

1985 marked the start of our family business known as "Frederick Harvesting". I began going "on harvest" in 1990 when I was approximately 2 years old. Harvesting has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My dad would use a tarp strap to tie my car seat to the buddy seat in the combine. This was the start of a life-long bond with him as well as with agriculture. Many kids do not have the opportunity to spend time with their parents while at work. The combine cab was one way that I definitely got to spend a lot of time with my dad, and I consider this a blessing. The years seemed to go by quickly as I looked forward to each harvest season. As soon as I weighed enough to keep the header going (due to a micro switch in the seat of the combine), I was in the driver's seat. I was approximately 9 or 10 years old when I started driving combine by myself. By the age of twelve, it was a full-time job, and I couldn't have been happier. I loved harvest.

Going on harvest has provided me with many exciting opportunities that most kids do not have the chance to experience. Getting to know people in the different states has provided me with the opportunity to make numerous lasting friendships. Not only have I gotten to meet new people, but I've also gotten to see the changing scenery from state to state. From Oklahoma's Red River Valley to the Big Sky of Montana and the Black Hills of the Dakotas, the scenery has been pretty awesome.

To say that harvesting has had an impact on my life is an understatement. The work ethic that goes along with harvest has been great learning experience. I have realized that a 12-18 hour work day is often what it takes to get the job done. The harvest experience has taught me a huge amount of responsibility. In today's world, I feel that kids in general are often lacking in their sense of responsibility and dependability. From the time I began operating a primary piece of equipment, my dad gave me the responsibility of servicing that machine, making sure that it would be operating at maximum efficiency, just as he expected of the hired men. The opportunity to have worked alongside hired men from across the globe has also been a great experience. These individuals have often possessed unique skills and talents that Americans have never seen or heard of. I have also gotten to observe their different cultural backgrounds and learn about the agricultural practices specific to their country. Trying to understand their language/accent has often been a challenge. However, it's interesting that they think we are the ones that speak with an accent.

As I have also learned and observed, patience is a required trait in the harvesting business. The weather can be quite a challenge – it might rain for two straight weeks, making cutting impossible. This can be a really stressful time but it teaches great patience and perseverance. Through the years, I have had the opportunity to observe my dad and uncle under some of these stressful situations and they have taught me the importance of maintaining a positive attitude, reminding me that one's attitude tends to be contagious to those who we associate and work with. It also reminds me that God is ultimately in control of everything and He works out each circumstance in our lives.

Along with the harvesting business, our family also operates a farm. Having the farm has provided me the opportunity to view agriculture with a much wider perspective, witnessing first-hand the different growing stages of crops. Seeing a crop grow from seedtime to harvest has given me a deeper appreciation from a farmer's perspective.

Though I have missed out on many activities that most kids enjoy in the summer, I would never trade the experiences I have gained from going on harvest. I am thankful for the opportunities that the harvest/farm life has given me, broadening my horizons and building my character. My desire is to be able to have a career that will allow me to stay connected with agriculture. The impact of technology, weather, and economy, are the ever-changing factors involved with such a career. In order to best prepare me for these challenges, I plan to pursue a major in Ag Technology Management at Kansas State University. The goal of this major is to produce technology managers who have an understanding of agriculture and biological sciences and who possess the problem-solving capabilities of an engineer. I feel the future for agriculture is going to be exciting, and it is my hope to be a part of the excitement.