

OffGuard

Centre for Agricultural Medicine
Kenderdine Art Gallery





OffGuard:

FARMERS AND MACHINERY INJURIES



Developing quality programs for the Kenderdine Art Gallery in cooperation with varied University and community groups is among the most exciting and challenging aspects of generating effective public programming. Linking exhibitions to a specific, and often a non-traditional gallery public, must be balanced thoughtfully against maintaining an awareness of our existing constituency. These attempts to transcend traditional boundaries and alliances often result in the production of personally and professionally rewarding projects that are able to touch audiences otherwise inaccessible to us. Such has been the case with *OffGuard: Farmers and Machinery Injuries*.

OffGuard: Farmers and Machinery Injuries involved senior photography students from the Department of Art & Art History documenting rural residents across Saskatchewan as subjects while graduate students from the College of Nursing were engaged in interviews with them. During the interview process, individuals described their own injury circumstances while being photographed in or near their own homes, often at the very site where the injury took place. Excerpts from the interviews accompany selected photographs that appear in both the exhibition and catalogue.

Through the vision and efforts of all of the participants in this project, partnerships were assembled linking the Centre for Agricultural Medicine with the Department of Art & Art History, The Photographers Gallery, and Kenderdine Art Gallery. While each partner member played an invaluable role in the realization of the exhibition, catalogue and Provincial tour, the ultimate goal of the project was to develop an educational tool that could reach those most directly affected by the exhibition content, Saskatchewan's rural population. To fashion such an apparatus from powerful photographic images accompanied by interviews with the victims imbues the project with a multi-layered impact outside of traditional rural education programs.

While the achievements of this project will be evaluated on various levels, any measure of success would not have been possible without the dedicated cooperation and efforts of everyone involved. I am extremely grateful to Julie Bidwell and her entire support staff who conceived of this project and cultivated an unlikely family of partners with which to fully develop the program. Brenda Pelkey's efforts to assess and guide the participating artists ensured a delicate sensitivity

and optimal quality in the work that is presented for exhibition. The generous work of Donna Jones and the contributions of The Photographers Gallery and the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC) have enabled the work to reach its most important audience by way of an OSAC sponsored tour taking the exhibition to venues throughout rural Saskatchewan.

Vital to the development of the project was the cooperation and support of the University of Saskatchewan, Centre for Agricultural Medicine, Department of Art & Art History, The Photographers Gallery, and Kenderdine Art Gallery. I would like to express great appreciation to the staff, volunteers and supporting agencies of each of the partners involved. I also wish to acknowledge the insightful contributions, patience and design savvy of Betsy Rosenwald who is responsible for the layout of this catalogue.

The artists, Mark Ballantyne, Naomi Freisen, and Paula Reban who photographed the participants, demonstrated advanced skills, sensitive interpretations and genuine commitment toward the project. Their engagement with this enterprise has served to produce images that transcend mere visual documents of victims, elevating the work to complex statements of pain, loss, courage, tenderness, vulnerability and compassion. These profound works function as important carriers of meaning and might well exist as fully competent art works outside the context of this exhibition.

Interviews of the participants were conducted by Julie Bidwell, and graduate students Roxanna Kaminski and Hope Bilinski. As is true with the photographic images, the interviews were executed with great competence and sensitivity. Again, persistent and dedicated efforts were essential to acquiring honest and open responses to difficult questions. The incident victims have bravely contributed their personal, often touching accounts of their tragedy and frequently include their post-incident reflections.

Finally, sincere gratitude is extended to all of the individuals who had the courage to participate in this project by sharing their painful stories of loss. As Julie has indicated in her essay, communicating a message of prevention is of primary importance to arrest further tragedies of this nature. To allow a lasting visual and textual record to be compiled in the compassionate service of others is indeed a generous act.

OffGuard: Lifting the Veil of Silence

Julie Bidwell

On average every year in Saskatchewan, twenty-one deaths occur and over 300 people are hospitalized as the result of a farming incident. Nearly half these deaths and injuries involve farm machinery.¹

When a farmer is injured, the event is usually unwitnessed, uninvestigated and under-reported. Radio or newspaper coverage, when it exists, focuses on the outcome of the incident and provides sketchy, if any, details about what happened. The injured person and family, concerned that others in the community may view the incident as incompetence, understandably create a veil of silence around the event. Burdened with grief and guilt, they may take solace in regarding the injury as an “accident,” a freak event or even an act of God. Aware of the family’s pain and considerate of their privacy, outsiders respect their silence. Privately, outsiders may attribute the incident to carelessness and reassure themselves that such a thing could never happen to them. A year later, the only people to have learned from the incident are those who were directly involved.

Contrast this with the situation in other hazardous industries such as mining, forestry and manufacturing. There, injuries are almost always witnessed by one or more co-workers who see the injured person’s pain and suffering first-hand. When the individual returns to work following a serious injury, co-workers observe the daily struggle of working with a permanent disability. The injured person, witnesses and co-workers participate in an injury incident investigation that is not intended to lay blame but that attempts to identify the immediate cause, contributing factors and basic cause of the incident. Changes are made to equipment, work practices or the environment to prevent such an incident from recurring. A year later, many people have learned from the incident and the workplace is safer as a result.

The science of injury research is much more than simply the collection of facts and figures. Researchers

use cumulative data and detailed reports of incidents to develop a clear understanding of what causes injuries. The investigation, tracking, and reporting of incidents has helped reduce injuries in modern industry. Workers’ Compensation Board statistics identify high-hazard jobs and activities, and insurance costs based directly on injury rates provide employers with an incentive to improve workplace safety.

Only recently has the science of injury research been available in the agricultural setting. In 1996, with funding from the Canadian Agriculture Safety Program, the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program was established. The Saskatchewan Farm Injury Surveillance Program is an important component of the national program. Recurrent patterns of farm work-related death and injury across the country and throughout Saskatchewan reveal that agricultural deaths and injuries are not random or isolated accidents. Farm injuries have identifiable patterns. When patterns can be identified, an injury is predictable. By eliminating risk factors, the injury is preventable.

How can farm machinery injuries be prevented? There is no easy answer. Injuries frequently involve more than one risk factor; and there are risk factors – weather and machinery design, for instance – over which farmers do not have control. But farmers **can** take control of their own safety by making the decision to adopt safe work practices and use them consistently. For example, research has shown that starting a tractor from the ground is a major risk factor for operator run over. The related safe work practice is to start the tractor only from the operator’s seat. That takes seconds longer than ground-starting but the time saved is insignificant when the benefit is weighed against the risk. One in four tractor run overs due to ground-starting results in death and the remaining three result in serious and often permanent disabling injuries.²

This photographic exhibition is intended as a challenge. Every viewer will react individually and,

for some, the exhibition will evoke painful memories. My personal reaction was, “This has got to stop! I do not want the food on my table to come at this cost to the producer.” We hope farmers and farm families will leave the exhibition thinking, “That could have happened to us. We need to learn about safe work practices, make the decision to adopt them and then use them consistently.” This will require changing

patterns of behaviour that have existed for generations. Change isn't easy, but the ability to change is essential for survival.

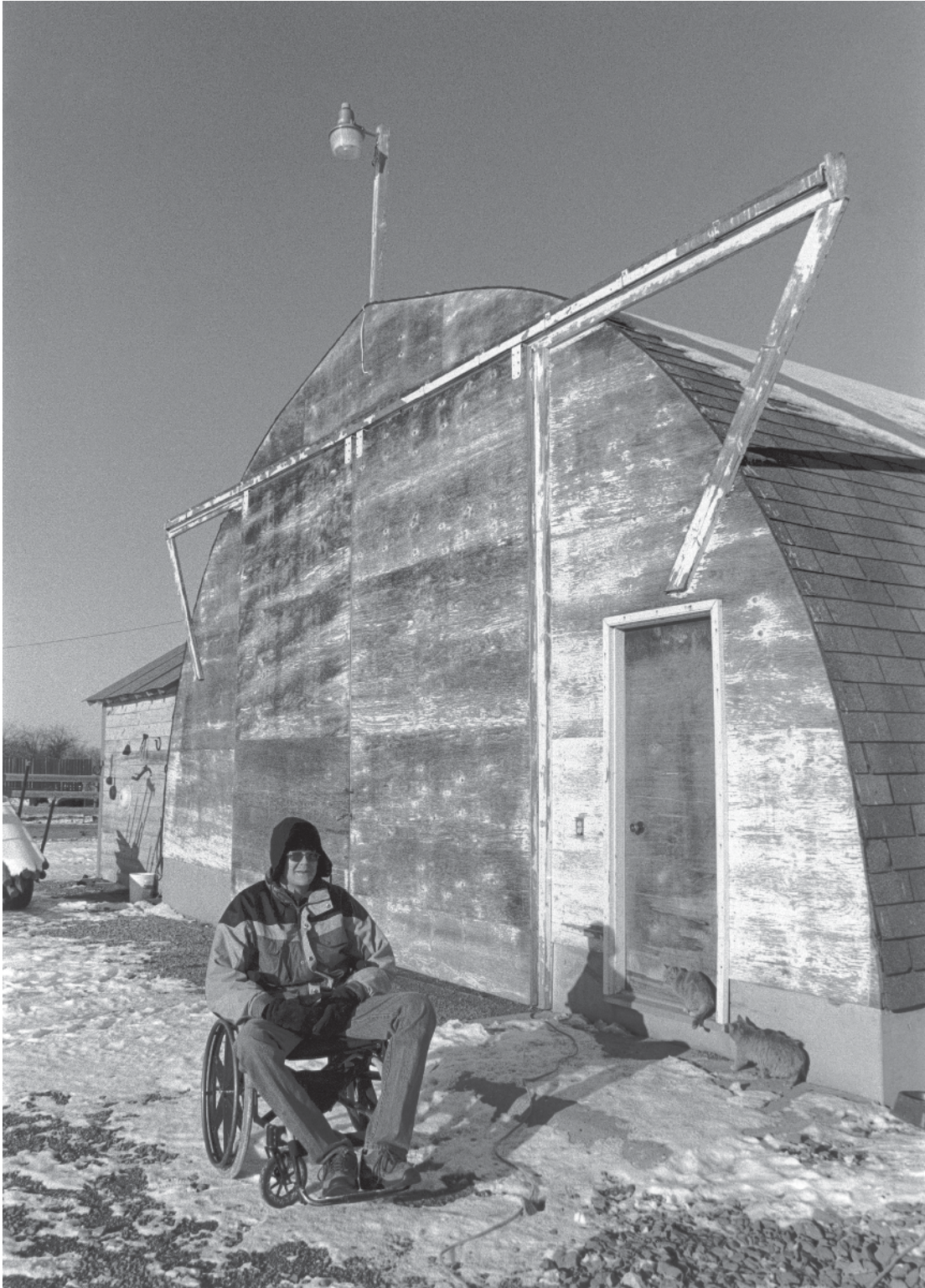
Immerse yourself in the images of these farm injury survivors and listen to what they have to tell you. They are prepared to share what they have learned so others will not be caught off guard by a farm machinery injury.

