that my inner landscape could be adjusted each time I glanced at this other expanse. Thoughts born on the bay were birthed anew on land. Powered by faith, understanding, or just plain stubbornness to be laid low by wild winds and occasional lightning flashes, my written thoughts, my life’s rudder, would continue to guide me.

Upcoming Events

Write to Learn Saturdays at Towson University

Sept. 27, Oct. 25, Dec. 6, Jan. 24, Feb. 28, March 28, April 25 (snow make-up date)

Food served from 9–9:30 a.m. and two workshops from 9:30 a.m.–noon.

Write to Learn Saturdays in Southern Maryland

Oct. 11, Nov. 8, Dec. 13, Jan. 10, Feb. 14, March 14, April 25. All classes take place at the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center in California, Md. (St. Mary’s County).

Food served from 9–9:30 a.m. and two workshops from 9:30 a.m.–noon.

Write to Learn Saturdays in Frederick

Sept. 6 and 27, Oct. 11 and 25, Nov. 15, Dec. 13

All classes take place at Urbana Middle School, 3511 Pontius Court, Ijamsville, Md. 21754

Food served from 9–9:30 a.m. and two workshops from 9:30 a.m.–noon.

Learning and the Brain Conference at Towson University

Nov. 1, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Annual Leadership Retreat at Towson University

Jan. 24 12:30–4 p.m.

NWP Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas

Nov. 19–23

Praxis I Preparation Sessions

Five sessions through the 2008–2009 school year. See Web site for dates and details.

Mini-Writing Retreats

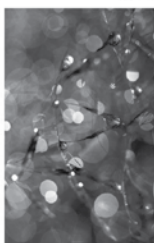
See Web site for details:
www.towson.edu/mwp

Maryland Writing Project invites you to create the writing life you desire. Energize your efforts and overcome your obstacles by joining Angela and Cheryl for the...

Dates: October 2008—May 2009

Look for upcoming flyers for times, locations, and fees.

2008-2009 Series of **Mini-Writing Retreats**



Time for Change at Oregon Ridge Park, Oct. 18, 2008: Time to leaf through your pages filled with articles, memoirs, and stories to find that seed waiting to be nurtured and published.

(No Fee)

"In this world of change, nothing which comes stays, And nothing which goes is lost."
- Madame Anne Sophie Swetchine (1782-1857)
Russian Author

Register online:
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Check out the MWP website for registration and fee information from individual event flyers.
<http://www.new.towson.edu/mwp/mwp.html>

A Gift of Words in Bel Air, Dec. 6, 2008: Create the most precious gift you can give someone, your words.

(Fee: \$15 per person)

Start to Finish in a Day, Feb. 7, 2009: You have fabulous ideas but you can't get any of them past your desk. Join us at Towson University, with Valerie Heller, to ponder, polish, and publish.

(No Fee)

Writing Inspired By Art, Apr. 2009: Guest speaker Catherine Trader will join us again this year and lead us through an exploration for our senses.

(Fee: See upcoming flyer)

Full Steam Ahead, May 2009: Workshop on the Water or Relax, Reflect and Write.

(Fee: \$45 per person)