

Growing Ideas

KENTUCKY AGRABILITY



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*UK Cooperative Extension Service/College of Agriculture USDA
Special Project #99-EDFA-0-3132*

Forward

Curtis Absher, UK College of Agriculture

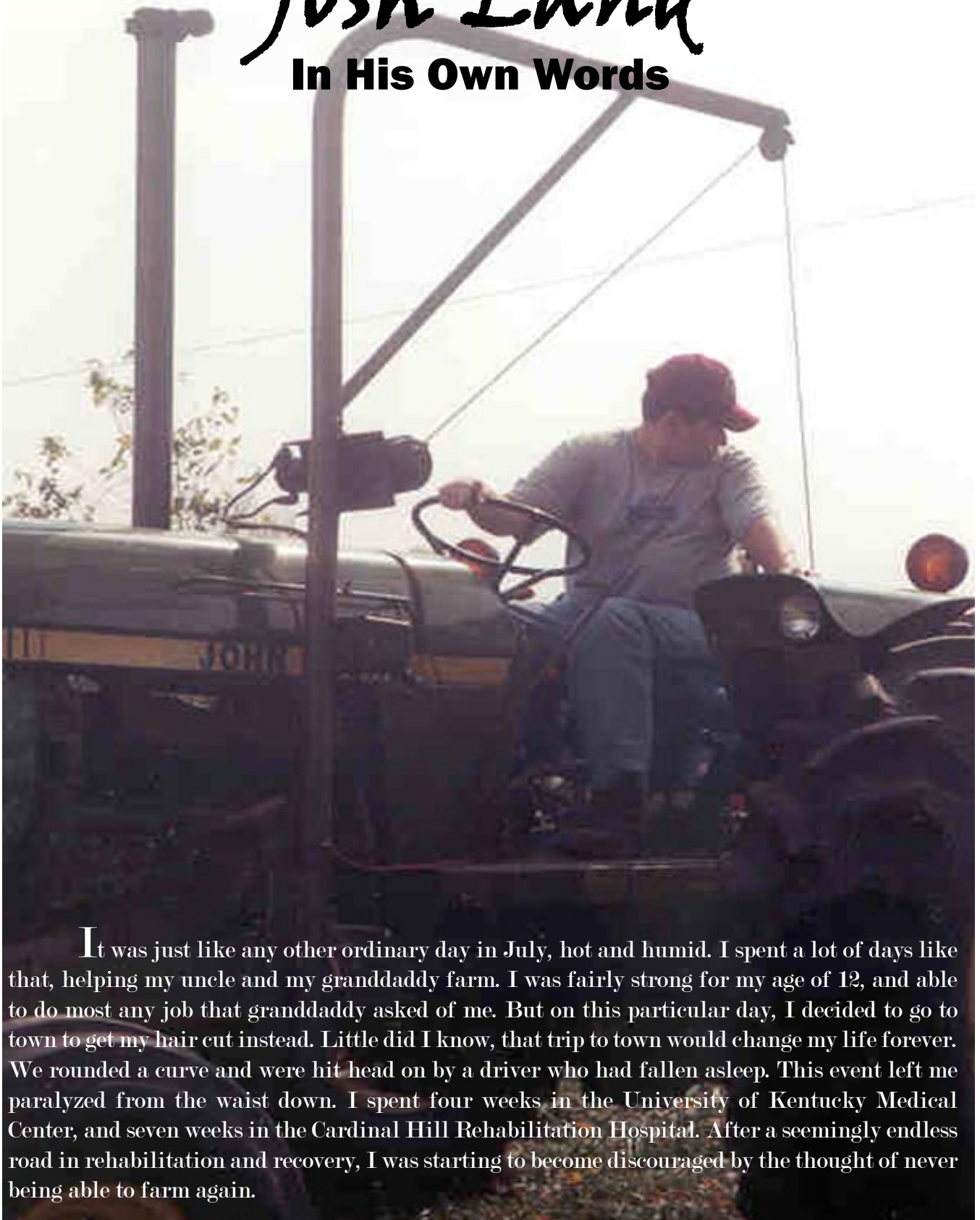


Temporarily abled is a phrase that has stayed with me for years now since I first heard it used. It came to mind when I fell and damaged my shoulder to the point of needing reconstructive surgery. I was reminded of it when I suffered from a leg problem that put me in a chair with my foot above the level of my heart. I remembered it again when I began to notice changes in my Dad, who was a hearty carpenter at one time in his life, as he negotiated around his house, garden or shop so very carefully as he got older. I also think about it when I work with my colleagues, John Hancock and Kathy Sheppard-Jones and realize that we need to be conscious about making our homes and workplaces physically accessible, by doing simple things like making certain that there are ramps available and that there is adequate open space for moving about for those who use wheelchairs.

I am so thankful that someone increased my sensitivity to appropriately speaking about person with disabilities rather than disabled people. My aforementioned colleagues and many others with disabilities that I have been fortunate to interact with have clearly demonstrated to me that attitude is the only thing that can be totally disabling. Because of this, Kentucky AgrAbility has enriched my life just by association. I have become more aware of the resiliency of the human spirit that exists within us all. Persons with disabilities have that same capacity to overcome barriers and to achieve success despite life's obstacles and setbacks. All of us find ways to rely on our strengths, and the stories in this book are rich in the description of peoples' abilities and gifts. Read these stories and you'll never again think of people as being disabled. I hope that you, like me, will be constantly reminded of the phrase, *temporarily abled*, and be grateful for that new understanding.

Josh Land

In His Own Words



It was just like any other ordinary day in July, hot and humid. I spent a lot of days like that, helping my uncle and my granddaddy farm. I was fairly strong for my age of 12, and able to do most any job that granddaddy asked of me. But on this particular day, I decided to go to town to get my hair cut instead. Little did I know, that trip to town would change my life forever. We rounded a curve and were hit head on by a driver who had fallen asleep. This event left me paralyzed from the waist down. I spent four weeks in the University of Kentucky Medical Center, and seven weeks in the Cardinal Hill Rehabilitation Hospital. After a seemingly endless road in rehabilitation and recovery, I was starting to become discouraged by the thought of never being able to farm again.