Julie Bidwell was an Occupational Health Nurse at the Centre for Agricultural Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, from 1998 to 2005.

Notes

- 1 Hagel, L. and D. Rennie. Fatal and Hospitalized Farm Injuries in Saskatchewan 1990–1996 Saskatoon: Centre for Agricultural Medicine and Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program, 2000.
- 2 Rolland, E., W. Pickett and R. Brison. Fatal Runover Injuries in Canada, 1990–1994 Kingston: Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program, 2001.





Seeing is Believing

Brenda Pelkey

The photographic component of *OffGuard: Farmers and Machinery Injuries* was undertaken by Mark Ballantyne, Paula Reban and Naomi Friesen as course work for fourth-year photography. As their supervisor, I met with them a number of times throughout the school year to discuss not only their images but also issues relating to the complexity of undertaking a documentary project. Complex, not only because of the practical challenges of photographing strangers – all of whom have experienced a traumatic event that has profoundly affected their lives; but also because the photograph, as transparent document, as “window on the world,” has been under a necessary scrutiny for over thirty years. The students had to navigate the terrain of the photograph as document and discover for themselves the complex relationship of photographer, subject, viewer and venue.

Mark, Paula and Naomi discussed the challenges they encountered in trying to fairly and accurately portray the individuals involved. They had to deal with cold weather for the outside shots, time limitations at the sessions, complex lighting situations, some struggles with camera technology and, most importantly, the awkwardness of intruding – camera in hand – into the lives of veritable strangers. Aside from family snapshots, getting your picture taken is rarely a completely comfortable activity; getting your picture taken for the purpose of public exhibition, less so; and even less again, having your injuries put on display. This, coupled with the fact that both subjects and photographers know very well that there is no definitive photographic moment in which the identity of an individual is fully depicted, can make a photographic session feel uncomfortably invasive.

In our meetings, while we looked over contact sheets and work prints, Mark, Paula and Naomi exchanged stories about their experiences. They talked about who they had met and what the conditions for photographing had been like, whether the light levels had been high enough indoors and the locations where

they had been able to take photographs outdoors. We examined the contact sheets, I commented on their individual technique and gave advice where required. They spoke of the warm welcome they received in every home and the feeling of privilege they felt in being able to meet these people and to participate in this project.

It was decided that each person would be represented by at least three photographs: a portrait and, where possible, two other images in a work environment. By changing location, framing, vantage point and distance a more comprehensive portrayal was able to emerge. The photographs were made in kitchens, apartments, barns, farm yards and living-rooms all over the province. In some photographs, the individual's injuries are foregrounded; in others, they are imperceptible. Some subjects are depicted with family members, some as they tend to daily chores. The resulting images make it obvious that these accidents happen to those of all ages and do not spare men, women or children.

The photographs stand as evidence, a mirror with a memory, reflecting a cautionary tale. They are presented with text written by Julie Bidwell of the Centre for Agricultural Medicine, based on interviews with the subjects conducted by Bidwell and College of Nursing graduate students, Roxanna Kaminski and Hope Bilinski. The third person narrative, the subject's recall of the event, agricultural injury statistics and the photographs work to provide vital truth-value not only to the photographs but to the written narratives and exhibition as a whole.

Documentary photography can be a powerful medium. Public reception of the photograph is that it portrays in some way “the truth.” This body of work clearly demonstrates that meaning, and any truth that is to be determined in photographs, are dependent upon the context in which they are embedded; in this instance, the traumatic experiences of farm injuries.

Brenda Pelkey was an Associate Professor of Art & Art History at the University of Saskatchewan (1994–2003) and is currently at the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario.

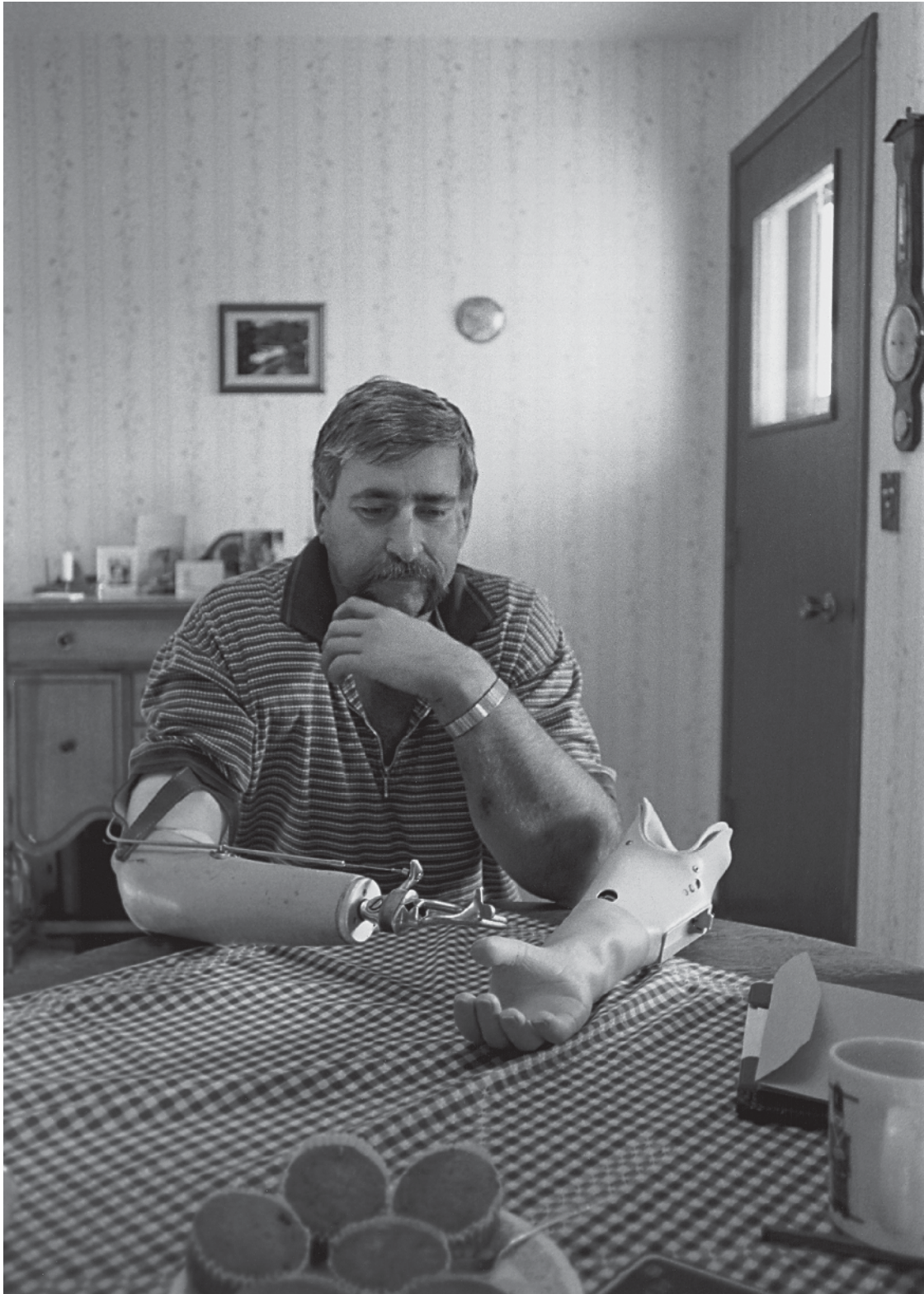


Bernard Bigoraj *Buchanan, Saskatchewan*

“Things are not easy. It's hard, always having to ask other people to help you. I used to do mechanic work – I worked on Volkswagens. Since the accident I've walked six miles to get my wife to replace a screw when equipment broke down. But you know, there's no point being negative. I can't stand people that are negative all the time. One good thing is, it made me quit smoking.”

On Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend in 1990, Bernard Bigoraj was making bales for an 85-year old neighbour whose equipment had broken down. With three bales to go, he stopped for a cigarette. He crouched down to avoid the wind. As he got up, he slipped on the stubble. Reaching out to catch himself, he was drawn into the baler. Bernard suffered a skull fracture and facial lacerations, his left arm was burned off above the shoulder and his right arm was severely mangled. He and his wife, Frances, have six children (the youngest was two at the time) and a beef cattle operation which they continue to run.

In Canada from 1990 to 2000, men accounted for 92% of the people fatally injured in farm work-related incidents. During the same time period 83% of persons hospitalized from farm work-related incidents were men.



