



I Saw A Funeral

I saw a coffin

HUTTERVILLE COLONY, S.D. Five days before Father's Day in 2008, Tim Waldner from Hutterville Community, SD, received a message no dad ever wants to hear.

"Your son Justin is dead."

Simon, Justin's uncle, rushed up to Tim to deliver these devastating words after finding Justin, aged 13, buried under a pile of corn silage.

"It can't be. He can't be dead," his distraught dad replied.

But when he arrived at his son's side, Tim saw nothing to bolster any hope that Justin was alive.

Images of a funeral and a coffin immediately jumped into the shocked father's mind. The lifeless body of his son lay before him with blood running out of his ears, mouth, and nose.

Justin was not breathing. His eyes protruded out of his head and no pulse could be found, his father recalled. Tim's youngest son, Jacobi, stood next to his brother, and his dad turned to him saying, "What you need to do is say a prayer."

As Jacobi prayed, Tim desperately performed CPR.

"Suddenly, Justin began to gurgle and snore," Tim remembered.

And then he felt his son's precious pulse.



South Dakota teen survives harrowing silage accident

An ambulance arrived from Groton, SD, to take Justin toward an Aberdeen ambulance, meeting near Ferney. The Aberdeen ambulance rushed him to Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen, where he was placed on a ventilator and airlifted to Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls. Worse yet, they discovered that silage had entered his lungs.

It was during Justin's recovery four days later in Sioux Falls where he and Tim spoke their first words to each other after his near-death.

"I love you, Justin."

"Dad, I love you, too."

What happened?

On the afternoon of June 10, Justin was playing with his friends on top of a truckload of silage being unloaded from a semi-trailer. The semi driver told Justin to get off the truck because of safety concerns. Justin complied.

But after he jumped, a pile of silage spilled on top of him. "I struggled. I tried to get out, but I couldn't," Justin recalled. That's where his memory ended.

The driver of the semi looked around and, because he didn't see Justin, he assumed he had left for home.

About 10 minutes later, Justin's uncle Simon arrived at the silage pile with a front-end loader to push the silage into the pit. Before doing this, he had debated whether to push the silage into the pit before or after his coffee break. He chose to do it before.

With the silage pushed into the pit, Simon repositioned the scoop to begin levelling the forage crop when the loader suddenly stalled. Reaching forward to crank the ignition, he noticed a piece of plastic poking out of the silage between the front wheels of the machine.





Knowing that cattle should not eat plastic, he pondered whether to remove the plastic immediately or wait until all of the silage had been levelled. He decided to remove the plastic immediately.

The “plastic” was his nephew Justin’s pants.

Recovery

Justin’s ventilator was removed four days later in Sioux Falls. He returned to Avera St. Luke’s in Aberdeen one week after the accident and was discharged on June 24, two weeks after the accident.

Justin suffered no brain damage and although his lungs had been filled with fluid, they were now totally clear. Tim reported that doctors were amazed by the speed of Justin’s recovery. “He was determined to get back home.” At one point, Justin informed his dad he was going to check himself out of the hospital if the authorities didn’t.

An irony

When the news of Justin’s near-death first reached Tim’s ears, he had been occupied in the community school, where he serves as principal, working on plans for a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day to be hosted at Hutterville. In the safety-day letter of invitation Tim composed before the accident, he had written, “All of us love our children and want to do everything we can to keep them safe and unharmed as they grow up.”

On the other side of nearly losing his son, Tim knows these words are more true than he ever could have imagined.

- Adapted from an article by Russ Keen published in the High Plains Journal, August 4, 2008.

<p>MACHINERY & SILAGE</p> <p>Children shouldn't be present when silage is being made.</p>		<p>Before towing on the road ensure trailer lights are working.</p>			<p>If working on a silage clamp be careful to avoid tipping.</p>
	<p>Machinery should only be used by a competent operator.</p>		<p>While using oversized machinery, be aware of overhead power lines.</p>		<p>Keep clear of working machinery.</p>
<p>Disengage the PTO and switch off the tractor before clearing blockages.</p>		<p>When towing large loads keep to a safe speed.</p>		<p>Change unsafe practices</p>	

We want to hear from you! Tell us about a time on the colony farm where something went wrong. Explain what happened. What was your take away from the event? What safety measures were implemented as a result? What would you recommend to other Hutterite farmers? Tell us your story and why you feel it is important to be shared.

Email your story, questions or concerns to HSC directly at: mail@hbsafe.farm

