

Every summer since the year I was born, I have gone on harvest with my family. As a young girl in elementary school, I never understood why I had to leave for the whole summer to go help on harvest when all of my friends got to stay home and play together. As I grew older, it became even harder for me to not be able to participate in the summer activities that my friends did and not see them all summer. Although it was hard at times, harvest has been one of the most amazing experiences in my life.

From the moment I was able to help, I was washing dishes, cooking, and doing laundry. I can remember making my mom buy me a stool at the dollar store one year on harvest so that I would be able to reach the sink to help wash the dishes. We did not have a dishwasher in our trailer house until recently, and therefore had to wash all the dishes by hand. I continued helping my mom around the house and with the meals for several years. As I got older, my duties expanded and my parents expected even more out of me. When I turned sixteen and received my driver's license, I became the "part-chaser". My dad would send me on road trips chasing those parts that seemed too little and pointless, but were actually very crucial. I would travel over a hundred miles unexpectedly just to fetch a single part. It seemed pretty crazy at the time, but the look of relief on my dad's face when I showed up at the field with it made it seem quite important. When the cutting was really busy or we were short of help, I would have to go out to the field and run a combine. Although running a combine was not one of my favorite things to do, I did it when I was needed.

Throughout the past eighteen years of my life, I have had some great experiences on harvest. We travel all over the United States harvesting during the summers, which means I get to travel to some neat places. We visit Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, South Dakota, and Montana. Because we travel to the same places each year, I have made many friends. I keep in touch with them during the winter months and then get to see them each summer. We have a great time reuniting each year. My family and I usually take advantage of our days off and visit places nearby. We have been to Yellowstone National Park while we were harvesting in Montana and to Winter Park and the Alpine Slide while in Colorado. These were definitely my favorite three places we have visited during harvest. My family hires people from New Zealand each year to work on our harvest crew. I have learned a lot about their country because of this, and have met some incredible people. They always send me back to school each year with stories to tell.

Harvest has made a big impact on my life. I have seen parts of the country that no one else I know has. I have learned many things about various parts of our country, as well as about other countries. People have also informed me that I have a terrible Texas accent, which I never would have known if I hadn't gone on harvest. I have been shown the true definition of hard work, and plan to keep that with me forever. I learned that we do not have the things we do because of luck or chance, but because of the hard work of my family. Along the way, I have met many special people that will always be important to me. Although once I graduate from high school, I will probably not go on harvest with my family again; I will never forget all the special moments my family has shared during those times. Harvest has been a true blessing to my family.

Many of these past summers, I have dreaded going on harvest. I always thought of how much fun I could have at home instead of cooped up in a trailer house with my family. Looking back on all those summers, I now realize I wouldn't trade them for anything. Next fall I plan to attend Abilene Christian University of Abilene, Texas, and am going to major in education. After I earn my degree, I would like to be an elementary teacher. I hope that all the things that I have learned on harvest as well as in my everyday life, I will be able to pass on to the children I will teach.