

**Author:** [REDACTED]

**Title:**

**About the Author:**

**Keywords:**

**Abstract:**

Site Proposal

I have come up with the group Illini Pullers as my University of Illinois subculture. They

meet officially on Mondays and Thursdays. All members identify themselves within the

group at large. Through their specifications with tractors they have developed a set of

specialized terms that help to identify them as a member of the group. The group has a

goal, which is to build a working quarter scale tractor out of allotted materials and have

it ready for competition at the end of May 2009. The Illini Pullers are a sponsored

organization, supported by the university as well as commercial businesses.

I also have an interest in this group for several reasons. They are a program through

the college of ACES, which I am a member of. I was encouraged to join, but I feel I

lack the enthusiasm and skill that comes with building a tractor of any kind. I feel I

would be able to focus on this subculture because I am not yet familiar with any aspects

of the group and its dynamics, yet have a curiosity to learn more about the Illini

Pullers.

### **Initial Exercises:**

#### **Question:**

A Crossroad

Becoming a freshman again, I feel as if I am starting back at square one with every aspect of my life. Most students on campus have no idea who you are or do they care to. No one knows your reputation, let alone your personality. In a way you feel like an outsider to yourself, you're given a rare opportunity to reinvent yourself completely if you chose to. I believe Alan Alda describes it best, "You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you'll discover will be wonderful. What you'll discover is yourself." It is in this hope that I explore the world of the Illini Pullers and all that they familiarize and submerge themselves in as a community, as I wish to be able to do the same with an aspect of the university still unbeknownst to myself.

The group of students that build a quarter-scale tractor each year can easily be judged as farm boys just by the word "tractor". If you Google "Illini Pullers" you'll also find a link to IlliniPullers.com. I believe this is a spoof website that directly makes fun of the official Illini Pullers at the U of I. I'm very curious to find out if the members are aware of the existence of this website, and if they are how they feel about it, or better yet why would someone create that website. On a more on topic note, I have no idea what the model tractor is judged on every spring, or what criteria it must meet. They are a

sponsored group and must take their work very seriously since those businesses will want to see progress. I know that there is a general meeting every Thursday with design meetings on Mondays and an open shop on weekdays. From there schedule alone they seem like a dedicated bunch. I also know that they drive out to the University of Illinois' farm to "test out" their models. They will be testing out this year's model on September 11<sup>th</sup>. From being in my agriculture engineering classes, I've discovered that a large amount of the freshman boys are considering joining the team, while the few of us girls in the classes aren't even debating membership.

Similarly to the Illini Pullers, I am typically dedicated to the task at hand. I am a member of 4-H, which I can guess most of them were at one point in time. I have lived on a hobby farm for the last nine years so I am partially familiar with tractor brands and their various uses. Likewise I have never driven a large tractor, nor has anyone in my family ever used the machinery for anything other than harvesting hay from a small field. Unlike the Pullers I have no mechanical knowledge concerning a tractor or any automotives for that matter. I can fill my truck with gas, fill a tire with air, and add windshield fluid, that's about as useful as I get in that department. However when it comes to the education department I am not that unfamiliar with them. Being an Agricultural and Biological Engineering major means that a lot of my current classmates are interested in joining the group and we will be studying related topics for the majority of our education at the University of Illinois. Furthermore I recently discovered that the Illini Pullers is a subgroup of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE). It was suggested to me by my academic advisor that I join this society, as it directly involves my future career. I recently acquired the option of working with the senior members of Pullers on a semester long project for my ABE 100 class. It would be extremely interesting and valuable to have the outsider view added with the hands on experience of working with them on a side project.

I would have a lot to learn if I was given the class project of working with the Pullers, I will have the task of becoming familiarized with a mechanic's vocabulary. There may not be as many technical terms to learn as I predict, yet I have a feeling that however many there are, I will be familiar with all of them by the end of the semester. I'm also interested in finding out their views on the various aspects of the University of Illinois. Most of all, I wish to discover how they have become so successful from their start eight years ago. Last year they came in fifth place overall at competition. In order to become an award winning team, I am positive that each member dedicates a great deal of time and effort to the project throughout the year. It think it will be difficult of me to understand how they are able to

commit so much when the academics of the university are as demanding as they are.

While thinking over their hectic schedule for the year, it would force anyone to come to the conclusion that the members of the Illini Pullers must love what they do or they wouldn't have the audacity to commit to it. As far as I know, no one forces them into participation; it is entirely up to them to dedicate themselves. It is clear from their awards that they take this very seriously and are good at what they do. The team must be fairly close-knit from the amount of time spent together. By being a member of the College of ACES, which is shared by the majority of the team I think I will be able to connect more efficiently with them than a person from a different area of study. I have a great confidence that I will learn a great deal about them and myself during this semester. It is my goal to find a balance with school and life outside of school, along with my place at the university, just as they have, by observing and researching the Illini Pullers.

**Plan:**

Artifact Analysis

Stepping into the Agriculture Engineering Sciences building is immediately an odd feeling. The ceiling is uncovered exposing the color coded vents and pipes that run over head. The smooth, grey concrete floor guides you forward into the main floor. There are filled trophy cases and out dated bulletin boards along the wall. After passing the glass case filled with field tiles of the past, the white washed industrial doors labeled with the Illini Pullers name and insignia greet passersby. Once inside the threshold you immediately see a small open office complete with desk, stacks of paperwork and old metal desk chair. Along the hallway wall is a green chalkboard with half a dozen phone numbers written in a female's script. There are also two award plaques from the previous years leaning haphazardly along the board's running trim. On the other side of the board, written in white chalk is "the wall of shame"; beneath it are dozens of stick figures illustrating various inside jokes, some from before the senior members' time.

At the end of the short hallway is an open door identical to the main door. Once in the room, your eyes follow the wall past the steel cabinets filled with oil, varying chemicals and a million different kinds of bolts, to a half barrel filled to the brim with empty, smashed Mountain Dew and Pepsi cans. Taking in the full view of the room with sound barriers, one can't help but notice the three ride-on lawn mowers. The two right most tractors have no cover over the front. They all sport multiple engines and with a closer look, it is obvious that they none of them sport mower decks and are rather elongated.