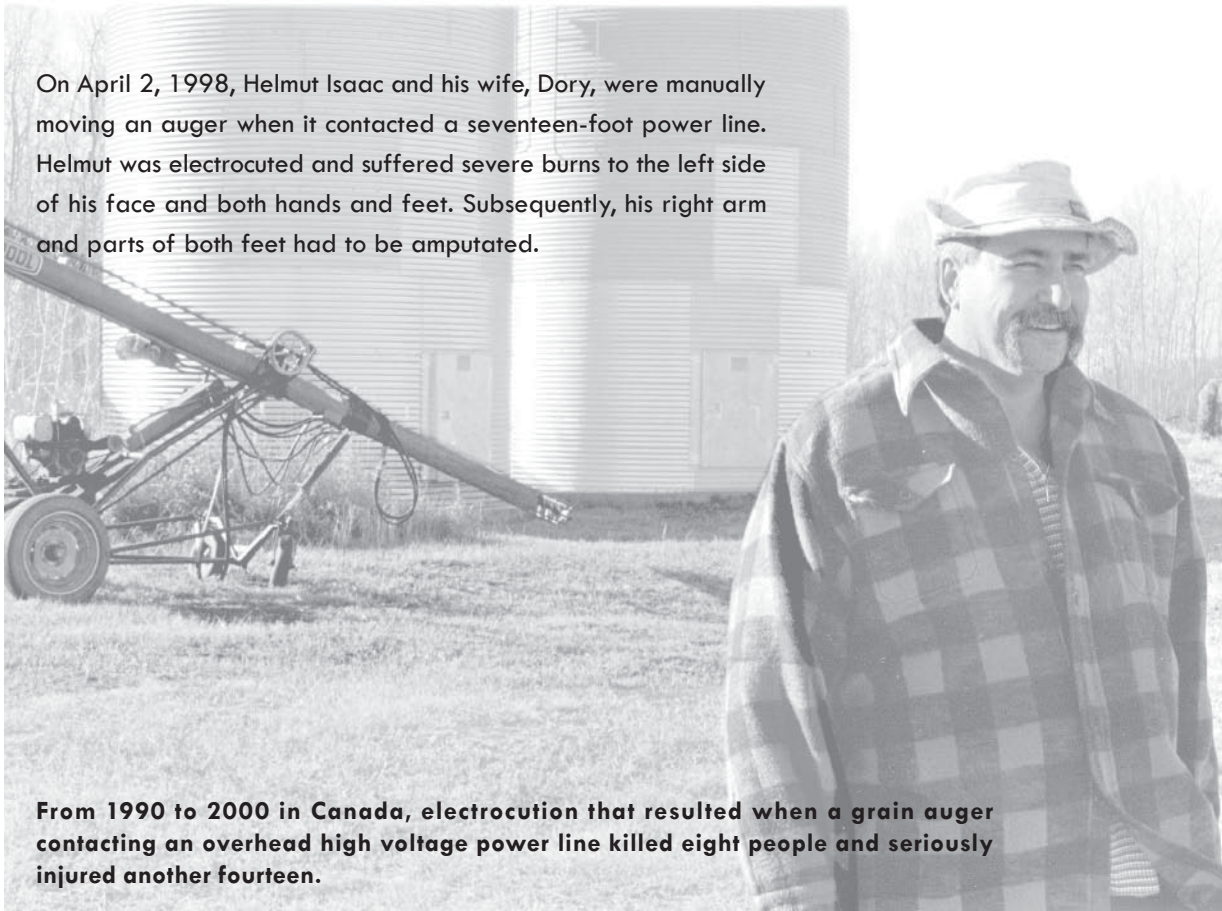
Helmut Isaac *Glenbush, Saskatchewan*

“I was probably an average farmer, kind of a Jack of all trades. I did as much of my own mechanic work as I could... all the repairs, building, welding, and whatever. Any electrical work that needed to be done, I did. Now I can't hardly turn a screwdriver let alone hold the screw. This thing (prosthesis) helps but it's not a good substitute. There are days when I ask what I'm trying to prove, still being here, but what are the options?


Lower your auger to move it, no matter where it is. We cheated for years, went under that line and got away with it. But this time, we were coming from a different direction, and it happened.”

On April 2, 1998, Helmut Isaac and his wife, Dory, were manually moving an auger when it contacted a seventeen-foot power line. Helmut was electrocuted and suffered severe burns to the left side of his face and both hands and feet. Subsequently, his right arm and parts of both feet had to be amputated.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, electrocution that resulted when a grain auger contacting an overhead high voltage power line killed eight people and seriously injured another fourteen.





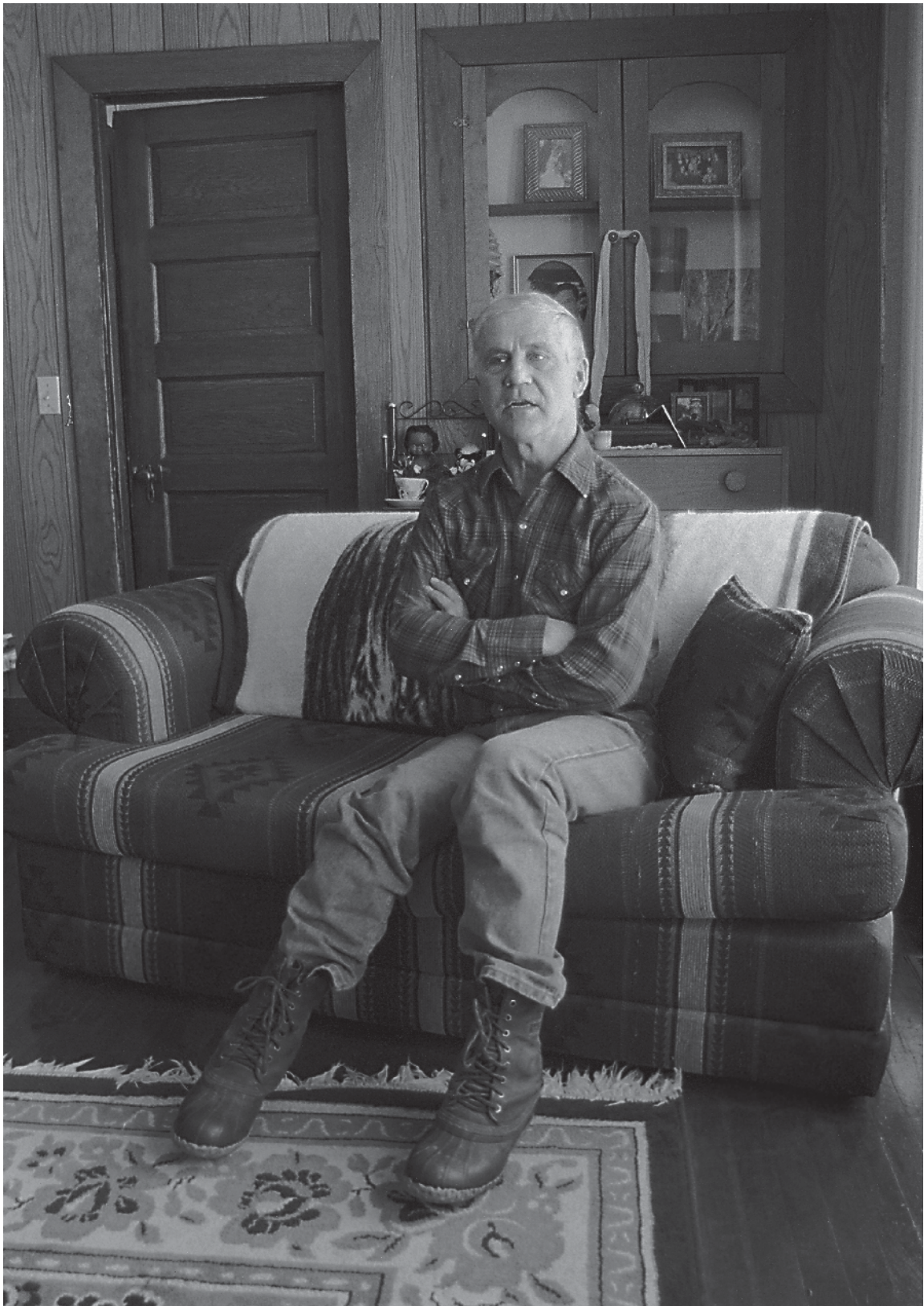


Hilda Lieffers *Cudworth, Saskatchewan*

“Why did it happen? I’ll never know because I’ve worked around threshing machines and combines since the age of ten. Maybe there was too many people, too much distraction ... there was four of us. After my surgery, the doctor came to see me and he said, “Gawd, but you had a good grade of grain in those fingers!”

After her husband died, Hilda Lieffers lived in town and rented out their land. On September 30, 1995, she drove out to the farm during harvest to get some wheat to make Kutya at Christmas. To check the quality of the grain, she reached for a handful from a grain truck that was unloading. At that moment, another person closed the truck’s end-gate, slowing the flow of grain and exposing the auger. Hilda’s right hand became entangled in the auger and two fingers were permanently damaged.

In Canada, September has the most farm work-related injuries and fatalities. From 1990 to 2000, 1767 persons were hospitalized and 151 fatalities occurred during the month of September nationwide.

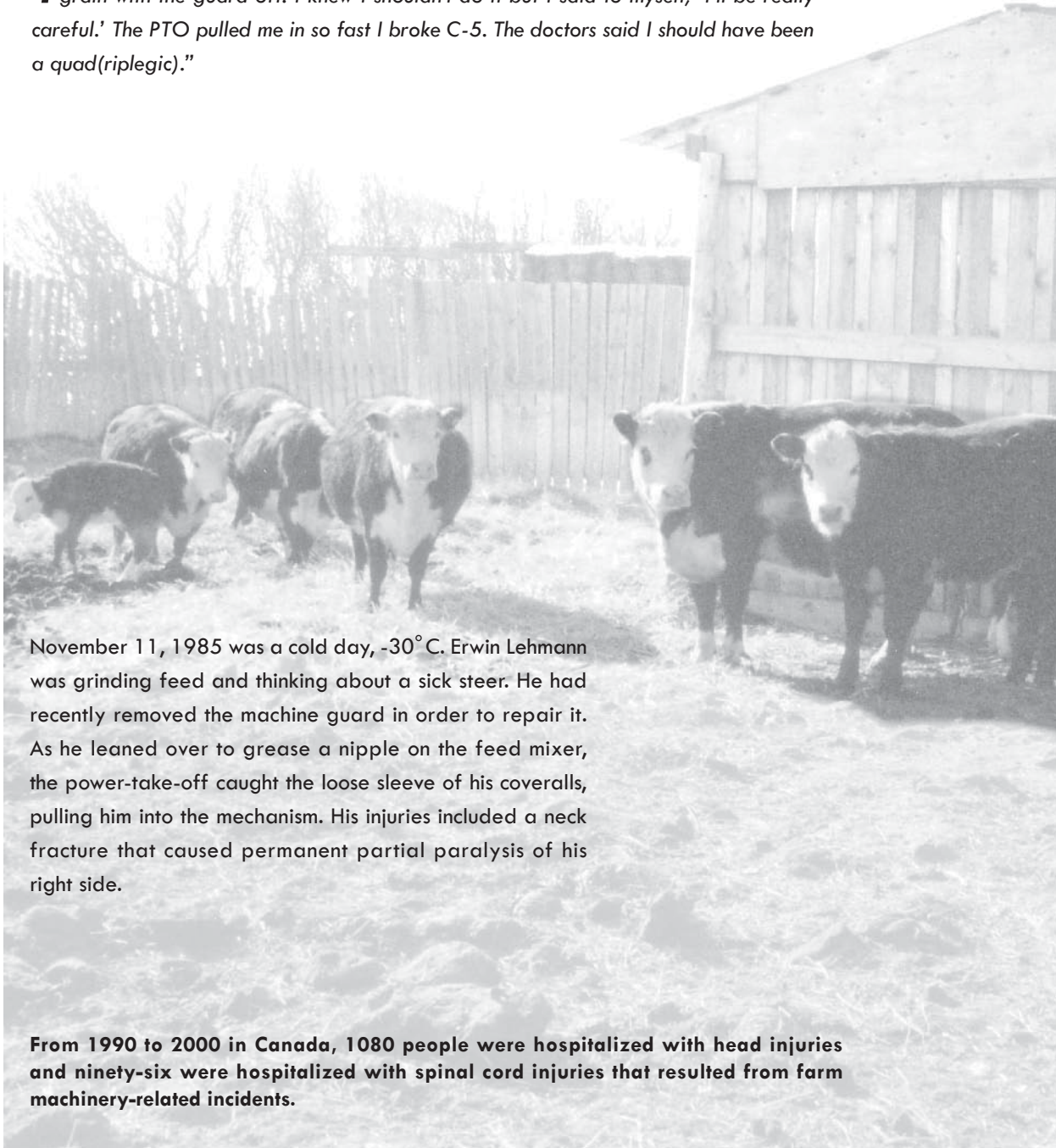


Erwin Lehmann *Rosthern, Saskatchewan*

“I had my mind on the steer, not on what I was doing. I should never have ground grain with the guard off. I knew I shouldn't do it but I said to myself, 'I'll be really careful.' The PTO pulled me in so fast I broke C-5. The doctors said I should have been a quad(riplegic).”

