

## America's Deadly Harvest

**"If only."** Two words. Two tiny, simple words. "If only he'd had a roll bar on that tractor," a wife laments. "If only our boy hadn't been playing in the grain bin," a father cries. "If only, if only, if only . . ." Say it a thousand times or more and you begin to grasp how much farm-related fatalities cost our nation in one year alone. Talk to just one of the victim's relatives and you begin to feel the crushing devastation endured by the men, women, and children left behind. The sorrow of these families cannot be overstated. Sharing their stories on the next few pages may prevent the same horror from happening in your family. We hope you will remember these words and faces the next time you climb on a tractor.



## AMERICA'S DEADLY HARVEST

or when you clear a clogged combine, or give in to children when they clamor to ride on the tractor with you.

Some of these photographs and details were provided by family members whose loved ones suffered fatal farm-related accidents in October 1989. Sadly, these are only a few of those who died during that time and throughout the year.

The families wanted their losses to benefit farm families. They ask that you think about the emotional and financial crisis your death would cause. They ask that you consider the regret you would feel if someone died because you were careless. They ask that you be careful.

Finally, they ask that you not let your family be haunted by "if only . . ."

By **DEBORAH G. LOWERY** and **NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON**



Oct. 1: Gordon Lampert, Jr., 49, Glenfield, N. Dak., died from a crushed larynx after the agitating arm on a grain dryer struck him in the throat. The arm moved as Lampert loosened clogged sunflowers from the empty dryer.



Oct. 1: Roger Nelson, 61, Clear Lake, Iowa, was killed when the corn picker he was working under was blown off the jackstand.



Oct. 2: Ward E. Pfaff, 75, Camp Douglas, Wis., was run over when his son backed the combine to turn and begin harvesting another row of corn. Pfaff had been following the combine to check for kernel loss from the just repaired machine.



Oct. 3: Fred DeVries, 67, Belvidere, S. Dak., died when a sweep auger struck him in the head while he worked in a grain bin.



Oct. 3: Richard Harlan Grussing, 39, Swift County, Minn., was killed when he was pinned between a turkey shelter and the tractor he was using to move the shelter.



Oct. 3: Elmer Hess, 65, Humboldt, Kans., suffered a fatal heart attack after getting his foot and hand caught in a corn picker. Law officers think Hess freed his foot by removing his boot, but then caught his hand while trying to retrieve the boot.



Oct. 5: Dewey V. Marshall, 60, Sandy Hook, Ky., was killed when he and his son were operating a tractor on a hill. A rear wheel slipped into a depression, causing the tractor to overturn. Marshall's son jumped to safety.



Oct. 5: James W. McDougall, 62, Dover, Minn., was killed when the tractor he was riding flipped over on him. His wife thinks he was herding cattle with the tractor.



Oct. 6: Jeremy David Blockson, 8, Elwood, Ind., suffocated in a grain wagon in which he was hiding. The adults unloading corn into the wagon did not know he was there.



Oct. 6: Maynard Elwell, 72, Stafford, N.Y., was killed when he apparently caught his pant leg in the rotating shaft of a tractor power-take-off. He was alone at the time of the accident.



Oct. 7: Wilbur Dallas, Sr., 57, Pawnee, Okla., died when his tractor overturned while he was mowing the site where his youngest son had been paralyzed in 1986 when the son's truck was hit by a train.



Oct. 7: Ronnie Taylor, 39, Newbern, Tenn., was killed when he tried to roll-start a tractor on a steep hill. The tractor hit an embankment and flipped over, landing on him.



Oct. 8: James Decker, 34, Owensville, Mo., strangled as his shirt became caught in a corn auger while he was moving corn from one wagon to another. The equipment was running while he checked on a malfunction.

## AMERICA'S DEADLY HARVEST



Oct. 8: Michael John Kleinsasser, 4, Frankfort, S. Dak., was killed when he was run over by a tractor. His family was gathering potatoes, and he wanted to help.



Oct. 9: James R. Gabriel, 49, Kempton, Ind., strangled when his clothes were caught in a corn picker he was lubricating.



Oct. 9: Richard Kingery, (pictured) 43, Rock Port, Mo., and Donald R. Graves, 61, Fairfax, Mo., were electrocuted when the auger they were moving from one grain bin to another came in contact with a 7,200-volt power line.

Oct. 7: Nancy Ann Schneck, 12, Milbank, S. Dak., was playing in a hopper bottom of corn being unloaded into a pit when she was pulled under. Her mother, Linda, and a neighbor pulled her out but couldn't revive her. "I wanted so much for her to cough and start breathing again," recalls Linda, "but she had already gone home to our Lord. I always kept my children away from hay grinders, power-take-off machines, and anything else that seemed dangerous," she says. "Had I only known how dangerous it was, my daughter would not have been playing there that day. I ask myself so often, 'Why didn't I tell Nancy to get out of there?' I will live with this for the rest of my life."



Oct. 9: Kenneth Thomas Reynolds III, 8, Sperry, Okla., was riding on a tractor driven by his father. The fender he was sitting on broke, and the wheel pulled him under the moving tractor. Then the attached mower ran over him.



Oct. 9: Jack Thedford "Chip" Sloop, Jr., 20, State Road, N.C., was killed while trying to pull a stump from the ground with a tractor. The tractor flipped backward and crushed him.



Oct. 10: Harvey Ashmore, 50, Muscoda, Wis., died in an accident while fighting a farm fire. The volunteer fireman ran from the cab to the front of a truck where a water tank was kept. The driverless truck rolled forward and ran over him.



Oct. 11: Arthur F. Carranza, 68, Newman, Calif., died when his tractor overturned into a pond. Carranza was removing rocks and backed the tractor too close to the pond; the vehicle overturned and crushed his chest.



Oct. 11: James B. Kohlman, 34, Churchville, N.Y., was operating a front-end loader when the machine slipped sideways down a pile of corn silage. Then the wheels caught on the ground, causing it to roll over.



Oct. 11: Fred Winfield Stark, 62, Bastrop, Tex., was killed when the tractor he was driving ran off an embankment and landed on him.



Oct. 12: Kenneth Brase, 62, Waseca, Minn., suffered a heart attack while fighting a tractor fire.



Oct. 12: Lemuel Harley See, 65, Stephens City, Va., was pulling a log up a hill when the tractor slipped, overturned, and caught fire. See was pinned beneath the tractor.



Oct. 12: Wilmot Violette, 56, Van Buren, Maine, died when the tractor he was using to move hardwood logs flipped backward, overturned, and crushed him.



Oct. 13: Charles Weldon Mounce, 58, Walnut Springs, Tex., was crushed when the bulldozer he was operating overturned on a steep incline.



## AMERICA'S DEADLY HARVEST

Oct. 16: Oscar Laaker, 82, New Haven, Mo., died when a topheavy tractor with a raised front-end loader overturned on him while he worked on an incline. The tractor came to rest completely upside down, pinning Laaker beneath it. "My husband would say, 'If I told him once, I told him a thousand times to put that bucket down,'" explains Elaine, Oscar's daughter-in-law. "The bucket was empty, but on an incline, weight just pulls it right over. The farmers said they saw him going around constantly with the empty bucket up in the air and they'd say, 'Oscar, for God's sake, don't be driving around with that bucket up,'" she says. "It's that old saying, it always happens to somebody else," Elaine adds.



Oct. 14: Albert Clauss, 61, Boston, N.Y., died in a tractor accident when he apparently reached down from the operator's seat and was pulled under the left drive wheel. He was spreading wood chips in a field behind his home.



Oct. 14: Mark Donoghue, 63, Columbus, Nebr., was killed while he and his sons loaded a cow into a trailer. The animal rammed Donoghue in the chest.



Oct. 14: Roy Miller, 59, Zanesville, Ohio, died when he was pinned under his tractor. He was operating the tractor on a hillside when it overturned.



Oct. 16: Charles W. Greer, Sr., 56, Vicksburg, Miss., was run over by a disk.



Oct. 16: Matthew Heller, 11, Beemer, Nebr., was discovered inside a corn wagon that was being unloaded at a grain elevator. His death was ruled a suffocation.



Oct. 16: Mark Duane Witt, 33, Hawarden, Iowa, was crushed between a tractor and a combine while he was changing heads on the machine. He was preparing to harvest corn after completing bean harvesting.



Oct. 17: Beverly Jane Mason, 50, Wildorado, Tex., died when a beet digger drive-chain broke and flew through the window of the truck she was driving next to the digger.



Oct. 17: Raymond Olson, 69, Andover, S. Dak., was run over when he slipped off a corn combine that had been clogging all day. Because it was dark, Olson's son Tim, the driver, was unaware that his father had climbed onto the combine.



Oct. 18: Salude Mosqueda, 21, a migrant worker in Lincoln County, Idaho, was killed when his coat became entangled in a power-take-off shaft that pulled him into a potato harvester.



Oct. 20: Caleb Cameron Boisseranc, 2, Rathdrum, Idaho, died when the tractor trailer on which he was riding jackknifed, causing a water tank on the tractor to break loose and roll over him.



Oct. 20: Thomas William Clugston, 53, Mount Vernon, Ill., was spotwelding a rim on an inflated tire when the sidewall of the tire blew out. He died from head injuries received in the accident.



Oct. 21: William Keith Gilman, 72, Star City, Ind., had used a cinder block to raise the jack as he changed a tire on a loaded silage wagon. The block crumbled under the heavy weight, and the wagon fell on him.



Oct. 23: James Hawkins, 63, Bethany, Mo., was pulling a log up a small incline when his tractor overturned on him.

## AMERICA'S DEADLY HARVEST



Oct. 23: William J. Markley, 73, Stone Lake, Wis., died when his tractor overturned while he was pulling logs on a slope.



Oct. 23: Noble C. Pryor, 73, Fayetteville, Ark., was killed when he apparently slipped from his tractor and fell beneath the rotary mower.



Oct. 24: Ervin Kimmel, 74, Milford, Ill., was watching two others move a corn conveyor when the conveyor became top-heavy; the undercarriage collapsed and struck Kimmel. He died from injuries several hours later.



Oct. 25: Jason Palma, 13, Radnor, Ohio, suffocated while on a school outing. He climbed into a grain bin containing corn and asked his classmates to cover him up. The child died before he could be released from the weight of a few feet of grain.



Oct. 25: Raymond E. Reiterman, 72, Mount Sterling, Ohio, died after the tractor he was bypass-starting suddenly started, lunged forward, and ran over him.



Oct. 25: Theodore J. Walczuk, 71, Navarre, Ohio, was attempting to uproot an evergreen bush with a chain hooked to the drawbar of his tractor. The tractor flipped and pinned him beneath the steering wheel.



Oct. 25: Lewis Douglas Williams, 42, Stewartsville, N.J., died when his tractor overturned. He was mowing an embankment at the time of the accident.



Oct. 26: John Oxford, 60, Parrott, Ga., died when he fell from his tractor and was run over by a harrow. A witness who saw the accident believes that Oxford was unconscious before he fell.



Oct. 27: Danny Lee Corrigan, 15, Teague, Tex., died when he was thrown from his 4-wheel ATV while accompanying a tractor and trailer carrying 20 people on a hayride. He attempted to pass and struck the trailer.



Oct. 27: Gust Eklund, 71, Ada, Minn., apparently died from a heart attack that occurred while he was operating a tractor.



Oct. 28: Bryan Lee Cameron, 16, Coulterville, Ill., died when the tractor he was operating overturned.



Oct. 28: Randal L. Conrad, 35, New Concord, Ohio, was pulling a hay wagon for a youth convention rally when the brakes failed. He rode the tractor down a steep hill, where it overturned. None of the passengers were injured.



Oct. 29: Loyd Sadler, 48, Gallatin, Tenn., was pulling a small wagon in which his son-in-law and two of his grandchildren were riding. The tractor stalled and rolled backward down a hill, and the tractor flipped on Sadler. The others were unhurt.



Oct. 29: Guy W. Sparks, 55, Moulton, Ala., fell from a tractor he was riding. He was killed when he was run over by the attached rotary mower.



Oct. 29: James Walters, 9, Watseka, Ill., died after being buried in a wagon filled with 400 bushels of shelled corn. His family was helping relatives with harvesting. The boy was revived but died the next day from respiratory problems.

# You Don't Have To Die

"This has been a very tragic time for my family and me," wrote Garnet Pfaff, whose husband was killed in a farming accident last October. "But if what I can tell you will help save others from going through what we had to, it will be worth it."

Similar words poured in by mail and phone from the families of farm accident victims as we began work on

this special section. They offered warnings and heartfelt pleadings to other farm families to avoid mistakes or careless actions.

If your family's farmers won't listen when you suggest that they be careful, tear out this article and give it to them. It just might save a life.

## Know Your Machinery's Limitations

"Check, check, check," the families told us.

"I plead with all farmers and others to check everything possible before you climb aboard a tractor or any farm machinery," says Virginia Sadler of Gallatin, Tenn. Her husband, Loyd, was killed when the

tractor he was driving stalled on a hill, rolled backward, and flipped over.

"Keep up preventive maintenance on your machinery," advises Kenneth Reynolds of Sperry, Okla., who lost an eight-year-old son.

"Keep a logbook of all that is done to each piece of equipment."

Updating old equipment is just as important, says Cindi Kraeger, of Port Leyden, N.Y.

"If we hadn't been using such an old wagon . . .," she says, remembering the accident that took her husband's life in November 1989. "It didn't have safety levers."

## Know Your Physical Limitations

It's a good idea for farmers to keep their own health evaluated and maintained and to check about the possible side effects of medicine before operating machinery. The effects of medication may have cost Noble Pryor his life.

"I had noticed he wasn't getting around too well," Ella Jean Pryor remembers about the days before her husband's tractor accident. "I think his medicine was too strong; it had just been changed the week before."

She surmises that the medication's effects may have caused him to fall from the tractor and into the path of a rotary mower.

Hearing problems may have contributed to the death of Wisconsin farmer Ward Pfaff.

"He wore a hearing aid," says his wife, Garnet. "When noise was too loud, he always turned it down. He may have had it turned down because of the loud noise of the combine."

Pfaff was following the machine to check for harvest losses and was killed when the combine operator backed the machine to start a new row of corn.

"Ward probably didn't even hear the combine or realize it was so close," says Garnet.

## Use a Buddy System

"If he hadn't been alone . . .," some of the relatives wished in their letters and phone calls. In some instances, they believed that the accident might have been avoided. In others, they wondered whether life-saving help could have been summoned more quickly.



Although realistically farmers can't always avoid working alone, someone should know a farmer's schedule and where he will be working, suggest some farm families.

"One bit of advice I would like to impress upon farmers is to work in pairs whenever possible," says Diane Witt of Hawarden, Iowa. The body of her husband, Mark, was discovered by his father after an accident that pinned him between a tractor and a corn head.

William Keith Gilman was dead when his son found him after a wagon of silage fell on him.

Says Gilman's wife, Lovetta, "Because he brought the tractor and the chopper back to the house, I didn't know where he was. I thought he was somewhere close by, so it was a while before we found him. If he and my son had been there together, maybe it wouldn't have happened."