Curiously, but maybe obviously enough they all have names: 2007's "The Legendary Chief", 2006's "The Chief's 3 in 1", and 2005's "Commander-In-Chief". The 2007 and 2006 models are hoodless, revealing five and six engines in their designs. Every model present is stickered, wherever there is paint with a sponsor's name or logo. They vary from international companies, such as John Deere all the way down to local businesses. A member informed me that they require between \$30,000 and \$40,000 worth of sponsorships to complete a tractor fit for competition. The reason for the immense amount of money is partly to do with ordering parts. Instead of being able to produce thousands of tractors, as a factory would, the Pullers are only building one. This increases costs because the majority of the parts are custom and not casted as the usual orders part makers receive would be. Building one custom tractor from scratch is a costly undertaking. With all the finances invested in the capability of the Illini Pullers, they certainly have large expectations to fulfill. Not only are the sponsors counting on the tractors but the members are also depending on their reliability and their own efforts.

These three tractors in the center of the room are the heart of the Illini Pullers, their "babies" so to speak. The members put countless hours into their design, building, testing, and modification. One member told me that she had already put several thirty-plus hours into the design this semester. Their semi weekly meeting can last from fifteen minutes to an hour and a half. The reason for the variable is due to the schedule of building and designing, for instance they currently are reviewing design ideas so the meetings are longer, while later in the season if they are stalled due to a delayed part, there isn't much to discuss other than complain about the absent part. The group's current thirty- one members have limited flexibility when it comes to time dedicated to the team.

The Illini Pullers were described to me multiple times as being like a small business. Like a family run business, they are close and always at the shop. Division is likewise present in both. Illini Pullers are divided into two main parts which are business/paperwork and design/building. As one member explained the reason for the division, "not all thirty one students are going to be able to turn a wrench at once." This makes sense, but I figured everyone who was involved would be interested in getting their hands dirty with oil, not getting sponsors and ordering parts. But as always, someone has to get it get the job done.

The Illini Pullers facility impressed me; it had all the tools to get the job of building a tractor done. It was clear that the workshop was used predominantly by males due to the organized mess that was covered the space. The dust pan still filled with waste lying on the

floor was a big clue, for only a man would do that. The foldable table against the southern wall was filled with opened bags of potato chips and cookies. Farther along the southeast corner of the room was an overhang, beneath which were metal counter tops with two bar stool accompanied by more stacks of paper. Above the overhang were two stacks of four large tires piled on top of each other. There was also an air compressor, fuel powered generator, and several cardboard boxes with various objects protruding from their tops. I hope I'll be able to navigate through this unfamiliar room with ease like the members do.

The Illini Pullers are even closer than I originally predicted. They operate as a small business would, all dividing the work for a common goal. Sponsors entrust them with thousands of dollars each year in hope of a prominent return in the final competition. Not all the hope is in the sponsors, each member has wants and goals for the team and their quarter scale tractor. Just by the observing the names of each of the three tractors it is clear that there is a compelling passion for their team, school, and future.

**Data:**

September 15, 2008

Initial Meeting with the Puller's V.P.

Competition:

Judged on 3 categories:

- Results of Pull
- Oral report
- Written Report

Financing Pullers annually:

\$30K to \$40K required a year

Funded by sponsors

Engineering Design Council supports half of the funding

Members:

31 current members

Over 100 prospective members, numbers always go down

In meeting 2 girls, 15 guys

Not everyone goes to design meetings on Mondays

"not something you do, but a way of life"

20-30Hrs a week, dec. is worse!

Small Business Style:

Supplier on One, not thousands

Lots of number crunching

Limits on tractor: 900 lbs, 600 Horsepower

President and Design President have final say

A team: returning members, past experience

X Team: new comers, last year's tractor, fix and present

Came in first place last year

Resources:

ASABE.org

¼ scale: team pics, rules, etc

#### Annotated Bibliography

1. Newsom, Kim. "*The Art of the Sell.*" FFA New Horizons December 2006.

The author speaks to the reader about the growing field of agricultural sales and marketing. She helps us understand through a professional in the field, Tamara Craig Schilling that "effective sales specialists never really sell anything, but instead builds trusting relationships that lead to product sales." Newsom also reflects on the importance of a salesperson's inner qualities. They need to be a self started, personable, and responsible. She also reiterates that sales professionals need a working knowledge of agriculture and recommends taking annual classes at a community college and interning for companies such as Caterpillar during the summer.

I chose this article as a resource because it has

several key factors that will help to understand the Illini Puller members. The students are going to have to work to "sell" their tractor to the judges during the oral and written portions of the completion. Likewise, some of the students may have interest in the sales and production aspects of agricultural machines as future careers. This article was also helpful, just by where I found it, in a student magazine. It shows that there is a larger interest than I had originally thought in this area of agriculture production.

2. Lambert, Douglas Allan. *The U.S. Farm Equipment Industry and the Demand for Farm Tractor Horsepower*. Urbana: 1981

This document was a thesis project for the author; I chose to use a chapter out of this piece entitled "The Demand for Farm Tractors." In this chapter Lambert covers when a farmer will decide to go out and purchase a tractor, he says the actual decision happens an average three months before the purchase. I learned that farm tractors are designed to allow repairs fairly easily. Lambert reviews previous studies for calculating the demand of a tractor. However I don't believe I'll be able to use any of those equations to my benefit in the near future. I chose this source based on the fact that its author did this writing as project for the University of Illinois. I believe it will be able to help me look deeper into the mathematical aspects of tractors and their demand later on. This is the only book I chose to cite. I was only able to look through a single chapter before feeling overwhelmed and unintelligent against his equations and professional style of writing.

3. Doherty, Bryan. "A Fair Price for Corn" *Agriculture Online*. 19 September 2008. 20 September 2008.  
<<http://www.agriculture.com/ag/story.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/ag/story/data/1221852302658.xml>>

Doherty proposes the question that is a rather hot topic in the farming industry right now. The price of corn has gone skyrocketing up dramatically within the last few years. This is due in part to demand, rising fuel costs, and drought. The demand has increased because of the fight over the corn for fuel or food. Ethanol is now in higher demand than ever with the cost of oil making record breaking history. This being said, the fuel to run the equipment and transport the product to its various processing locations costs more than ever. Also the always prominent variable, weather has taken its toll on the corn producers of America in several growing regions. Doherty predicts the corn market price to level out at \$5.00 a bushel for 2008, with a possibility of \$6.50 in the 2009 season. He says that if these prices keep raising it will create an uncertainty in the market and that farmers will be fighting for acres.

I chose this online article because it was extremely

recent. It was also relevant to the Illini Pullers because of tractors and their farming history. I'm sure a lot of member's livelihood is stocked up in the corn industry one way or another, so it matters what happens with the price crisis.

