Reflection on Dan Barry’s “The Boys in the Bunkhouse”

“The Boys in the Bunkhouse” may have a more personal connection to me than other students. You see, I could have been one of them. In 2011, I was in a snowboarding accident. I was predicted not to live and at best have a far diminished mental capacity. Thanks to modern medicine and determination, I have exceeded those expectations.

However, had my accident occurred during a time when lesser treatments and knowledge about brain injuries was available, I could have easily ended up in an institution. My parents could have been advised this was the best option for me. I can easily identify with the desire to be a part of something to be proud of.
and work versus not wanting to waste away with no goals or hope despite
disabilities.

My initial thoughts in reading the story of the men was that this was a good concept. It gave opportunity to those who may not have had it otherwise. The jobs available gave the men a home, friendships, pride and a family. Had things been done properly, this type of work program could have been beneficial for the men and for so many who are still in need even today. Throughout the story, there are honest and well-meaning people involved with the men not only with the company, but in the community as well.

Looking past the first impression and into reality is where these men were living a very different life than appearances. That these men worked their whole lives for very little pay and were forced to live in disgraceful conditions was appalling. They were taken advantage of because of their disabilities and that is something that directly relates to my own situation.

I have had to relearn many things to overcome my deficits and there is still much to learn. I worry about being able to get a job, I worry about people taking advantage of me because I can be fooled into believing things that aren’t always true, I worry about being able to be successful in the world on my own without
the help of my parents to look out for me, I worry about being able to make smart, long-term choices. Because of who I am, many things concern me that average people take for granted. That doesn’t mean I am not determined to be successful, it just means that I may have to rely on others to help and guide my path in the course of my life.

History plays an important part in changing some things in the world for the better. While it is a tragedy that these men suffered and continue to pay the price of being pushed into a life they did not chose, it may help others like me. Legislation and regulations for those with disabilities has greatly changed throughout the years. While I must learn to make my way in the world, it is also my goal to set an example for others with disabilities and aid those in need when possible. I can only hope that in my life I am led, influenced, trained and guided by those who genuinely have my best interests in mind, but I am grateful to have laws that can also protect my rights.