



Jada Bulgin

Hoffmans finish up at Colby, Kan., celebrate holiday

Thursday, July 1

Hoffman Harvesting made the short move from Scott City, Kan., to Colby, Kan., today. Yesterday we picked up a little more

work, so that meant we needed to clean off equipment and load before we could head out today. I made the trip out to the Ehmke farm to tour their galvanized scale house.

Once the equipment was loaded and on the road, it was time to finish getting the campers ready to move. This proved to be a tricky situation. When we arrived in Scott City we could just pull my camper into its spot. Today the campground was too packed to do that. A pickup without keys in it on one side of my camper and a tree on the other left us no option but to back completely out of the campground. Callum did the job while Carsten, Malin and I made sure he didn't hit anything. He did a good job.

Fortunately, this wasn't a bad omen for the rest of our trip. It was a safe trip that ran smoothly. We were even surprised to see we could cut. The moisture was around 12 to 13 percent. Later today, however, Hans had an accident. He hit the grain cart's auger with his combine auger. The damage was internal on the combine (it can't dump) so that means there aren't any photos. Luckily, the grain cart was left unscathed. A parts run back to Scott City this evening will allow us to get the auger fixed in the morning so we can be up and running at full capacity tomorrow.

When the Ehmkes needed a new building for their scale house, the family wasn't thinking traditionally.

"We knew we didn't want something prebuilt," said Louise. She went on to say we wanted something that reflected what we did for a living—a seed company. The idea of building a grain bin building soon became part of their vision.

The Ehmkes grew excited about this vision and contacted their builder to see if their thought was even feasible. The builder said if he could see blueprints, he should be able to do it. The family contacted an architect to make blueprints, and the grain bin building came to life one step at the time.



Louise and Vance Ehmke (middle picture).
The Ehmkes' scalehouse (right).
The kitchenette (bottom left).
A bed in the guest quarters made by Vance (bottom right).

Photos by Jada Bulgin.



Our last days harvesting.

Sometimes there's no other way to get cell service. Leon climbs up on the auger to make a call.



The entire Ehmke family soon got involved. Vance chose the size of bin. If used for its original purpose, the bin would hold 25,000 bushels, but comparing the building to a house, it is around 2,400 square feet. The building's skin went up in three days and commercial windows no wider than two feet were added, so no framing was needed on its circular body. Culvert pipes serve as support columns for an upstairs deck that has a view of many of their fields.

The two-level grain bin building was designed not only for the purpose of a scale house but for people to stay in if needed. The scale house has a view of an 80-foot scale and a place to weigh and test the wheat. The main level also includes three offices, a kitchenette and a dining area. The winding staircase leads to a bathroom and guest quarters upstairs.

To finish the interior, Louise had a goal to use things that reflected the land and the family's heritage. The building is furnished with some desks, benches, beds and decorative furniture made by Vance.

"I thought of what the place needed and then Vance built it," said Louise, showing off a podium Vance made.

The desks are made of corral wood and angle iron. The benches are also made from corral wood, and at the top of each bench is a decorative, embedded 1886 coin dating back to when Vance's family immigrated to Kansas. There are also some pieces of furniture made from dead trees on the farm planted by family members. For instance, a small stool upstairs was built from a black elm tree Vance's grandfather planted. The trees used for the furniture are elm, walnut and locust.

The decor also depicts the family's heritage.

"We love anything primitive," said Vance, showing off his fossil collection.

Some historical items included in the decor are old railroad ties, war memorabilia, antique items used for measuring and sorting grain, and a framed flag dating back to 1861 when Kansas became the 34th state. In addition to

their collectibles, there are a lot of photos on the wall. Louise is a photography judge for 4-H and her children were involved in 4-H. The result is that the walls in one of the offices feature blown-up photos that the Ehmke children took while they were in 4-H.

Located between Scott City, Kan., and Dighton, Kan., the building was erected in 2001 and is quite a sight to see. Everyone who visits gets to sign their name and the date they visited on the wall. As you can see by the photos, the grain bin building has proved to be the perfect reflection for the Ehmke family and their seed business.

Fun Fact: The building has been featured in Mother Earth News and HGTV's *Rezoned*, which labeled the building a "Kansas Galvanized Grain Bin."

Cutting in Colby at twilight

To our surprise we were able to harvest as soon as we unloaded our equipment. The wheat tested around 12 to 13 percent. It is just barely ready, but we are able to cut below the highest moisture we can cut—14 percent. After doing some repairs this morning we started harvesting around 10 a.m. The wheat is yielding around 30 to 40 bushels per acre thus far and it looks beautiful.

The wheat is looking good here. Yesterday we were cutting wheat ranging from 45 to 65 bushels per acre. The test weights were anywhere from 60 to 63 pounds.