The tractors that the team currently builds run on standard fuel, not ethanol. They may want to get ahead of the times and convert to ethanol run engines. This would help them in competition and may get them more sponsorships. Also because they are run on normal fuel they are also feeling the same pains as the average farmer with the wallet crunch presently happening, although I'm sure they are feeling dramatically less.

4. "*The National Farmers Union News*". 2003. 20 September 2008.

I decided to go through the entire year of this periodical, I was given a limited amount of time to go through it since you are unable to check out the material. I thumbed through each monthly newsletter and discovered a plethora of information. The Ohio Farmers Union created a network for other farmers to donate or sell their hay to farms suffering from a drought. There was a review of their annual convention which included praise for Senator Patrick Leahy for standing up for "true organics" and not the "biopharms." In the January newsletter, there was a "Washington Alert" with a second headline reading "America needs Estate Tax Reform, Not Repeal." The organization believes that their repeal advocates are being selfish and not looking out for the American family farm. "Not a single family farm in recorded history has ever been lost due to estate tax." They believe in this fact and believe the advocates in Washington have been exaggerating the costs of responsible estate planning. The current statistic available in 2003 states "98% of family farms are exempt of estate tax."

The National Farmers Union believes that is the tax exempt value was to rise from four million to eight million dollars would secure the passing of farms throughout generations. This bill needed sixty senator votes later in July. The publishers called on the members of the Union to contact their senator to support the bill. The result of the bill was not published in the club's calendar year.

I believe that the National Farmers Union newsletter is a great source for anyone involved in agriculture. It would be great to be able to get my hands on a current newsletter. Although I do believe that this annual periodical was useful in gaining the perspective of active farmers. I'm sure they are still feeling the repercussions of the events that occurred in 2003. I was also pleased that they included a Price Barometer with every month, which served the purpose of monitoring the market prices for the readers.

5. American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers

Website .ASABE 2008. 20 September 2008. <[www.asabe.org](http://www.asabe.org)>

This website is a great resource for me. The organization hosts the quarter scale competition and other related teams. I know firsthand, that members of the Illini Pullers log in at least once a week to check on up comings and recent news. They form the rules and they can all be found online. The website has links to ordering related periodicals. There are links to public affairs and other information that members are interested in. This not only helps students involved in the ABE, but also the professional members.

I was easily able to access a copy of the X-team and A-team rules and procedures publication along with the official brochure of the Quarter-Scale team. Inside the rules manual I learned a lot of the specifications necessary for a safe and successful competition. The A-Team, the more experienced members rule manual says that the team members must be active in the club for at least one semester before the competition which makes sense, because how could someone possibly have a large roll and impact on the project if they haven't been involved with it from square one.

They are not allowed to have direct help from an outside professional source. I found it interesting that a school is allowed to have two teams competing against each other. I'm curious as to how they would be able to support two teams considering the financial burden that is required each year.

When it comes down to size, there are more rules than there are about member specifications. The weight may not exceed the whopping 850 pounds. There are two weight pulling classes, Class I (1050 pounds) and Class II (1550 pounds) for pulling categories. There are even specifications about the number of drive tires and the use of sixteen horsepower engines. Also the frame must be completely custom and not a purchasable lawn tractor model. I found it interesting that the engines are supplied by the Competition Organizing Committee, because of the fact that the University of Illinois Team has models with five and six engine models which must be costly.

I have learned a lot from this research and I'm sure I have plenty more to do. I was disappointed using the library search generator. I was unsuccessful in finding the history of tractor pulls or the original purpose behind them. I was also trying to find resources on how to make a tractor pull to its full potential, but I believe I'll be observing this first hand as I observe the Illini Pullers on their journey to competition.

September 22, 2008 Illini Pullers Design Meeting

Time: 7PM

Location: Computer Lab located in AESB

Pre-meeting:

The room was filled with about twenty students, one other girl besides me. There was food and pop in the hands of the members inside the lab. I always thought we couldn't have such things in the computer areas; guess there is an exception to every rule. It probably had to do with the fcst that there was not a single faculty member present.

Meeting:

The meeting was jokingly called together by the design leader, everyone was quiet. He went over the rules and revisions for the A-Team's upcoming season. They decided to change from the six engine to the five engine design due to the new weight limit. The heavy class was moved to a higher weight level, they worried about the strain on the frame and discussed gear ratios. After this point I was pretty much lost when it came to knowing exactly what they were talking about. There was an almost heated argument between the leader and what I assume is a senior member about the use of chains this year versus traditional belts for the engines. The discussion was respectful, the senior member acted as the devil's advocate so to speak. A lot of answers were consistent with, "we'll figure it out when we get there." When these two members were discussing across the room, small conversations started between members who were seated near each other about the chain vs. belt situation or plans for the upcoming weekend.

The team members present voiced concerns about the serviceability aspect of the competition. They believe that the chains would hurt them in this area however, the fact that they used traditional belts last year in competition and still suffered in that area helped to sway opinions. They rambled on about parts and ability to do certain methods

By the time 7:40 pm everyone looks bored. They plan on testing new parts on machines, that will break the parts to test the stress they are able to withstand, which will be costly, but allegedly worth it. Members were told to email the leader with any new ideas. A house party was announced, attendance was encouraged even though the party occurs on a school night. The leader said they were about done, but that the freshman had to go down to the shop to go over shop safety. Everyone left the computer lab chatty, but looking tired.

29 September 2008

Annotated Bibliography: Web –based Research

**1. YouTube.YouTube, LLC.2008.28 September 2008.  
<<http://www.youtube.com>>.**

This site proved to be entertaining, while educational depending on which clip you choose to view. This site is the most known online video site to date. There are a range of videos related to tractor pulling. Other websites even provide links to YouTube video clips they feel is important for their users to view.

I was rather impressed that there was such a selection of tractor pull related videos online. I had just figured that pullers and farmers for that matter aren't internet savvy. My theory was proven wrong; I believe they find a sense of pride in broadcasting their accomplishments over the internet for all to see.

**2. Puller Zone. Outlaw Truck and Tractor Pulling Association. 2008. 28 September 2008.**

<<http://www.pullerzone.com>> .

This sight provided a plethora of valuable information on the history of tractor pulls; the first of which dates back to 1929 in Bowling Green, MO. It details the need for regulation which is the reason behind forming associations. It describes early pulling style as, "Pull on Sunday, plow on Monday." However that is not the case for the majority of pullers out there today. The website also provides a list of registered pulling vehicles associated with the OTTPA and is complete with video clips members have added on their own.

