



GARRY SEYMOUR dumps his load of wheat onto a grain truck during harvest.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez



VAUGHN SABATKA unloads a grain truck at the McDonald Equity.

Times staff photo by Norma Martinez

Harvest is here!

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Harvesters are no longer edgy with the uncertainty of who is going to bring in the first load of wheat. Claude Gleason brought in the first load, and around four other loads at Frontier AG on June 29. Since then the harvesters are anticipating as to when the ground will remain dry enough for the heavy equipment to get around the fields without tearing them up. Every day it finally gets hot enough to dry the fields and they just get started when it rains again and they are forced to cease the operation.

Catching Rob Jensen in the fields with his combine Sunday on a hot sunny day, I decided to take advantage of the opportunity for this country converted city girl to get a lesson on harvesting. I first took a couple rounds in the field with Rob in his air conditioned combine, then I went with his father Chris Jensen in his open air conditioned truck, to take a load to the McDonald Equity.

The weather was hot, and perfectly clear. On the return trip the wind came up and was stirring up a dark cloud from the wheat dust.

I had Chris drop me off in front of my house when Willy Martinez stopped by with his radio from the fire department and got a call saying, "Strong severe weather warnings were in effect for Cheyenne County." The wind was blowing at a rate of 25 miles per hour, and was headed northwest in this direction with possible hail. We never got the hail but, the wind blew hard enough that it blew my three-tier fountain over busting it up. Around 7 just as the three harvesters finished off their last strip of cutting the rain came.

Saturday evening Rob Jensen and Rex Linin were cutting the wheat owned by Dean Knapp. They managed to cut around 15 acres when the rain forced them to quit. Rob felt fortunate to be able to at least start as he said, "I talked to several harvesters who said they tried and tried on that same day and were not able to get an average dry sample."

On Sunday afternoon around 4

o'clock Rob Jensen made a cut around the area to get an average sample of wheat for testing. After the elevators determined the wheat was dry enough to accept, he and Linin were hurrying in hopes of finishing the remaining 85 acres before the currently predicted storm set in. Garry Seymour decided to give them a hand since he was able to finish his cutting on Saturday evening. With the three cutters they were estimating to be done by 7:00 p.m.

Portions of the fields are so wet they will not dry out for a long time, and they had to cut around them. These are the areas where the heavy equipment leaves very deep ruts in the fields.

Earlier talking to Kent Banister from McDonald he said, "This is the worst year he has ever seen as to short days of harvest due to the persistent rains since he has been harvesting.

Just south of Bird City on Road 32 one of the farmer's wheat was cut, but they were having trouble bailing the straw because of the rains. In year's past Rob Jensen has done the same. He drives a John Deere 96 OO combine that throws the straw out the back, and a baler follows and bales it. This year because of the wetness of the ground, he is not able to do so.

With all the moisture this year weeds are growing quickly between the wheat. Normally the herbicides will hold these weeds off until after the harvest.

This is Rob's third year for cutting Dean Knapp's wheat. During the winter Rob keeps busy with his cattle and calves, and also plants corn and milo at his place just south of Bird City as well as some of Knapp's land. He still has seven fields of wheat to cut.

Rob and Rex have been cutting together for two years. In explanation, he says, Rex's children have all grown up and left Bird City so he has no one to help him, while Rob still has two sons who help him out when they are not in school. Without older children to help them, they have to hire help. So to eliminate this additional expense the farmers join forces with a sort of co-op helping each other out.



Rob has three sons, Jacob, the oldest, just graduated from Kansas State College this year and is working in California. Terry still has a year left of college and he works at Home Depot in Hays, so he can work and attend college classes. Rob's youngest son, Mitchel, just graduated from Cheylin this year, and helps him out, but will be attending Hays Vo-Tech College for welding this fall.

During harvest Terry and Chris are driving the wheat trucks to the elevator. Terry drives the 1986 Kenworth with 42-foot trailer that holds 900-1,000 bushels of grain depending on the weight of the grain. Chris drives Rex's Chevy tandem truck that will hold about 550 bushels of grain weighing about 33,000 pounds.

After driving these loads to McDonald Equity, the truck is weighed and, with a probe, the scale attendant takes a sample of the wheat and tests for dryness. Next they go to the elevators where they dumped the wheat, then back to the scales to weigh the empty truck to determine how much grain they brought in.

Attending to the elevator were Vaughn Sabatka and Justin Miller. Justin is working during his summer break from college.

When asked how many loads they had seen dumped on Sunday they estimated about 20 loads. Mr. Sabatka said this was an unusually low count for harvest. He explained, "Ordinarily during harvest they would take in around 100 loads per day."

Due to the wet weather the loads did not start arriving until 2 in the afternoon, and then after a few hours, the harvesters had to stop because of the rain.