At Cardinal Hill, I heard about the AgrAbility program at the University of Kentucky. I was told that they helped disabled farmers get back into activities associated with farming. The therapists there told me to contact John Hancock, who happened to be a paraplegic as well. We called John and he made a personal trip to my house to give us some ideas not only about making a tractor accessible, but also ways to modify our house so that it would be easier for me to get around inside as well. It was a great encouragement to me to see someone who had injuries similar to mine who was able to do just about anything he wanted. I could tell that John had determination and that he wasn't going to let anything stop him from living a normal life.

Once I knew that I could still farm, the next step was modifying a tractor for me. Fortunately, my granddaddy was good friends with a guy by the name of Leo Hardin. Leo owns a used farm equipment dealership in Bloomfield, Kentucky. Me, granddaddy, and dad made a trip to visit him and see if he had anything that we might be interested in. He had a used John Deere 2940. It was just like the one that I was so familiar with from my past experiences on my granddaddy's farm. We had talked to John about trying to make a tractor like this accessible. He thought that it was a possibility.

We purchased the tractor and got to work on making it accessible as soon as possible. We took it to my cousin's machine shop and John along with his partner Larry Schwartz, started to construct a lift and hand controls to put on my tractor. They took three metal rods and mounted them to the clutch and both brakes so that I could

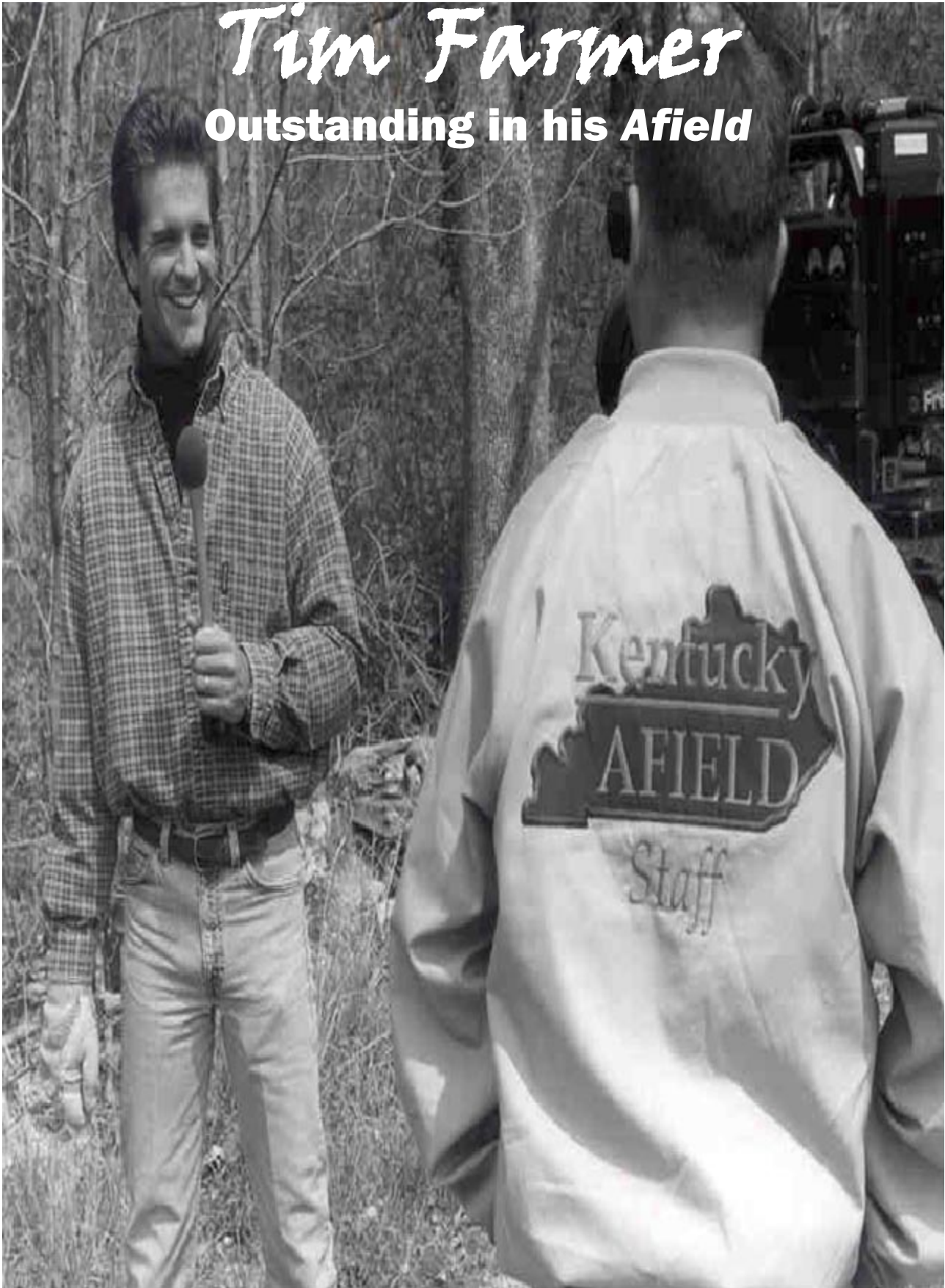
operate them with my hands. Then they went to work on making a lift to go on my tractor that would easily take me from my wheelchair, straight up onto the tractor. I was very pleased with the finished product. We took a 2 and 1/2 inch pipe, mounted it to the frame of the tractor, then a 2 inch pipe was inserted in the 2 and 1/2 inch pipe and bent at a 90 degree angle at the top with a dolly placed at the end. We then mounted a winch to the 2 and 1/2 inch pipe. The winch cable ran through the dolly then attached to a pipe with a hook on each end, similar to what is known as a singletree. We got a sling to place underneath of me and then attached to the singletree. Using the lift, I could then easily raise my self up and be sat down into the tractor seat. While the lift is not in use, I attach it to two small slots to keep it stable while I am using the tractor. I feel very comfortable with this lift because it is an easy and safe way for me to be able to farm.

