

Hitting the road



Jada Bulgin

Tuesday, June 8

Today we moved from Olney, Texas to Kiowa, Kan. It is approximately a 300-mile trip but seems to take forever when traveling with wide loads on narrow roads. By the time we were done settling up with Olney Fuel and the campground and found out our broken down truck wasn't going to be able to come with us, it was 11 a.m., before we hit the road. We didn't get to Kiowa until 6 p.m. The journey was long because of the temperature being in the high 90s as well as narrow roads and bridges. Our wide loads have to yield to bridges that are narrow when traffic is coming. When it is a busy road, it takes a while to get past them.

Thursday, June 10

The night before we left Texas, we finally got to have our annual cookout. We prefer to have more than one but were happy to at least enjoy Mike's mesquite cooking and, of course, Julie's famous peach cobbler topped with Blue Bell ice cream once this year. Their daughter Kelly was able to join us for the duration of harvest, but Ryan was busy with his new job at Dell and unable to come home. Hopefully, we will see the whole family more often next year. The trip to Texas was gone before we knew it this year.

The rush to Kiowa had us nervous because we heard everyone was cutting before we got here. Once we were unloaded and able to test the wheat, it was running at 17 percent moisture. The wet wheat allowed everyone to be able to make up on some lost sleep. Leon and Johann also went back to Texas to get the truck that broke down. Unfortunately, it is still broke down so they had to haul it Anthony to get fixed.

Today we had visitors. Our farmer Dan and his wife, Debbie, stopped in for a bit to welcome us back to Kiowa again. It was nice to chat with them. I also want to give a shout out to Johnson and the salesmen at Versatile who are enjoying the blog.

I am also happy to announce that we finally got started cutting here. We tried one field and it was running at 16.5 percent moisture—way too wet to cut. The second field we tried was the one. We started cutting around 3 p.m., with the moisture right at 14 percent and are still going. The yields are anywhere from 30 to 60 bushels per acre. The test weight is anywhere from 58 to 64 pounds per bushel. The moisture has gone down, so hopefully we'll be able to run a little longer today.

Monday, June 14

Hoffman Harvesting has been harvesting in Kiowa, Kan.—or something like that. Yesterday we got an early start harvesting, but rain showers



Top: Hoffman Harvesting is loaded and lined up at the truck stop, ready for ripe wheat in Kansas. **Bottom:** Finishing up with the Texas wheat harvest.

threatened us around noon. Thankfully, the field didn't receive any rain but our farmer's yard did. The distance was two miles away, which was too close for comfort. All day long we were on eggshells, as the sky continued to look like it could rain any minute. Around 5 p.m., we finally had to succumb to the rain. It has been raining on and off ever since. Rain is also being forecasted for tomorrow so it doesn't look like we will be cutting for at least another day. We look forward to cutting, but knowing that it is raining pretty much everywhere is settling our nerves. So far we have received around three inches in

Kiowa and our next stop, Pratt, Kan., has received four inches. Harvesters and farmers alike are shouting, "rain, rain go away!" Hoerner Harvesting, also from Bowdle, S.D., is now harvesting in Kiowa, Kan., too. They stopped by to visit yesterday. Visiting were Craig and Vicky, along with triplets, Kaitlyn, Cody and Nathan.

While we were harvesting the wheat was anywhere from 35 to 55 bushels per acre.

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Sage Sammons

Tuesday, June 8

During the harvest season you really grow close with the crew you are with. Whether it is with your immediate family on your personal farm or with a crew cutting someone else's, people really bond together. It may be because of the long hours, or it could be the euphoria of the harvest season that brings people together. On a crew like we have, this is my family for the summer.

In a family, when someone is hurt or struggling, it tugs on the each of the individuals' hearts in the family. Today one of our combine operators, Andy Shelburne, decided to go home to be closer to his immediate family, and nobody on the crew

could blame him. His mom is in Portland, Ore., recovering from a stomach surgery and having a tough time with it. She has been in and out of intensive care, and that has been hanging heavy over Andy's head for a couple weeks now. Last night, he got a call that his dad was in a car accident in Arizona and he had to be airlifted to Phoenix, Ariz. He is also in intensive care and had to have surgery.

Andy has been a very hard worker this season and has been the bright spot on many days when the hours have gotten long. From day one he has had a positive attitude about harvest, and he still has that drive today. He has always had that attitude even when people correct him. He was new to driving a combine and af-

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Crazy last few days



A Sammons Adventures combine is busy cutting wheat in Holliday, Tex.

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All Aboard Wheat Harvest . . . (Continued from Page 6-B)

Crazy last few days

days has come to be a very efficient operator. It is truly tough to see him go through this, but even today on the way to Dallas, he has kept that very positive attitude. It is very inspirational how he can continue to keep his head held high during his tough times.

It's tough to transition from bad news like that to some good news, so here goes nothing. We finished cutting today and are ready to leave for Floydada, Texas, tomorrow. We had a very good run here in Holliday and are hoping that the year continues like it has started. Some of the wheat in Floydada looks to be ready as we unload tomorrow, while some still looks about a week off. Hopefully, we can keep a strong run going as we continue on into the summer.

My heart breaks for Andy and his family. I ask that you keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers over the next few days, as he will be in all of ours. Thank you for the support.