November 11, 1985 was a cold day, -30°C. Erwin Lehmann was grinding feed and thinking about a sick steer. He had recently removed the machine guard in order to repair it. As he leaned over to grease a nipple on the feed mixer, the power-take-off caught the loose sleeve of his coveralls, pulling him into the mechanism. His injuries included a neck fracture that caused permanent partial paralysis of his right side.


From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, 1080 people were hospitalized with head injuries and ninety-six were hospitalized with spinal cord injuries that resulted from farm machinery-related incidents.





Walter Jess *Richard, Saskatchewan*

“ get a funny feeling when I get in front of a tractor wheel. You should always be sitting on the seat when you start up. The extra time it takes to get in and out of the tractor is well worthwhile.”



On February 26, 1991, Walter Jess was using a front-end loader to lift a hay bale over a feeder. When the tractor stalled, he dismounted and started to cut the twine securing the bale. Realizing the bucket had slipped and needed to be raised, he reached into the tractor, turned the key and hit the starter. With the throttle wide open and the safety mechanism that prevents starting in gear by-passed, the tractor lurched forward, running him over. Surgery and rehabilitation for traumatic injuries that included a fractured pelvis kept him in hospital eleven weeks.

In Canada, from 1990 to 2000 machine runovers seriously injured 528 persons. Many of these incidents occurred when the operator attempted to start the machine from the ground.





Charleen Gray *Bankend, Saskatchewan*

“Your window of opportunity is very slight. If you can go for three days in a row without sleeping, you’re going to go – you’re not going to stop. You’re eating, sleeping, everything on the go. You just push... you push twice as fast, twice as hard, to make that almighty dollar. But money doesn’t bring you back what you have lost.”

It was harvest, 1985. Charleen Gray and her husband, Everett had finished their crop and went to help a neighbour. Charleen was greasing the inside of the grain auger on their pull-type combine. Everett informed her he was going to start the tractor to warm it up. Standing inside the grain tank, Charleen saw no danger and continued greasing. When Everett started the engine, the power-take-off shaft spun for just a few seconds. Charleen saw the auger move and quickly pulled her left hand out. But her right hand, holding the grease gun, was pulled forward and severed at the wrist between the auger and the auger opening. Her youngest child was six months old at the time.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, fifty-seven people lost all or part of an arm and another 594 people lost a thumb or fingers in a farm work-related injury.

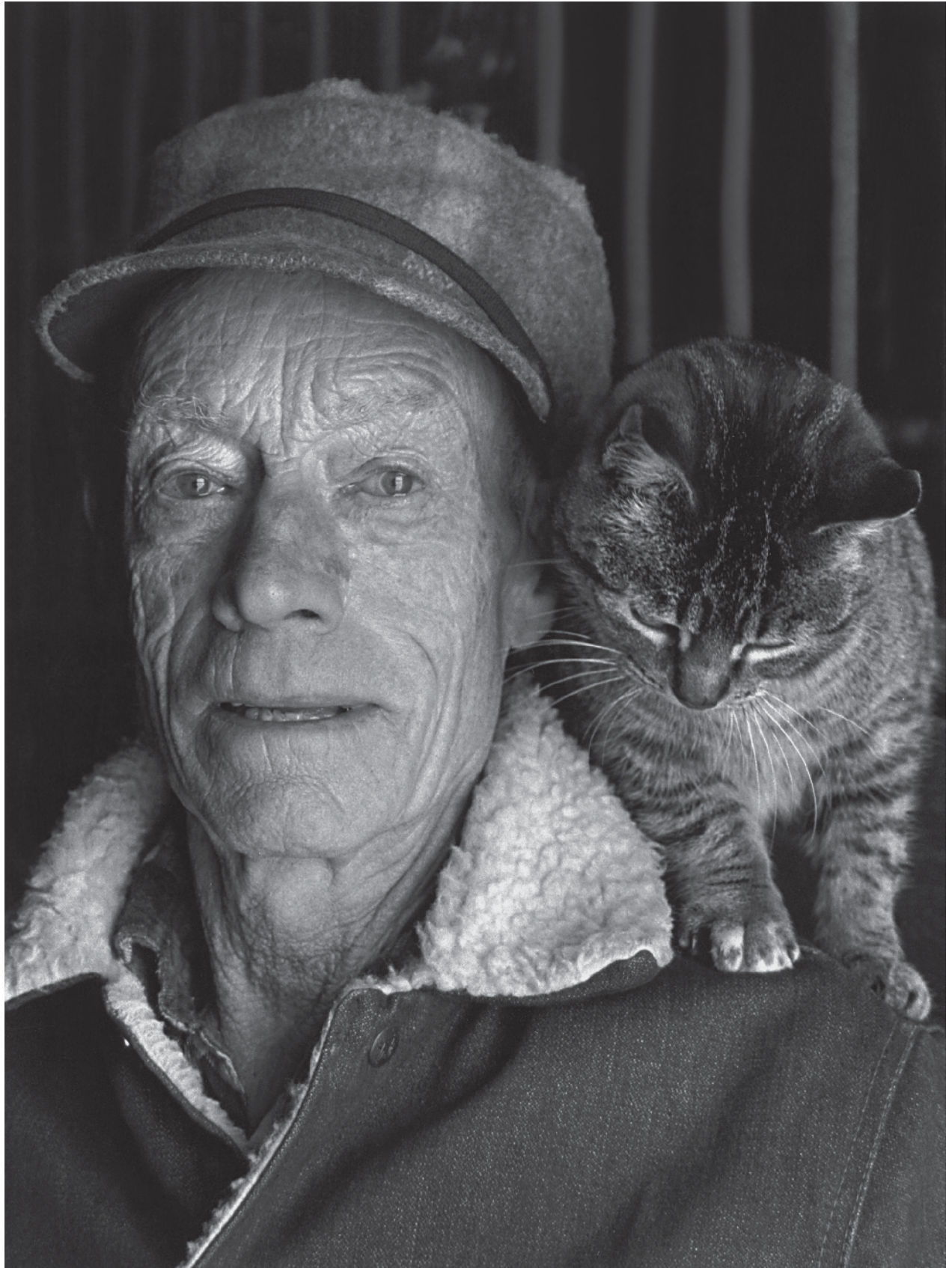


Bob Schmidt *Prud'homme, Saskatchewan*

“At a time like that your mind works slow – or it doesn’t work fast enough, put it that way. I was alone at the time; the trucker had gone to dump the load. I just kept seeing my hand being pulled in and I thought, ‘Well, if I don’t do something pretty soon, there won’t be much left.’ So I braced my foot against the combine, and with the help of my left hand, I just jerked it out... whatever came, came.”

It was late October 1977 and Bob Schmidt was making the first round of a field with the combine. When it plugged, he didn’t stop to tighten the belts knowing things would get better as the day progressed. He gave the belt a yank to get it going again and his hand became entangled between a pulley and the belt. He lost three and a half fingers on his right hand.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, thirty-one people were killed and 537 people were seriously injured in incidents involving combines.



Tony Potoreyko *Porcupine Plain, Saskatchewan*

“I’m not the type of guy that takes chances, like taking shields off and things like that. That’s one of the things that really frustrated me. You practice safety to the best of your ability and you’re the one who gets caught. After the accident, somebody said there was a root sitting behind the back of the baler, and they thought I tripped and reached out to catch something.

A universal or automatic shut-off for the tractor engine would have helped. The accident would have happened but the damage would have been very small, because within seconds I could have shut the tractor off. When you’re alone in the situation and there’s no way to shut the equipment down, it’s a real Hell hole.”

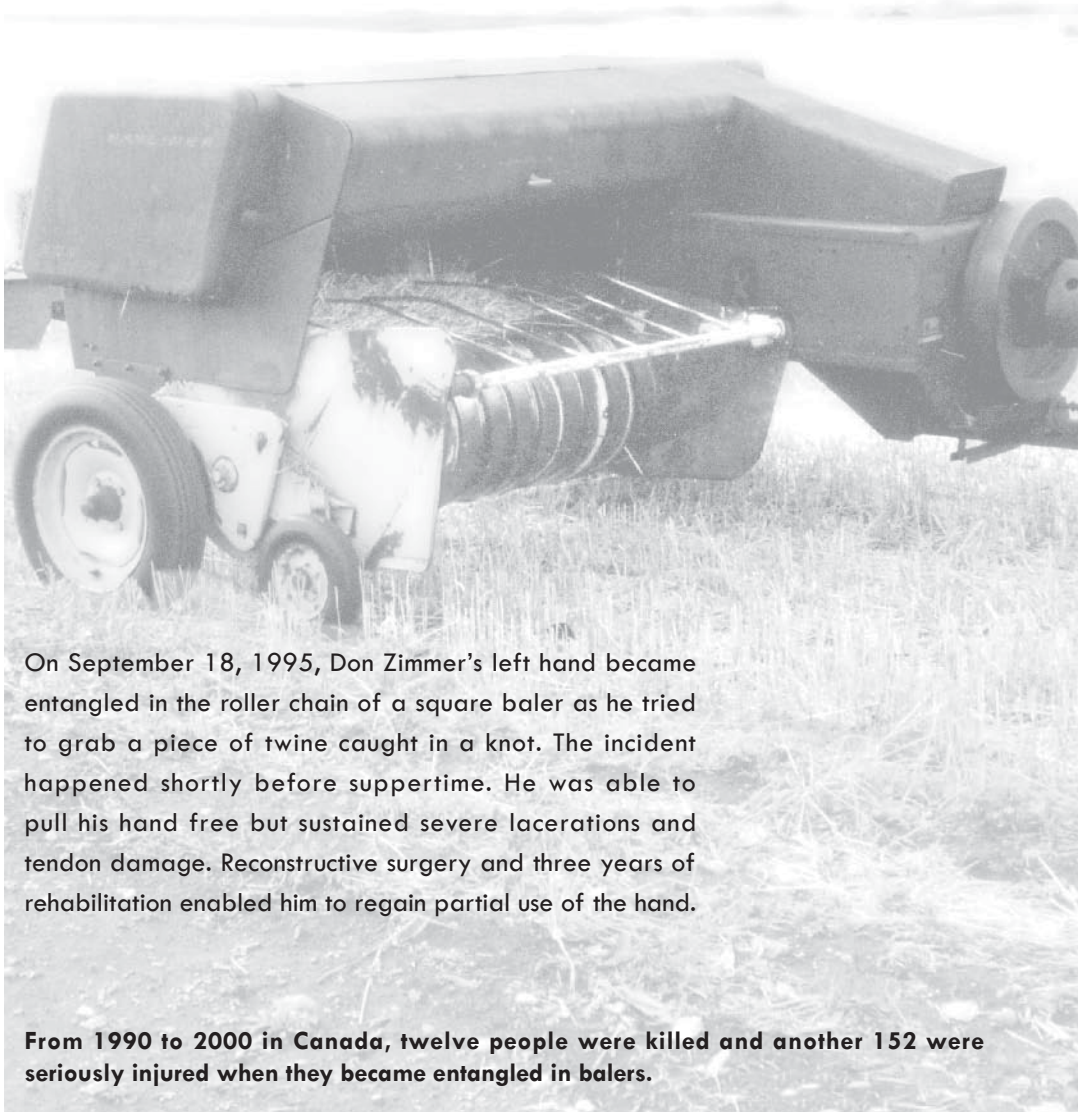
On August 6, 1993, Tony Potoreyko was entangled in the rear end of a round baler. He can’t recall anything between dismounting to check on the baler and regaining consciousness in the baler. His right arm was stuck between the roller and a rotating belt. Suddenly he remembered he had a utility knife in his jeans pocket. Knowing that was his only hope of getting out, he used his left hand to cut at the eight inch belting as it stripped the flesh from his right arm. Eventually he managed to cut through the belt and free himself. Reconstructive surgery saved the arm. Tony estimates he has about 40% of its use now.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, 2282 people were hospitalized for injuries that resulted from becoming entangled or caught in a farm machine.



