The multicolored lights soar across the arena of the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex at Walt Disney World in Orlando. Strobe lights flare up the sides of the fields as if they are lit with flames. I hear the vuvuzelas and noisemakers blaring out from the crowd. As we step on the stage, Kari Byron’s voice booms off the walls. Cheers erupt from the crowd of thousands in front of us, a deafening roar that dulls my other sensations. We've made it, we've done it, and how far we truly have come.

It's been a long journey. A journey that started with nine high school freshmen and friends tinkering around with motors, wires and metal in a garage. The more I got involved, the more I discovered my passion for building things. From having too many ideas and so little time to build them all, I learned to prioritize and optimize. From numerous all-nighters before competitions, I learned to be meticulous but still get the job done. From unexpected robot failures during competitions, I learned to be thoroughly prepared and attentive. As the captain and driver for my team, I learned to lead and perform under pressure. Most of all, I love to compete, but robotics has trained me to be humble and calm through both victory and defeat.

Yes, it's been a long journey, but a rewarding journey that I will treasure even more than any trophy or prize.