Kentucky AgrAbility has been of great assistance to me. I am very grateful to them for what they have done to help me out. Through their assistance, I was able to get back on the farm and help my granddaddy and uncle again. It made me feel like I was able to contribute again instead of everyone having to do things for me. I was able to realize the dream of actually working on the farm again which is something I was afraid that I would never do. I appreciate the efforts of this program. They help make dreams come true.

Again, thanks to the University of Kentucky AgrAbility program for giving me something that otherwise would have been unreachable. A special thanks to John Hancock for his encouragement and friendship.

Tim Farmer

Outstanding in his Afield



The studios at the Kentucky Educational Television (KET) station were electric with activity. Here, the production team for Tim Farmer's popular weekly series, *Kentucky Afield* had gathered and was pulling footage to create a seamless transition from a fishing segment to a close up of the host sharing viewer photos. Tim was in the midst of editing the show that would air the following Sunday. The atmosphere was light and friendly in the editing suite, but it was clear that the mere act of putting together the half-hour outdoor sporting series each week was a finely tuned process. Scheduling that day was tight, because as soon as the program was ready, it was off to Cave Run Lake to film three days of muskie fishing.

It's an obvious labor of love for Farmer, a Louisville native who shares his experiences travelling through the rivers and woods of Kentucky with his viewers. As he puts it, "I get to hunt and fish and do all the things I love to do on a daily basis... and get paid for it!" But it's not all fun and games. Each show takes a total of 200 staff hours to put together. And there are no re-runs for *Kentucky Afield*. Farmer and crew air new episodes each week, all year. But you won't catch him complaining, "I've got to stay busy. This type of work is a great outlet for that."

The rugged Farmer is so skilled and affable in his segments that many who tune in do not even realize that he takes part in hunting and fishing activities one-handed, after losing the use of his right arm in an accident. Though his show does not focus on this fact, viewers with various disabilities

repeatedly call in to get information and advice on adaptive equipment. As a result of the increasing demand, Farmer began hosting a yearly seminar series entitled "Overcoming Physical Barriers with Tim Farmer" at the Salato Wildlife Education Center in Frankfort. Participants from Kentucky and Tennessee learn about techniques and equipment to help them more fully enjoy outdoor recreational pursuits including archery, shooting, and fishing. When asked what the highlight of his career is, Farmer immediately responds that it is that workshop. "I felt like I'd made a real impact. It's hard to describe. Just in showing people that they still can do what they want to do. Everyone has some reason they aren't doing the things they enjoy. Not just people with disabilities... Anytime we can get anybody else out there, it's a great thing."

As is true for most everyone, fancy adaptations aren't needed to meet Farmer's needs. For fishing pole modifications, he uses a fighting belt with attached PVC pipe in which the pole sits. A strap around his neck leads to the pipe, adding stability for those hard fighting fish. Another working device Farmer uses is a bow that he pulls back with his teeth. How well can something like this really work? Well enough to rank Farmer 23rd in the country against non-disabled archers.

Farmer's attitude toward work and play closely mirror his philosophy on life. "After the accident, I knew it was going to change my life forever. But I also knew that I would adapt and I would go on and it would be okay. What are the other choices?"

Bobby Pillow Getting it Done



Bobby and Shirley Pillow know what it takes to run a successful farm. They have raised soybeans, corn, wheat, cattle, and most importantly, three children on their Hickman County farm. Sixty-five year old Bobby is proud of the connection he has with his land.

Bobby was born on this farm. He began managing the place while he was in his early teens and never left. When other family members moved to the city, Bobby was counted on to provide the needed labor. He knew early on that farming was the life he would lead. It was just down the road that Bobby's life changed forever on a hunting trip when he was 14 years old. "I was going squirrel hunting. I had a shotgun accident and shot my hand off."

As a result, Bobby lost his right arm about three inches below the elbow. His first thoughts after the injury were about how he would be able to continue to contribute to his family. "The first day [after coming home from the hospital] I got up early. My father was out cutting hay. I was up about daylight and got on the tractor and mower and went to the field. About an hour later my dad came to the field and liked to have a fit 'cause I was cutting hay. I said 'Dad, I had to see if I could still drive a tractor or not.'" He's never wondered since then.

But work and life on the farm are not without their challenges. Bobby says, "It takes me a little longer, but I get the job done." His wife Shirley adds, "He does everything! Sometimes he does things and I say, 'Now why are you trying that?' He says, 'I think I can do it. Let me try.' There are very few things I've ever seen him try that he could not do."

Of course there are some aspects of farm work that are more difficult to accomplish. Repair work can be tricky when the job requires two hands to reach and adjust a piece of equipment. But Bobby has an entire machine shed filled with adapted hand tools and other devices that he has engineered to assist him in such situations. They are simple solutions, modified as the challenges presented themselves. And he adds, "Most of what I've done would be good for everybody, not just people missing a hand."

Bobby feels that it really helps to know someone with a similar disability. His brother also lost a hand and Bobby says "It's psychology I guess. I knew he had made it all right without one [hand] and I could too." Bobby's determination and creativity have helped him keep his farm running more than 50 years. When asked if there were things he had problems with in his farm operation or his everyday life he responds quickly, "Oh, sure. You've got to figure out [a way to do things], but you can figure it out. There's no such thing as 'I can't.'"

Lately Bobby has started talking about retirement. "You know I just want to travel a while." He's already sold some land, but when discussing the possibility that he wouldn't farm anymore, Shirley just laughs. "He hasn't done it yet." She turns to her husband, "You'll look out the window and they won't be doing it to suit you. You'll be right back out there."

Bobby grins. He still has his planter, his combine, and his tractors. And he has no intention of selling them. "Just in case, you know. I might want to do some more." Shirley just smiles.