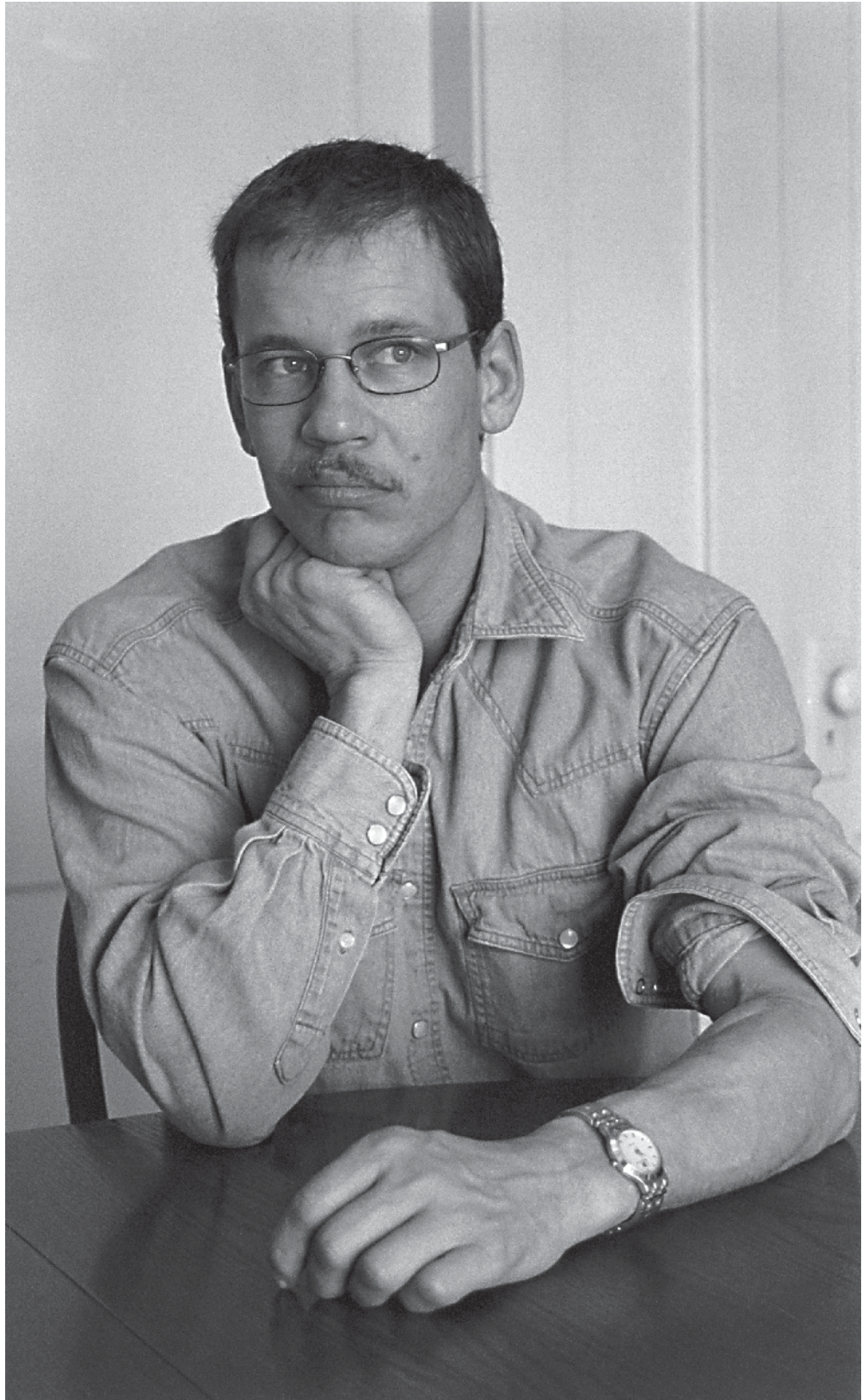
Don Zimmer *Handel, Saskatchewan*

“*I should have shut the machine down. The machine should have had a guard on it. Stress was definitely a factor – the stress of trying to get the job done, trying to make a living farming. If the stress was not there, I would have shut things down and done things properly. So I don’t know whether you’d call it stress or stupidity.”*



On September 18, 1995, Don Zimmer’s left hand became entangled in the roller chain of a square baler as he tried to grab a piece of twine caught in a knot. The incident happened shortly before suppertime. He was able to pull his hand free but sustained severe lacerations and tendon damage. Reconstructive surgery and three years of rehabilitation enabled him to regain partial use of the hand.

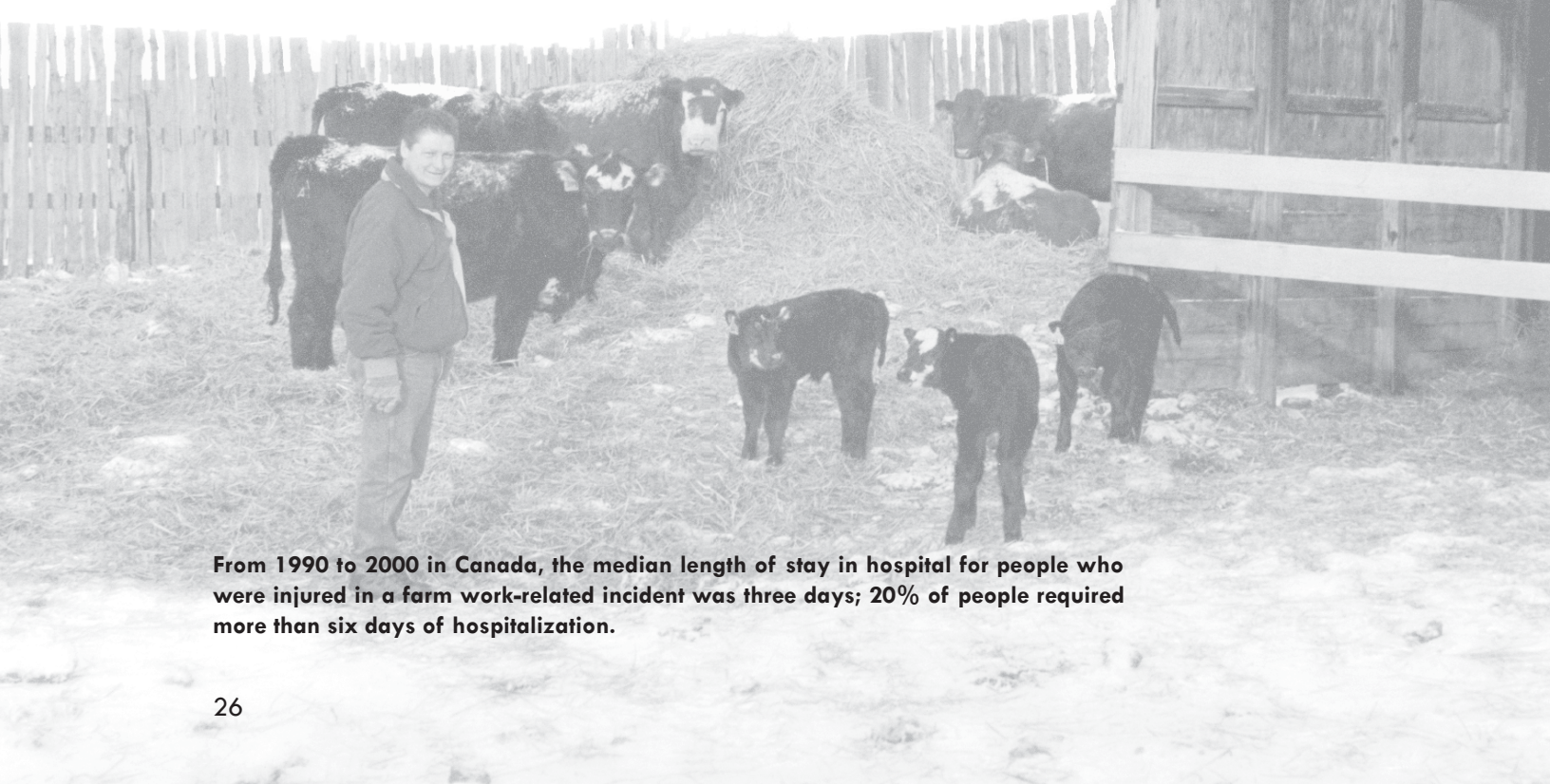
From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, twelve people were killed and another 152 were seriously injured when they became entangled in balers.



Doug Thoms *Humboldt, Saskatchewan*

“Usually, I’m very safety conscious around equipment, but for some reason everything blew up at me that day. It happens quick and you think it would never, ever happen to you. Now when I look back, the bales didn’t have to be made that day. But I figured I had to get out there and do them. It’s not the baler’s fault, you know. It’s the person on the baler.”

On September 4, 1990, Doug Thoms started the day tired. He had combined the night before until 3:00 AM and had gotten up at 6:00 AM. Skipping breakfast, he decided to do some baling before the day’s combining began. He had trouble getting the bale started and, after several tries, kicked some straw into the hard core baler’s pickup in frustration. The teeth of the pickup grabbed his left foot; and as he struggled to free himself, both legs were drawn in up to thigh level. His wife, Debbie, who was six months pregnant at the time, found him. After reconstructive surgery and a lengthy rehabilitation, Doug not only walks, he plays on a local men’s fastball team. He considers himself lucky to be alive.



From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, the median length of stay in hospital for people who were injured in a farm work-related incident was three days; 20% of people required more than six days of hospitalization.



Joe Stachura *Yorkton, Saskatchewan*

“What happened was the grate between my hand and the hammers slipped. The hammers took the big mitt I had on and rolled it under, catching the index finger of my left hand. It was all over in the twinkling of an eye or a blink. Maybe I shouldn't have used the frozen bales. I could have thrown them aside and just used dry straw which goes through, no problem.

When something isn't going right and stress is building, take a break – two, five or ten minutes. Have a drink, lunch, or just look at something else for a while. Better to take a minute than to lose an arm or leg.”

On January 15, 1985, Joe Stachura was trying to unplug a feed mill, driven by a power-take-off. The mill was clogged with a frozen bale. Joe had unplugged the mill while it was running many times before, but this time his left arm became entangled. Due to the extent of tendon, nerve and blood vessel damage, the arm had to be amputated.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, four people were killed and another seventy-nine people were seriously injured while operating feed mills.





Dayton Hewson *Cutknife, Saskatchewan*

“I scooped the first bale from the bottom of the stack. It bounced, so I speared it to carry it the mile or so out to the pasture. The second bale was on top. You usually spear the bale, but I was afraid it might unsettle the stack which was close to some young trees. So I just scooped the bale from underneath. You should use a spear or grapple hook every time you move a bale – that’s your best protection.”

On April 25, 1999, Dayton Hewson, eighteen, was transporting hay bales to the pasture for his family’s purebred Limousin cattle. He was using a cabless tractor with a front-end loader. The loader’s hydraulic mechanism stuck, allowing the bucket to rise to an unsafe height. The bale rolled back, crushing Dayton in his seat. He is now paraplegic and confined to a wheelchair.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, sixteen people were killed when they were crushed by round bales that fell during transport and handling by tractor or truck.



Richard Polkinghorne *Marsden, Saskatchewan*

“*t was the first of October and I had coveralls on – it was cold. It was about 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening. I am just assuming that my sleeve must have got caught in the power-take-off. All I was left with was my boots. The PTO took my coveralls, my coats, my clothes and everything. So I stumbled around and just vaguely remember making it to the two-way radio in the truck. My wife, Lois, was at the base station and she heard everything first hand and got help. Thank the Lord for small miracles!”*

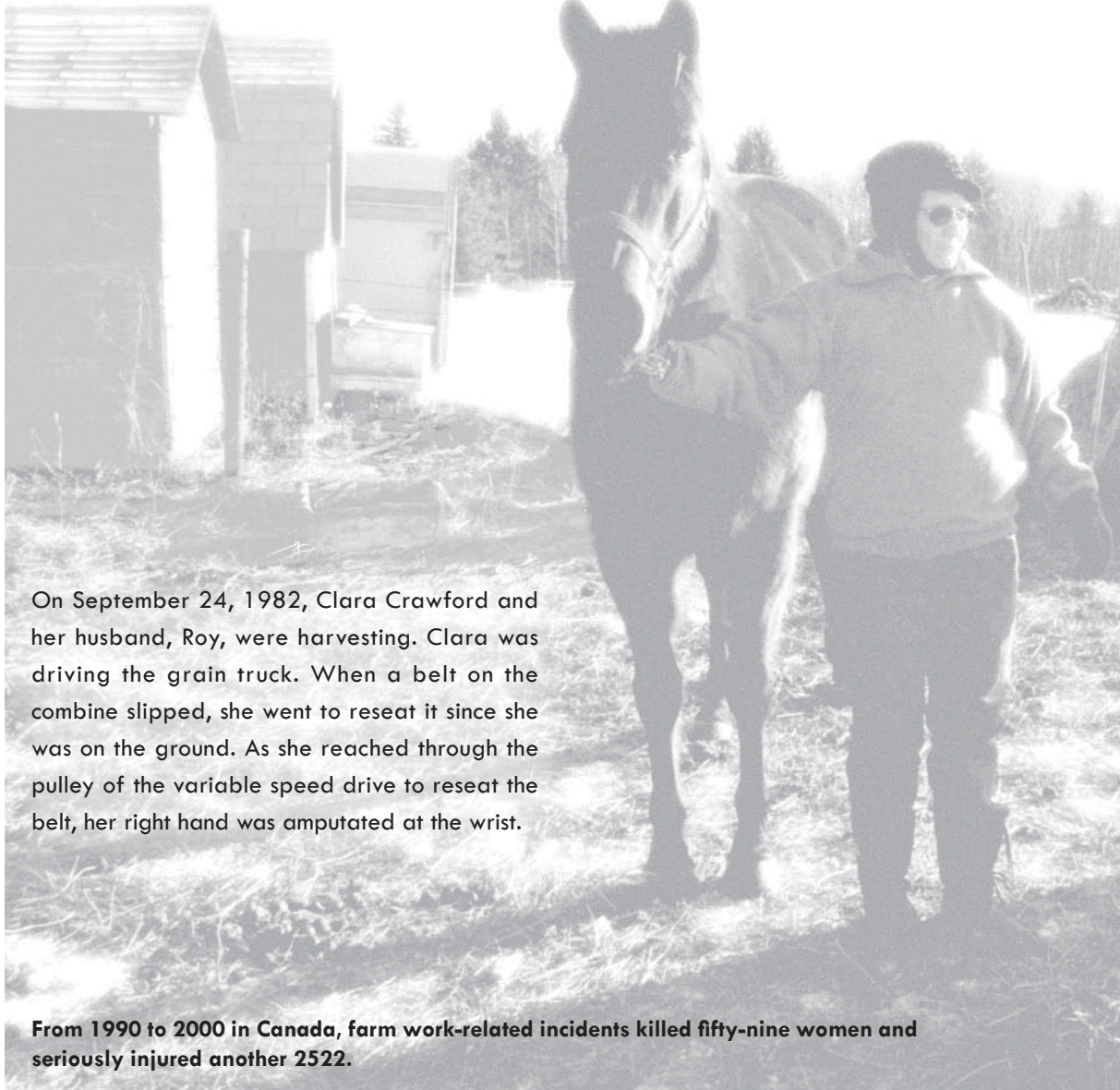
It was harvest, 1983. Richard Polkinghorne climbed the ladder of the grain bin he was loading and discovered it was full. By the time he made it back to ground level, grain was spilling all over. He reached across the power-take-off with his left arm to loosen the auger's belts in order to shut it down. His arm became entangled and was amputated below the elbow.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, twenty-four people were killed and another 602 people were hospitalized with serious injuries resulting from incidents that involved grain augers.



Clara Crawford *Mont Nebo, Saskatchewan*

“I had been working years around combines and hauling grain but I never had put a belt on like that. This happened right at noon, about five to noon. Roy wanted to shut the combine off but it was dinner time and I said, ‘No, leave it run, I can put it on.’ You know... just being bull-headed. That’s all it was.”



On September 24, 1982, Clara Crawford and her husband, Roy, were harvesting. Clara was driving the grain truck. When a belt on the combine slipped, she went to reseal it since she was on the ground. As she reached through the pulley of the variable speed drive to reseal the belt, her right hand was amputated at the wrist.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, farm work-related incidents killed fifty-nine women and seriously injured another 2522.

