

Although the job of a custom harvester might be to cut crops for others, the rewards are far greater than grain in storage or money in the bank. I believe that the Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson sums up my ideas quite well, "Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant." Seemingly ironic for a son of a custom harvester, but when we examine the importance of harvesting and the impact that it's had on my life, it's quite clear that I, like Stevenson, believe that the seeds are far more important.

I wake up at seven o'clock to see that my dad has already started his work day. I can barely open my eyes from the late night of combining. An hour later, we're on our way out to the combines to begin another day and I stare emptily out at the seemingly never ending wheat fields. "Will it ever end?" I find myself thinking this a lot as the days begin to mold together, and I begin to lose track of the time. The thought escapes me as quickly as it came. The line of combines come into sight and I begin to prepare myself for what is sure to be another long day of lengthy periods of sitting with almost a guarantee of getting dirty due to breakdowns, just another day in the life of a custom harvester's son. A lot of people would never be able to stand a week of this let alone an entire summer, yet somehow I have survived this every summer since I was born. Despite the hard work and the hundreds of thousands of acres cut over the years, the lessons that harvesting has taught me are far beyond all the sweat, blood and tears that has been extruded from my body.

Very few high schoolers can say that they have a job, let alone a job you've been working since before you have two numbers in your age. It almost seems incredible that we're going to have to rely on these people to drive our economy in the future when they haven't even learned to work by the time they enter college. A strong work ethic is only one thing I've learned over the years though.

Being a custom harvester also promotes finding creative solutions to problems when they arise. Over the years I have learned hundreds of ways to make seemingly impossible problems easy by using tools and methods I would have normally never thought could get the job done. I have also learned that even if you don't have the correct parts to fix something, there is almost always a chance that you can find something else to temporarily get you through the day. The combination of these two seeds among the many others will help me rise to the top when I go to college.

As an undergraduate in Mechanical Engineering, I will have to call upon all the lessons that custom harvesting has gifted me with over the years. I believe that I might not be the smartest student in the world; however I will be able to rise to the top due to my ability to work hard, be creative, and to be a leader. All of these qualities I would not have if it hadn't been for custom harvesting.

Custom harvesting has given me many seeds for the future; even though it hasn't always seemed like the harvest was very plentiful for me. The lessons I have learned over the past seventeen years will never leave me and will drive me regardless of what career path I may choose in the future. I can only hope that those seeds will help me spread the lessons I have learned to future generations.

