

## A Regretful Move

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**Course:** English 101

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**Assignment:** Memoir

My dad taught me the meaning of work. When I was a child, I remember spending my summers splitting wood for the old fireplace that sits in the den of our house. I can still smell the wood of the mature cypress trees as they cracked and splintered in the summer heat. July of 2005, however, was different from all the summers before and changed my view of the years to come. During this month, which has been permanently scarred into my memory, I was no longer chopping firewood for the winter.

Instead, I accepted a job in West Monroe, Louisiana, working with my Uncle Albert in a hospital. In May of 2005, just after I finished school for the year, I received a phone call from Uncle Bert. He told me he needed a diligent worker for a couple of weeks in July to finish wiring a new hospital due to open soon, and I was the first person who came to his mind. When he added I would be well-paid and could stay with him for those two weeks, I eagerly accepted his offer. The drive north to West Monroe took about four hours; the entire way there, I knew leaving my father to make some fast money was wrong, but still I kept driving. As I pulled into the town, I saw it was dramatically different from my hometown of Denham Springs, located on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. For instance, in West Monroe, there was one red light, and the only place to gather at night was a Sonic just off the interstate exit. I finally arrived at my uncle's house, but the guilt continued to grow; finally, I ignored it completely.

After a warm greeting from Uncle Bert, I unpacked my truck, prepared for bed, and went to sleep early in order to be well rested for Monday's job. On Monday, I spent all day installing

fiber optic cable for the hospital's CAT scanner, a machine used to scan the body and to show the internal organs without invasive means. Tuesday was similar to Monday, as I spent the morning shadowing my uncle and doing as I was told. The cool morning ended hastily, and the typical heat of a Louisiana day began to make us all sweat. At lunch, we ate sandwiches and drank Cokes. My uncle told jokes to pass the time. Following lunch, we all decided to pack up the tools and return to Uncle Bert's house for a few beers and to cool down. After those beers, my cousin Ryan and I went to bed early because Wednesday was going to be another tiring day.

On Wednesday, I awoke in the early hours, quickly dressed, fixed lunch, and loaded the truck with the necessary supplies. Uncle Bert and Ryan soon joined me, and Uncle Bert drove us to the hospital to start the day's work. As soon as we arrived at the job site, I unloaded the truck. The morning seemed to creep by. We finished installing everything except the medrad injector (used to inject dye into the bloodstream) to the CAT scanner. After Uncle Bert shouted, "Hurry up and wire the injector to the control panel in the other room so we can go home," I brought the injector into the room and set it on the table. Next, I fabricated a mounting bracket on the ceiling in order to secure the injector in place. I then installed the wires to the injector box by standing on a table and feeding the other end of the wires into the ceiling. It was at this moment I made one of the worst mistakes of my life.

As I ran the wires through the ceiling, I realized I needed a ladder to push the wire over the lead radiation wall. I searched several minutes for the ladder but soon discovered I had left it at the house. Instead of retrieving another ladder, I placed a chair next to the wall and continued working. However, I accidentally positioned the chair on top of a vent in the floor. I struggled to keep my balance as I pushed the wire over the wall header; I wrapped my arm around a metal ceiling brace to maintain my stability and continued to push the wire. My cousin unexpectedly

entered the room and asked, “Hey, where is --?” As I looked down to acknowledge him, the shift of my weight caused the chair legs to slide into the floor vent. I remember hearing a scream in the distance as my feet dangled feebly. The pain shot through my body as if I were hit by a bullet.

During this time, I saw blood gushing out of my arm; I realized the scream I heard was my own. As the blood rushed down my snagged arm and cascaded onto the floor, I dangled from the ceiling like a rag doll while Ryan ran to get help. I tried hopelessly to free my injured limb, but the weight of my body mashed the metal brace deeper into my muscles. With every second that passed, the pain increased ten-fold. I felt the warmth of my body ebb as Ryan returned with my Uncle Bert. They roughly lifted me off the brace and quickly freed my arm. I slumped over onto a chair while they used my pocket knife to pick out the insulation from the ceiling. Next, they stuffed my arm with paper towels in an attempt to slow the bleeding, and, finally, we duct taped the gash closed.

Ryan drove me to the emergency room on the other side of town. Trying not to bleed on the carpet of the truck, I held my arm outside the window. When we arrived, I was immediately admitted, and the doctor escorted me directly into the operating room. He informed me if the brace had sliced into my arm one inch more to the right, I would have severed a major artery in my left arm. After giving me this information, the doctor added, “You are very lucky you did not bleed to death on the way here.” Twenty-three stitches closed the gaping tear in my arm, and I was released.

When the week was finally over, I returned home, where my father and mother were excited to see me. After several weeks, I was able to regain the use of my arm. Although I

learned many things during the summer of 2005 and experienced more than my usual job of wood-splitting, my most significant lesson was easy money can sometimes leave a lasting scar.