This sight was found through a search engine, as most of these resources where. What caught me off guard was the difference in the website URL in contrast to the website's sponsor. This sight was extremely informative and the history did match what I found in later sources.

**3. ITPA. Illinois Tractor Pulling Association. 2008. 28 September 2008. <<http://www.itpapulling.com>> .**

This website hosts tons of photos and recent standings. There is a bit of everything too, varying from member information to classifieds to official association rules. It also describes the still running "battle of the brands" as "John Deere vs. IH vs. AC and Dodge vs. Chevy vs. Ford." The association also states that they ended their ties with the NTPA in 2000, although it did not mention a reason for the split. Now the group has "alliances" with OTTPA, with lots of co-sanctioned

pulls. The sight does have a forum, but isn't very active. I liked this website primarily for the brand vs. brand outlook pullers share. I find in almost amusing because it reminds me so much of the way people, primarily men have brand preferences and prejudices for sports cars and other automobiles. It was also neat and thought provoking when I read about their split with the National Tractor Pulling Association.

**4. Yesterday's Tractor Company. 2008. 28 September 2008. <<http://www.ytmag.com>>.**

This site is the "antique tractor headquarters." However they do provide a tractor pulling discussion board, which was active. Among the forums there are specific ones such as, "Tractor Talk" and "Restoration and Repair" all of which looked fairly active. Outside of the forums they are a purely antique tractor site.

What really moved me about this website was the tractor pulling discussion board. A member had posted that his pulling son had died in a car accident just the day before. Members offered their thoughts and prayers to him and his family. One member even commented that he had met his son at a pull and he was "very knowledgeable with the Deeres" and that he'd be greatly missed. This discussion showed me how close-knit these enthusiasts really are. It was moving to see such a quick and caring response to the grieving man's post.

**5. Physics Forums. Jelsoft Enterprises, Ltd. 2008. 29 September 2008. <<http://www.physicsforums.com>>.**

This site is primarily used in the form of someone asks the "physics" of a problem, then several people in return try to help them solve their problem. This site would not be a primary source for most pullers. However, I ran into a blogger trying to figure out the physics behind the pulling sled in order to get ahead in the game. One blogger replied to his request, "that's like trying to apply physics to win a basketball game, it's pointless."

This amused me immensely, but I give the kid credit for trying anyway.

**6. Full Pull. Full Pull Magazine. 2008. 29 September 2008. <<http://www.fullpull.com>>**

This was a resource for the magazine's subscribers and people interested in subscribing to the quarter-annual magazine. There is a prominent link to the magazine editor's Ebay store. It also list by state, sixteen in total, of where someone might be able to pick up an issue. The site also posts results for 2007 and 2008 popular pulling events. There is a link to photos and videos. There are also links to ad information for advertising your next pulling event or classified ads. They also kindly added a link to other pulling websites; unfortunately the ones listed have not been

updated lately.

**7. US Tractor Pulling. US Tractor Pulling. 2008. 29 September 2008. <<http://www.ustractorpulling.com>>.**

This website first appeared to be a great resource for any and all pullers, until you try and click on any link within the website, none of them worked. If they had you would have been able to read important, relevant articles. The site also included a small history of tractor pulls that was consistent with other material found. I did enjoy their blurb on the importance of safety while tractor pulling. It included a YouTube video that showed a pulling tractor's engine being blown followed by a small explosion. No one was injured, except possibly the driver's ego.

**8. NTPA. National Tractor Pullers Association. 2008. 29 September 2008. <<http://www.ntpapull.com>>.**

The website opens with an offer for graduating high school and current college students to apply for one of their three \$1000 scholarships. Further down the main page there are links to current point standings. The history of the association matches all the other sites. This association was one of the first, joining together eight Midwest states in 1969. They are managed by World Pulling International for over 21 years now. The NTPA has headquarters in Ohio.

I found the site's picture and photo gallery informative. The site does push a lot of emphasis on the advertisement of their four different sponsor levels. I thought it was considerate of them to support the children of members with scholarships. The website did not mention anything about the separation that occurred between them and the ITPA in 2000.

**9. Field Day of the Past. Field Day of the Past. 2008. 29 September 2008.**

**< <http://www.fielddayofthepast.net>>.**

This website is a promotional site for the "Field Day of the Past" weekend held in Virginia every September. I used only a single page of this website for useful information. I was searching for tractor pull classes that are common for an event. I certainly found them here. There were over 24 classes, not including the lawn/garden tractor pull for children twelve and under. Classes were by weight, and type of modification, with even several antique tractor classes. This site served its purpose for my research and I'm sure it's useful for its other patrons.

**10. ASABE. American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers. 2008. 29 September 2008. < <http://www.asabe.org>>.**

This site was obviously the most useful, seeing as it is the host of the Quarter Scale Tractor Competition. This is predominately a professional member society. The website

includes a easy to use technical dictionary and other resource links, which include career resources, forums, and much more. They also offer several ways to receive new periodicals. This site is for certain the most useful website out of all the association pages that I have visited and looked over. Its members must visit it quite frequently.

I just wanted to add briefly how impressed I am with this organizations website. It covers just about everything related to agricultural and biological engineering. It surely took many man hours to format and gather the information that is present today on the site; they should be proud.

Thursday, October 2, 2008

Illini Pullers

General Meeting

Prior to the start of the meeting, the senior leaders had to decide where to hold the meeting due to the ASABE officer meeting that was running late in our meeting room. The boys moved us over a room with loose wall shelves, and started the overhead projector. The projector was not showing the very leftmost side of the computer screen on the board, so one senior member jumped up onto the table directly under the projector and began toying with it. After five or so minutes of everyone telling him to hit this button or change this setting he shut it off the machine, after which it would not turn back on. By that time, the ASABE officer meeting had concluded and we went back to the designated meeting room. It was time to start the meeting.

The boys joked about having a food eating contest with the food the ASABE officers had left in the room. None of them however were willing to clean up the food, but were willing to eat most of it. The same member who had toyed with the projector said to one member, "Does this say janitor?" as he ran his ringer across the John Deere logo that was embroidered onto his worn down baseball hat. I took notice that there were three girls, other than myself and sixteen boys present.

