



Headline: Farmer Gains Positive Outlook From Injury

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Paul Croken grows 120 acres of carrots, turnips and cabbages on Prince Edward Island, on the farm he’s owned for 30 years. Every year he hires local help for the harvest season and to help with vegetable grading. Perhaps if it wasn’t for all his reliance on his friends, family, and employees, Paul’s farming career may have come to an abrupt end on October 8th, 2008.

He had gone out alone with his sprayer in the early morning, just at the beginning of harvest season. While reaching over the sprayer hitch to make a quick adjustment, the drawstring of his coat was caught in the power take-off. “I remember coming to on the other side of the tractor and sprayer, about 15 feet away, and I’d gone between the PTO and the draw-bar,” he says. His wife, Heather, remembers getting a phone call from their neighbour between her morning shower and the time she’d usually start getting ready for work. “Gordie McKenna found him and he just said not to worry, that he’d phoned an ambulance and it was coming to get him,” she recalls. The McKenna family knew Paul well enough to consider an unattended tractor odd enough to investigate, but Gordon McKenna didn’t

want to worry Heather by what they’d found. Paul’s left arm had been nearly completely severed in the accident and he had lost a lot of blood. When the ambulance arrived, Heather got a second call urging her to bring the kids to the field right away. “They didn’t think that I was going to make it to Halifax, I’d lost so much blood, and I had a lot of internal damage as well,” Paul recalls.

Paul was airlifted from Charlottetown hospital to Halifax the same morning. “They wanted me to go in the helicopter with him, but I didn’t want to leave the kids,” Heather says. “I just kept telling the kids that it was just his arm, no big deal, because I really just did believe that.” In the end, doctors did have to amputate his arm at the shoulder and Paul was also left with a paralyzed diaphragm and just one working lung. He spent four weeks in the hospital, leaving the harvest season in the hands of friends and family.

“I’d pop over when they were at the warehouse, just to give them an update on how he was, but that was it,” she says. “The vegetable growers’ co-op, Brookfield Gardens, and everybody that he knew all came together and they harvested everything without any of our help.”

When Paul first got out of the hospital, he says it wasn’t easy to be optimistic but looking back on it as a family now, both Paul and Heather agree the lasting effects have been nothing but positive. “He wouldn’t slow down before, but now he doesn’t have a choice,” Heather says, “and more people need to learn that.” She sees how much closer he’s become with his family. Paul says he still works on the farm, and although he can’t do everything he used to, now that they’ve expanded the farm, they can afford to have year-round help, so he doesn’t have to. “Believe it or not,” he jokes, “Other people can do things!” Paul says now that he appreciates his own limitations, he can see that his accident was simply the result of one man trying to do the work of three. He’d advise other farmers not to suffer a life-threatening incident before evaluating what’s really important in life and learning to slow down more often.



Cutlines

Croken 1

Paul Croken credits friends, family and friends with his successful return to farming. He encourages other farmers to slow down and evaluate what's really important in life.

Croken 2

Paul Croken's injury hasn't stopped him running a successful farm, but he now appreciates his own limitations. "Believe it or not," he jokes, "Other people can do things!"

Croken 3

Even after his injury, Paul Croken continues to grows beets and other vegetables on his Prince Edward Island farm.

