

Long, busy days for the Zeorians



Jenna Zeorian

Thursday, June 17

The Zeorian crew has moved to our second stop for the summer—Hooker, Okla. We were going to leave Hamlin bright and early on Tuesday morning, but a downpour of rain kept that from happening. Instead, we waited until the rain stopped to pack up and head out. And, unfortunately, that put us behind schedule.

We got on the road after lunch and traveled all afternoon. We realized, however, that if we continued to Hooker, we would be setting up camp at night, which isn't fun. So we stopped in Perryton, Texas, and spent the night.

We arrived in Hooker this morning, got the trailer house set up and the equipment ready to go. The young man we're working with here cut a test sample this afternoon, but the moisture tested around 16 percent—too wet to cut.

It rained on us last night and this morning in Perryton and is supposed to storm tonight here in Hooker. I would say it's starting to feel like the rain is following us, but I know we're not the only ones dealing with it. In fact, it seems like about every harvester we know is rained out at the moment.

Saturday, June 19

Like I posted on Twitter earlier today—the ground may be wet, but the wheat is dry! And the combines were rolling around Hooker, Okla., today.

While here, we're teaming up with a fellow custom harvester, Anthony, who's from the area. Together, there are three combines running. Yesterday afternoon we found a dry field and were able to start cutting. This morning we moved to fields about 40 miles east of Hooker, near Forgan, Okla. The move took a good part of the morning because they "roaded" the combines (instead of loading and



Top: The Monday night/Tuesday morning rain in Hamlin, Texas, amounted to at least three inches and flooded roads around town. It also stalled our move until Tuesday afternoon. **Middle left:** Callie in front of the storm clouds last night in Perryton, Texas. **Middle right:** Red and green unloading. **Bottom right:** Sunset and grain cart. (Photos by Jenna Zeorian.)



hauling them), and combines top out at about 20 miles per hour in road gear.

I was in the field a good portion of the late morning and afternoon, acting as the chauffeur and helping get vehicles and trucks where they needed to be. Later in the day, Jack Lyons, a DuPont retail account manager out of Amarillo, Texas, visited us in the field. He was in the area and stopped by to see our family/crew. It was great to meet him.

After that, I booked it back to Hooker, picked up some groceries and fixed supper. But, considering the distance and pinch for time this evening, I was told not to take supper to the field; so I somewhat had the night off. I feel bad, though. Mom and Dad just walked in the door (12:20 a.m.)—they've got to be hungry!

Sunday, June 20

OK, so this post isn't directly related to harvest but kind of illustrates the crazy things that we sometimes encounter when we're on the road.

Today, Taylor, Callie and I went to Lib-

eral, Kan., which is 20 miles northeast of Hooker, to pick up a few things from Walmart. While we were there, our older sister, Jamie (who's in Nebraska), called and asked what we were doing.

"Hanging out in Liberal," I replied.

Jamie laughed and said, "Perfect. Listen to this article I just read on *WOWT.com* (the website for one of the news stations out of Omaha)." And then she read the following article to me.

Boo Boo Bear is Back

Source: www.wowt.com

Southwest Kansas isn't bear country, but there's one black bear that's been showing up in the area around Liberal, Kan., for several years.

Startled residents begin spotting the bear each spring. State Game Warden B.J. Thurman says that's because the bear is highly visible as it roams through wheat fields, feasting on the crop.

Thurman, who calls the bear "Boo-Boo,"

told the local newspaper that the animal has been in the area for six or seven years. He believes it roamed out of nearby New Mexico during an outbreak of wildfires and either lives in southwest Kansas year-round or visits the area in the spring.

The bear was spotted several times recently in Stevens County. It's been known to travel through several counties in the region.

(View the original article at <http://www.wowt.com/home/headlines/96723804.html>.)

Pretty funny! All I can think about is seeing Boo Boo out in one of our wheat fields, having his dinner.

This story also reminded me of being in eastern Colorado a couple of summers back and hearing about a lion roaming the countryside. Yes, really—a lion.

Jenna Zeorian can be reached at jenna@allaboardharvest.com.

Technical difficulties

Craig cautiously finishes dumping on my truck in Floydada, Texas. Photos by Sage Sammons.



