

me!" I spoke to no one.

As I turned back in the seat, I felt a searing pain in my back and a burning in my legs, and all of a sudden, I reached down to touch my legs. I could neither feel or move my legs. Worst of all, I could not sit up anymore without holding tightly to the steering wheel. Then the reality came... I was paralyzed! It was 5:30 P.M., and I sat there holding on for four hours until my daughter finally found me.

Often times, after having a serious accident, one is rendered unconscious and cannot remember much of what happened. That was not the case in my accident that left me paraplegic. I remember it all -- every pain, every painful thought of life, every painful thought of death. And, I was blessed!

During those four hours I came to a complete understanding of who I am and who God is. Not everyone in the world has that privilege. Yes, I have come to know Him as my All.

I was totally dependent on Him. Stuck. Unable to move. For the first time in my life, I had no control over anything. I thought, "If I just had a pistol, I could solve my dilemma." I didn't, so I

couldn't. I realized that I could not remedy my situation. The only thing I could do was cry out to God (which I did), and He answered.

Four hours, in my way of thinking, was a long time to get an answer. But God was teaching me that His ways are



Pictured here is a wheelchair accessible hay feeder that Tom Covington designed.

not my ways.

I was immediately flown to Vanderbilt Hospital. After surgery to fuse my broken back, six weeks of in-patient physical therapy, and 90 days of out-patient therapy, I was prepared to live my life in a wheelchair.

So, what has it been like for me? I am a 57-year-old man who thoroughly enjoys and gets the most out of every day.

"How?" you ask.

Well, first of all, I realized that life is just a series of adjustments. From the day we

are born we learn to adjust. For many people, that is a very hard lesson to learn. In fact, many may never learn it. I was blessed to learn it early, and that lesson has allowed me to accept my present lifestyle without any serious repercussions.

I also realized that it was selfish on my part to keep the "dream"-- the farm. I sold the 120-head cow herd. I sold the equipment except what I knew I would need. I kept the tractor on which I was hurt because it was perfect for small usage, and also I had a sentimental attachment to it. Then I burst my dream bubble and sold the farm -- all but 15.45 acres, the new house we had built, my shop and a hay barn.

Then I began to adjust to having time. Yes, time! I, like many others today, was a workaholic, and to suddenly have free time... well, it was quite an adjustment.

Over these three years, I have made our house completely wheelchair accessible. I call our backyard "sidewalk city." There are sidewalks to the shop, sidewalks to the barn, sidewalks to the swimming pool and pool controls, and sidewalks to the dog pens. We don't vacation; instead, we build sidewalks!

But, as wheelchair farmers know, wheels don't turn very well in wet ground, and, for the first time in my life, I have done some wet-ground plowing with my wheelchair (Hence, the sidewalks!).

For the first year and a half of paralysis, I stayed inside and did some writing on various subjects on my computer. I also began a cookbook since I like to cook. My wife allows me that full-time privilege along with doing laundry. It seems I can pull clothes out of the dryer easier at my level than my wife can leaning over, or so she indicates.

But after 18 months, I had to get outside and till the soil. I had a ramp built so I could get on my lawn tractor. Now I do all the mowing and weed eating. Speaking of weed eating, I am open to suggestions on how to do that gracefully from atop the lawn tractor. I get it done, but not gracefully.

I had stalls built in the hay barn and corral fences to herd my stock. I then needed a cow to put behind the fences, and my wife told me to get one. So I did -- a beautiful, gentle, milk-in-the-pasture Jersey cow and a beautiful, black purebred Simmental -- both bred artificially and due in September 1997. I'm excited as

the "herd" builds.

We also have three mares, two AQHA mares, one with a month-old AQHA stud colt named "Hoss," one TWH mare and her yearling filly who will sell in the Sellabration Sale in Shelbyville in late August. The mares are at their "suitsors" being impregnated, so 1998 should be exciting as the foals arrive.

Also, I mentioned the dog pens. I raise Registered Australian Queensland Blue Heelers, selling the pups when they are weaned. In fact, I have made more off the puppies than off cows here of late because the price of cattle is so low.

