

# SAYF Worship Journal

March 2015 Retreat

Arthur Morgan School

*On the weekend of March 20-22, 2015, the Southern Appalachian Young Friends met at the Arthur Morgan School in Celo, NC. This is our witness. This is our story.*

What I said about the eleven year old from Palestine is the first time I've ever spoken in Meeting, outside of SAYF. I've been saving my first leading. I'm not sure whether or not I made the right choice, but it felt like it needed to be said.

There's so much I want to say, and not enough time or room to say it.

Especially since Emma graduated, I take my role as Mama SAYF very seriously. I care about all of you deeply. I applied for a program called Quaker Fellows at Earlham College. It's basically SAYF at college. When I was applying, I talked about you. I said that I would go to the ends of the Earth for any of you because you are my family. I meant that.

But now it feels like you don't need me to go to the ends of the Earth. I feel like I'm fading away into SAYF history. Pretty soon, Michael will mention me and everyone in the room will give him blank looks. Jonathan (whose name I never spell correctly) says it's like watching your children grow up. Benjamin says I should consider it Mission Accomplished. I've done my job.

It is very scary. But I still love all of you, and deep down I know you all love me.

Until next time.

Love,  
Mama SAYF  
(Grace)

P.S. I got into the program, so next year I'll be at Earlham College, in the Quaker Fellows Program with Taylor Satterthwaite (a former SAYfer).

Dear Friends,

Thank you all so much for the fantastic weekend. I loved spending time with you all beneath the rhododendra enjoying the constant beauty of the Appalachian Blue Ridge. My life has undergone some pretty drastic changes over the past few months and I've been quite busy as a consequence, but SAYF is always there in the back of my mind on a midnight drive and I think of all of you as I turn the music even louder and scream way more obnoxiously than I should be. This is my last retreat for the year, as in April I will be at States for my ultimate frisbee and during SAYMA I will be working helping spread the magic of this place as a Camp Celo helper. I cannot describe how much I love you all and continue to use you all as my rock during this increasingly chaotic but forever interesting part of my life.

Sven

Dear SAYF,

You probably already know the quote “not all who wander are lost.” Well, to fit my particular situation, I’m changing it to “not all who are lost, wander.” See, seven months ago, I moved away from my little hometown. Now I live in New York City among Taylor Swift and 8 million other people. It’s safe to say that my life has been very different, and the transition is still going on. This whole weekend, I’ve had to remind myself that my life is drastically different than the one I used to lead. I keep forgetting about the changes. I feel as if for 7 months, or maybe longer, I haven’t been able to pause in the chaos long enough to take one long, full, healing breath. Friends, all of this emotion and change has made me realize one thing: I am not lost. SAYF is my home. It does not matter how many new faces I meet, how many airports I walk through. The miles between us are meaningless. The months apart are nothing. This community has shaped me from a timid 12-year-old into a slightly less timid 16-year-old who lives in NY. But more than that, it has taught me that love follows you wherever life takes you, and that because of SAYF, I am never alone. Friends, take this moment. Look at the faces around you, faces that love you unconditionally and know you as your truest self. Listen to the river. Appreciate the beauty of the place we are in, here, now. Take a full, long, healing breath. Realize that my heart and your heart are connected, and always will be.

I will always be here. I love you so much.

Anna Tsomo

P.S. Call me or write me sometime.

*I can't put to words the amount I love and look forward to these retreats and these people. Celo has to be my favorite retreat of the year (if you don't count SAYMA). I have always loved the mountains, and when I am able to be in the place I love with the people I love, I overflow with happiness. Yes, this retreat was a little scattered, but I think most of us can say it couldn't have been better. I have one simple complaint. My shoulders are super sunburnt. Here are some drawings:*



Dear SAYF,

As retreats go, this hasn't been my best one. I've been pretty down and distant, and I'd like to apologize for that. On that note, I'd like to thank Merrick, Aaron, Anna, Asa, and Ben (and countless others) who consistently listened to me and made me feel okay. This community nurtures and heals me in ways I didn't know I needed. "La Vie En Rose" or "Life through the rose-colored lenses" is a perfect example of how I feel at SAYF. You all use your healing light to provide a more hopeful outlook for me.

"Hold me close and hold me fast,  
this magic spell you've cast,  
this is La Vie en Rose...  
when you press me to your  
heart, I'm in a world apart,  
a world where roses bloom..."

Thank you for your hugs and love, and for always showing me roses.

To Anna,

As it's been said in the past, and will be said many, many times in the future, I wanna be like you when I grow up. I will see you soon, I'd follow you to the ends of the earth (or the east coast).