The meeting was finally called to order. They loosely followed Robert's Rules of Order starting with the review of old business; however no secretary or treasurer reports were mentioned or provided. The old business was following: x-team meets after general meeting, member info. Sheet went around, and discussed prices and ordering for shop shirts and team polo's. New business was almost as eventful with a quick oral report on the Engineering Design Council proposal that was submitted, senior members explained the

importance of being able to fundraise as much as you ask for, seeing how the council price matches your proposal. The group's proposal for this season was 18K. The group then proceeded to discuss hoodie designs for the team, followed by a joke about tattooing the group's logo on their backs and how they would have had to burn it off of what I assume is a former member. The joke was in reference to the last "Sons of Anarchy" television episode. Moving on.....

The new business was followed up by the week's design meeting overview. The design leader, who is also the one who "broke" the projector in the other room and also made the janitor remark led the discussion. He said that not much had changed, talked about using a gear box and asked that the guy who new the specifics on gearboxes to model it out on the "ProE" software. He also asked if anyone had any "revelations" on design ideas. Someone suggested using Legendary's (a former competition tractor of the club's) style and removing the conflicts with chains. Someone next to me softly voiced, "that a boy" in praise of the other club member suggesting what he must have been thinking. The design leader goes back and forth discussing this with another senior member, while the rest of us are all quiet and looking quit bored, someone keeps holding back her coughs. After a few more minutes of this, the coughs are no longer muffled and people start getting antsy. The boys wrap up their discussion and the x team members are asked to stay seated while the rest of us are free to leave, thankfully!

Monday, October 6, 2008

Illini Pullers

Design Meeting

A few members walk in before the meeting starts and get settled, there were about twelve of us. A couple more were walking in, when the design leader turn to them and says to one, "Tell your grandma I'm sorry." I thought it was a new version of the always popular "your mom" jokes. However he started explaining his sentiments, saying that while farming he went into her field and ran over a few plants, a few times. This made me wonder about myself, why I had originally jumped to the conclusion of it being a joke of sorts.

The meeting started off with a "So....any revelations over the weekend?" I had my own personal one but decided to not voice my opinion of "yes, I realized you say this at least once every meeting." The leader reminded everyone that the Homecoming parade was this

Friday, and that three of the older members would be driving the tractors, but all hands are needed to help out. He asked that everyone meet in the shop at three wearing the team polo's. A few of the members suggest doing wheelies in the parade and the necessary factor of having members at key points along the parade route with gasoline tanks to refill the tractors.

Back to the design aspect, they plan to have the clutch in the shop by Monday. Corban is working on a stand for the tractor. The design leader encouraged members to be present when they test parts on the "dyno" since not many of them have experience with it. Members were told to "Bring your boxing gloves" to Thursday's meeting. At the meeting they will debate the two designs and after the meeting Corban and design leader Kesler will have the final say and everyone will know by Monday. The idea on Monday is to just "run with it."

My goal is to try it to the general meeting on Thursday and also show up to help them set up for the parade on Friday.

October 14, 2008

Interview Transcription

Subject: [REDACTED]

Grade: Senior

Leadership Position: Illini Pullers President

Interview Date/Time: October 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:45 PM, before I.P. General Meeting

[REDACTED] Alright, so what motivated you to become a member of the Illini Pullers?

[REDACTED]n: Ugh, when I was a freshman, actually before I came to school I knew about the club. I'd been involved with tractor pulling before, so it was a pretty obvious choice. Beyond that I just wanted to do something more; they say to join an extracurricular activity when you here so this seemed like a good idea so I got involved with this and I figured it could help resume' wise, getting a job and everything else. Taylor: Alright

[REDACTED] Umm, so how were you able to achieve a high ranking position this year and everything?

██████: It all comes, just work is pretty much what it does and somebody has to step up to do it. There's probably only four or five guys in the club that put in the kind of time that, or equal time that I do. Some of those have already been leaders before or others that just didn't have quite the years of experience that I had. -So just putting in a lot of time and the past few years just showing initiative.

██████r: And how many hours do you usually put in a week?

██████n: Ugh, it ranges anywhere near, on the bottom end five hours and there's some hours, weeks in the spring where its forty plus.

██████ Ok, like where would we are right now, in the season with hours per week?

██████: This week wasn't much, probably in the ten hour range, between calling sponsors, calling manufactures and looking through design stuff at this point. It'll definitely be picking up from here on out and not going back down.

██████ Right. -Lucky you.

██████: -Of course.

██████ Alright, do you find it a challenge to dedicate the needed time to both academics and pullers?

██████: Ugh, the needed time to academics, pullers no. The one will definitely take place over the other, but it's pretty easy to get them both done. I guess in that you sacrifice a lot of time watching tv, or going out, or doing stuff like that. Both academics and pullers are important to me so its pretty easy to get enough time for both of `em.

██████r: So tell me about your most memorable time with the Illini Pullers.

██████: Oh I'd have to say competition either year. Uh, each year had its upsides and its down sides but its an experience all together between actually going, talking to guys from other schools, competing, doing,-I've done oral presentations both years that I've been involved so workin', practicing those till two in the morning and givin' them the next morning. And just the social scene after, in the evenings being able to talk to the guys you may only see once or twice a year is really fun.

██████ Do you spend a lot of time with each other socially? -And

what do you do?

██████████: Ugh, I'd have to say that a large percent of the people I spend time with are members of pullers. I live with Kesler and Schilling, ugh Tallins and Salinski are over a lot. Kim, I hang out with a lot, and what we do is just goin' out, watchin' tv, shootin' shit, (Taylor Laughs)doing whatever. We went down to our lake place a couple weeks ago. There were about ten of us that went down for the night so just whatever any normal person would do.

██████████ -Hockey games

██████████: Yea, hockey games there you go, that type of stuff. But as you saw at the hockey game it was pretty much a group of pullers with a few others along with us so, yea we definitely spend a lot of time together.

██████████: -Inside the shop, and out.

██████████: -Inside and out. Sometimes too much, but by the end of the year you're really tired of seeing everybody.

██████████r: I've seen that blackboard.

██████████n: Yea (chuckles a little)

██████████ Can you come up with a reason for the gender dynamics of the club and explain it.

██████████: Well I think naturally males are more attracted to this, if you look at engineering, if you look at ag. Engineering. There's, I'm not sure about the new class, but there's definitely 90% male, 85% males in the class so it's only natural by the demographics that are around that approximately that much of the club will be. -But I think we're more, better situated than that, I think there's probably 6 or 8 eight girls involved in the club compared to 20 guys. So, its obviously still lopsided more toward the males gender. But again that's just the nature of the beast.

