

**SAYF Worship Journal
 SAYMA – Warren Wilson College
 June 11-14, 2015**

On the weekend of June 11-14, 2015, Southern Appalachian Young Friends met at Warren Wilson College for Yearly Meeting. This is our witness. This is our story.

This is my 3rd SAYMA, which is hard to believe and a little bit scary. I know I'm going to be graduating next year, and I'm not ready for that. For my entire life, I've always been ambitious to grow up. In grade school, I wanted to be in middle school, then high school, then college, ad infinitum. SAYF is the first part of my life where I am content and even prefer to sit still.

I know that everything either ends or becomes so different that it might as well have ended, but I'm just going to miss you all a lot. I'm already missing our graduates and I can still see them in the room with me. I just hope that SAYF continues to be a special and loving place, just as it is for me.

Charlie :)

I think that only very recently did I realize my place as an "older SAYFer." I am now who I used to look up to, I am now part of that clique, that coup, that 12 year old, Fedora-wearing me aspired to be in. Now I'm not saying that all of the newbies look up to me the way I used to, but knowing, or even dreaming, that I might be able to influence them, even half as much as I was influenced when I was in their shoes, gives me a higher sense of purpose, if you will, that I have never felt. Because even if I don't want it, I now have an immense responsibility, to everyone younger than me, to be a better person. Because even if I try to shove it away, there is some kid, somewhere, who, no matter how terrible of a person I am, will look up to me and think that I'm behaving the way people my age are supposed to behave. But I do want it, and I won't shove it away, because I care so absolutely about this community, and every little twerp in it, that I would do positively anything and everything for every one of you. Thank you for helping me grow up and thank you for growing up with me.

I love you all,

- Levi

Each year when the Seniors graduate, I think about the gifts each has brought the community and wonder how those gifts will be given to the community next year. Kofi, Nick and Grace have shared so much friendliness, warmth and the kind of care (and dynamic personalities) that draws people together and builds community. Seeing all the rest of you together this weekend and the love and concern you show one another and the community as a whole, I know the gifts you bring will create a new and different but equally strong community next year.

With love,
 Mary Linda

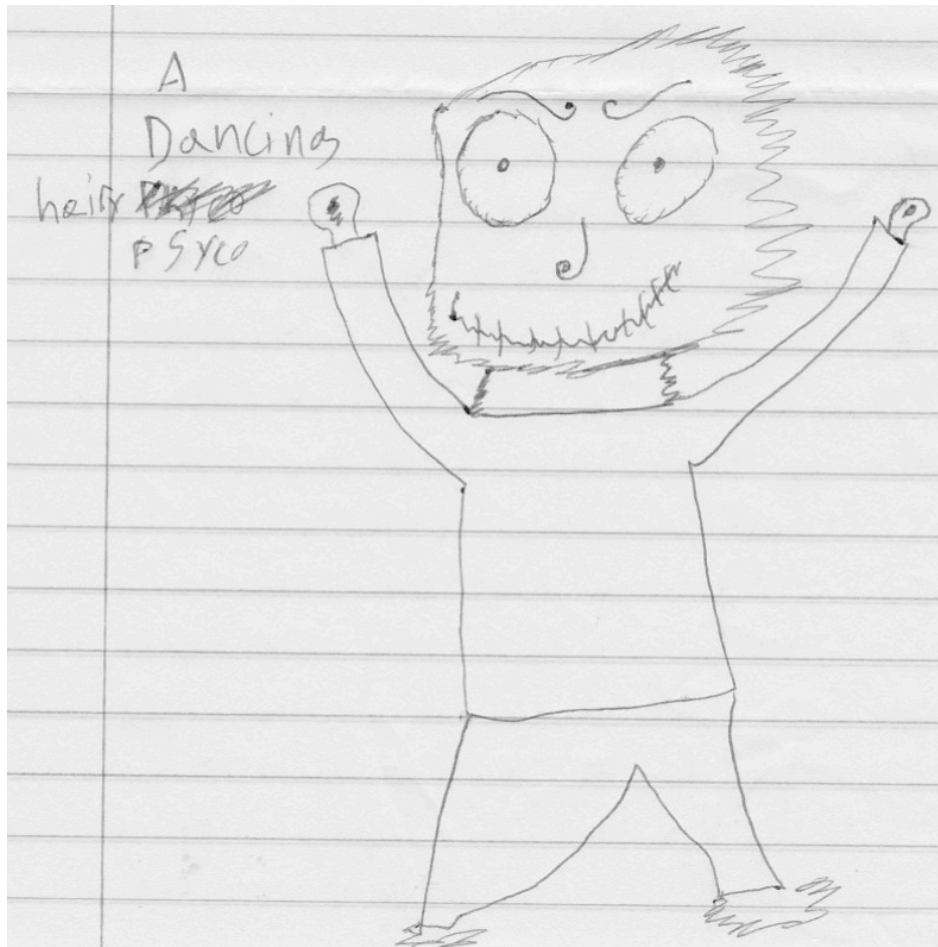
SAYMA is always a big time for change, what with graduation and all, and it's got me thinking about how much I've changed since my 1st retreat a year and a half ago. So many things are different for me now than they were then. When I started coming, I was super close with 2 people who I stuck to the whole time. After graduation, I thought about how next year it'll be me up there. I thought about how there won't be enough time for me to speak to all the people I've made meaningful connection with. SAYF is such a huge part of my life. Today I'll go back to ATL and tomorrow I'll go back to work and I just hope that the memories I made this weekend stay with me forever. I love you all so much.