I learned about the national AgrAbility project, which helps farmers with disabilities, and was referred to its counterpart in Tennessee. We discussed some design ideas to make my farm more accessible. A highlight of this spring 1997 has been the building of a ramp under the hay barn. The ramp has stations for my lawn tractor, my converted 4 x 4 ATV with all hand controls for a paraplegic, and a station for the IH484 tractor which now has hand controls. I can once again bushhog the pasture. I must tell you it was quite an experience getting on the

tractor on which I had my accident and driving off to bushhog.

But, as I have tried to tell you, life is one adjustment after another, and the biggest adjustment I have had to make is swallowing pride and asking for help when I realize the task ahead is too much for me to tackle and one I really want to accomplish. So, I have learned to ask for help.

It makes no difference what level of injury a person is. If he has the desire to achieve, he can make the necessary adjustments to achieve success in any endeavor. Of course, people with disabilities must sometimes ask for help in order to reach that success.

I could not have accomplished anything without God's help and the help of my wife of 34 years, Carole, who has, if the truth is told, had to make the most adjustments. She is a trooper for hanging in with me while I have adjusted and am still adjusting.

If you, too, have had an accident, take some free advice from a 57-year-old dentist/farmer who's been paraplegic for three years: Go for it! The sky is the limit!

I don't think of myself as any different from anyone who is not a paraplegic. I'm just a bit slower... perhaps it's my age. ■

DOWN ON FLOWER FIELD FARM

by Rosanna Bounds,
Pat Nagle's "mama," and
Tennessee AgrAbility

Until one July day in 1994, Pat Nagle of Rockford, Tenn., was virtually unstoppable. She forged ahead with plans for her miniature horse farm, tended to her family, her home, her accumulation of animals. She somehow found time for sewing, crafts, and gardening.

Then a fifty-pound bag of feed started to fall off its container. Without thinking, Pat reached across to catch it, and, in that instant, she sustained permanent damage to her back -- twisting bones and tearing muscles. Pat realized, in retrospect, no harm could have befallen the unopened bag of feed.

After therapy, visits to chiropractors, medications for pain and muscle relaxation, Pat tried acupuncture and finally surgical procedures to deaden or destroy painful nerves. Some things helped for a while, but the pain remained. Particularly painful for Pat was pressing on the tractor clutch, which she uses to get in her bales from the fields to areas where her horses are fed. Cutting, teddering, and baling hay were also difficult.

The Tennessee AgrAbility

Project arranged to have a hand lever added to the clutch of her MF 265 tractor so that Pat could have access to it more easily and have assistance pressing the clutch. Also, Pat's husband Bob, who is now retired, has taken over a big part of the loading and feeding. Tennessee AgrAbility continues to keep in touch, offering support in numerous ways.

Tennessee AgrAbility has been assisting Pat in finding a



Pat Nagle, Bob, and Buster

means of self-support that would not aggravate her injury and would provide a viable, expanding business for her. Having always lived on a horse farm, she has long been involved in the equestrian field (riding, showing, and breeding). Pat performs the majority of the health care practices necessary for the numerous animals on the farm. After much exploration on how she could work in a way that was less physically demanding, Pat learned about the Bio Scan

System. She acquired the Bio Scan as a way to be self-supporting again, since injury has ruled out the heavy labor of horse farming.

The Bio Scan System promotes healing and treats the acupuncture points of horses, cattle, cats and dogs. Pat has marketed the system to local vets and has helped conduct a seminar on its use. She has also been treating numerous animals on her farm and neighboring farms.

Pat has just completed a personal interest television segment for a Knoxville station which highlights her miniature horse and exotic animal farm. She has also generously donated one of her miniature horses to Camp Easter Seal's petting zoo in Mt. Juliet for the summer of 1997. Easter Seals and the campers thank Pat for all the joy she shares with others.

Pat has found an alternative enterprise that blends well her expertise with animals and her own personal experience with disabilities. AgrAbility has helped acquire assistive technology that accommodates her back injury.