██████████r: Yea that makes sense.

██████████ So would you like to see more girls become active with the club?

██████████: I mean of course,there's -I'd like to see more people over all become active. Last year we pretty much had one new member and that really hurt us. We lost a pretty good group from the year

before and almost gained no one back. So next year we're gonna be short a lot of guys that would be steppin' up into some leadership positions since we really don't have any sophomores right now. -But yea, male, female, whatever, I'd like to see anyone.- If they like it, join.

██████████ Alright then in one word best describe the Illini Pullers.

██████████ Ok, an experience. -That's pretty much, I think the only thing you can say, its just.-Or on that it's also a lifestyle 'cause once your into it, you think about that just as much as you do school or anything else. And when you wake up in the morning, its Pullers usually before schoolwork that crosses your mind, but it's just a lifestyle. I mean you're here enough; I'm here on average five nights a week if not more. So it's definitely a lifestyle.

██████████ More like a job too.

██████████: I wouldn't say that it's a job. -Well it's a job 'cause you can have fun workin' too. It a lot of hours, it's as many as I worked this summer.

██████████ What are your predictions for this upcoming season?

██████████: Ugh, I think we're going to put together a solid tractor. One that's a lot more reliable than last year and get to competition, maybe not win every event or pull, but make four solid passes down the track. I'm confident that we can do well in all the other portions as well. We've got a lot of experience on the business side, we've got a lot experience in the design judging side so I think we can put together a pretty solid team this year, Or a pretty solid tractor with the group we've got.

██████████ Alright, one last question. -Chains or belts?

██████████: Chains, I hate belts. I don't-I built the belt system last year and I hate 'em.

██████████ gotcha

██████████: Well there you go.

██████████ Well thank you.

Interview Narrative

When I was a freshman, actually before I came to school I knew about the club. I'd been involved with tractor pulling before, so it was a pretty obvious choice. Beyond that I just wanted to do something more; they say to join an extracurricular activity when you here so this seemed like a good idea so I got involved with this and I figured it could help resume' wise, getting a job and everything else. [I]t's also a lifestyle 'cause once your into it, you think about that just as much as you do school or anything else. And when you wake up in the morning, its Pullers usually before schoolwork that crosses your mind, but it's just a lifestyle. I mean you're here enough; I'm here on average five nights a week if not more. There's probably only four or five guys in the club that put in the kind of time that, or equal time that I do.[I]t ranges anywhere near, on the bottom end five hours and there's some hours, weeks in the spring where its forty plus. This week wasn't much, probably in the ten hour range, between calling sponsors, calling manufactures and looking through design stuff at this point. It'll definitely be picking up from here on out and not going back down. I wouldn't say that it's a job. -Well it's a job 'cause you can have fun workin' too. It a lot of hours, it's as many as I worked this summer. I guess in that you sacrifice a lot of time watching TV, or going out, or doing stuff like that. Both academics and pullers are important to me so it's pretty easy to get enough time for both of 'em.

I'd have to say that a large percent of the people I spend time with are members of pullers. I live with Kesler and Schilling, Tallins and Salinski are over a lot. Kim, I hang out with a lot, and what we do is just goin' out, watchin' TV, shootin' shit, doing whatever. We went down to our lake place a couple weeks ago. There were about ten of us that went down for the night so just whatever any normal person would do. [H]ockey games...that type of stuff...we definitely spend a lot of time together.

I'd like to see more people over all become active. Last year we pretty much had one new member and that really hurt us. We lost a pretty good group from the year before and almost gained no one back. So next year we're gonna be short a lot of guys that would be steppin' up into some leadership positions since we really don't have any sophomores right now. I think naturally males are more attracted to this, if you look at engineering, if you look at Ag. Engineering. There's, I'm not sure about the new class, but there's definitely 90% male, 85% males in the class so it's only natural by the demographics that are around that approximately that much of the club will be. I think we're more, better situated than that, I think there's probably 6 or 8 eight girls involved in the club compared to 20 guys. So, it's obviously still lopsided more toward the male gender. But again that's just the nature of the beast. [M]ale, female,

whatever, I'd like to see anyone.

October 15, 2008

#### ASABE Meeting Notes

Note: I attended this meeting because they are the host of the Illini Puller's competition in the spring. Many of the Pullers are also members of the society. Also, the Pullers had to cancel a tractor test pull today due to the rainy weather conditions.

Officer reports are given, nothing worth noting in my opinion. The only old business was last month's officer elections. The president then moved on to cover new business. This included a field trip on the coming Friday, Knights of St. Patrick scholarship nominations, committee formation, and the decided collaboration with the Ag. Mech. club.

ASABE would also like to host a bar crawl on October the 30<sup>th</sup>. All members are welcome to attend as well as purchase event t-shirts. The field trip this Friday will be combined with the Ag. Mech club to the SST Development, near Bondville. This is an education facility where the goal is to teach farmers about using high precision farming equipment.

#### Dates to note

October 25 and Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> there will be a basketball tournament for the club, round robin style. The winners will play the ASABE champion team from Purdue on Nov. 8<sup>th</sup> followed by a "hog roast" at the farm.

October 31<sup>st</sup>: there will be an ice cream social sponsored by the Alpha Epsilon between 2 and 4.

Also the club had received a thank you note from retired Prof. Bode. The letter was thanking them for their award of appreciation given to him when he retired last year.

After the conclusion of the meeting, a speaker and dinner followed

\*I apologize for the delay in posting this, it was done on time for class this past thurs.\*

October 23, 2008

## Analysis of Fieldwork Essay

After spending a bone chilling night with the Illini Pullers out on the farm all that my mind comes up with is the word "Tough." There were so many technical and mechanical difficulties that occurred, not to mention the unbearable wind. The first problem tonight happened before we were even at the farm. Someone had left on a program within the tractor which in turn ran the battery down. The design leader, Kelsler had brought in a charger earlier, but it didn't seem to be working; this was further proven when he touched the positive and negative clamps together. Even I know that's crazy, but he's just confident, seeing as no electrocution or explosions occurred after the clamps made contact.

When we arrived at the farm, they told us that the tractor "Legendary" didn't have any working brakes at the moment and wasn't able to be pulled. We were down to one tractor, Commander in Chief. It turned out that was the best thing that could've happened, other than the miracle of 80 degree weather at dusk in the middle of October. Kesler attempted a reverse donut with the Gator and preceded out to the track, we all followed.

