

While all of my classmates were spending their summer days at the swimming pool, I could be found in the middle of a wheat field running a combine. Growing up, my brother and I always dreaded the middle of May – that was when the combines came out of the shop and Dad started his “harvest sweat”. Back then, we didn’t realize the amazing experiences we would have and how close we would become without even realizing it.

I have been a part of a harvesting family my entire life – I made my first trip for parts with my mom when I was only a week old. I stepped up from napping on the floor to being a designated window washer when I was about seven, and started on the tractor and grain cart when I was twelve. From there, I got promoted to combine operator when I was fifteen, and I ran one until I had a son of my own last year and was unable to join my family on the harvest run.

Last year was also when I learned to truly appreciate what my father does for a living. He is a part of a dying breed, and it is a sad thing to watch. I met some of the kindest people I have ever had the joy of experiencing on harvest. I met some of my best friends, and made the majority of my childhood memories. Harvest truly shaped who I am today. It taught me to work hard, enjoy time with my family, and to truly appreciate good people. It taught me how to carry a conversation with people and to be responsible – not to mention that I can leave even the dirtiest windows streak-less.

My only regret about harvest is not appreciating it enough when I was along. It was hard work, and they were long days – but those long days paid for my pickup and my raising. Sure, I wasn’t raised in what most would consider to be the lap of luxury – we don’t drive any \$100,000 vehicles, but we do have some quarter of a million dollar machines that only run five months a year.

