



from the Diary of a Teen Press Workshop

Dear John,

I don't really know what to say to you to start this email, so I'm just going to say thank you.

When I was first informed of your program, I thought "Cool. These kids must be really blessed to have an experience like this. Well, time to go home." And that's what I did. I never realized that this would be something that would change my life forever. I didn't even give this program a second thought until my mom got an email from Mr. Costello about a week later. My mom and I were looking up what this was and reading the description, and I realized that this program would be really fun to try. I got a permission slip, but never got a chance to fill it out. Later, when I saw your program, it hit me. This was the chance I had always been waiting for. I was so anxious and nervous, but I wanted to meet you so

badly. I wanted to shake your hand more than anything. When I came home that night, I wanted to tell my family about the presentation and how it affected me, I just didn't know how. It touched me and opened me so much, that I didn't know what to say. I was awestruck. All I knew that night laying in bed was that I was going to shake your hand no matter what.

The next day, you had the workshop with us. I was more excited than ever, because that night I had created a question to ask you, and I was going to ask it if it was the last thing I could do. (As well as shaking your hand). When you asked for people to come up, I nervously put up my hand with anxiousness. I was picked on. As I walked up to you, I was so nervous. I should have known, though, that you weren't scary, or mean; you just wanted to talk. I was so relieved. At the end of the interview, you gave me your card, and I couldn't believe it. That night, I signed up for your program.



The next day, I found out that our flex period was going to be spent with you. I was super excited to see what we were doing. Turns out my brother was there, and I was just really happy because the room was full of people I loved. We did some interviewing, and then you told Mr. Costello you wanted

to ask us questions. At that point, everyone was really nervous except for me. I was so excited. It was really funny to me when you asked me about my cat shirt. Finally, it was announced that you needed people to interview the director of "The Medicine Of The Wolf." I ran up and said, "I will do it!" And I did. I was nervous beyond imaginable because apparently Julia Huffman and our maybe surprise guest were a big deal. When my mom picked me up from school I said, "Mom, I know that it's 4:15, but I need you to get me home to wash my hair and get changed really nice only to bring me back to school at 4:50 for an interview. We're interviewing the director of a movie..... Love you mom....." And even though she was mad, she agreed.

I arrived to the school with my questions and my nerves. I didn't want anything to go wrong. When we got there, I only got more nervous. You helped calm me down a bit with your hug, (because I love hugs) but that comfort didn't last long when we were escorted into a fancy conference room. We practiced questions, (being nervous), practiced the interview, (still nervous), and waited, and waited---- forever!! While doing this I found out that one of your film partners is the grandson of Walt Disney, and that you have a connection with almost anybody in Hollywood. Finally the door opened, and Mr. Costello walked in with a few people behind him. Show time. I shot up and walked straight to Julia, not knowing if it was her or not, but I could just tell. I used what you taught me through the program to greet her. We sat down, and Joe gave us the thumbs up to start. Right as I said my name, the world around me zoned out. All that I was focusing on was her. We asked our first few questions, and she got choked up. She said to us at one point, "This is probably the best interview I've ever had." and, "Wow, excuse me, I might cry". While her mom was watching. At some

point during the interview, I heard the door open. Moments later I heard the sound of pictures being taken on an iPhone. It turns out the man taking pictures of us was one of the best photographers for National Geographic. Wow. Apparently, he had first declined the interview, but had accepted when he found out that the press were kids. Wow again. We interviewed him, and it was amazing. We just sat there listening to his stories while we looked at his book with him. This was our interview. At the end of the interview, you looked so proud. You gave me a big hug, and we took a picture together as a team. I went home that night and almost cried with joy, love, and the feeling of opportunity.



The next day, we had the honor of watching the film "I Am Able." Frederick's story just overwhelmed me and gave me so much hope and forgiveness. It was such a touching film, and it was so cool to see your sons, too. It was so cool that they were the ones who created this film. After the film was over, you and Mr. Costello asked me if I wanted to interview a man named Taff. I realized that he was the man from Wales whom people in our community always talked about, and I felt honored to meet him. We went up to the media center, and interviewed him. It was truly amazing to hear his story about the journey he made. At the end, I was able to have some helpful criticism from your son. that experience was really great and of course, I am blessed for it.



Sunday was amazing. I didn't realize it yet, but that day would be the best day of my life. I brought my mom and sister with me, because my sister wanted to meet you so badly. I think you're a star all over the country in Middle Schools. When she heard that you, in actual human form, had hugged me, she was super jealous. I had had my fair share of experience with you already, so I thought she should get a chance to meet you. As we walked into the building, my heart was racing faster than ever before. If I could interview any one person, alive or dead, it would be Frederick. I realized that at any moment, I could see him. I was really quite scared actually to see a glimpse of him, because I didn't know what to expect. I found Mr. Costello and learned that the rest of my team was watching the film as we spoke. He took me to the place where the auditorium was, and I was greeted by you. As I looked through the window in the room right next to me though, my heart stopped. I saw him. Just writing this I feel anxious and scared and excited all at the same time. I was hoping he would see me, but he didn't. I walked into the

theatre right as the movie ended, and that's when my sister, Cecilia, got her hug. You invited me to have a seat with you, and I watched in awe as Frederick walked to the front of the room with your sons. I listened carefully and respectfully to the questions until it was over. I was then greeted by my teammates, and we were taken to the same room I saw Frederick in earlier which I learned was the VIP lounge. I was greeted by a table of amazing treats, and smiling faces. We set up our station for the man we were interviewing for his film "Iraqi Voices." This is an amazing film, and I was really happy to have the interview. I did end up becoming even happier, though, when he said our interview was better than the one on CBS. That was cool. Oh my gosh, finally Frederick walks in. Oh boy, this is scary, I can't believe this is happening. But it was. I greeted him happily. I can't lie, it felt weird to shake his stub, but also really cool. Mr. Costello told him that we could hold the microphone, but he politely told us that it was "Okay" and that he can take it. Every time we asked him a question, he would say "Thank you" before answering. During the interview, he showed us a Viking helmet he had brought as a "prop". He had us explain to him what it was, and what it meant to us. At the end of the second round of interviews, I presented him with a We Are Cotter t-shirt. He was really surprised and excited. Also during the interview, he gave me a hug. That was the most amazing thing ever. He was so excited to hug us. At the end, we spent about an hour talking with him. We face-timed a former Cotter student from Rwanda, and we showed him snow for the first time. After that, we explained what it was, told him about the four seasons, holidays (like Christmas, Easter, Halloween, and birthdays), and we talked about animals. After, I got a final hug from him, and then you.



I am never going to forget this. This experience, this lesson, this hope. I will definitely never forget you, your sons, or Frederick. I hope that someday soon, I can see you and give you another hug. I have questions to ask you, and I really want to meet some of the kids, and definitely have a conversation with Dave! I am going to honestly miss you so much because you have changed me, and my perspective on the world, forever.

So all I can say now is thank you from the bottom of my heart and never forget, I have your card. 😊

Lots of thankfulness and love forever,
Anne
Grade 8, age 14
2.29.16