The Tennessee AgrAbility Project is here to help others live and work independently. Call (423) 544-7444 in east Tennessee or (901) 855-7637 in west Tennessee if someone you know could benefit from these services. ■

ROPS AT COST

Protect your farm family and all tractor operators by installing a ROPS (roll-over protective structure) today.

All of America's leading tractor companies are offering farmers one of the most effective farm safety devices at cost. Dealers are encouraging farmers with older tractors that do not have a ROPS to buy them at cost now.

"Many fatal tractor overturns in Tennessee occur while bush hogging. Tractor overturns account for most tractor deaths each year and could be avoided with careful planning and operation," said Tim Prather, University of Tennessee safety specialist.

"For operator protection, the tractor needs a roll-over protective structure (ROPS) and seat belt," Prather continued. "You cannot be crushed between a ROPS-equipped tractor and the

ground if you stay on the seat."

How effective is a ROPS and safety belt? A person will likely get bruised by the seat belt and may bump his/her arms, legs and head during the crash, but he/she should be safe. As a bonus, the ROPS limits many overturns to 90 degrees rather than a complete rollover, reducing damage to the tractor as well as protecting the operator.

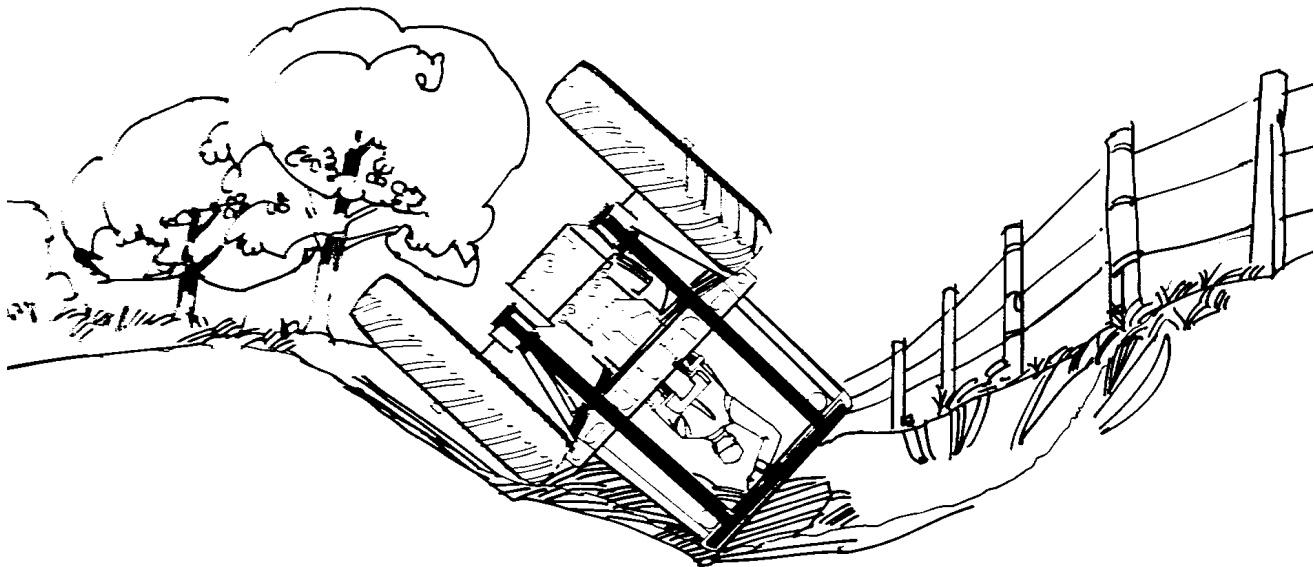
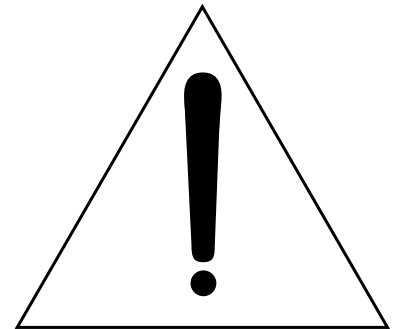
"It is usually not possible to jump from a tractor to avoid serious injury or death during an overturn. Survivors often relate that their overturns were over before they realized what was happening," Prather said.