Monday, July 5

I hope you all had a blast this Fourth of July! Hoffman Harvesting was finished up with the Colby, Kan., harvest in time to celebrate July 3, 4 and 5. We bided our time grilling out, playing rugby and baseball—well, some of us anyway—swimming, watching movies, and visiting with other harvesters parked at the fairgrounds. We had a choice to move to our next stop (Goodland, Kan.), but with bleak weather reports we decided to stay parked here. The Colby fireworks show takes place in our front yard so we didn't need to go anywhere to watch them.



Talk about convenient! That evening it rained hard. We received three inches of rain. I bet our farmer was happy to have his wheat cut before the rain hit. His average yield was 60 bushels per acre.

It also rained three inches at our next stop—Goodland, Kan. We plan to head that way tomorrow so we are ready to go when it actually dries up. In the meantime, we are just hanging out and having fun.

Here is a recipe for some kabob marinade I made:

Kabob Marinade

2 cloves garlic
1 1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 C. Worcestershire sauce
3/4 c. soy sauce
1 c. olive oil or vegetable oil
1/2 c. lemon juice
1/4 c. prepared mustard
1/4 c. white vinegar

I don't think marinating time matters too much. I have done it from 30 minutes to up to the day before. I use steak, zucchini, red onion, tomatoes, colored peppers, and mushrooms. My trick is to put the veggies separate from the meat when grilling, as the meat takes longer to cook.

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Jenna Zeorian

Zeorians prepare to move from Deerfield

Brooklyn, Jillian and Callie sitting on the tailgate.



Tuesday, June 29

The exciting news for the day is that our friends, the Rathes, who are on the road with the New Holland Harvest Support crew, are now parked next to us. Since the harvest support trailer is stationed in Garden City, we talked the Rathes into staying here in Deerfield with us for the couple of days that they'll be around. It's definitely fun having them as neighbors. The girls, Brooklyn and Jillian, even helped me with supper, and there's a recipe for the dessert that we made.

This is a recipe for our family's version of the classic upside-down cake. The recipe was given to my great-grandma, when she was on harvest, from the wife of a farmer who my great-grandparents cut for in Medicine Lodge, Kan. Since then, it's sort of become a dessert staple during harvest for our family. I remember Mom making it when I was little, and now I've got helpers making it with me.

Upside-down Cake

1 large can of crushed or sliced pineapple
1 large can of cherry pie filling
1 box of yellow cake mix
1 stick of butter or margarine

Pour pineapple into bottom of a greased 9- by 13-inch pan. Pour cherry pie filling on top. Sprinkle box of cake mix over top (dry). Slice stick of butter over top. Bake for one hour at 350 degrees.



Callie displays the final product.

Thursday, July 1

The Z crew has had some big cutting days in Deerfield, Kan. The crop here has been one of the best we've cut in years, with the wheat

ranging from 70 to 80 bushels per acre. The test weight has been exceptional, too—averaging around 63 pounds and at times near 64 pounds. And this is dryland wheat, by the way.

Unfortunately, with such a thick and heavy crop, lodging tends to take place (lodging is when the wheat starts to lay down). Because you have to try to pick up the wheat with the header, the combine must slow down considerably. Mom has had a great time running the machine at about 1.5 miles per hour the past couple of days.

Yesterday, the sickle bar broke on the combine. Luckily we had a spare one, though, so we were only stopped long enough to make the repair. Kudos to Dad for being prepared.

Dad has really been appreciative of the grain elevators around here—short hauls and short lines. What's interesting is that in most areas the only elevators are in town, but out here there are elevators spread throughout the countryside.

We had a great time with the Rathes while they were our neighbors here in Deerfield. Yesterday, all of us girls even went into Garden City, Kan., and checked out the Lee Richardson Zoo. (It's such a nice zoo—and it's free!) They left this morning for Colby, Kan. I already miss my cooking helpers—and now it seems too quiet without them running around here.

We'll probably finish here in the next couple of days, but our next stop in Limon, Colo., isn't ready yet. We're not sure what we'll do between now and then—so we're just taking it day-by-day for now.

Tuesday, July 6

I hope everyone had a fun and safe holiday weekend! We finished cutting around Deerfield on Saturday, one day shy of working here one full week. It was a good crop this



Downed wheat.

Have a little dirt.



Photos by Jenna Zeorian.

year—the wheat was thick and heavy, dry, and had good test weight. Total, it averaged about 76 bushels per acre, which we believe is the best-averaged wheat we have ever cut.

Since we finished on Saturday, we actually had the Fourth of July completely off. I honestly can't remember a Fourth that we weren't in the field, begging Mom and Dad to quit early for the night. We enjoyed a relaxing day, grilled for supper, shot off a few fireworks, and had a campfire at a pond, where Callie serenaded us with her guitar. It was a really great night.

