

PROJECT INSPIRE WOMEN'S RETREAT AT MINERAL HOTEL RESORT AND SPA

Journal entries of Sarah, receptionist at the lobby of Minerals Hotel, May 15-17.

Compiled by Nechama Bernstein

Sunday, May 15

Dear Diary,

I've had another hectic day; a group of about 120 women arrived here this afternoon for a three-day stay, so the hotel is full. I wonder who they are and what brings them together; they look quite different to each other. They're definitely Jewish because they discussed their kosher food arrangements...

Monday, May 16

Dear Diary,

I've been watching these women all day chatting, laughing, singing, dancing, listening to lectures together and I was so curious to discover more. Like what connects these women? They're for sure not all related and definitely are not from the same community. I've never sensed this togetherness in all the groups we host here. So I mustered the courage to ask a group leader, Devorah, why they came and how they all know each other so well.



ly religious and less observant women alike come along simply to share their knowledge with other Jewish women. And they all study together with such friendship and love...

I need to think more about this. I didn't tell Devorah that I was Jewish as a kid...

Dear Diary,

These ladies are super friendly. I chatted with a couple of them while they enjoyed some free time. They described to me the fun they've experienced so far with geo trekking, painting and drumming, intensati, singing and dancing, even goat yoga. These trip or-

self! I decided to listen in on the next lecture if I can stand by the door unobtrusively...

I heard some of the lectures on authenticity and heard these women discuss how they can become more real in their daily lives. I've never actually thought about being authentic to yourself, but it makes so much sense. My life would likely improve if I learned to be more genuine with my husband and friends...

I wish I could record the singing I just overheard. Devorah invited me to join so I stayed for a while; these ladies sang stirring songs that just make you all emotional. What's hit



bly hard. The food was superb: lavish breakfasts, meat carving and a Hawaiian barbecue for supper, a rooftop dessert banquet before they left. The activities were fun. And every participant seemed to be thanking the organizers for teaching and sharing with them and genuinely transforming their lives.

The atmosphere before they left was unreal. These women felt so connected to each other. They promised to keep in touch; they literally called each other sisters! And so many women promised to become regular learning partners. I'm finally acknowledging I'm a tiny bit jealous of this group. I'd love to be a part...

Dear Diary,

As the group was about to leave, I told Devorah that as a kid I used to be Jewish, I even attended Hebrew school and celebrated a bat mitzvah. She was SHOCKED. Apparently if my mother is Jewish, I'm an authentic Jew. So I should also be finding out more about my religion.

Devorah was super kind; she plans to keep in touch and set me up with a learning partner.

I can't believe that now I can also join a Project Inspire retreat!



I need to digest this. Most participants had NEVER met each other before. And they came with the Project Inspire organization to teach or learn about their Jewish heritage so they all inspire each other to grow spiritually. Taking a break to focus on God? Spiritual growth? Wow. It's incredible that both the ful-

organizers arranged a fabulous itinerary. But, incredibly, they all highlighted the one-on-one learning and inspiring lectures as the best part of the trip! One woman explained to me that Project Inspire does not persuade you to become more religious, they simply help each woman become the best version of her-

me? I never cry... Devorah explained to me the significance of the Shema song and the Acheinu song so I guess my soul is affected?

Tuesday May 17

Dear Diary,

I complimented the organizers of this trip that they must have worked unbelieva-