#### Use Common Sense

Hardly a farmer can say he hasn't done *something* that he knew wasn't safe when he did it, in the interest of saving some time or effort. For many families, that moment of risk turns into a lifetime of heartache.

"Please think before you reach over or into things that spin," says Cindi Kraeger. Her husband, Peter, was killed when his gloves or coat caught on one of the beater bars in a self-unloading silage wagon. "The good Lord gave you a brain, so use it. Don't waste it or yourself."

Gertrude Walczuk saw the tractor turnover accident that took her husband's life.

"It was right in our front yard, and I saw the whole thing," she says. "He decided to move this tree, and it was too big. It was poor judgment, I have to say it."

"You can't warn somebody if they won't listen," she continues. "People don't need to think it won't happen to them."

Jerry Gabriel, widow of a farmer strangled in a corn picker, advises farmers to think of loved ones when they take risks during farming.

"It's so hard to be the one left behind," she points out. "When you get out there in the field, you have to be careful. Because if you're not, your family's life will never be the same."

## Please Be Careful—We Need You

All the safety seminars, instruction manuals, and warning labels in the world can't influence a farmer as much as a simple, sincere plea from his young child or concerned wife. We at *Progressive Farmer* suggest you sit down and write a letter to the busy farmer in your family. Tell him how you feel about him and why it's

important that he be especially careful this harvest season and in the seasons to come.

Words don't always come easily, so we've prepared a suggested letter. Use it to write your own, or just fill in the blanks, tear out the letter, and hand it to your loved one as he heads for the fields.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

I'm writing this letter because sometimes you get so busy you may not hear my words. I guess this is the most hectic time of the year for us. It's also one of the most dangerous.

That's what this letter is about. I'm asking you to be careful. We both know farmers who were killed or injured because they side-stepped safety procedures. I don't want our family to be on that casualty list this fall—or ever.

With so much to do, it's tempting, I know, to finish those last few rows even though you're so tired you can't see straight. Or you may want to try to unclog a machine quickly without turning it off.

When you do something you know is risky—even once—then it's easier to do it a second time. And then a third. With each time, our family's chance of losing you grows greater.

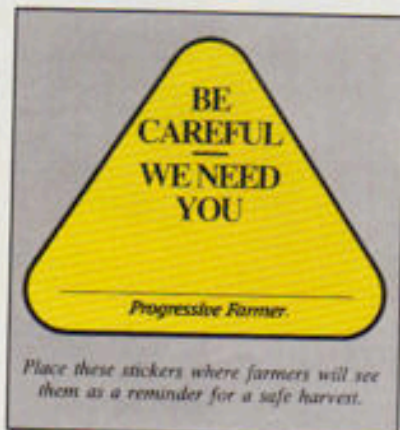
I want you around, \_\_\_\_\_, to enjoy this beautiful land God has given us, to rejoice in our family's good times, and to support each other during the bad ones. Don't let some fleeting, careless moment tear you from us.

I'm asking you to remember this letter every day when you head to the fields. If you start to do something you know is unsafe, think about what our lives would be like without you. Think about the future with us that you'll miss if your life is cut short. Are the extra minutes you'll save worth the price we might all pay?

I want us to share many more autumn harvests and spring plantings. So don't take it lightly when I tell you to please be careful—we need you. I'm counting on you to remember what's most important in life.

I love you \_\_\_\_\_

### Free Stickers for the Asking



*Progressive Farmer* wants your farm to be a safe one. As a gentle reminder to anyone you know who farms, place these stickers in conspicuous places—on machinery, in the farm shop, on chemical containers, on the refrigerator, or even on clothing your special farmer will wear.

Receive five weatherproof yellow vinyl stickers free of charge just for the asking. (Additional stickers are 25 cents each.)

Send a self-addressed stamped envelope with your request to *Progressive Farmer Safety Stickers*, Box 2581, Birmingham, AL 35202.