

Life Changing Agriculture Injury Stories from Farmers

Wade's Blow from Hay Bales

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http://depts.washington.edu/pnash/ag_storycorps

Else: I hear you had a bad accident on the farm.

Wade: I did, I did have an accident on the farm. I was warned many times by incidents, if you will, with hay bales, which stack square hay bales in a big stack as we'd put up hay in the summertime, and then I would feed out of them during the winter. I thought I was always careful of pulling the hay off the top instead of off the bottom. When you pull out of the bottom the stack would tip over. Well, careful with that, I knew what I was doing. But I would use a farmhand and reach up on top of the pile and just grab bales and pull them off the top and let them fall. Then I would pick them up and put them on the front and go out and feed with it. Well, this particular morning I drove up to the bale pile where I had pulled the bales off the top the day before. I was just picking up the bales off the bottom that were laying loose. Threw the last one on the front of the farmhand as some were waiting for me to back up underneath of it, and they fell on top of me.

Else: Were you by yourself?

Wade: I was by myself. When they hit me they came down and landed on my hip, pushed my hip forward, my chin down to my chest. I could feel something break. Crack—something happened. I was immediately in shock and in pain. I didn't know what happened.

Else: Did you pass out?

Wade: No. I was awake all the time and I thought, hmm, I wondered what it was going to be like; here's where I'm going to die—it's the thought that went through my head. Well, I couldn't get out, get over the top of the bale pile. I couldn't get out over the top of the tractor. So I climbed up that little snow bank and walked alongside of the board fence, knowing that I had to go get help. My body was telling me: sit straight, stand straight, don't bend. My right arm was paralyzed to the point where there was just a sharp pain down the outside edge of my right arm. So, my dad came out the front door. He told me afterwards he knew I was hurt. And so, we go into town, go to the small hospital. I was wearing a brand new shirt that I had just gotten for Christmas and I said "no, no, I'll get up and take my shirt off." He says, "young man, I don't want you to more than blink your eyes." He said "you have a very serious injury," and used medical terms: "you have broken the fourth, fifth, sixth vertebrae." In other words, I have a broken neck. To go into the hospital and have to lay flat was a traumatic experience for me. While I was in the hospital I did have three, actually four roommates. Out of the four of us with broken necks, I was the only one that walked out. I have learned to, first of all, not be underneath the bale pile. And I've learned to—I don't always do this—but I've learned to slow down and be aware of what I'm doing. Sometimes we get in a hurry and don't think about what we're doing, and that's when we get in trouble, and that's what had happened.

