

Keystone 2017 Through the Eyes of Sarah Moore



I am writing this roughly one week after returning from my first [Keystone](#) conference but due to family and work commitments had very little time to reflect on the event until writing this. The impact that event has had on my life is extraordinary and I'm still processing it. This may seem like a strong statement given that it was merely a four-day weekend with roughly 16 hours of driving. However, Keystone has impacted my life and the level is yet to be determined.

In the weeks leading up to Keystone, I did a lot of prep work to include buying new outfits, having my eyebrows threaded and practicing my makeup skills, just in case one of the makeover appointments fell through. I really wanted everything to be perfect and tried to do everything in my power to control any and all variables.

I began my journey to Harrisburg on Thursday the 23rd of March at 6am and with some short rest stops along the way arrived around 3pm. On the road, I was filled with excitement about seeing friends, making new ones and just being able to be a girl. At the same time, I had great anxiety about getting there in time for my makeover appointment with [Amy](#) and photo shoot with [Cassandra Storm](#) plus wondering if I would have time to freshen up and shave beforehand. I also wondered what had I forgotten to pack, had I included all of my speaking points in my presenter notes and how would my first presentation at such a conference go. As exciting and stressful as these thoughts were they certainly aided in the trip flying by.



I got to the hotel and checked in with only a slight issue with my reservation that was quickly resolved without any problem. I got to my room, feverishly unpacked and got ready for my evening. I was dressed and ready for the makeover with Amy and was so excited to see her again even though it had only been a couple of months. I could not wait to see the results especially since I had lost 20 pounds since [First Event](#). Amy worked her magic while her daughter, Amber, worked on my hair. As usual, Amy did a fantastic job with my look and I was ready to take on the world!



Two of the greatest girls in the world, Julie Leigh and Stephanie Wardlow were helping [Cass Storm](#) with the photo shoots and set it up for me to go straight there after my makeover. Cass has got to be the best photographer in the world, not because she takes better photos than anyone but because she is so sweet, patient and complimentary. She said that she didn't even recognize me due to the weight loss and that I looked beautiful. The photo shoot was amazing as always and I can't wait to see the photos when they are ready in mid April.



Next, it was off to dinner with Steph, Mike Davis and Julie. Prior to going to the hotel restaurant I hung out with them at the makeshift photo studio while Cass finished with other girls. Mike then asked if I wanted a drink to which I of course answered yes to. He pulled out a Pepsi bottle that clearly did not contain Pepsi and poured me the most amazing homemade whiskey sour that

was like nothing I had ever had before. I had several more of these during the course of the weekend!



Dinner was at the Dog and Pony Lounge in the Hotel and several other girls, including Katie Leigh who I really hit it off with and got to know much better during this event, joined us. It turns out that we have a lot in common as she is a paramedic and firefighter as well as both of us being a bit geeky. She and I met very briefly at First Event but she left the morning after I arrived

so we didn't get to talk and karaoke girls like relaxing

then. While at dinner, we all chatted were entertained by a variety of singers. The bar was filled with other us and it was just so comfortable and albeit loud.



room Apple

We then headed to Julie and Steph's where Julie made us some sort of

liquor and ginger ale drink that was good but super sweet. We hung out for a little while longer just chatting and having cocktails before calling it a night and what a great night it was.

Morning came quickly and back in guy mode I headed to the local Planet Fitness to get a quick workout in. Then, off to Starbucks for some breakfast and Target for a few last minute essentials. Back at the room, I made sure that my presentation was ready to go, loaded up my laptop and associated presentation supplies then began the process of getting myself ready for my 12:30 makeover with Amy. As usual, she did a fantastic job with my makeup and I felt like a very professional woman ready to give the presentation of my life.



I headed to the registration table and gathered my name badge with the prestigious “presenter” designation. Then, it was off to the Elm room for the 2:00 presentation. The room was all set up and the tech was good to go. I hooked up my laptop and speakers and fine tuned everything for the acoustics of the room then waited for the masses. 2:00 came and went, as did 2:15 then at 2:30 I packed it all up and headed out. I talked with one of the staff members who was so pleasant and apologetic. He expressed his disgust with people for not coming to hear about such an important topic. He and I were joined by an attendee who is a retired Cincinnati police officer and chatted about domestic abuse and feel that I was able to give both of them more insight than they had before the conference, so it wasn’t a total bust.



I met Julie in the bar along with a couple of other girls and she bought me a drink to help drown my sorrows. Despite the lack of attendance and my belief that this community needs to hear this message the presentation was really only an excuse to justify my trip and get to be me. After the drink, it was off to see Cass for another photo shoot that went terrific. Afterward, there was more socializing with Julie, Steph, Katie, Ashlee Paige and Mike before we went to the Vanity Club dinner at a local restaurant.

At First Event, I learned about the TG sorority known as the [Vanity Club](#) and was intrigued by it. Julie told me all about it and I was really interested so she said that I would be her guest at the dinner, which would give me an opportunity to meet more club members and gain additional insight into the organization.