Saturday, June 12

Wow, the last few days have been

crazy! It feels it has been forever since I wrote a blog, but we finally have some downtime here in Floydada, Texas. Getting here was an adventure in itself. First, though, I want to readdress one of the stories that has become somewhat popular and I have been getting a ton a questions about—camels in Texas. I now have the full story.

Mr. Hudson, who was described from our farmer as a little eccentric, started with nothing and was born in a small, rural dust bowl Oklahoma town. He became wealthy after investing in convenience stores with his brother and sister along the I-40 corridor, from California to the east coast. But his passion was in agriculture. He bought and sold ranches in the Midwest, which was his dream. He eventually sold out his interest in the c-stores for \$100 million.

So where do camels come into this whole picture? Hudson owned a ranch west of Wichita Falls, Texas, and introduced camels to the area to see if they would control the mesquite. Camels have an ability to eat thorny items such as cac-

tus, which is how they survive in the African desert. The end result was that the mesquite was too bitter so they didn't eat it, but they did devour the plum thickets. A plum thicket is a thorny, bushy plant that can take over an area, and domestic animals cannot eat it. The camels ate the thicket where they could reach it, and eventually it created an archway within the thickets.

This story has been passed down from a couple different people, and Hudson has passed away, so some of this could be embellished. This just one of the stories of Mr. Hudson that I heard from our farmer, but there were few more. The stories validated how people could view Hudson as eccentric.

Now back to the harvest operation. We moved Wednesday afternoon from Holliday to Floydada, Texas. This was after I drove 150 miles one way to Clinton, Okla., to get a part for one of the headers from Mac-Don. As soon as I got back, I hopped in the Peterbilt and our journey was under way. We had some truck issues the night before, so the convoy was split

up a little bit. The front convoy had Scott pulling a header, then Michael and Paul pulling combines, and I was pulling the grain cart. After me were Craig pulling a header and Wally in the motorhome (or the hauler as he calls it). We were about 60 miles ahead of the second convoy, which was Dad pulling the service trailer, Sierra pulling a header and Laura, our cook.

We may have picked the hottest day to move, and some people battled high engine temperatures. Both Wally and Craig had overheating issues, so they just pulled over and joined the second convoy as they came by. We finally rolled into Floydada around 8:30 p.m., just before sunset. After a long day of traveling, everyone was ready for a good night's sleep.

Thursday saw John and I make the 175-mile trip back to Holliday to load the last combine. John's truck was fixed late Wednesday, and he pulled a grain trailer to Floydada. We double backed and loaded the combine in record time and were back to Floydada before dinner.

The crew was able to unload two combines and got started cutting right away

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Jenna Zeorian

Wednesday, June 9

Yesterday (June 8), my bosses gave me the afternoon off, and I ended up driving to Oklahoma City.

OK, so it was actually a planned excursion, but it sounded more exciting that way, didn't it? The truth is my younger sister, Taylor, returned home from her school trip to Washington D.C. and New York this past weekend, so it was time for her to catch up with the rest of the family. My older sister, Jamie, who no longer makes the harvest run, and her fiancé, Curt, drove Taylor to Guthrie, Okla. (just north of Oklahoma City), where Callie and I met them.

Why Guthrie? It was one of our harvest stops for eight years, which is long enough to make the town start to feel like one of those home-away-from-homes. So we thought it'd be fun to go back, and it was. Plus, Guthrie was pretty close to being a mid-point for us; it was a 300-mile drive for me and Callie, and a little over 400 miles for the other half.

While the purpose of the trip was mostly business (kind of?), we had some fun, too. We went to the drive-in theater, stayed the night, showed Curt the sites of Guthrie this morning and had lunch. Then came the sad part, though—saying goodbye to Jamie. It's hard for us to leave her, but I think it's probably worse for her to be left—missing her entire family and missing harvest. (Ouch.) But hopefully, she'll be able to visit us sometime this summer.

Anyway, we girls are now safely

back in Hamlin. It's good to finally have our "crew" complete—it was a little weird without Taylor. Dad informed me that while we were gone, they cut almost 250 acres of good wheat, so it sounds like they had a productive day and a half. I'm just not sure what they did about food?

Saturday, June 12

First stop down! We finished cutting here in Hamlin last night around midnight. It was a pretty late night, but it looked like rain and we were so close to being done that Mom and Dad decided to finish it. When you can cut that late, you better just do it.

Today was spent cleaning trucks and equipment and settling up with farmers. We treated ourselves to steak for supper tonight. What did this Nebraska girl think of Texas beef? I guess it wasn't too bad.

Tomorrow, Dad and I will make the first of two trips to our next stop near Hooker, Okla. For us, each move takes two trips because we don't have the number of drivers or capability to get it all done in one.

Monday, June 14

Early Saturday afternoon, Dad, Taylor and I left Hamlin to make our first trip to our next stop in Hooker, Okla. On this trip, Dad drove the semi, which pulled the combine and grain trailer, and I drove the car, which sort of serves as a flag-car and scout. Taylor tagged along for the ride.

The trip was going well until we began to run into storms in the northern

First stop down, wondrous weather



Zeorian Harvesting ran into storms in the northern panhandle of Texas. Above, a grain bin and church demolished in Bryan's Corner, Okla.

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