I grew up in the Ozark Mountains of northern Arkansas and spent family vacations visiting relatives throughout the year in the Loess Hills of western Iowa. I have always found myself drawn to the outdoors for both work and play. During my youth, I would often dig holes, collect rocks, and/or wonder through the woods, with a fishing pole or gun in my hands looking for the next “big catch.” Therefore, it was not a surprise to my family when I decided to major in environmental, soil, and water sciences at the University of Arkansas and pursue a minor in wildlife habitat.

During my undergraduate studies, I became fascinated with soil and its relationship to all of the things I love for both work and play. At the start of my sophomore year, I was given an opportunity that led me down the path where I am now, but at the time, I had no idea that would be the case. My soil microbial ecology professor, Dr. Mary Savin, allowed me to lead two research projects while working as an hourly research assistant in her labs. These research projects gave me a glimpse into the life of a soil researcher. I was able to experience everything from submitting a grant proposal to carrying out data collection to communicating the results at the Annual Meeting and in journal publications. These experiences, along with numerous others with various faculty, were a blessing and turned my career interest to soil science research.

After obtaining my B.S. degree, I chose to pursue a M.S. degree in the Applied Soil Physics program at the University of Arkansas, under advising from Dr. Kristofor Brye, followed by a Ph.D. in the Soil Physics program at Iowa State University under advising from Dr. Robert Horton. During these years of graduate school, I learned that I could overcome my fear of public speaking, which led me to become absolutely enthralled with teaching. I also started becoming more involved with ASA, CSSA, and SSSA by participating in the Congressional Visits Days in Washington, DC and by serving as a member and chair of the SASES National Research Symposium Contest Committee. This allowed me to give back and share with the younger generation of students the great experiences that I had presenting in this symposium as an undergrad.

Just a few weeks ago, when I renewed my annual memberships to the Societies, I was embraced by so many memories going back to the first meeting I attended in 2005. As a Society member, I believe in community and promotion of our sciences. During the years of pursuing my degrees and engaging in activities with the Societies, I have been blessed by those who have placed many great opportunities in my path, starting with my first class period in Introduction to Soil Science and leading to my current position as Assistant Professor of Soil Physics in the School of Natural Resource Sciences at North Dakota State University. It has truly been an adventure. As a new addition to the Early Career Members Committee, I am excited to serve our community in the Societies and help create and build opportunities and adventures for others.

The Early Career Members Committee (ECMC) serves members beginning their careers, new professionals, and graduate students in agronomy, crop, soil, and environmental sciences with representatives from ASA, CSSA, and SSSA. The success of the ECMC depends on selected representatives to provide leadership and a voice for early career members within the Societies. One of our newest members to the ECMC is Aaron Daigh. Aaron received his Ph.D. from Iowa State University in soil physics and is now an associate professor at North Dakota State University. His research interests include water, solute, gas, and heat transport in soils under row crop agriculture, rangeland, and natural ecosystems. If you would like to learn more about the ECMC, visit www.crops.org/membership/early-career.

With Opportunity Comes Many Blessings

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