After Commander in Chief was unloaded, everyone busied themselves with preparing the tractor and sled. The first problem that occurred on the track was the dysfunctional sensors that were attached to the pulling sled. These sensors were supposed to measure things like ground speed. Kesler and the other older members took a look at it and had it fixed in under five minutes. The first puller was ready and the engine was humming idly, I began smelling a toxic burning scent. Everyone else seemed to smell it too, they looked at the exhaust pipes and saw that the pipes were touching and burning the paint off the contacting hood of the tractor. They carefully moved the hood of the searing pipes. All it took to fix the problem was a quick turn of the wrench. Another few members made pulls, switching the variable weights each time. I was offered the opportunity to drive but turned it down because even some of the members were having a hard time driving it and they are already experienced tractor drivers. The next major thing to go wrong was an actual pull in which the sled rider forgot to turn on the sled weights. The driver put the pedal to the metal and the front of the sled jumped up in the air by the sheer amount of force. I took a look at the computer data from the miss-pull and it displayed a steep mountain as a representation of the ground speed of the sled. The guys in charge of the computer data suggested that they name the file, "Corban (the sled rider) fucked up." They do have a tendency of blaming others verbally for their misfortunes. Actually, a lot of things have a tendency of coming out of their mouths: swears, spit, sunflower seed shells, and laughter.

When we finally arrived at the last pull of the night the sun was long gone and trucks were lined along the dirt track to use the headlights in substitute of the sunlight. The last pull had begun and everyone was saying, "He's going to make a full pull." As I looked down the track, I noticed the weight box was still at the back end of the sled. Corban forgot to turn on the sled weights for the second time that night. The driver was told to slow to a stop, but being a first time driver on Commander in Chief and unfamiliar with its electric steering, stopped the vehicle on a dime. The Sled lurched forward toward the tractor, and landed on the upper area of the back axel. No one was hurt and both the tractor and driver seemed to be unharmed. The driver was harassed for the rest of the stay at the farm while we all cleaned up. It looks like a good chunk of their troubles are self-induced. Yet, a lot of their misfortunes seem to be just bad luck or unpreventable. Nevertheless, these guys are good spirited and were up for going to a local bar after getting cleaned up.

Getting the shop cleaned and organized is what they might need to focus is in on. It certainly does need a "mother's touch." They might have less incidents and more time if this were to actually happen.

However, there is a clear reason for the cleanliness of the shop. There are members coming and going in and out all day. They stop in, get what they can done, then go back to class. The Illini Pullers certainly do care about being clean in some areas. Sawing and drilling is discouraged inside the shop as it will get inside the engines and filters. Even the exhaust pipes have balled paper towels at their tops to prevent particles from getting inside. There is also an entertainment factor to this practice; they rev the engines as it turns on and out flies the paper balls.

The Illini Pullers are a joking lot; they like to "give each other shit." The girls don't seem to be as into the humor or into the club as most of the boys. Given there are fewer girls in general, simply because there are less girls within the Agriculture and Biological Engineering major. I had originally thought that girls may be unofficially discouraged from joining; that the boys would just want this to be a "men only" sort of activity, but this is certainly not the case. The Pullers are always looking for more hands and minds to help regardless of gender. I was the only girl present at the pull tonight and they were all friendly with, "pardon me"s and sincere smiles. I was even loaned a hoodie to put over mine since I was freezing cold. It gave me this old fashioned, rarely seen chivalry, because I wasn't the only one underdressed and the member didn't know me as well as the other members, but he still chose to offer it to me. Some of the boys did tease me for looking like a linebacker given the extra build from the added layer.

Spending more and more time I realize that the Illini Pullers are really just a group of friends with a project to work on. They have meetings twice a week, these are run very objectively. Yet, when it comes to after the meeting or any hands on time, they are boisterous and entertaining all while getting the necessary work done. Illini Pullers even have a chalkboard at the second entrance of the shop with chalk drawings of inside jokes. Some are so old that even the senior members don't know what they are about. I pride myself with knowing some of the latest drawings and their hidden meanings. I've even given to some thought about joining up with the group next semester. I wouldn't be any help with the design or shop work, but I could be useful in the business aspect. This is an area where Kim, a senior member is in charge. She is a senior this year and they'll need someone to take over her position next year. Just as the Pullers see everything, it might be worth a try.

\*\*\*\*\*10/29/08\*\*\*\*\*Note: I am unable to attend either of the pullers meetings due to an exam and a job shadowing, I will make up the missed time next week.

November 11,2008

Illini Puller's General Meeting

7PM

Meeting opened with a "not too much to go over tonight" from the president. Eleven members in total were present; I was the only girl also.

New business covered a ProE computer class they would like to host for members in hope that more will be able to use it during the competition season. There didn't seem to be much interest and the date was changed.

The design president made a joking remark toward a student from Indiana, saying "You guys can't even vote right." Everyone laughed and side comments were made. This all came from the Indiana student arguing with him about holes in the frame, which seems silly to me. The design leader also went over how the clutch works. He used the actual part in collaboration with his presentation and know I actually know how a clutch works too!

There were also a few reminders about upcoming deadlines. A joke was made about going out that night and the meeting was over. -

Except no one got up and left. They just started telling stories like when Kesler got caught stalking a squirrel with a knife by Corban. Kesler simply said, "I was practicing my Indian-sneaking up skills"

This upcoming Wednesday there will be a pull at 3 PM.

October 13, 2008

General Meeting

7PM

The pre-meeting consisted of picking in southern states, I'm still unsure of how this came about but a few things were said including, "That's the way of the C.S.A. (Confederate States of America)" and "Their teeth grow left to right down there (Ozarks)"

The meeting's gender dynamics were: 3 girls to 19 guys

The meeting:

This Saturday will be Salute to Ag. Day, the main event will begin at 9 am. Members were asked to sign up for timeslots to work the booth and watch the tractors. They will need to meet at the shop, at 7:45 am. It was stressed that this is a good opportunity to pitch the club to possible sponsors at the football game. The attire is to be the team polos and jeans.

The Engineering Open House is beginning its safety classes for participating clubs. I am told that this is earlier than past years, but just one member needs to attend the two short classes.

There was a brief presentation by Kesler on the Commonshaft and Powertrain, goals and objectives were expressed at this time. Also the clutch testing results were presented, followed by an explanation for the outcome.