Of course, a person should not wear a seat belt without a ROPS. If your tractor does not have a ROPS and seat belt, contact your tractor dealer to determine the availability and prices. There are lower prices and more ROPS models

available than ever before, and many tractors can be retrofitted with a ROPS and seat belt for under \$500 (less than the deductible on your major medical insurance). Use only a ROPS certified for your tractor. Don't bet your life on a homemade or otherwise uncertified ROPS.

"Tractor safety is no accident. Your tractor will do only what you tell it," Prather said. ■

(A special thanks to Mark Hampton of JOHN DEERE INSURANCE and PRYOR IMPLEMENT of Trenton for sending us ROPS safety information.)



WHAT IS TENNESSEE AGRABILITY?

WHO:

Tennessee AgrAbility is a cooperative effort of the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and Easter Seals.

PURPOSE:

To help Tennesseans with disabilities live independently and farm profitably by providing comprehensive technical assistance and information so they may continue to be agricultural producers.

FUNDING:

Grant from the USDA-EXTENSION SERVICE through a provision in the 1996 Farm Bill.

NEED:

Nationwide estimates show that

25 percent of all farmers have some type of disability which may hinder some farming activities. In Tennessee, it is estimated that there are 8,000 farmers with disabilities. Farming is consistently ranked as one of the three most hazardous jobs in the U.S. by the National Safety Council.

COST:

No fee for on-the-farm assessments and services. We make referrals to funding sources that fit individual needs.

ON-SITE SERVICES

STATEWIDE:

- worksite assessments to evaluate access to structures, equipment, farm and home
- emphasis on farm safety and

prevention of secondary injuries

- farm financial management through UT Extension's MANAGE program
- individual and family peer support
- disability awareness education in local communities involving youth groups such as 4-H and FFA

NATIONAL SUPPORT:

Since 1991, Breaking New Ground Resource Center at Purdue University and the National Easter Seal Society are the national grant partners who provide ongoing information and technical assistance on safely accommodating people with disabilities working in agriculture. ■

TENNESSEE AGRABILITY CONTACTS

PROVIDING DIRECT SERVICES TO FARMERS:



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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE TENNESSEE AGRABILITY PROJECT, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS SECTION.

Please tear off this portion and return if you are interested in: (check all that apply)

- An on-site farm visit from our staff to discuss possible assistive technology solutions and modifications.
- A group presentation about the Tennessee AgrAbility Project, farming with a disability, and/or a demonstration on assistive technology devices in agriculture.
- Phone consultation
- Additional information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone _____

County _____

Occupation _____

Type of Farming _____

REFERRAL TO THE TENNESSEE AGRABILITY PROJECT

Name of Farmer or Farm Family Member: _____

Address: _____

County: _____

Phone Number: _____

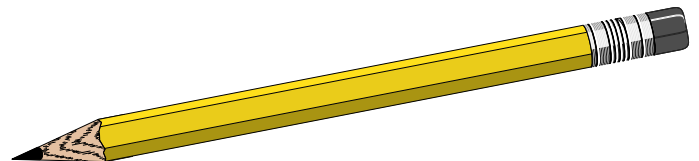
Type of Farm: _____

Nature of Injury or Disability: _____

Referred By: _____

Phone Number: _____

Thank you very much for your assistance informing the staff of the AgrAbility Project about a Tennessee farmer or farm family member who may benefit from the services of AgrAbility. This project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and is a cooperative project of the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service and the Easter Seal Society of Tennessee under special project number 94-EDFA-1-0016



CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

This newsletter is compiled and produced by Easter Seals.
Please send any story ideas for the January 1998 edition to:

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The Tennessee AgrAbility Project
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Or call 423-544-7444. No Fences is available by request in alternate formats.
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*This newsletter is available on request in alternate formats including large print, cassette, or computer disks.
Contact Eileen Griffin to make your request.*



Helping Tennesseans
Live Independently and Farm Profitably

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