Bobby Meadows

A Man With a Mission



Kentucky AgrAbility received a call from the staff at the Veteran's Administration, requesting some technical assistance for one of their clients, Bobby Meadows, a Vietnam veteran and Kentucky farmer. AgrAbility staff met with Bobby, who began farming in 1984 after he retired from the army with a 50% disability rating. He had sustained bullet wounds in both legs while on duty in Vietnam. Bobby had been able to farm without much difficulty until a 1989 tractor accident left him a paraplegic and put him in a wheelchair. Now Bobby needed to figure out how he could continue to run his 130 acre crop and livestock operation. Enter Kentucky AgrAbility. John Hancock visited Bobby's farm setup and recommended some options to help him be better able to do his work despite his new situation.

Transportation around the farm is one of the biggest obstacles for people with mobility impairments. Rough terrain, rocky and uneven knolls and dips can be tricky to walk, let alone traverse with a wheelchair. To remedy this, it was felt that a six wheel all-terrain vehicle (ATV) would meet Bobby's farm transportation needs. As versatile as an ATV is, it still had to be adapted for Bobby. Finger-operated gas controls and stick guidance would help him navigate his fields easily. The freedom the ATV brought was immediate. Bobby said that after he drove the ATV once he knew he wanted it. "The land on my farm is rolling, and this vehicle lets me get to any of the fields I need."

But Bobby had other farm equipment that had to be modified as well. He wanted to continue to work his fields, so his Long 610 tractor was outfitted with hand controls, high backed seat, lift, and extensions for

the canopy and roll over protection system. The chair-lift enabled Bobby to transfer to a seat at ground level that he would use while driving the tractor. This allowed him to avoid an additional transfer. The hand controls are a quick detachable pull-type for better accessibility and control the brakes and clutch and operate the differential lock. Additional adaptations that were made on Bobby's farm included solar powered remote control gate openers would make entering and exiting the pastures a simple task. Bobby would also need a wheelchair lift on his pickup truck so he could move around independently both on and off the farm. A radio communication system to keep contact with home base was a safety item that Bobby agreed would be important as well.

The Veterans' Administration and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation helped to pay for the necessary modifications and equipment that have enabled Bobby to return to full-time cattle and tobacco farming. Bobby remains a successful farmer on his Mercer County property. His success story is so great, in fact, that he was named the 1993 National Disabled Veteran of the Year. But Bobby is modest about his achievements, "John [Hancock] got it all started," he says, "If it hadn't been for him, I don't know what I would have done. He made the suggestions to the VA about what I needed and they got the equipment..."

John responds and pays Bobby what is, perhaps, an even greater compliment, "Bobby's just like any other farmer who uses services from the Cooperative Extension Service. He just has different questions and different needs."

John Hancock

Mr Kentucky AgrAbility



In the summer of 1984, 24-year-old John Hancock of Fulton county, Kentucky was involved in a motorcycle accident that left him a paraplegic. Since that time, John has put his life back together and now works to help others who have had life-changing experiences do the same.

Following the accident and 18 weeks of physical therapy, John went back home. "Therapy was tough, but once it was over I was able to return to my job as a county Extension agent," he says. A year and a half later, John travelled to Purdue University in Indiana to work with an intriguing program called "Breaking New Ground." This program was cutting edge because it promoted the idea that farmers who had become disabled could be retrained and/or provided accommodations that would enable them to again work on their farms. John was immediately drawn to the positive impact he could have on farmers.

Two years after he went to Purdue, John returned to Kentucky to share with the Extension Service what he had learned. "People without disabilities need to become more aware of how much someone with a disability can do if he or she gets the right rehabilitation training," said John. "A farmer with a disability may do farm chores a bit differently, but what's important to remember is that he can still do them." While an agent in Carroll County, he began working with individuals with disabilities that other agents would refer to him. Soon he moved to the University of Kentucky campus and became a one-man resource center on rural disability issues for the state.

In 1990, The US Department of Agriculture authorized the creation of AgrAbility projects as part of the US Farm bill. Kentucky began a state AgrAbility project in 1993, with John serving as

director. Kentucky AgrAbility has the mission of providing technical assistance to farmers and farm families who have been touched by disability. Kentucky AgrAbility also impacts the state at a systems level by providing training to rural disability professionals such as rehabilitation counselors and Extension staff, thus enhancing their ability to work more effectively with their clients with disabilities. A big part of the program revolves around providing disability awareness for many groups from kids at 4-H camp to University staff and students. John is also beginning work with KY GROW, a three year grant to develop accessible gardening opportunities for people with and without disabilities throughout the state.

John feels that the most important part of the work he does is the one-on-one assistance that he provides the farmers referred to him by Extension agents and the Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. "Just like I was able to return to my job, a farmer who becomes disabled can return to his farm," said John. "He may need a bit of help here and there, but for the most part he is able to grow anything from a garden to thousands of acres — and that's an important message to get out."

In his spare time, John enjoys fishing, basketball, swimming, target shooting and playing with his labrador retrievers. Someday, he hopes to have his own farm raising beef cattle and tobacco. In the meantime, he's content to help others keep their dreams as reality.

When asked how he views people with disabilities, John doesn't hesitate in his response. "A person can have a disability but not be disabled," he said. "And I think that's the way people with disabilities want to be looked at."

Kathy Sheppard-Jones

Drawing Her World Outside of the Lines



Life often throws surprises at us, and we wind up on paths that we never expected. Kathy Sheppard-Jones' path has taken her in many different directions. Kathy has a strong horse background. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Vermont with a degree in Animal Science. Kathy has successfully bred, trained and shown Morgan horses at the World Championship level, but finds the most joy in teaching others riding and driving skills. The fact that she uses a wheelchair while accomplishing her goals has made her take a more creative approach to problem solving. "The only thing that's different about me is the way I get around. I do everything I want to, but perhaps just a bit differently."

Kathy planned to pursue a doctoral degree in equine nutrition, but decided to take some time off and move to Kentucky to get hands-on horse experience first. While here, she became involved with the Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation's driver evaluation program. There she was able to accomplish something others told her she could not do: drive a vehicle independently. The positive experience she had with that program made her decide to change her direction. "I was so impressed with the impact that Vocational Rehabilitation staff can have on peoples' lives. I decided that I would like to be a part of that."

