

Longest week of the summer

Chimney Rock at sunset.



Jenna Zeorian

Thursday, July 29

The Z crew is in the middle of one of the longest weeks of the summer—the week that consists of the move from Limon, Colo., to Jordan, Mont. The trip, one-way, is over 700 miles. And the trip has to be made three times for some of us (ahem, Mom and Dad).

Unlike other moves, we always move the trailer house to Jordan on the first trip instead of the second. So, on Monday around 3 p.m., the whole family left Limon. We knew we wouldn't make it too far that day, considering how late we were leaving, but it was the kind of thing where we just needed to get on the road.

We made it as far as Scottsbluff, Neb., that night. I wasn't pulling the combine header (it will make the second trip instead), so I had the opportunity to make

a couple of stops and detours that I normally wouldn't have been able to do. For example, while Mom and Dad were in Scottsbluff trying to find a place to park for the night, Taylor, Callie and I detoured to see Chimney Rock—the way true Nebraskans should and would.

Speaking of being a true Nebraskan—I have to say, it was pretty nice to be in our home state, even if only for a night. It had been two months since I'd been in “the good life” and being there actually made me a little homesick. Even though we live on the far eastern side of the state and we were on the far western side of the state that night, call me crazy—but it smelled, and felt, like home. I guess it was probably the cornfields and humidity.

We traveled all day on Tuesday and didn't have any breakdowns or problems. OK, so I actually took a wrong exit once, in Gillette, Wyo., but big deal, right? We made it as far as Miles City, Mont., that night, which meant the trip was basically over. On Wednesday morning we got up and drove the final 80-some miles north to Jordan.

Coming back to Jordan is basically like coming home. It's one of the stops that my great-grandparents made when they were harvesting. And, since my parents have been in the business, we've been here every single summer—making it the 20th for me. I could go on about this little town, but I'll have to save that for another day.

Mom and Dad left this morning to

Since we stayed in Scottsbluff, Neb., Monday night, Taylor, Callie and I detoured to see Chimney Rock. Photos by Jenna Zeorian.

Montana prairie and strips of wheat south of Jordan, Mont.



Happy to be passing through good ol' Nebrasky on our way to Montana.

head back to Limon to get the rest of the equipment. They should make it there by tomorrow, then turn around and head back north with the semi, combine, tool truck and combine header on Saturday. I won't be surprised if they don't make it back to Jordan until Monday. Many of the roads through Wyoming and Montana are steep and narrow, which slows speed down considerably, especially with a wide load.

The wheat here is still a little green but should be ready to go by this weekend or early next week. So our timing should work out pretty well.

On a side note, I'm pretty sure today (July 29) was fellow correspondent Jada's birthday. Happy birthday, Jada!

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Leaving Limon, Colo., on Monday.



Having lunch on Tuesday at a rest stop in Wyoming.

Favorite stops and some breakdowns in between



The family during the Big Sandy harvest. This has Christmas card written all over it.



Sage Sammons

Sunday, August 1

I do realize I have been MIA for about a week, but I had to fly back to Las Vegas for my job that I have during the school year. I am back on the trail now and boy do I have stories to tell, but first we will start with the South Dakota crew.

The crew is almost done with the winter wheat harvest in South Dakota and are getting ready to start cutting the spring wheat. When they are done with that, they will then reunite with the one machine in Montana. The wheat has been extremely good there, but the conditions haven't been the best. They have still been fighting rain and long lines at the elevator but are still progressing.

As for me in Montana, we only have one combine and semi here. I have moved from driving semi to being a combine operator. That leaves Mike to take care of all our

trucking needs. We knew from the beginning that we would be short-staffed here, so Dad planned on that, and now we are working with another crew, Skinner Harvesting.

Dad and Dan go way back, and we have even worked with his crew in the past. It is always great to see friends and even better when the work can benefit two crews because of convenience. Our farmer expected us to have four machines, and we do—it is just three green machines and one red machine.

