

Zeorian Harvesting on the road again soon

I grew up on the road. I grew up a "wheatie." It is in my blood.



By Jenna Zeorian

Before this year, when asked about my plans for the summer, I never gave the question a second thought.

Before this year, I would explain how my parents own a custom wheat harvesting business that takes the family from Texas to Montana during the summer, following the ripening wheat. And before this year, I could say with certainty, with excitement, that I would be there alongside my parents and my sisters—the crew.

This year, though, has been a little different. After graduating from college in December and beginning my journey down that thing people call a career path, I began forcing myself to come to terms with the idea that I would not be making the harvest run.

The idea of it saturated my thoughts and kept me awake many nights. I may or may not have even cried myself to

sleep a couple of times. Not saying I did, of course, because what 23-year-old would admit to that?

As a fourth-generation harvester, heading south when the weather warms is all I have ever known. My great-grandparents started the custom harvesting business in the early 1950s and my parents, Jim and Tracy, ventured out on their own in 1982 with Zeorian Harvesting.

Zeorian Harvesting, based out of Manley, Neb., is a small operation, as we run one combine, allowing us to be a completely family-run business. The closest thing my dad has to hired hands are us ladies—my mom, my two younger sisters, Taylor and Callie, and me. Prior to 2005, that list included my older sister, Jamie, too.

I grew up on the road. I grew up a "wheatie." It is in my blood—which is why it is so strange to imagine not being on harvest and why the past months have been so difficult for me. But now, a very recent, unexpected turn of events has given me the option of making the harvest run again—if not for the whole summer, at least for part of it. So here it is, almost the middle of May, and I have absolutely no idea what I am doing.

To talk only about my uncertainty of the summer seems selfish, though, when there is a much bigger picture to look at. With this year's droughts, fires and wheat conditions, all of us in the wheat industry are uncertain as to what the summer, what the harvest, will hold. So I will say what I have been saying to my parents, family and others—it will work out, have faith.

And I guess I should take my own advice, too.

Whether or not I am along, Zeorian Harvesting will be on the road and we are excited to be part of All Aboard again this year. My family has a passion for the custom harvesting



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lifestyle and we are blessed to have the opportunity to share it with others across the country and around the world.

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Misener Family Harvesters ready to begin hard work



By Emma Misener

"Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."—Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919)

I can't help but think this Teddy Roosevelt quote applies to the hardworking American farmer, as well as hardworking American custom harvesters, and that's exactly what I am. My name is Emma Misener of Misener Family Harvesters. My job—rather, my way of life—is what makes my work worthwhile, and being part of a group that "harvests the crops that feed the world"—well, that makes me proud.

During the 2010 harvest I had the opportunity to share my livelihood with All Aboard Wheat Harvest followers as a guest correspondent on the tour blog, and this year I'll be sharing my journey with the readers of *High Plains/Midwest Ag Journal* each and every week. I'm excited to get to know all of you, just as I'm sure you're interested in knowing how I got into the business.

My father, Ron Misener, start-

ed Misener Family Harvesters in 1971 in Troy, S.D., after serving as an Army Sergeant in the Vietnam War. In 1975 my father was hired to help out on a farm where he met the farmer's daughter—and the rest is history. In 1976 Kristy Green married Ron Misener and our family got its start. I am the youngest of six, and Marie, David, Katie, Elizabeth, Daniel and I grew up on the floor of a combine with our paper and crayons, falling asleep behind the tractor seat after being hypnotized by the hum of the machines.

It was 1997 when Dad took two of our three combines south to Stockton, Kan., with my brothers and started the first year on the road. In 1998 it became a family affair.

I was just 10 years old when I finally got to drive. I suppose he finally got tired of my telling him it was "just like mowing the lawn, except with a 30-foot head." By the time I was 15 I was appointed to train the hired men and be a field manager. When Dad did the hiring he always made sure to ask one very important question: "Can you listen to a 15-year-old girl?"

One of the combines loaded on the semi and ready to head south.



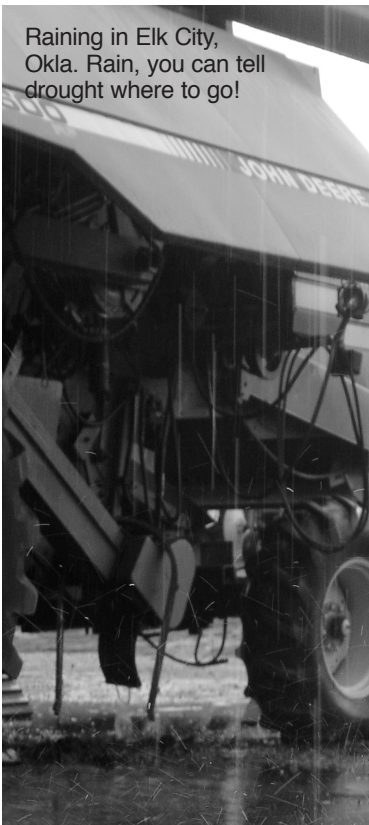
In 2000 the family relocated to Elk City, Okla., so we would be closer to where our harvest begins. We usually start toward the end of May in Gotebo, Okla. Our harvest has started in the same town, with the same customers every year. From Gotebo, we move back home to Elk City and then up to Kansas where we make stops in Mount Hope and Oberlin. From Kansas we head to South Dakota, making stops in Gregory and Troy, and finally ending our wheat harvest run in North Dakota near Rolla. We don't stop there though; we continue fall harvest in Rock Rapids, Iowa, before heading back to South Dakota for soybeans and corn near Worthing and Dell Rapids.

Our crew is primarily family, but we hire four to six people. We run no more than five John Deere machines in Oklahoma and Kansas. We own eight machines, but three are left in the north to mini-

mize travel on roads and to save on fuel. We have a grain cart pulled by a John Deere 4650 tractor, four semis and all the support equipment we need to operate. We also have three travel trailers for life on the road. To make life a little easier for my mom we have cargo trailer. This is where we keep three deep freezers, washing machine, pantry, generator and a grill. These trailers are pulled by our signature "Forest Service Green" vehicles.

This year harvest will be difficult. It's the first one without my father, who passed away Dec. 7, 2010. We have been faced with many challenges since his passing, but are determined to keep his legacy alive and to keep his way of life a part of ours. He is greatly missed, but I know he's with us leading us down the road.

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Section B



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