Sage Sammons

Wednesday, June 16

Every now and then, there are days that really prove how much technology influences our daily lives. As a harvester, you are reminded of this every time you sit in the cab of one of the new combines. Everything runs from a computer screen that would make the people who started this industry scratch their heads. Everything from a calculated moisture percentage to approximate yield of the wheat to engine load is all shown on the screen, plus much more. The strides that the combines themselves have taken in the last 20 years are just unbelievable. But when something breaks down or fails, life can become a little clustered.

I am happy to say that our monitors and combines are running fine, but another piece of technology that makes life easier failed on me while we were rained out. I'm talking about my cell phone.

We have been rained out the last few days so we all ran into Lubbock for the evening last night. Everyone had a lot of fun, but I realized that my phone was missing. I

looked high and low, tearing apart the pickup and camper looking for it but to no avail. I then called the restaurant in a last-ditch attempt and came out with no good news. But everything is replaceable, and phone numbers are easy to get. I just had to remind myself that I am in good health and happy. I had to keep a positive attitude. Who knows—maybe it will turn up. In the meantime I had to run to Lubbock again today to replace my phone, and technology is pretty pricey. Kind of makes me miss the "soup cans tied together with a string" days.

As for the cutting, we were able to get back into field late this afternoon. They are predicting warm weather with no rain to be seen in the forecast, which is good because we need five or six good days of cutting and we will be moving on to our next stop. I was able to run to Lubbock because our haul is short enough that three of our trucks can keep up with the combines.

Tomorrow I have to run to Amarillo to pick up Dad off the airplane. My dad, sister and I all went home to surprise my mom for her 50th birthday last weekend. Dad decided to stay a couple extra days because of

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Technical difficulties continued

All Aboard Wheat Harvest continues . . .

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the inclement weather and is coming back tomorrow. From Amarillo we are going to run up to our other job in Dumas to see how far along it is.

Sunday, June 20

We are back in full swing, or trying to be at least. The biggest problem lately has been trucking issues. Personally my Peterbilt had issues, so I had to take it to Lubbock this morning and sat there from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. It was fairly uneventful, but I was able to catch up on my sporting knowledge thanks to ESPN.

Both yesterday and today we had to stop the combines because our trucks weren't able to keep up. We had about a 30-mile haul, one way, and the elevator was busy, so the combines had to stop periodically. Our combine and grain cart operators were able to catch a little afternoon snooze while all the trucks were out—something fairly rare to witness in the field.

After we moved to a different field about 5 p.m., tonight, our issues went out the window. We started hauling to an elevator that

was only six miles from the field, and I was happy because I didn't have to back my truck in (because of the large stacks on the Pete).

The wheat harvest is almost done here in Floydada, and the farmers are pretty happy. What I personally saw as a little above average crop, has risen to a pretty decent crop. Overall, I would say that the average in the area is about 35 to 45 bushels per acre.

Monday, June 21

Happy Father's Day to all the dads out there, and thank you for every thing you do—especially mine for helping me through all problems and issues I may encounter. Fathers play a big role in their kids' lives, and they need to be celebrated for their influence more than just one day a year. But on this day it is commercialized, so thanks for everything, Dad.

Today started a little slower than we wanted it to. We were only six miles from the elevator, but it seemed every truck in the area was hauling there, too. So the morning started like a tortoise but quickly changed to the hare around noon. The lines at the elevator seemed to disappear, the cutting was going smoothly and we avoided problems all day. It was a



Sierra, Sage's sister, posing in the Peterbilt in the field, Floydada, Texas.



very productive day, and this was with one combine operator who was sick.

My sister, Sierra, pictured at right, came down with strep throat last night and was unable to work today. She has been really impressive this year running the combine, so it was tough to see her get sick. Scott, our straw boss, took her position on the No. 2 combine. Dad spent most of the day taking care of Sierra, finishing some small projects and tying up loose ends. It is really good for Dad to have a straw boss like Scott who is able to manage the crew, job and farmer(s) while Dad can keep all his businesses running efficiently.

As the day came to a close, we were able to cut more than 600 acres, so it was a pretty decent day. We actually had to shut down a little early because we have to move the com-

bins about 15 miles tomorrow. We did run into a little weather again. A light drizzle moved into Floydada, and it might push our start time an hour or so back tomorrow.