Today, our good friends and fellow custom harvesters, the Krumbachs, visited. (If you followed the blog last year, you'll remember them.) They are currently cutting in Tribune, Kan., but had rain last night, so the day off today. We visited and hung out this afternoon, then had another campfire at the pond and roasted hot dogs. It was really fun seeing the Krumbachs and spending time together.

On another note, one of our farmers at our next stop in Limon, Colo., called this morning to let us know that they had hail last night. The town of Limon apparently got hit pretty hard, but our farmer's crop is still good enough to cut, even though it did get hit. I hope other farmers in the area were as lucky and they have at least some of their crop left.

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Sage Sammons

Safety and avoiding accidents—easier said than done sometimes

Wednesday, June 30

When you live on a farm, the biggest thing you want to avoid is an accident. In 21 years, I have done a great job of avoiding major accidents that cause damage to either equipment or someone else. But it all caught up with me last week.

Early in the week I was in a combine moving from one field to another. I'm one of the most experienced operators on the harvest crew this season, and the move was a little tricky. We were moving with our headers on three miles straight down a road to the next field. Sounds easy enough, but throw in telephone poles that are on either side that might have a gap of 45 feet between them. With a 30-foot header, there is no problem, but with a 40-foot header like the ones we have, it could get difficult. About halfway to the field, I met the two poles that were the skinniest to get through. To avoid a meter of some sort on the left telephone pole, I hugged the right side of the road, only to find that the right side of the header hit that pole square and bent the frame of the header, totaling it.

I truly felt terrible but did learn something from it. Take the extra time to put the headers on the header trailer to avoid any issues. No matter how mad I wanted to be, I could only be mad at myself because at the end, I was in control.

But my troubles didn't end there.

About the time I had finally quit beating myself up for the header incident, Dad wanted me to haul it to our dealer in Montana. It was supposed to rain, and the haul from the field to the elevator wasn't too bad, so Dad could

go without Sierra and me for a couple days, as one combine would be down anyway. We took off bound for Montana pulling the header in my personal pickup. We made fairly good time, despite not being able to go the speed limit because of the massive load we had on. We were about 300 miles away from our destination when we were in an accident.

We were going around a sweeping left turn with an off-ramp that came down and met the interstate. I was taking the turn very wide to stay out of traffic, but in the end took it just a little too wide. I managed to keep the pickup on the road, but the weight and the momentum of the header pulled us down in the ditch and caused the truck to flip one and a half times. The truck and header trailer were totaled in the wreck, but Sierra and I walked away without a scratch, mainly because we were both wearing our seat belts.

It was a very scary incident that could have been much worse. I learned that no matter how careful you think you are driving, there is always room for improvement. The officer who came to the incident informed me that this corner had been very accident-prone. He said that usually people don't walk away from that corner, so we are very lucky.

In the end everything is replaceable; that is why it is all insured. It's better not to use that insurance, but in the time of accidents it is comforting to have. I also became aware of how many great people I have in my life. Not only in my immediate family or in my group of friends, but the random people who genuinely care about me. I received more phone calls and text

messages to make sure my sister and I were OK. I am truly blessed to have a great family and amazing friends. God truly was watching over and protecting us.

As for the crew, they are still in Dumas, Texas, and cutting a mixed bag of wheat. I say that because almost half of the crop we are cutting was devastated by hail. The crop that wasn't hit by hail is averaging very well for the area, 40-plus bushels to the acre on dryland and 50-plus on the irrigated portion. But it isn't a very big job, so they should be close to finished by the time Sierra and I get back tomorrow.

It was heartbreaking to see my truck totaled, but my sister and I are truly blessed to walk away without a scratch.

Friday, July 2

We got back to the harvest last night, after taking a detour through our future stops along the way.

One of our truck drivers, John, flew out of Denver to go to a wedding. He bought the ticket before we even left Cut Bank because we figured we would be close to Denver by the first of July. So we (I say we because the whole family came down—Mom, Dad, Sierra and I) flew into Denver to get the pickup that John drove up to the airport. While in the Denver area, we visited one of the farmers we would be cutting for and got a glimpse of how long it will be until it is ready to go.

After that we started our journey south to Dumas, Texas, and while on the road Dad got a call from our straw boss Scott. He said they had to shut down because they ran into some wet wheat, but Dad



Photo by Sage Sammons.

figured we would be going sometime today. That was before the rainstorm this morning.

We went out to the field and moved the combines to another job where the wheat will be ready to cut as soon as it is dry enough. The forecast doesn't look good, though, as they are predicting rain all day today and a little bit tomorrow. But it wouldn't be the first time the weather people have been wrong this summer.

So now we are in hurry-up-and-wait mode. We have about three or four more days of cutting here and Colorado won't be ready for at least a week.

I hope everyone has a good and safe holiday weekend!

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