Wynne

I REALLY, REALLY, REALLY LIKED THIS RETREAT. I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM THE COMMUNITY FOR 3 MONTHS, WHICH IS LONGER THAN I WANTED TO BE, AND I FEEL LIKE THIS WAS A GREAT WAY TO COME BACK TO THE GROUP. IT WAS AWESOME TO SEE EVERYONE AND I CAN'T WAIT FOR SEPTEMBER.

-MILES

This SAYMA/SAYF was great from the ultimate frisbee to the potato wrestling. It's always bitter sweet to see the graduates go but this year was worse than ever. As usual I don't know what to say so pigs in a blanket 75! - Finn



Dear SAYF,

Before I start blabbering on about less important things, I would like to say goodbye to the seniors and let them know they will be missed. This was my 6th SAYMA and my 6th SAYF. At the other 5 I've been to, I've never felt like myself. This retreat I did feel like myself, because I was. You've all been so accepting and kind this retreat, and I've felt so welcomed and loved. I know I've said this before (but anyway), I'm meeting with a doctor this Wednesday to get me on estrogen injections, which is REALLY BIG for me. Thank you all for accepting the person I really am.

Love to all,

Emma Yockey

P.S. Call me or text me (if you want)

I really, really, really liked this retreat.

-Leland & Miles

SAYF,

Thank you thank you thank you. At the time I needed you most, you welcomed me with love in your hearts, warmth in your embrace, and tears of empathy in your eyes. I've never existed within so nurturing a community, and I'm so humbled and honored to call this place my home. To Grace, Kofi, and Nick: you love lives on here. We're deeply changed by you. I aspire to love as unapologetically and fully as you do. Grace will get this. I have been changed for good (and yes, for the better) by your presence here. This time next week I'll be with my best friend in the world (not including my mom), another gift that came into my life from SAYF. We'll think of all of you on our adventures and carry you with us in our hearts and spirits. I don't know what will have happened in my life when next we meet. Hopefully good things. But the one thing I know with total surety, I'll love each and every one of you will all I have. Realizing now: I messed up the last line of linger last night, and it seems an appropriate place to put it here:

"... mmmm and as the years go by
mmmm I'll think of you and sigh
mmmm this is goodnight and not goodbye..."

Goodnight my loves and I love so forward to watching the sun rise with you again.

Endless love,

Laura Kelley

A singer named Bob from Jamaica said "A groovy song I will make ya"

"Don't worry" he'd write

"Everything gonna be alright"

He sounded a lot like a Quake-a

Dear SAYF,

You humble me low. You lift me up high. So many reasons to sign. A few to cry. Life is achingly rich with you in it. I wouldn't want it any other way. I am a better person in this world largely because you have allowed me the privilege of bearing witness to your beautiful selves.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart and the depths of my soul!

Jennifer Chapman

FAN

Dear SAYF,

First and foremost, I would like to recognize Benjamin Chapman as Mama SAYF. Benjamin, you don't have to accept, but I sincerely hope you will. The way Benjamin leads this community with gentleness, but a firm resolve and brutal honesty is something I greatly admire.

