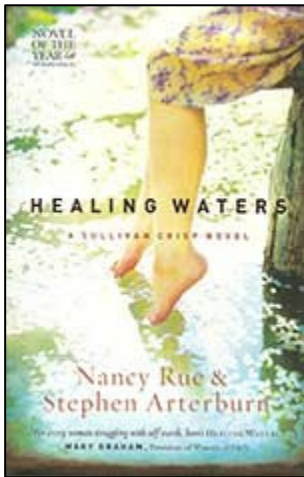


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- March 2009



A dear friend said to me with determination in her voice, "*Healing Waters* is one of the best books I have ever read. You have to read it." With any other recommendation I would have nodded and planned on buying the book---sometime. But I really value her opinion. After all, she is in the publishing industry and has a great sense for the exceptionally good book.

So the next time I visited a bookstore, I asked for *Healing Waters* by Nancy Rue and Stephen Arterburn. I finally found the novel and added it to the TBR pile.

Then my friend called: "Did you get the book, *Healing Waters*?" I was glad I could say yes. "What did you think of it?" I had to admit I'd not started it. After all I was trying to work on my own book, but when she insisted I had to call her and tell her what I thought, well naturally, I picked it up.

And I did not put it down, other than for emergencies, like nature calls and pleadings from my husband to cook dinner, finishing it sometime in the early hours just before the east started to lighten. Yes, it's that good. The Women of Faith dubbed it their *2009 Novel of the Year*. I agree.

I always read the back cover copy. The opening line "When Lucia Coffey looks at her reflection, she sees fat and failure." led me into the next one, "When she looks at her sister Sonia, she sees svelte and success." I opened the book and dug in. Two sisters, a tragic accident, a marriage in trouble, a troubled psychologist, and the crucial question, *where is*

God when His people are suffering? The characters might have lived next door to me, or been part of my family they were so real. Their struggles, their despair, love lost and love found, all kinds of love, all kinds of heartbreaks and letting the healing waters do their work.

Healing Waters is the kind of book you'll be thinking about later, wondering how you can apply the lessons you watched the characters learn.

So what can we, as writers, pull from this novel? For me, it is the desire to write like that. This month I'd like to focus on the characters in this book. Stories are about people and what happens to them and through them. Too often, writers want their characters to be pretty close to perfect, at least physically if the story is a romance. But unless a character has flaws, the story will not be as rich or as riveting. Lucia sees the world through fat glasses, failures and frustrations. The writer makes you ache and cry with Lucia. Lack of self worth hampers many of us. There are no easy answers, but a path to healing if one searches. So create characters with hidden hurts and not so hidden ones. Give them dreams to help pull them along, and other characters to either help them or get in the way of their success.

Your characters will come from deep inside of you, and/or from parts of the people around you. The deeper you dig and the more you read and observe, the richer your characters will be. Think of all the books you've read and make a list of the characters you remember, months and even years later. What was it about them that made them stick with you? What did they want? What did they fear?

After all, we learn a lot about life, living, and truth through reading about the lives of book people. Good fiction beats a movie any day, especially since you can't hear the thoughts of

the people on the screen. You sure can in a book, and then go back and re-read them again.
Dip your toe into your own healing waters. Happy reading. Write on and enjoy spring.

Until next time,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine