Three short blasts on the whistle triggered my excitement beyond belief. The train came to a stop so the thirsty beast up front could take on water for her long climb to Silverton. Locomotive 486, a 1925 steam locomotive, gave me my first locomotive cab ride. I was in awe, and watched in pure excitement as the engineer, my dad, worked the different valves and levers to get the train moving again. With careful observation, I watched the fireman shovel heavy scoops of coal into the firebox and make the steam pressure jump to the required amount of 195 PSI. At age 11, I had little clue of the intricacies of steam locomotive operation, and I was too naive to pay attention or follow instructions.I thought I knew it all already, but soon learned I knew nothing.

As I grew older, I realized that there were several people out there who knew far more than I about the complexity of steam locomotives and their operation. I realized that a mindset where I knew everything and vocalized when people were doing things “wrong” was not going to help me get where I wanted to be in the business. I had to act fast to save my good reputation as a learner and not a know-it-all. There were many steps that rendered my change, starting with the acceptance of the reality that just because I had been at the railroad for my whole life, I infact did not know it all.

My father Bill, the senior engineer at the Durango and Silverton Railroad, was a tremendous help in assisting my maturity grow. He spent countless hours answering my questions and teaching me all that he could about trains and the railroad. He was a great role model in the sense where he taught me about leaving my opinions to myself and always being open to learning different ways of doing things. Both of my parents vocalized to me on several occasions how I’ve grown out of being a child, and more into being an adult.

I now spend my days chugging up and down the Animas Canyon between Durango and Silverton, Colorado listening to the stories of railroaders before me, and soaking up every bit of information that I can. I am now a more active listener and a full-time learner. I now apply myself to almost every situation that I can and I have both my job and my parents to thank.