She got a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling at the University of Kentucky and was subsequently hired by the University, where she oversees a quality assurance program that helps Kentucky provide services that meet the needs of consumers with developmental disabilities. Kathy is also pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology, focusing on survey

research.

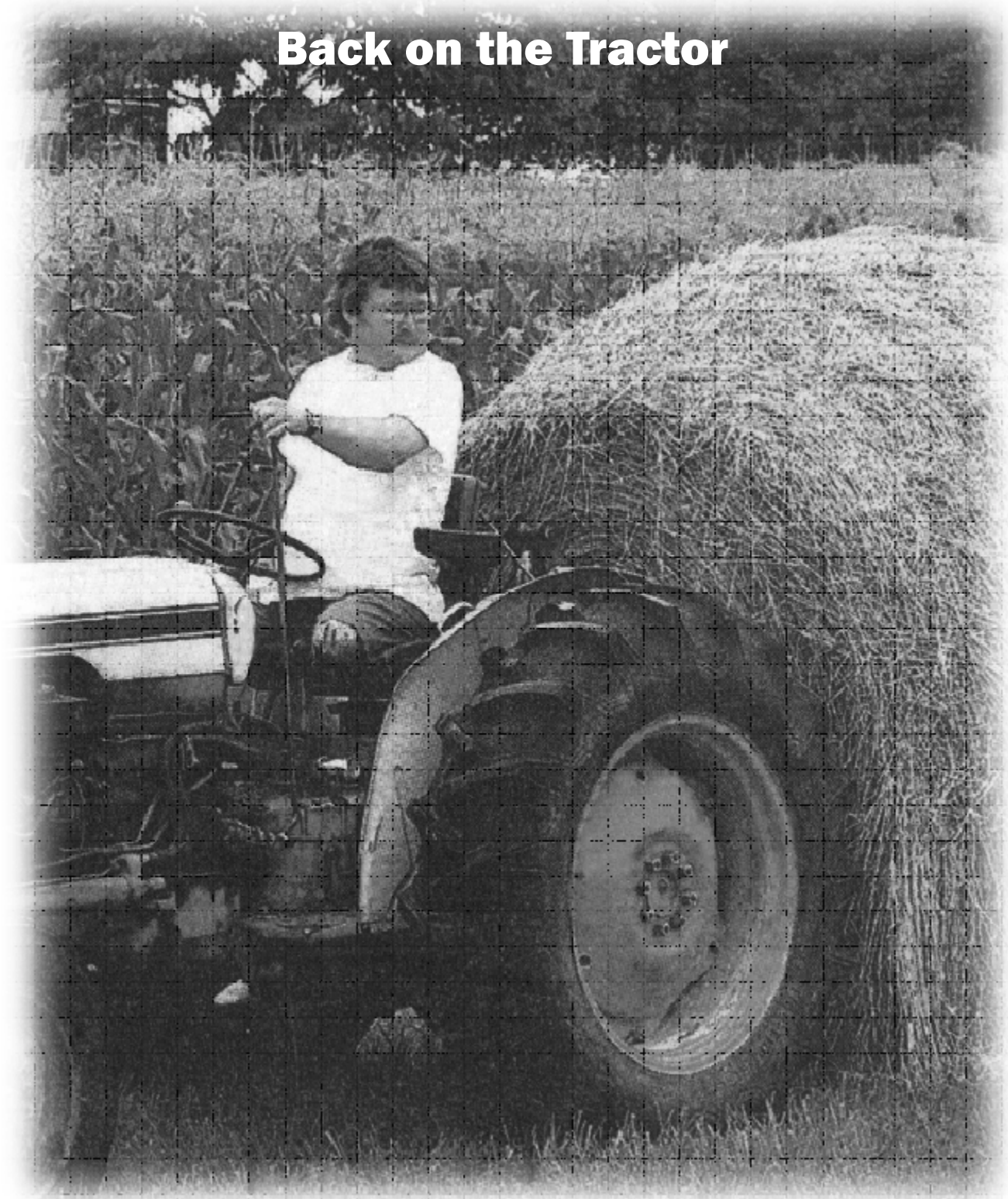
But Kathy has not left her agricultural roots behind. She has horses of her own that she actively breeds and shows. "Being on the sidelines of the horse industry is not an option for me. Some people don't think you can work with horses from a chair, but there are always ways to get things done. The horses themselves adapt pretty quickly to the wheelchair. As long as they are taken care of and fed, they don't care how you get around!"

Kathy and her husband, Jim, own five acres of land in Jessamine County. The finishing touches on her horse barn are being completed there. She feels this stable is an excellent model of how one can combine accessibility with functionality and still be pleasing to the eye. When construction is complete, Kathy will give riding and driving lessons to people with and without disabilities. Kentucky AgrAbility's technical advice has been invaluable in the design effort. "By using rehabilitation technology and common sense principles, my property is fully functional for me to do all barn chores independently."

Kathy enjoys raised-bed gardening and is involved in Kentucky GROW, a grant project funded through the US Department of Education that she hopes will spread the benefits of accessible gardening for everyone. Kathy also works with Kentucky AgrAbility because it enables her to bring her agricultural and rehabilitation interests together. "Farming is a huge way of life in Kentucky. Farmers and their families who are touched by disability do not necessarily have to give up their way of life. Being able to show them that is truly a gift."

Donald Bray

Back on the Tractor



In late 1998, Donald Bray noticed that something was wrong. He began feeling severe pain in his legs and a tingling sensation in his feet. Doctors diagnosed peripheral arterial disease, a slow deterioration of the arteries that supply blood to the feet and legs. The disorder is typically associated with diabetes or heavy smoking, but Donald had neither. The best guess is that his case is hereditary, a legacy from some unknown family member generations back.

There was no cure for Donald's condition. He could either live with the pain for the rest of his life or have his legs amputated. Initially, he opted for the pain. But after about a year his situation got worse, and he couldn't stand for more than a few minutes at a time. For a man who had been active and independent all his life this was a very difficult lifestyle change. Now, even performing 15 or 20 minutes of work would leave him immobilized by pain for the rest of the day. He relied on heavy doses of prescription painkillers, but still found very little relief.

"It was so hard seeing him in such pain and knowing there wasn't anything that I could do about it," said Donald's wife, Julie. Surgery finally became unavoidable early in 2000 when prolonged poor blood circulation led to gangrene in his toes. Donald's legs had to be amputated above the knee.

That could have been the end of a sad story – except that Donald wasn't ready to concede yet. Even while he was still hospitalized, he was trying to think of ways to get back on the job. Shortly after going home, he rigged up his own set of hand controls on his four-wheel ATV, which enabled him to drive around the 70-acre farm that he operates with his grandmother, Rosie.

Enter Kentucky AgrAbility. Donald

heard about the program through a Pulaski County farm equipment dealer, who told him how it had helped another local farmer who lost a leg in an accident. "When I heard about the program, I knew I wanted in on it," he said.

AgrAbility staff visited Donald's farm and recommended hand controls on his Case 885 tractor. Soon he was out in the fields working, much as he had before. "I just wanted to do anything I could to get back," said Donald. "I figured that it would be hard to operate the tractor when they first started talking about putting on the controls. But it's really pretty easy." So easy, in fact, that Donald has put out his own tobacco crop, has helped cut the hay and has done the mowing and just about everything else that needed doing around his farm. "...Once I get on the tractor, I can do just about anything I need to."

Donald also recognized the importance of the independence that comes with driving his own vehicle. Deciding that he wanted to be able to drive his car again, he purchased a used set of hand controls for it but couldn't find anyone who knew how to install them. So, he studied the controls and figured out how to put them on himself. "He can build just about anything," Julie said, proud of her husband's ingenuity and determination.

He did so with a little help from his then 13-year-old son Josh. "Josh had to tighten some of the bolts I couldn't reach," he said. "Once I got them on... In five minutes I was driving."

Though Donald lost both of his legs to vascular disease, he has not lost the desire to keep doing what he loves. The support of his family, local and state resources, and his own ingenuity will keep Donald in his fields for years to come.

David Dennis

Choosing Solutions, Not the Sidelines



A car accident in 1987 changed David Dennis' life. But being in a wheelchair has not decreased his desire to farm. "After the accident, my friends and family thought it was crazy for me to think about driving a tractor and doing farm work. But farming is something I love," says David, who owns 40 acres and rents an additional 30 acres of farmland near Lawrenceburg, Kentucky.

Before his accident, he farmed 300 acres full time. During his rehabilitation, he gave up his rented land. David also earned a college degree so he could start a new career, and he's now an accountant with a state agency in Frankfort.

But David's love for farming never waned. To better be able to manage his homeplace, he bought a John Deere 4020 tractor. He choose this model because it comes equipped with a powershift transmission that enables the driver to change gears without ever needing to use a foot clutch.

The tractor's features were a good start, but David still needed a way to get on and off of it on his own. He brainstormed until he was able to fashion his own lift to help him from his wheelchair to the tractor seat.

Admittedly, it wasn't a perfect solution. "My homemade lift required me to pull myself with ropes into the seat. It put a toll on my shoulders, and it wasn't safe," he says.

During his rehabilitation, a nurse at the hospital told David about the Kentucky AgrAbility Project and that there might be options available to him if he still wanted to farm his own land. Curious about the possibilities, he contacted John Hancock at the University of Kentucky.

After meeting with David, Hancock obtained a lift that was originally designed to move people from wheelchairs into equipment seats. It showed real promise for David's tractor, but in order to make the lift a good fit for David's needs, the skills of the industrial maintenance class at the Anderson Campus of Central Kentucky Technical College were called upon. The class instructor, Allan Robertson, agreed to undertake the job of adapting the lift to Dennis' tractor.

It proved to be an excellent lesson for the class in designing a product to meet the needs of the user. "In order to make the changes, the students had to put themselves in David's position," says Robertson.

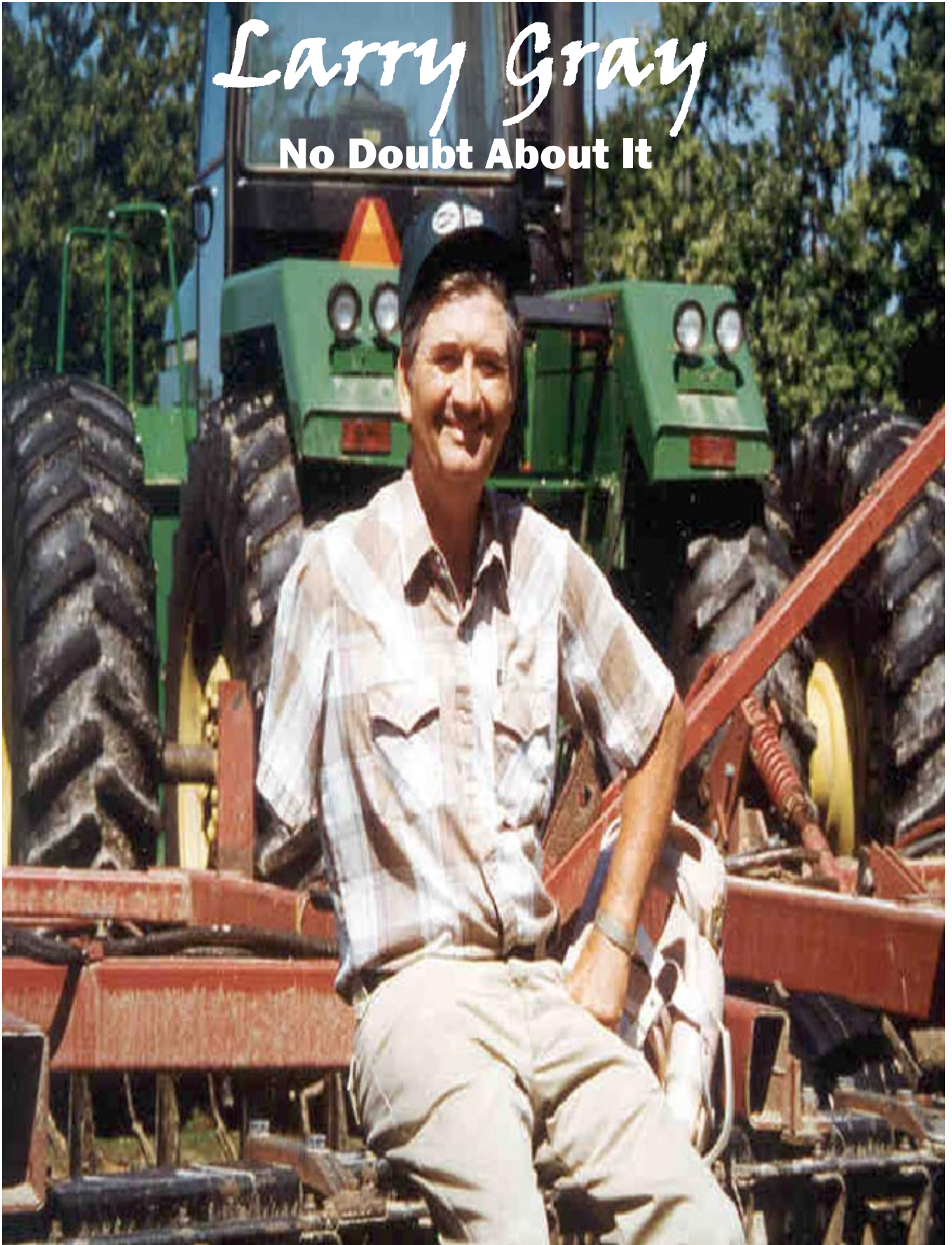
The class rewired the tractor and installed the hydraulic lift on a separate electrical system, which was an important safety feature. This ensured that if any problem arose while David was in the tractor that he would still be able to exit it safely. The cab was modified with hinges that allow it to tilt back, providing extra room while Dennis lifts himself into the tractor seat.

The adaptations have meant that David is able to do farm work that he didn't even do prior to his accident. Now he bales hay for his own beef cattle, and even does some custom round baling for neighbors. David also uses the tractor to do his winter livestock feeding.

"Sitting on the sidelines was alright for a while," he says. "But I really wanted to get out and drive my tractor by myself. My goal is to be 100% independent." As his recent accomplishments show, David is well on his way.

Larry Gray

No Doubt About It



Larry and Brenda Gray have Kentucky across the road and their feet in Tennessee. As long as he is farming, Larry doesn't care about state lines. He smiles, "It would be hard to get away from agriculture... When I was a little boy, I'd get in a dust pile and my daddy was planting a field. I did the same thing in that dust pile. I'd smooth it out and I'd plant me some rows. Even as a little bitty boy I got aggravated at crooked rows."

Larry had planted straight rows until the day he lost his right arm at the shoulder in November, 1991 when he became entangled in a power take off shaft while unloading his last load of beans. It nearly cost him his life. Recovery was a long process, but he was determined to be back on the tractor the next spring. Larry says, "I told the therapist, 'take all the time you need in the winter but I wanted to be on a tractor the first day of April.' And I was, and we were planting corn."

Not farming was never an option for Larry. "There's just something different about farming. We're a unique group." He knew there would be changes that would take place, but he would find ways to get things done. When he first returned to farming after his injury, Larry's biggest concern was how others might view his future. He knew that he would have to prove himself. And prove himself he did. Though he did not relish the thought of bringing on additional help to do the tasks he could no longer do, his grain operation expanded extensively when he grew from a one-man operation to two. There is only one thing Larry can no longer do, and that is get a job done as quickly as he is accustomed. "I can't accomplish what I want to do if I hurry physically. I'm all thumbs."

Larry has inspired other farmers. He has visited and talked with others with amputations, encouraging them not to give up on their goals. His wife, Brenda, offers support to other wives whose husbands have experienced injuries. As is the case in so many farm injuries, Brenda was the one who found Larry after his accident. "There is a grieving process, a lostness. But don't let it dominate your life," she says. Brenda and Larry both feel that good communication is essential to the family unit, particularly after such a devastating blow. Larry and Brenda are not ones to look back. Brenda laughs, "We are still very much in love with farming. I was the one who was never going to marry a farmer. I am knee deep in farming and I love it."

Larry looks thoughtful as he thinks back on that fateful Sunday afternoon. He knows he should have died. Even before his rescue, he found the strength he needed. "The Lord intervened in the situation and gave me some strength that I didn't have. A peace that I didn't have. And then when those words came, 'Everything is going to be alright' my attitude changed." These words are framed and sit on Larry's desk. He and Brenda believe them. They have been proven over and over in his life. This is not to say that frustration doesn't arise. However, he has his own solution to it. "Sometimes you just have to quit, get in the truck and drive off, think about something else, get it out of your mind and then approach it again a little differently than you did before. But the main thing is not to give up."

Larry Gray has never given up. Perhaps that is why he is not just an average farmer. He is a good farmer. By anyone's standard.

Marty Pope

A Different Kind of Attitude



Marty Pope has been described as an “All American boy” living in the picturesque town of Bardstown, Kentucky. Some might have thought that Marty’s accident with an all-terrain vehicle that left him with a spinal cord injury would change his life forever. How would he be able to go back to his job? How would his life change? But for Marty there was never a question of if he would return to his life before the accident, it was only a matter of how and when.

Marty had a lot of factors working in his favor. He had a very supportive family, a great deal of internal motivation and many supporters in his community who rallied around him. Shortly after the accident, the local John Deere dealer where he had worked spearheaded a fundraiser to help with Marty’s expenses. His vocational rehabilitation counselor worked diligently to assist him with the resources he would need to attain his vocational goals and get back to work. Marty himself got to work on his physical rehabilitation soon after getting home from the Frazier Rehabilitation hospital, setting up parallel bars outside to improve his strength and endurance. Through Kentucky AgrAbility, Marty got technical support and a great deal more.