We have run into a problem that we haven't seen this year and that I personally haven't seen for a few years—sawfly. I will get more into sawfly later this week, but I'm telling you now because we have to use different headers. To prevent a sawfly disaster, farmers swath their crops a week to 10 days before harvest. Because of the swathing, we have to use pick-up headers instead of our 40-foot MacDons.

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Sage's wheat harvest story continues . . .

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So far we have only had this problem on one of our jobs. We ran into a little bit of moisture on that job today, so we moved two combines to a different job 60 miles away, west of Big Sandy, Mont.

We are now cutting on the farm my mother was born and raised on—or were cutting until we got a little rain this afternoon. It wasn't enough to shut us down for more than the evening. We will be able to get back in the field tomorrow morning and should finish up everything late afternoon tomorrow, weather permitting. Then we will move back to the job we were originally on, north of Carter, Mont. We are staying in Fort Benton, Mont., because of its central location to our jobs here.

I'm glad to be back, and I will talk a little bit more about the sawfly, pick-up headers and cutting on my grandparent's farm later this week.

Tuesday, August 3

There are certain stops every year that crews love returning to. For me it definitely hits close to home and for as long as I can remember has been part of my summer home. It is our farm between Big Sandy and Fort Benton, Mont. The farm my great grandpa started and where my mother was born and raised.

It is where I drove my first combine. It

is where I was finally old enough to help. It is where I was able to create special bonds with each member my family. For me when someone says harvest, for some reason my mind always comes to this farm and those times.

One of my fondest memories is just a few years ago when the crew was 60 miles west, north of Fort Benton, and were harvesting away. Since they were so busy over there, Dad and I brought one truck and combine over to Big Sandy to cut the three fields we have here. Twenty-two hours later, we were finished and moving back over to Fort Benton. Nothing spectacular happened, and we were actually able to cut fairly quickly, but it was the fact that it was just the family; it felt just like old times. I will never forget those two days. On top of all of that, it was one of the best crops we had harvested here.

This year has been another great crop and made some different memories. Skinner Harvesting came with us and helped us, and since we were staffed for four machines, we had a pit crew whenever something had to be fixed.

We brought two, one red and one green, of the four combines and the grain cart over from our other job. The first thing out of my grandpa's mouth was, "I don't know how long it's been since a John Deere cut here." The wheat ran well, about 35 to 45 bushels per acre, 12-percent protein and



The view from my seat in the combine.

60-pound test weight. We did run into a little bit of high moisture though, so it took three half-days to finish cutting. On top of the high moisture, we had some equipment issues.

On day two, we had the worst break-

down of the season. The bearing on the drive shaft of our combine (the Case 7120) went out and put us out of commission for the evening. Dad went and got the parts and we were able to get back in the field fairly quickly today. But as we were making a part run, Skinner's header also had a bearing go out. For a little bit there we were completely shut down. After we got everything going again, we had some minor issues with rocks and had to replace a few sections and guards.

The job we started on north of Fort Benton dried up, so Dan moved his combine and crew back over there and got cutting while we finished up in Big Sandy. We are now getting ready to take the 60-mile venture over to join the rest of the crew. Just like that, my favorite part of harvest is over and done with, and it is still my most beloved part of the summer.

I promise I'll have more photos and even a video up on the blog before the week is over.

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Getting a little face time in the combine. (Thanks Mom!)

"To prevent a sawfly disaster, farmers swath their crops a week to 10 days before harvest. Because of the swathing, we have to use pick-up headers instead of our 40-foot MacDons."



Photos by Sage Sammons.



Editor's note: Jada's crew is in South Dakota and split three ways this week. While keeping up with three crews in three places is enough of a challenge, she also had technical difficulties. We love that technology has allowed us to keep up with our All Aboard Harvest crews this summer, but it prevented us from following along with Jada this week. She'll be back next week to catch us up.

Jada Bulgin



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