I still haven't cried, there wasn't a pillow to punch. My heart is breaking. Leaving this community is the worst thing I've ever had to do. I'm coming back to SAYMA, but I know that this is the last time I will see some of you. I am grieved, I'm in denial. I don't know what to do. I don't want to go. I will always love you. Call me anytime and I will do my level best to be a care and comfort. I'll enclose my contact information. Please use it if you like. I will never be ready, so here goes my leap of faith.

Lillian is Grandmama SAYF. I'm now Gran-Gran, because Avatar is the best animated series ever. I treasure your gifts and I treasure you as gifts and ponder them in my heart. I miss you. I love you.

Auf Wiedersehen,

Gran-Gran SAYF

To all the graduates:

Every graduation is bitter-sweet, every retreat we gain and lose wonderful people which he community is better for knowing. I don't know how graduation will feel when I'm inside the circle but I can only imagine the sadness that comes with losing such a large part of your life. Everyone is better for having known you. You inspire people to be better people. I wish you much success and happiness in your new life outside of high school and SAYF.

I thought that SAYMA would be a good way to get closure, and to say goodbye temporarily. This retreat was by far one of my favorites, and now I don't want to leave, because I feel like I am just getting to know a lot of you SAYFers. I don't think I realize how much I look forward to SAYF, and I'm just now realizing how much I'm going to miss it.

Au revoir. Je t'aime,

Wren

P.S. Follow me on snapchat

I don't know where to begin with this retreat, to be honest. I don't know because the overwhelming love of this retreat is clouding me. This retreat I felt the love of every friend I came in contact with. This was special because I really tried to diversify who I hung out with. I hope that effort showed. Everyone who I hang out with, whether for long or in passing, I realized just how special everyone is. Especially the seniors, who I don't think I showed nearly enough appreciation for. Y'all are so special, and have had varying impacts on my life, but all for the extremely positive. Kofi, you never fail to welcome everyone, and put a smile on everyone's face. Nick, as the song is appropriately named, you are "cooler than me," and I'm not mad at all about that. It just shows how special you are. Grace, you are the roots to the tree, holding things steady with your love. That love is truly that of a mama, but especially "Mama SAYF." I am going to miss you all when you move on from our immediate lives, and become adults. Promise you will visit, and remind us how great you are.

And to everyone: this community has kept me sane, literally. I wouldn't be the person I am today without everyone here. It's all of y'all that make this place so special, not the place we are in. You could assemble a bunch of a\$\$holes in this place, and let them follow our steps, and it would not rival what we have today, and forever.

Don't forget that, even in your darkest hour. I know I did for awhile, but it was the overwhelming love that I felt that brought me back. And this love is so addicting. I don't know how I'll get through the summer without my love addiction. Maybe I'll just cuddle my dog to compensate. I also wanted to take this moment to apologize. Apologize to anyone and everyone that I didn't get to know like the back of my hand. Apologize to anyone I may have hurt, physically or emotionally in the time I have been here. And finally, I really want to apologize to everyone for not telling you everyday how much you mean, to me and everyone here.

I love you all more than you can imagine, even if sometimes I just don't say it.

Benjamin Chapman

P.S. To those who will not be joining us next year who aren't seniors, I'll miss you just as much, I promise.

Damn it Nick, I'm gonna miss you. I'm gonna miss all of the seniors, really. It's like SAYF is a big family table that never gets rid of chairs, it only adds more on, all the places marked with a name and there will always be one for Kofi, and Nick, and goodness Grace! and even if you all aren't here you'll still sit in it through memories and spirit. Just like the past graduates sit in spirit now like Emma, or Zan, Catie, Elise, Lillian, Madelyn, Lincoln, my sister ... all of them and so many more, they all still have a place at the table and they all fill it so well just like you graduates will! Just like Anna does Grace I didn't say anything to you in the circle, but it's only because I couldn't imagine bringing my feelings towards you to words. I'm just so thankful for you just being you. My first SAYF retreat was in Asheville, my home meetinghouse, but when I walked in that first night, I didn't recognize that place and I'm not gonna lie, I was terrified and then this amazing girl just starts running at me and she hugs me, like a genuine hug, a real hug and I hadn't had one of those in so long at that point that it made me kind of confused. That first retreat you and Catie adopted me and we made cake.... You made me feel "safe" and like I was supposed to be there... Thank you honestly thank you. Thanks to all of SAYF really, love y'all!

- Sarawila