

Bryan Williams  
July 5, 2007  
Mr. Bennett  
Reflection Column

### Lonely summer lessons

Growing up I hated summer break. While my classmates were excited to pack up belongings from their desks, I wasn't. Summer wasn't a time for parties, sleepovers, or camping. Summer was a time for learning and work. Little did I know then that I would learn to love the work.

Growing up on a dairy farm I had a different routine. I went to school, came home, I would watch the last 15 minutes of *Duck Tales*, then it was time to feed calves and cows, chop and carry wood from our wood pile home, and occasionally help clean the milking barn. I was 16 before I found out that other kids didn't have to shovel coal into their furnaces. After chores were done I spent a few hours playing in tree houses that I had built. That was a typical school day, summers were even worse.

Instead of associating fun with summer, I learned summer meant boring tractor rides. For hours I drove back and forth. Bailing hay meant my father would sometimes wake me up at 5 or 6 in the morning and sometimes stay up until 3 or 4 in the morning. Whenever there was the right amount of dew, we bailed.

I remember being so angry every time I had to get in a tractor. I was so frustrated because I knew that once I got I started there was no telling when I would come back home. Didn't my father realize I was missing out on my own childhood? Didn't he know that there was nothing more boring and hard to do than to sit alone in a tractor all day? I felt like one of those solitary confinement experiments where the people went crazy.

Luckily I had a radio. Throughout the years I developed a love for all music. You couldn't be picky with the radio in the tractor. For years all I got was *Oldies 94.9*. Sometimes I would get one radio station driving up the row and get another coming back. Someone really should have invested in a better antenna.

By the end of the summer it didn't matter which station was on, I could sing along to every word. If I really liked a song, I would sing to at the top of my lungs. No was around, no one heard, or cared.

I learned to ponder. With hours and hours of just sitting, I thought about everything. I learned to appreciate quiet reflection.

I learned how to improvise. Whenever our equipment would break down, it was up to me to fix it. You learn to do a lot of things out of necessity.

I learned to appreciate nature. I loved to just look on the horizon and see the mountains. The fields looked so great in their rows and bails all neatly placed. I loved to watch the hawk that used to follow the bailer. When hay is bailed mice who have built their homes underneath, run away, so hawks learn to follow and catch mice.

Looking back I learned how to make sacrifices. I valued hard work. I learned to love wherever I was and whatever I was doing. I learned to love my lonely summers.