

Mailer home inspires young writers

Lighthouse students tour writer's studio

By K.C. MYERS

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PROVINCETOWN - His house is almost a mansion, but the middle school students had to bow their heads to get into Norman Mailer's small attic writing studio.

Five Cape Cod Lighthouse Charter School students toured the late author's home yesterday as part of a field trip for their writing seminar, "Reading and Writing Strange and Unusual Stories."

The students viewed the brick home's ornate wallpaper, fabulous waterfront views and photos of the late writer with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and other famous folk. They heard about rowdy dinner parties and eccentric house guests.

The students, who also have studied

Roald Dahl and Edgar Allan Poe in their seminar, took home an important lesson: Part of the craft of writing involves the place where authors work.

"(Mailer) believed you shouldn't be distracted, that your imagination should not be taken away from the writing," Guy Wolf, administrator of the Norman Mailer Writer's Colony, told the students.

That's why Mailer turned his back on the spacious rooms below and climbed into the small, dim space on the top floor of his gracious Commercial Street home. Even when it took two canes for him to walk, he still mounted the attic staircase to do his work, Wolf said.

The students offered thoughts about their own ideal writing studio.

"I would want a small room with a fireplace," said Sam Wood, a seventh-grader at the charter school.

Sam said he writes a lot already, mostly fiction.

Writer Ann Wood, Sam's mother and the writing seminar's leader, said she loves to visit writers' homes when she travels. She thought her students would enjoy seeing the home - and then the grave in Provincetown - of the famous literary figure who for decades lived right in their own backyard.

Since Mailer's death in 2007, his home has been turned into the setting of a writer's colony, offering workshops, residency fellowships and prizes to emerging writers.

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GUY WOLF

administrator of the Norman Mailer Writer's Colony

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