

"Rollover!"

Paul C. Semenchuk

By this time, we had sold our two smaller farms (the original ten acres and the other 17 acres) on the East & West Line, and bought the 96-acre Niven Farm on Stone Road - the main artery between Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines, in the Niagara Peninsula. Southern Ontario. Canada.

Things were going great. I had dropped out of high school and was devoting myself to full-time farming. (The following year, when I was sixteen, I went to Toronto and completed three years at the Russian Bible Institute. That same summer I completed high school in Chicago and went on to finish college in the USA.)

Although we were able to buy a tractor at the end of WWII, we also needed horses for the kind of crops we grew. One of our two horses (Dick) was docile; the other one (Bob) was unpredictable. To say the least, he was high strung.

I had been preparing our big vegetable garden for spring planting and had just finished rolling (flattening) the ploughed, disked and harrowed ground. The heavy steel roller was about three feet high and about ten feet wide, resulting in a tight squeeze going through the garden gate, as I found out when I first guided the horses and roller through the gate into the garden.

Going in, I sat on the roller's metal seat, secured to the roller's frame. Going out, I thought I would walk the team through the gate, holding Dick's bridle. After I made my way to the front of the horses, something spooked jumpy Bob and both of them bolted. I couldn't hold them. I jumped to the side of the horses, but the end of the roller's frame caught me at my waist and I found myself "over a barrel."

Now, the horses were heading toward the gate, with no one to guide them. I heard an inner voice distinctly and compellingly say, "Roll over!"

I did, and as I hit the ground I heard a shattering crash. The edge of the roller, where I was draped a short second earlier, had smashed into the gatepost and splintered it. The horses galloped to the end of the lane and stopped.

I was in no hurry to go after the horses. I stood there somewhat dazed, wondering about the urgent voice and the two words that had just saved my life. Before I moved on, I made a mental note to replace the demolished gatepost as soon as possible. On the farm, life goes on.