

First Job on the Family Ranch in Rural Nebraska Big Piney , Wyoming

Story Narrative:

"I grew up in rural Nebraska, and my first job was working on my family ranch. I worked a lot of years on my ranch without getting paid at all. But the summer I was 13 years old, I finally got a paying job in the hay field. I had a little gray Ford tractor with red fenders, and a little sickle bar mower that I pulled behind it. My sickle bar mower wasn't very long at all. I had to go around and around the field many times to get it all mowed down. I remember wanting really badly to get a suntan, and ending up with nothing but a sunburn. I remember enjoying my money from my job a whole lot, because I sure had put in a lot of hours just earning my keep, as my dad said. I loved my little tractor, it always started up for me. But one thing I did not love about that job in the hay field was the sweat bees. They'd get up under your arm and sting the crap out of you. Overall, though, I loved my job in the hay field. I did that for four summers, all through high school, along with other jobs, like a job at the grocery store in town, and babysitting, and a nanny job over in the neighboring town. Growing up on a ranch sure makes a kid turn out to be a hard worker." Part of the "Be Here: Main Street" project--an effort to collect stories about small-town life across the United States. The project was the brainchild of the Smithsonian's "Museum on Main Street" program, an initiative that brings traveling exhibitions about subjects of national importance to small towns across America.

This story was collected in conjunction with the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street program and its national traveling exhibition "The Way We Worked" when it was on view at the Sublette County Public Library in Pinedale, Wyoming, in 2018.

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