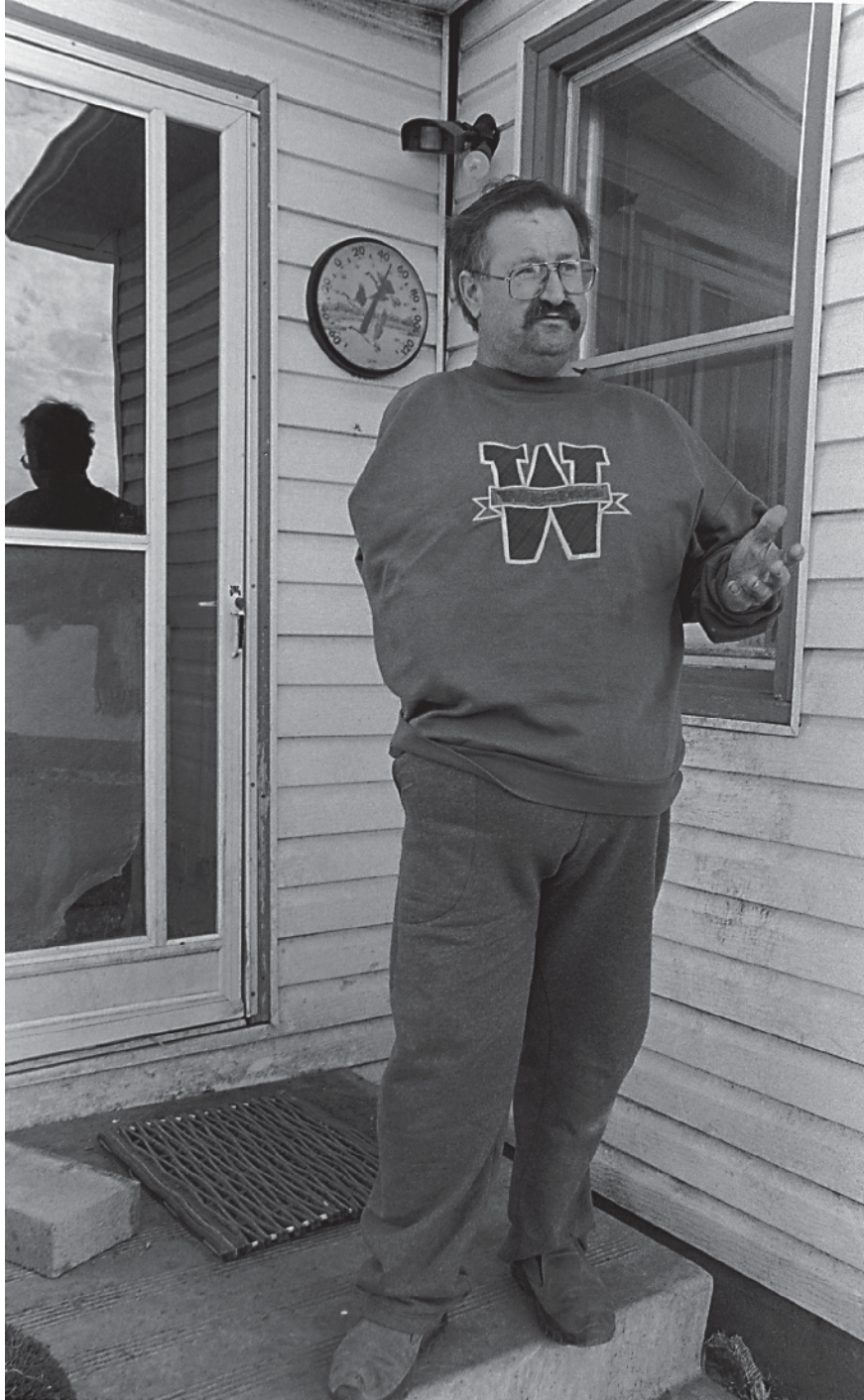


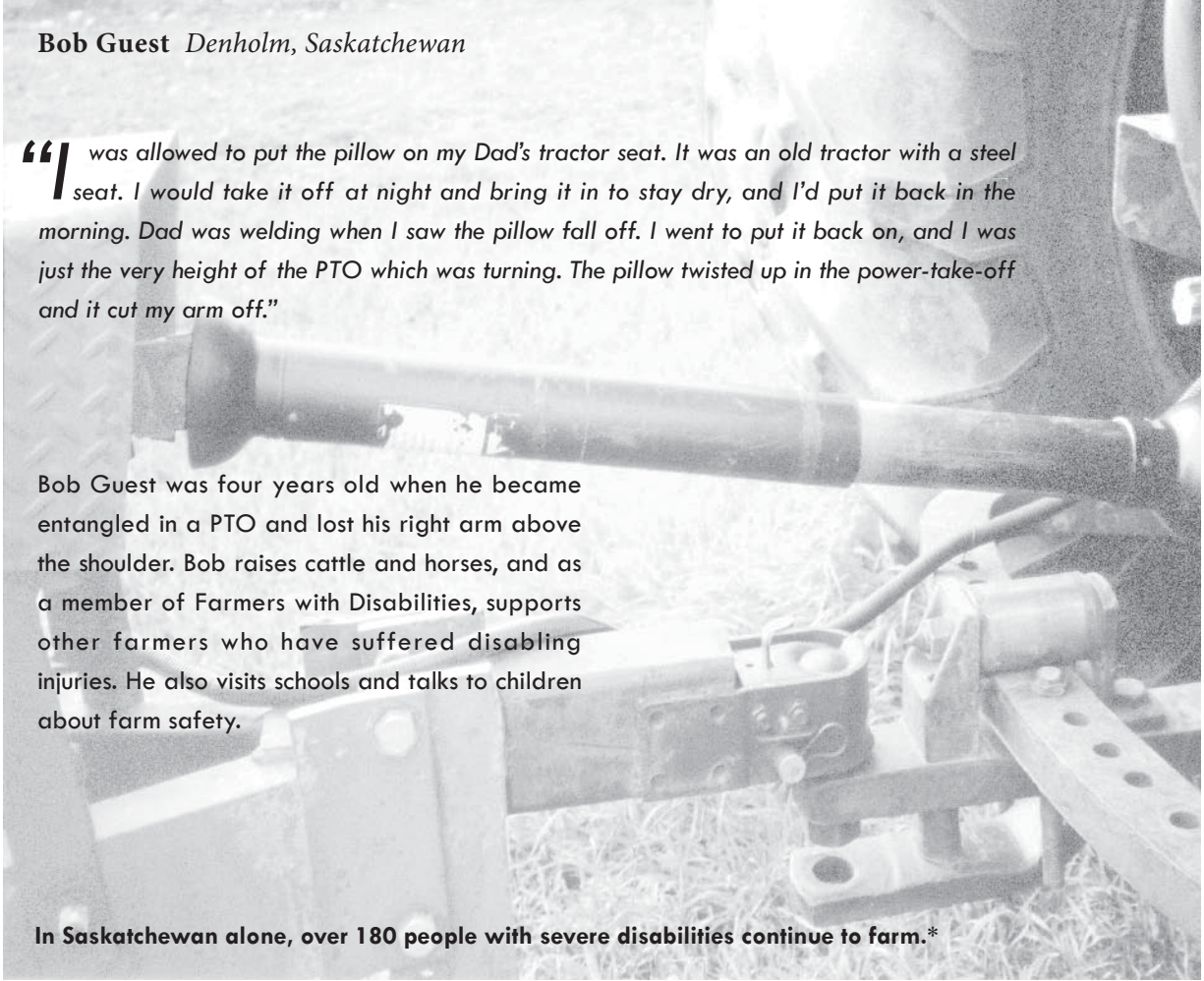
Crystal Zimmer *Handel, Saskatchewan*

“I have my limits. I have to know when to stop so I don't overexert myself. They had to put pins in my right ankle and if I overdo it, I'll have pain. Because my feet are misshapen, I have to wear moulded insoles in my runners, and I can't wear heels. I need shoes with great support that lace up tight around the ankles, so my feet don't shift. This prevents blisters and sores forming on the bottoms of my feet. I often get stares – whether they be curious or rude – or derogatory comments, but for the most part, people are very understanding.”

When Crystal Zimmer was two and a half, she ran out from the side of the house into the pathway of the riding-lawnmower her mother was operating. She lost her right heel and fifth toe, half her left heel and suffered severe lacerations to both calves. Surgery and rehabilitation enabled her to walk again, but the incident will affect her for a lifetime.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, seven people were killed and 103 others were hospitalized with serious injuries sustained in incidents involving riding lawnmowers or mowers being towed by tractors.





Bob Guest *Denholm, Saskatchewan*

“I was allowed to put the pillow on my Dad's tractor seat. It was an old tractor with a steel seat. I would take it off at night and bring it in to stay dry, and I'd put it back in the morning. Dad was welding when I saw the pillow fall off. I went to put it back on, and I was just the very height of the PTO which was turning. The pillow twisted up in the power-take-off and it cut my arm off.”

Bob Guest was four years old when he became entangled in a PTO and lost his right arm above the shoulder. Bob raises cattle and horses, and as a member of Farmers with Disabilities, supports other farmers who have suffered disabling injuries. He also visits schools and talks to children about farm safety.

In Saskatchewan alone, over 180 people with severe disabilities continue to farm.*





Bruce Kistner *Bjorkdale, Saskatchewan*

“It was a bad fall. I had combined for about two nights and two days by myself. I was tired. You know, I could watch the combine plug and I wouldn't even stop until it was plugged. I finished at midnight and went out after that to bale. Then I started baling again about 5:00 in the morning. I wasn't looking for anything. So, I guess I was just overtired, that's all.

If I could go back and do it over again, I suppose I would shut the baler off, open the gate on the back and dig the straw out from behind by hand. You could pull it out easy by hand with the baler open.”

On October 7, 1980, Bruce Kistner started baling early. By 10:00 AM it was too dry to make a good bale but he kept going. Though it was his nineteenth wedding anniversary, he couldn't take the day off. Cattle were getting into the crop and he wanted to finish the baling. When the machine's pick-up plugged, he grabbed the straw to unplug it. His hand was pulled in between two rollers and held tight until it burned off.

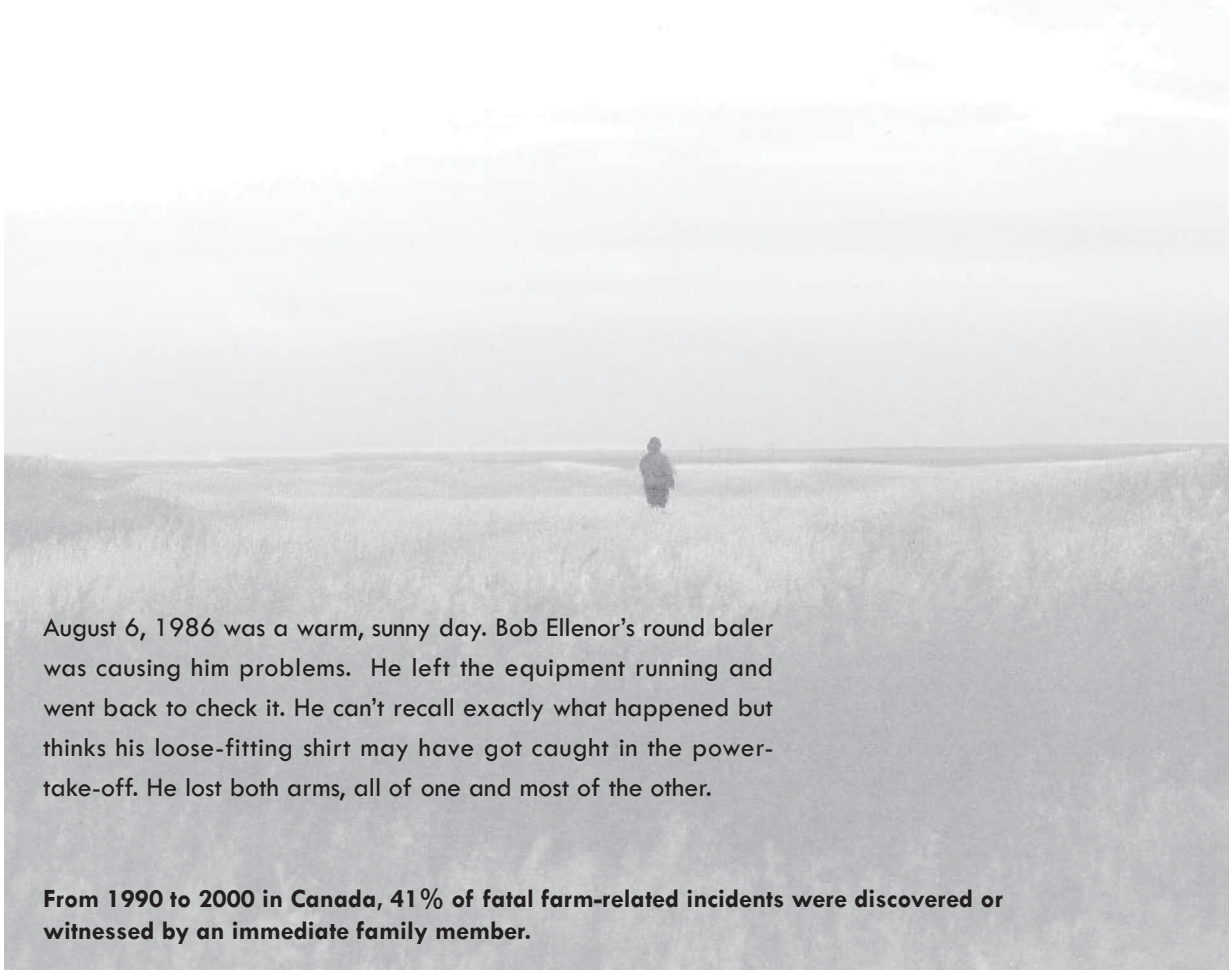
From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, 37% of machinery-related fatal and 34% of hospitalized farm injuries occurred during the intense harvest work period from August to October.



