When I was sixteen I had the opportunity to travel to Europe and work on my Aunt’s vineyard. The adventure to me was so exciting and has always provided a good starter for conversations with my boys. Even more so, however, the story reinforced the lesson that it is not only important to enjoy life but also work hard.

First, not everyone has had the opportunity to travel to Europe. Many less have had the opportunity to experience the very nature of the German people through working side by side with them in a Vineyard, eating the same foods that they ate versus the foods that were prepared with the tourist in mind at the typical tourist traps. Even the beers that the locals drank were different then the beers the tourist would imbibe on. These unique experiences always captivate my boy’s attentions when they are told.

The Germans are well known for their celebrating nature. Octoberfest for example is a world-wide known German Celebration. It is interesting to note that Octoberfest is not the only celebration that deserves acknowledgement, however. During my stay, I noticed a very interesting trend that the Germans literally liked to celebrate everything. There must have been a different celebration in every town going on at every moment. At least it seemed that way to me. Every night the locals of the small town I was staying in would go to the local eatery and celebrate each other with tasty food and good spirits. I often wondered how they managed to get anything productive done. After I had mentioned to my uncle that Germans sure know how to enjoy themselves, he chuckled out loud and said in his Southern German accent “Yes, we do, but we know that we will be working an exhausting day so we need our time to unwind”. I learned just what drives their celebratory style.

Ingrained in most of the Germans, especially German farmers, is the importance of work. This work ethic was showcased in how they wake early in the morning and work until the sun goes down. The work that I was a part of was hard, labor intensive work. The only stopping points were for the wonderful food breaks. Of course, at the end of the day we returned to the local eatery, ate our local eats, and drank our good share of beer with our friends. This time was not only valuable because it was fun but also because it was well earned and this made it that much more enjoyable. I looked forward to my return to the vineyard every day and the prospect of hard labor.

So, whenever my boys complain about having to work hard I like to remind them of my experience in Germany and how working hard actually allowed me to enjoy my fun time that much more. They don’t always heed my advice and I must remind this to them several times. In the long run, however, they do enjoy the family story and at least one day when they appreciate it they will look back and day dad was right!