Marty did find that he needed to make a few changes in his life. He had hand controls installed on his truck, and a lightweight manual wheelchair for excursions. In order to be able to continue in the business that he began with his brother in lawn care, landscaping, and snow removal he made some equipment changes. He traded tractors with the dealer to get a larger, 43hp John Deere equipped with a semi-automatic transmission, front end loader and freedom hitch. For Marty, the best part of switching tractors was that his new one

needed no hand controls or wheelchair lift because he was able to operate it and get on and off it independently.

Marty found a kindred spirit in John Hancock, Kentucky AgrAbility’s project director. John provided not only the know-how for meeting Marty’s new accessibility needs, but was also a strong source of peer support. Marty was able to relate to everything John discussed with him because the experiences they had surrounding their injuries were very similar. Marty had found himself asking many of the same questions that John had asked himself throughout the course of his own rehabilitation. John felt that some of his own personal experiences helped him to better understand and respond to what Marty might need. The two became fast friends, and John was struck by the level of community support that Marty had. “Everybody in Bardstown knows Marty. Traveling with him was like traveling with a celebrity,” said John.

Marty said he “...thought it was pretty cool how John helped people and I want to do the same thing someday.” Marty describes Kentucky AgrAbility as “a program with a different kind of attitude.” He says AgrAbility and his family were what kept him motivated when he was going through though some tough times, both emotionally & physically following his accident.

Marty continues to progress in his rehabilitation. He is an avid deer hunter, and has recently married. He is a young man with a different kind of attitude himself. He says, “Things happen for a reason. I’ve helped a lot of people out because of my disability.”

Jerry Hanrahan

Buzz Does



Jerry Hanrahan is a 67 year old farmer in Kenton County. He currently operates a 58 acre farm that produces 3000 square bales of hay annually. Jerry, or as his friends call him, "Buzz", has been farming since 1959 with only his left arm. His right arm was amputated at the shoulder due to an accident some 40 years ago. Jerry is a self man of many trades. He is a self-taught fabricator, a custom welder, and an all around fix it man. At his farm you can see evidence of his creations and modifications everywhere.

One of Jerry's main sources of income is from the sale of square baled hay. Baling hay is a hard and repetitive job that eventually takes a physical toll, especially if you are doing the task with only one arm. All of the years of loading and unloading square bales had accelerated the wear and tear of Jerry's existing arm. Because he knew that he wasn't ready to quit farming yet, he realized that he had to find a better way. He contacted the local county Extension agent, who, in turn, called Kentucky AgrAbility.

Kentucky AgrAbility staff met with Jerry and worked with him to determine what kind of hay stacking equipment would make the baling process easier. An automatic Zimmie-Stacker was recommended as a solution for use in his hay baling enterprise. The Zimmie would allow Jerry to bale, transport and store hay independently without needing to hire additional part-time laborers. It would eliminate the burden of having to change hay wagons, of loading and unloading the wagons, and therefore reduce his overall transportation costs associated with baling. Since Jerry already had a tractor and square baler, the new stacker would simply

attach to his existing square baler with very few adaptations. All that was needed to make it work were hydraulic hoses leading from the tractor. Jerry's skills meant that he already had the needed parts and the know how to install them.

Jerry had previously purchased a manual stacker and 12 bale front-end loader transport attachment. It was quickly realized that by adding an additional 24 bale transport attachment, he would be able to triple the number of square bales he could transport with the same tractor in a single load. This would allow Jerry to increase his production without having to increase work hours, thus making him more efficient. With the automatic stacker and bale transporter he would be able to expand his operation, bale more hay and increase his annual income.

Now that all of the needed equipment had been identified, the next area of concern was funding. Jerry contacted the Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Vocational rehabilitation is the state agency that assists people with disabilities in becoming or staying employed. Jerry met with a rehab counselor and was approved for the purchase of the hay stacker as well as a special prosthesis for welding and working in the shop. It was obvious that a small investment in Jerry's farm would enable him to keep farming and continue his way of life.

Jerry recognizes the importance of giving back to other farmers. He has begun to provide peer support for other farmers in the area who have disabilities. Perhaps the best support that he offers is by sharing his own success story.

In the Beginning...

A Note from Kentucky AgrAbility's First Client

September 25th, 1989

John Hancock
Dept. of Agriculture Engineering
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40546-0075

Dear John,

How does one say simply "Thank You" when your ideas have given me a whole new outlook, and the freedom, plus, safety to go about my work without being afraid I will fail to get the clutch pushed in, in enough time to stop a tractor before an accident happens? Thank you is not enough to tell you what freedom a hand clutch on my tractors really is for not only me, but the peace of mind it has given my family.

Thank you for coming here on your own time on that Saturday in April of 1988. Thank you for your positive attitude. Thank you for believing I could continue to farm with one leg paralyzed. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you for helping others see a physical inconvenience did not mean the end of life as a normal person. Thank you for helping me stay active and productive. Thank you for helping me stay sane through my productivity, and thank you for helping me find a way to continue to farm.

Sincerely,

Berniece Bullock-McHargue

Resources for Growing Your Own Ideas

Kentucky AgrAbility

304 W.P. Garrigus Bldg
University of Kentucky
Lexington KY 40546-0215
859.257.1845
800.333.2814
<http://www.uky.edu/Agriculture/AgPrograms/AgrAbility/>



Cardinal Hill Healthcare System

2050 Versailles Rd
Lexington KY 40504
859.254.5701
<http://www.cardinalhill.org/rehabilitation/>



University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service

Found in every County
To locate your nearest Extension office, see "Cooperative Extension Service" in your local phone book
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/ces/>



Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation

For the office nearest you, call:
800.372.7172
<http://kydvr.state.ky.us/>
Assisting Kentuckians with disabilities in achieving suitable employment and independence



US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

For information about USDA resources, visit their Web site at:
<http://www.usda.gov/services.html>



Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Fund

PO Box 12231
Lexington KY 40581-2231
877.675.0195
<http://www.kyatloan.org/>



Kentucky Supported Living

100 Fair Oaks, 4th Floor
Frankfort KY 40621
<http://dmhmrs.chr.state.ky.us/mr/supportedliving/>
Competitively funded program that provides flexible supports for people with disabilities and their families



This program is designed to help Kentuckians with disabilities obtain assistive technology to improve their independence or quality of life.