Similar to First Event, we had a bus take us to the restaurant, which was a little delayed but we had time to hang out, socialize and take photos in the lobby. When we arrived at the restaurant it was quite busy given that it was Friday night. We had reserved their function room, which was upstairs overlooking the water and very nice. To get there, we had to walk through the bar area, which was hopping and there were a few interesting looks as we passed through but no issues. We had some drinks, a fantastic meal and then it was on to introductions. Each member introduced herself, told the group what the Vanity Club means to her and had the opportunity to introduce any guests that they brought. The stories while brief were very powerful and gave a great deal of insight into the shared and unique experiences of people like us. As we left the restaurant we traveled back through the bar and I noticed one young genetic female that seemed entertained by our presence and started to laugh as she said, "Oh my God."



I'd like to say that I don't care what people think but it takes a lot of courage for someone to go out en femme and be in opposition to social norms so for this girl to respond in such a manner was disturbing. Granted, it could be her way of reacting to an uncomfortable or confusing situation. While I am at that point in my life where I do care less and less about what people think there are others that may be more fragile.



After the short bus ride back to the hotel we discussed what might be the plan for the rest of the evening. We decided to meet back up at the hotel bar so I went back to my room and changed into my dancing outfit, which I felt like took forever but when I got back to the bar area Steph hadn't made it back to her room yet (she's such a social butterfly). She saw me and said that now she had to change to outdo my look (LOL, like I'm even in the same league as her). While she went back to her room, Julie and I hung out with Jill Smith for a little while then the three of us went to the Keystone dance that was being held in one of the ballrooms where we chatted for a while but didn't see Steph for some time. I theorized that my look was just too intimidating for her and she was avoiding us, a fact that I shared with her when we did find each other then had a good laugh.



We landed back in Mike's room where we had some more terrific drinks to include some Mike's whiskey sours and Julie's apple drink. We chatted for a while then called it a night.

Saturday morning came far too quickly so I headed off to Starbucks but didn't have time to go to the gym before returning to my room to

start the process of getting ready for my 10:30 makeover with [Monica Prata](#). Ashlee Paige connected me with her and I am glad that she did. She is super sweet, very attractive and does fantastic work. It's an added bonus that her studio is in NYC plus she is willing to do virtual lessons via Skype. Her style is a bit different than Amy and she is not nearly as efficient as I think I was in her chair at least an hour if not longer as compared to 30 minutes with Amy. Regardless, I was very pleased with the results!

As I was leaving Monica's room, I bumped into Jamie Kendall and she invited me to lunch with she and



Ashlee as well as others. It ended up being the three of us and Al Sanders, Amy's friend from Las Vegas. I think he's a bit of a groupie although I understand that he used to dress some time ago. He and Arjay were affectionately referred to as the East and West Coast creepers (LOL). We had a great lunch at the Lancaster Brew Pub then back to the

hotel for photo shoots with Cass. The kitchen was rather slow at the pub so we had some scrambling to do to make it to our shoots on time but it all worked out well and Cass is so very accommodating.





Julie and Steph were helping Cass on Saturday so I hung out with them until it was time to get ready for the Gala. Monica did a quick touch-up then I had my final photo shoot with Cass (I was feeling like a fashion model at this point). We had a few cocktails then, like at First Event, when the doors opened launched into the banquet hall. Luckily, the Vanity Club had some reserved tables and I had the privilege of sitting there with Katie Leigh, Julie, Steph and Mike.



Dinner was fantastic and remembering the lessons from First Event we all left just prior to the Keynote speaker. We headed to the bar and remained there until closing time but after a quick wardrobe change.



We didn't do any dancing that night but did a fair amount of drinking, chatting amongst our group as well as with several other girls that stopped by at various times. Just after midnight there was a small gathering of Vanity Club members in an adjacent room that we went to. This was because at midnight the voting closed for the current election of new members and two of them were at Keystone. Since they received the required 75% vote they received their pins and became official members. It was brief but very nice then we returned to our table until last call.



Then, we said our goodnights to many of the girls before heading back to Mike's room. Katie, Julie, Steph, Mike and I hung out and talked until 3:30 or so talking about anything and everything. I was quickly realizing that the eight-hour drive home in a few short hours would be painful without any sleep.



Steph and Julie had a room right across the hall from Mike but Katie and I had to travel to the elevator and our respective floors. Well, Katie and I had been spending a lot of time together especially Saturday night and really connected so well. So, rather than call it a night we returned to Katie's room for a little while longer and I think I finally got to bed at 4:30.

Morning came too quickly and I was certain that the whopping 4 hours of sleep that I had gotten would not sustain me for the drive home. We all met up in the restaurant around 10am and chatted for a while until I had to put my foot down and declare that I needed to begin the arduous drive home. I said my goodbyes, which nearly brought me to tears then packed up the truck and checked out. Surprisingly, the drive home was not horrible and I lived to tell the stories.

Writing about and reflection on my adventures are part to share the story but also a therapeutic journal to help me process it all. There were and are a lot of feelings that I must reconcile as part of this trip. It was fantastic but why does it feel so good to be a girl and why is it so easy to get so close with others who are the same? It doesn't make any sense but at the same time makes complete sense. The friends that I make when getting together with others who share this side seem to be much stronger than those in my normal life. It's all so strange and a lot to digest.

-Sarah