Kesler said they are "at the point of no return" meaning that the majority of their major part design deadlines are coming up quickly. If you see something wrong you are supposed to speak up now, rather than have it become a huge problem later on. It's better to know now while there are more options available.

Following the conclusion of the meeting, X team members were encouraged to clean up the shop, as it's a "good opportunity to find

where things are in the shop”

**Discuss:**

**EUI Links:**

**Reflect:**

```
<!-- /* Font Definitions */ @font-face {font-family:"Cambria Math";
panose-1:2 4 5 3 5 4 6 3 2 4; mso-font-charset:0; mso-generic-font-
family:roman; mso-font-pitch:variable; mso-font-signature:-
1610611985 1107304683 0 0 159 0;} @font-face {font-
family:Calibri; panose-1:2 15 5 2 2 2 4 3 2 4; mso-font-charset:0;
mso-generic-font-family:swiss; mso-font-pitch:variable; mso-font-
signature:-1610611985 1073750139 0 0 159 0;} /* Style Definitions
*/ p.MsoNormal, li.MsoNormal, div.MsoNormal {mso-style-unhide:no;
mso-style-qformat:yes; mso-style-parent:""; margin-top:0in;
margin-right:0in; margin-bottom:10.0pt; margin-left:0in; line-
height:115%; mso-pagination:widow-orphan; font-size:11.0pt; font-
family:"Calibri","sans-serif"; mso-fareast-font-family:Calibri; mso-
bidi-font-family:"Times New Roman";} .MsoChpDefault {mso-style-
type:export-only; mso-default-props:yes; font-size:10.0pt; mso-
ansi-font-size:10.0pt; mso-bidi-font-size:10.0pt; mso-ascii-font-
family:Calibri; mso-fareast-font-family:Calibri; mso-hansi-font-
family:Calibri;} @page Section1 {size:8.5in 11.0in; margin:1.0in
1.0in 1.0in 1.0in; mso-header-margin:.5in; mso-footer-margin:.5in;
mso-paper-source:0;} div.Section1 {page:Section1;} -->
```

Self Reflective Essay

I decided to tag along with the Illini Pullers; I soon discovered one of the most reoccurring difficulties I had to be defining them as a whole. I am friends with freshmen members through my ABE 100 class. This did add a level of comfort when I first began showing up to the Illini Puller meetings as I was able to find a friendly face. However this caused some problems of its own later on; I didn't begin to see any differences between them and any other RSO team. They had a budget, a goal, loyal members, even a mission statement. What made them any different or unique, surely there had to be something! I made it my own unofficial go to uncover what made them different from other clubs that existed on the University of Illinois campus.

I began to look at the way their group functioned with personalities. I felt like only a few personalities really shined through during meetings and the rest of the club was just an audience so to speak. Kesler and Corban were the two main characters that stood out. They

both have important leadership roles which I believe was a key factor. I interviewed Corban and was able to capture 66yh7hu last names but not much more than that and this is really disappointing to me. I believe this occurred because of the way the meetings are run. They are run very objectively and the leaders are the ones who do most of the talking. So I witnessed an overwhelming amount of meeting behavior and not so much their shop behavior. If this project had taken place during the spring semester when they are actually in the building process and not the designing process as they are now I'm sure I would have gotten a lot more shop action so to speak. I could tell this would be true because some personalities did begin to stand out more when meetings weren't being conducted, such as the time at the farm. I'm still glad and appreciative for the time and process of getting to know the members I did and spending time with them as a group.

As I go back through my rough notes, I noticed the progression and style of my field notes and how they evolved. The very first two meetings I attend had field notes that more or less resembled minutes from the club's meeting. There was very little detail about the members present and their actions. Through the progression of a few more weeks the minutes began slowly changing. I began adding the numbers of each gender present at the various meetings and so on. I believe the ultimate change in my notes occurred when I went out to the farm with the Illini Pullers and my ABE 100 class team. Here I only listened in and took pictures; it was far too cold and dark for me to be able to take any legible notes. I took this experience and the way I recalled everything and how I still got chills thinking about that frigid night to enhance my scope of writing. From then on, the differences in my notes were far different from those prior. I began writing down side comments and jokes I overheard while sitting in on the meeting. I also attended more Thursday general meetings, where more people are present and it's less technical than the Monday night design meetings.

In my free write mapping I noticed the same development occurred as in my field notes. They began very objective to eventually including information, for example: some members had Facebook. I don't know why they would or would not be associated with the social networking site. I just felt it was imperative to included in my findings and coming to understand the Pullers. As the mapping exercised continued my pages would get filled with more tidbits of information each time. It would be filled with more social dates and happenings that they had mentioned during the duration of meetings. It was during one of these mapping sessions that I realized that they did in fact you could verify gender by which name they called you by; males are called by last names, while females are called by first

names. I suppose there is no exact rhyme or reason, at least none that I could uncover. I always figured it was like high school where football players were often recognized by their last name rather than their first name.

Another thing I also took for granted was the artifact research aspect of the project. Don't get me wrong, I tried my best to find material on tractor pulls but there just wasn't anything to find. The printed material really hurt me in not uncovering any significant material. However the ASABE website, which is the host of the Illini Pullers competition in April made up for the lost, unfound material. This website provided me with rules upon rules, dimensions for the track, and regulation measurements for specific  $\frac{1}{4}$  tractors parts. This website was my saving grace so to speak when it came to knowing technical information that related to the Illini Puller's competition and its objectives.

I also missed having the club's vice president around; she had to take a leave of absence from the University due to a life threatening illness this past October. She was very informative and helped me not to feel as outnumbered as a girl at the meetings. She is doing better and I couldn't be happier to hear it, but I certainly did miss her presence. I know the Pullers do too, the guys even got around to sending her a get-well card which was very thoughtful of them.

My final interpretation of the Pullers occurred to me while I was writing the final draft of the long essay. I wish it would have come to me sooner, but beggars can't be choosers. Throughout all my "to the point" and "short and sweet" writings I've been able to get a grasp on who the Pullers are. I decided the Pullers could best be described as that diamond in the rough. Under all the engine grease are boys who are intelligent, kind, humorous, and are known even to show some chivalry now and then. Looking over all my notes and mapping, and racking through my brain this was as best as I could sum them up. As I mentioned previously, I wasn't able to get to know all of them, but I kept picking up this "vibe" that they really were the same when it came to the way they thought and acted inside and outside of Pullers throughout my experience.