"Give your heart and soul to me,  
and life will always be  
La Vie en Rose"

I'm all yours,  
With undying love,  
[illegible]

**Dear Friends,**

**This retreat had the theme of rejuvenation and recharging with nature. But for me it took on many other themes...of human nature, of making tentative connections across unfamiliar territories to discover commonalities, of defining ourselves for each other to find greater understanding, to recognize the sorrows, growing pains, discomfort of building our bridges AND ultimately the joys and delights of finding our common connections through the light, that which is greater than any one of us or even all of us together.**

**Specifically, I found joy in wading in the river of music and movement and dance with young friends as they shared music and dances and songs. The music elevated my soul before the awesome creation before us as we stood on Mount Mitchell: the mountains and all they hold and the people with whom I was blessed to be experiencing it with.**

**Yoga stretched me and continued to provide a format for stretching as humans in our interactions.**

**And I got to walk the walk from and to the meetinghouse from Arthur Morgan School and indeed get that deep breath of fresh air and company of the rhododendrons that very much rejuvenates me.**

**Thank you, Mari, Celo Friends, fellow Nurturers, adult and otherwise, and the awesome Celo SAYFers for organizing and seeing through this fabulous retreat!**

**NAMASTE y'all!**

**Adrienne**

**I thought I had lost hope in SAYF to tell the truth. I didn't think that anyone noticed or cared about me. I was wrong, plain and simple. This retreat was truly wonderful. I had such a perfect time that I wouldn't ask for it any other way. The hike was brutal, but worth the sunburn and the aches, and Mount Mitchell was a scenic beauty. Props to Celo for a well thought out retreat, it was great. Hugs and kisses to you all, and I'm very excited for the camping retreat, which I have a hand in planning. It'll be great. Until then, sweet thoughts.**

**-Benjamin Chapman**

Dear SAYF,

Celo is a very magic place. First time, I saw very amazing sky with many star. I enjoy this trip very much. We went to hike, and we ate lunch in the stawberry field. Maybe this is my last SAYF trip in my life. I will change school to New York. I will never forget you guys. Thanks, SAYF. Thank you give me a good time and many cute friend.

Pam

SAYFers,

Before this retreat, it had been approximately 768 hours since I'd seen you, which sounds like it is much shorter than it is (or maybe I just did the math wrong). A lot has happened since then. In December, I missed the retreat because I spent a month in the hospital being treated rather ineffectively for an eating disorder and a mood disorder, among other things. My first night there, it was Halloween. I colored a lot of pictures for you all while I was there, but I've since lost them.

In January, I missed the retreat because I had to care for my dog, Jack. I came to hear epistles, however. Someone there hugged me, and told me they'd missed me. That was probably the highlight of my month. A week and a half ago, my grandmother and one of the greatest people I know, passed away. My father scheduled her funeral specifically so I would not miss SAYF.

I'm not sure why I'm making a list of reasons why I had to miss the last two retreats. I know that no one holds it against me. Maybe I'm making excuses for myself. SAYF is a different world for me. I live in Atlanta, I hardly leave the house, and I have, in generous estimation, 3 close friends. SAYF is different because it is (usually) not in Atlanta and therefore not the city (which I have grown to both despise and love), involves copious amounts of leaving the house, and surrounds me with roughly 30-50 Friends (and friends).

In conclusion, I just wasted an entire sheet of notebook paper talking about myself. I suppose I wanted to explain to all of you the importance of your existence. In addition, I would like to offer my support to anyone who needs it. I'm kind of boring, really, but I can read really fast and know how to fix a punctured lung, if that tickles your fancy. Please keep being wonderful people.

Love, Charlie

P.S. Celo is beautiful. Thank you for having us.

*I recently experience the term "leadership as service" and the phrase resonated strongly with me as I recognized that this idea seems to be the foundation of leadership roles in Quaker communities.*

*It also helped me recognize that, in all the positions of leadership that I have undertaken, both inside and outside of Quaker communities, service has been the guiding purpose and motivation.*

*I also see leadership as service regularly exemplified by the Nurturers and Young Friends of our SAYF community, though I found that spirit of service especially present this weekend in the leadership of our Celo hosts.*

*In peace, with love for all,  
Aaron*

My dearest, lovely, amazing SAYFers,

Since I didn't go on the hike, I had a very relaxing, nature-ful retreat. The other fairy-house-builders and I rested by the river for awhile, and for me it was a very spiritual experience.

Also, I got to get to know some people much better than I did before, and I'm glad to have made some out-of-ATL friends.

I feel like I should have more to say about this retreat, but I totally forgot so... I love y'all and have a wonderful month before I see you again!

Lots of love,

Lucy

P.S. Text me also

**it's worth getting sunburned**

**"Don't worry. About a thing  
cause every little thing  
is gonna be alright"**

*This retreat was weird for me. Not because of the food or the people but just because of me. I was sick when I came and that probably added to the weird mood I was in for most of the retreat. The hike was amazing and I got some good conversations out of it. The bonfire for me was a realization that I only get to see the wonderful people once a month or even less. I feel like I didn't have haven't cherished that until now. Anyway, the planning was great and everyone was outside so much that some of us look kinda like tomatoes. For the people I might never see again or only see one more time. I love, I always have, and always will.*

*Dear SAYF Community,*

*I was caught with little details of the retreat, but still was able to connect with some of you. It was the first time I saw myself in you. Thank you for spending your precious time here in Celo. Mountains and rivers, pebbles and fairy houses are waiting for your returns faithfully.*

*With love,  
Mari*