Bob Ellenor *Rapid View, Saskatchewan*

“My one arm got caught and pulled in and I guess, thrashing around, I caught the other arm. How long I was in there, I don’t know. Approximately two to three hours I guess, until the limbs fell off and then I slipped out on the ground. I started walking and I remember I had terrible chest pains and my head hurt. There was no hide on the side of my head – the belts took all the meat right down to the bone.

I was heading to my truck at the south end of the field, but that wouldn’t do – it was a standard. So, then, I figured the closest was my in-laws, about a mile and a half, so that’s where I walked to. When they saw me, they thought it was a bear coming into the yard – I was just covered with mosquitoes. And I guess the shock almost done them in as well.”

A black and white photograph showing a person standing in the middle of a vast, flat field. The person is small in the distance, and the field extends to a flat horizon under a cloudy sky. The overall mood is desolate and open.

August 6, 1986 was a warm, sunny day. Bob Ellenor’s round baler was causing him problems. He left the equipment running and went back to check it. He can’t recall exactly what happened but thinks his loose-fitting shirt may have got caught in the power-take-off. He lost both arms, all of one and most of the other.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, 41% of fatal farm-related incidents were discovered or witnessed by an immediate family member.

Len Pryor *Marshall, Saskatchewan*

“*suppose the boots should have been laced through the eyelets, right to the top. But very few people do that. So you’ve got these big, long laces and you wrap them around two or three times and tie them. A leather lace probably would have broken, but definitely the nylon (lace) wasn’t going to... you could pull a truck with those suckers! Now, I wear laceless boots.”*

In November 1974, Len Pryor and his father were building corrals using a rear-entry cab tractor and a manually operated post hole digger, borrowed from a neighbour. At 7:45 AM, Len got into the tractor to warm it up. Dismounting, he slipped on frost and his bootlace was caught by the digger’s unshielded power-take-off. His left leg was wrapped around the PTO shaft three times before the slip clutch took over. The leg had to be amputated.

In Canada from 1990 to 2000, PTO entanglements killed thirty-five people and hospitalized another 355.



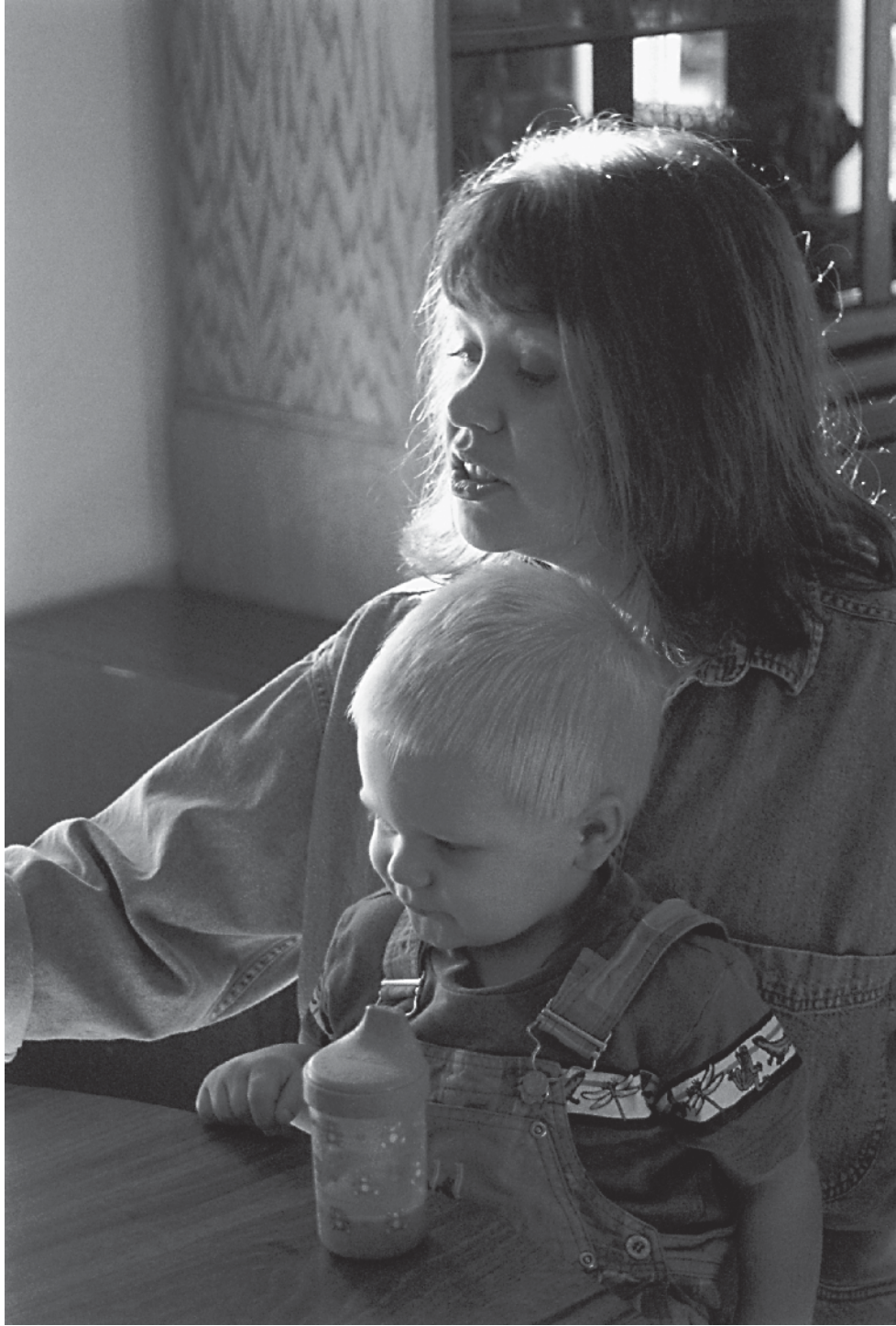
Lorraine Klassen *Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan*

“It just pulled me in. I was screaming and yelling, and it took her a little while to shut everything off, so that’s why it was just above my knee that I lost my leg, my left one. I was seven. It was harder for my Mom and Dad, I think, than for me. And the poor lady ... it was horrible for her, too.

My kids are still little; my oldest will be turning eight in one month. We put in a playground with a gate when he was a toddler, just so they’d have an area to be in, where we know they are safe. When Murray’s working in the yard with machinery, the kids just don’t go outside; it’s that simple. Jared, he’s almost eight now so he can go out. But he knows his boundaries – I have to be able to see him.”

Lorraine Klassen grew up on a farm but her entanglement injury happened at an overnight birthday party. Her friend’s mother was rototilling the garden with a garden tractor. The girls ran alongside in the newly turned soil. When they got tired, they’d jump up and sit on the fender and wrap their arms around her. After the incident, it was thought that Lorraine’s left pant leg must have caught a piece of wire, just as it was being dragged into the tiller attachment.

From 1990 to 2000 in Canada, farm machinery was directly involved in incidents that killed ninety-two children younger than fifteen years of age and seriously injured another 825.



Photograph Credits

Front cover: *Erwin Lehmann* by Naomi Friesen.

Back cover: Courtesy of the Centre for Agricultural Medicine,
University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Mark Ballantyne

Helmut Isaac (pages 10–11), *Walter Jess* (16), *Tony Potoreyko* (23), *Bob Guest* (36),
Bruce Kistner (38), *Len Pryor* (43).

Naomi Friesen

Bernard Bigoraj (page 8), *Hilda Lieffers* (12), *Erwin Lehmann* (14), *Clara Crawford*
(32, 33), *Crystal Zimmer* (34), *Bob Ellenor* (40), *Lorraine Klassen* (45).

Paula Reban

Richard Polkinghorne (pages 5, 31), *Dayton Hewson* (6, 30), *Cows in barnyard* (15),
Charleen Gray (18), *Bob Schmidt* (21, 47), *Don Zimmer* (25), *Doug Thoms* (26, 27),
Joe Stachura (28, 29).

Photographs on pages 1, 9, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 30, 31, 35, 37, 39, 42, and
44 courtesy of the Centre for Agricultural Medicine. Photograph on page 41
courtesy of Betsy Rosenwald.

Design: Betsy Rosenwald

Printing: Houghton Boston, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data:

OffGuard: Farmers and Machinery Injuries

Essays by Kent Archer, Julie Bidwell, and Brenda Pelkey

Photographs by Mark Ballantyne, Naomi Friesen, and Paula Reban

ISBN 0-9780373-0-8

Printed and bound in Canada.

Copyright © 2006 by Centre for Agricultural Medicine, Kenderdine Art Gallery.

All rights reserved. First Printing, 2001.



OffGuard PROJECT PARTNERS

Centre for Agricultural Medicine, University of Saskatchewan

Julie Bidwell, Occupational Health Nurse, Rural Health Extension Program

College of Arts and Sciences, University of Saskatchewan

Professor Brenda Pelkey, Department of Art & Art History

Photographs: Mark Ballantyne, Naomi Friesen and Paula Reban

College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan

Interviews: Roxanna Kaminski and Hope Bilinski

Kenderdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan

Kent Archer, Director/Curator

The Photographers Gallery, Saskatoon

Donna Jones, Director

Farmers with Disabilities Program, Saskatchewan Abilities Council

Bob Elian, Coordinator

Saskatchewan Farm Injury Surveillance Program

Louise Hagel, Injury Epidemiologist

The **OffGuard Project Partners** gratefully acknowledge the financial support of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health, Museums Association of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Cyril Capling Trust Fund, College of Agriculture, University of Saskatchewan. This exhibition could not have taken place without the support of the Farmers with Disabilities Program and the generous participation of its members.



Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada



The statistical information provided for the exhibit was based on the report *Agricultural Injuries in Canada for 1990–2000* published in 2003 by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program. Copy of the report can be obtained from: The Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program, Emergency Medicine and Injury Research, Queen's University/Kingston General Hospital, 76 Stuart Street, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7L 2V7 or from their website: www.caisp.ca

*Statistic on page 37 was provided by Saskatchewan Abilities Council: Farmers with Disabilities Program.

The Centre for Agricultural Medicine, University of Saskatchewan is now known as the Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health.

