

I am Russell Ramsey from Missouri. My previous jobs have been with the U.S. Army, SGT. E-5; I was a CED for Farm Service Agency for a couple years; I taught vocational agriculture at three schools before I retired from teaching; and the University of Missouri Extension for almost seven years. I was a member of FFA myself when I was in high school. I have a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture, Master of Science Degree in Vocational Education, and An Educational Specialist Degree in Vocational Education from the University of Missouri at Columbia. I have had beef cattle on my farms for many years now (over thirty years.)

I have been to the National AgrAbility Training Workshops at Nashville, Tenn.; Springfield, Ill.; Omaha, Neb.; Burlington, VT.; Jackson, MS.; and Sacramento, Calif. During those years, I was an employee of the University of Missouri Extension. My job was Agricultural Business Specialist. I was also the Regional AgrAbility Specialist for Southeast Missouri. I had several Small Farm Program Assistants who I supervised. Back in 2002 we had our first meeting with Karen Funkenbusch of the University of Missouri AgrAbility Project on how to receive services and assistance from project.

My program assistants identified several disabled farmers who received farm assessments from AgrAbility and later received financial assistance from Vocational Rehab. I cooperated with Brad Marsh who was with the Independent Living Center and who worked for Missouri AgrAbility in making disability assessments.

I have presented AgrAbility programs at the Ag Expo at Poplar Bluff, Small Farmer Conference at Sikeston; and at several University of Missouri Extension Council Meetings in Southeast Missouri.

I have assisted with the AgrAbility Educational Exhibit at the Mid South Gin Show in Memphis for a number of years. I even participated again this year. Thanks to Dr. Willard Downs and Karen Funkenbusch giving me a chance to get involved again this year.

Now you may wonder why are you on this farmer panel this evening? Well, I will try to explain to you what happened to me. Back in November 24, 2007 I was busy working on Thanksgiving Weekend putting in 8 foot Wooden Posts for an EQUIP project on one of my cattle farms. I was using a post hole auger on my three-point hitch and had a pallet fork loaded with the posts on my John Deere 725 Loader using my John Deere 4020 1967 tractor. I had a new John Deere 6430 Tractor with self-leveling loader at my home farm I might add. However sometime that afternoon, I was augering a post hole and the next time I remembered anything was in late January when I finally came to myself after a few days at St. Johns Mercy Rehabilitation

Hospital in St. Louis. My wife Wanda was helping me that afternoon. Wanda called for help when she discovered how seriously hurt I was. She was undoubtedly a major factor in me receiving emergency help from the trauma team at St. Francis Hospital as quickly as I did. The evening of my accident, I was airlifted to St. Francis Hospital in Cape Girardeau. I was in that hospital for forty days and then was in Landmark Hospital in Cape Girardeau for twenty-six days. I was in St. John's from January 29th to February 15th or 17 days. I do not remember anything about being in those two hospitals at Cape Girardeau.

I must say that I am thankful to God that I lived to tell you about this traumatic brain injury that happened as the result of this accident which was caused by a faulty valve in the hydraulic system which controls the front end loader on my 4020. The loader went up with my head turned and dumped the load of posts down the tractor past the muffler and into the steering wheel and onto my head. Like I said, I don't remember one thing about hearing anything or feeling anything until late January. I suffered pneumonia, kidney failure, and infection. I still have some left over tubes that run from my head and end up in my abdomen. I was fed through a feeding tube and when I finally came to myself shortly thereafter got to start eating some pureed food. Pureed French Toast? Anyway, I eat pretty much what everybody eats now so that is good.

This evening I would like to give you some of my philosophy of making a come-back. Number one is to believe in a higher power and have faith that you will get better both spiritually and physically. You must be a positive thinker. You must set goals for getting back to doing things that you once did. My recovery was influenced so much by Wanda.

She took charge in keeping track of all my doctor and hospital bills; ambulance and helicopter bills; University of Missouri Insurance and Benefits; and Social Security Disability; my physical, occupational, and speech therapy treatment scheduling and accompanying me to each session at St. Francis Rehabilitation Center. Wanda fed me with the stomach tube procedure when I was in that stage of my recovery during the first few weeks after I returned home.

After returning home, I immediately went to my computer and began catching up on my Quicken farm recordkeeping. After a few weeks, I got out of the house and began feeding the cows and calves that my family had brought back to our home place. I used my 6430 tractor and of course didn't get cold although there was snow on the ground at times. I moved my steer feeders with my tractor so the feed truck could unload near my driveway. I knew I had to do things in a down-sized way now at least for how long I didn't know. I emailed my secretary at the extension office. Her name is Tarah DeMent. She had come to see me even at St. Louis while I was in the hospital. We still talk to each other by phone or email even though I am not employed there.

Presently, I am a disabled employee of the University of Missouri. My family and I still have insurance as before and I receive 60 % of my former salary. I also receive Social Security Disability each month. Of course, I receive Missouri Public School Retirement each month just like I have for the past ten years. I wrote the leases for the two cattle farms we own and they provide income too. Financially, I am glad I have the Public School Retirement which will always be there for me or my wife.

I received a check from my Farm Bureau Insurance to get my 4020 fixed back into operation. I have used it to again drill a few post holes at my home place. I used the front end loader bucket to make a 300 feet ditch to bury new electrical wire to my barn/machine shed this past winter when an ice storm caused my overhead wire to come down.

I bought a new Vermeer Trailing Disc Mower last year and cut hay on my home place last summer and this summer. My son helped me hook-up last summer with the mower, rake and round baler but this summer I did all the hooking up my-self and baled like I have always done with my John Deere 535.

I loaded up and hauled butcher steers to the butcher shops last summer and again this summer. Of course, I do not have to haul cattle and my tractor around from my place up to my two other farms since we have leased them out. That used to be an every week job during the November to March feeding period in years past.

I drive steel fence posts when I need too. I wired a new garage/shop we had built by Morton Buildings. I vaccinate calves just like I always did. Of course, my wife or son help me do this. I installed a LP gas log in our old fireplace this past year. I have done all the lawn mowing around our home the past two years. I can still use my chain saw and all my other wood working tools. My left hand still bothers me; my shoulders are sore; and turning my head hurts some; my hearing is helped by hearing aids; but other than that I am doing o.k.

I have been busy volunteering work for the Missouri AgrAbility Program at the University of Missouri. I had a meeting that was at Madison, Wisconsin back the first week in June. Several of those who I have worked with in the past attended that three-day meeting on making farm assessments for farmers with disabilities. You could not ask for people better than the two main project leaders at the University of Missouri that are in charge of AgrAbility: Karen Funkenbusch and Willard Downs. I have worked with them since 2002 so we are not foreign to each other.

Wanda supports my volunteer work with the Missouri AgrAbility Project and believes this is contributing to my goal of helping others who have a farming disability. Wanda and I have been married for nearly forty-one years. Her parents lived and worked on their farm and never had to work on an outside the farm job. My son, daughter-in-law to be, daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter are very supportive of me in my road to recovery.

Many thanks to my former Regional Director Janet Kline; my former extension council in Reynolds County; and Dr. Willard Downs for honoring me this past winter at a special annual dinner.