One last note before I call it a night. Andy will be returning to the crew Wednesday! His parents are doing much better and his mom was really happy he got to come home. Thanks to everyone who sent their support and kept him and his family in their prayers. It is amazing how many great people are out there.

Sage Sammons can be reached at sage@allaboardharvest.com.

Hoffman's crew back to work



Jada Bulgin

Wednesday, June 16

Hoffman Harvesting is still in Kiowa, Kan., and we are still unable to cut. Yesterday some of us went into Wichita to run some errands. No rain fell

in the evening, so we were hoping we would be able to get back in the field today. To our dismay, we received rain in the early morning. Prior to the rainfall this morning, we had already received four inches. To get out of the camper, we visited with the Spicer family and did some maintenance on our machinery. Just to see where we were at with moisture, we took a sample in to the elevator around 5 p.m. Unfortunately, the wheat tested at 17-percent moisture, which isn't a shock because everything still looks wet at a glance. Hopefully, no rain will come so things dry up and we can get back in the field.

Friday, June 18

Hoffman Harvesting is finally up and running once again. Today, the crew went out to do some more maintenance and was pleasantly surprised to be able to harvest 14-percent moisture wheat by noon. We were all excited to get back into the field after a long respite.

Despite receiving several inches of rain, we were happy to see the fields were still receiving similar yields to before the rain. The wheat was yielding at 45 to 55 bushels per acre.

While the crew was busy being productive, Kaidence and I snuck away from our daily duties and went swimming with Vicky, Kaitlyn, Cody, and Nathan of Hoerner Harvesting. We also ran into Hattie and Hunter Spicer at the pool. It was a good time. We then got supper ready and went out to the field.

I must say it seems like we are playing in the mud a bit. Thankfully we have 4WD! I know some don't think it helps, but it has saved me too many times (for example, today) to not be thankful for it.

Saturday, June 19

What do harvesters do when their headers are wider than the gates to the field? We walk them in. A newer feature on our John Deere combines allows us to tilt our headers to the right and left. This makes the job a lot easier and is a necessity as headers get wider. We run 35-foot straight heads, but there are larger ones out on the market. In the past, walking our combines in was a lot more difficult. See a video of Leon walking a combine in at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SssA6U3IGMk. This isn't the smallest gate we have to go through, so it wasn't much of a challenge for this veteran harvester.

Sunday, June 20

Happy Father's Day to all the daddies, dads and fathers! This weekend proved to be a busy time for Hoffman Harvesting. We roaded two combines to Pratt yesterday afternoon and left two of our combines in Kiowa to finish our last two fields.

I got an unexpected break yesterday when I decided to take a big meal out for lunch and found a flat tire as I was loading the food up. Leon came in and got the food, which meant I didn't need to go to the field. I was, however, stuck in my camper for the rest of the day due to the heat (the temp got up to 105 degrees F) and no wheels.

We usually serve a big meal in the evening, but I took a big meal out early because I knew we would be separated by the evening. There is no rule when to take a big meal out, but most harvesters have a big meal once a day. Some choose the afternoon while others choose the evenings. For lunch (dinner) we choose to send out sandwiches with a bag that usually includes chips, pudding cups or something of that nature and something sweet. Then for dinner (supper), we serve a large evening meal. Our philosophy is that everyone's appetite comes back as the eve-



Leon and Hans fix on a header in Kiowa, Kan. Photos by Jada Bulgin.

ning approaches and it gets cooler out. However this hasn't worked out lately—it hasn't cooled down much at all at night. That's optimal harvest weather for you.

This morning we moved our campers and the rest of our equipment up to Pratt, Kan. It is about a 50-mile trip—I love short moves! Now we are split two ways cutting both east and west of Pratt. The wheat harvest is starting out great here thus far. The east is yielding around 50 to 70 bushels per acre, and the west is yielding 40 to 50 bushels per acre. The weather is hot and there are no rain forecasts in the near future, which will allow us to get some productivity in the field.

I am sad to say goodbye to Kiowa but am glad to be here. I know it's time to be here because when we got to Kiowa, it was booming with harvesters and when we departed, there was only but a handful left. So I say goodbye to Kiowa for this year and hello Pratt! It is funny how you can be sad to leave one place and happy to get to the next all at the same time.

Jada Bulgin can be reached at jada@allaboardharvest.com.



Gabriel and Leon sit on the tailgate to eat in Kiowa, Kan.

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