

Safety must come first

It will be six years on April 29 since Rena Hamming buried her beloved husband Peter after he was killed in an accident on their cattle ranch in Monte Creek in 2006 at the age of 73.

That painful loss is what brings Rena to speak at the Day of Mourning, April 27 in Richmond.

Rena and Peter were happily looking forward to slowing down. Their ranch was up for sale and they had plans to start travelling. Peter was a hard worker and on this ordinary day at his Kamloops ranch, he and his daughter stopped for a cup of tea at 3:00 pm before heading back out to finish up their chores. Peter was riding his dirt bike on the property but there were several distractions. The sun was in his eyes and there was a cow calving nearby. Previous injuries sustained on the farm had impaired his sight and hearing.

Peter didn't see the tractor in his path as he was turning a corner and he hit the tractor head on. "He died in my arms at 10 to 4," says Rena. "It was a tragic end to the life of a good man and the end of a dream for me."

When Peter died in the farm accident, the shock on his family was huge. There was not only the personal impact but life had to continue on the ranch itself. Peter was an excellent manager, but all of a sudden, Rena was in charge of running the ranch.

"The struggle that summer before the sale of the ranch allowed little time for personal grieving as there were so many decisions that had to be made."

Rena's message today is about safety. Peter was more careful about the safety of his employees than about his own. "It seems to me that some of the injuries that happened on the ranch over the years were preventable if more attention was paid to the safety of the operation, but there were always too many things to do and too little time to do them," says Rena.

There are many dangers in every aspect of farming, and farmers and ranchers can become complacent. "Carefully consider the consequences of your actions. Don't put yourself in danger and thereby endanger your immediate family," says Rena. "Please, don't be too quick to say or even think *I can do that* when the consequences may be severe."

Rena also offers her deep appreciation to WorkSafeBC for the assistance and support it provided in the months following the accident. Rena is now a volunteer in the WorkSafeBC Family Peer Support Program, offering assistance, reassurance and education to those who have lost a family member in a workplace incident.

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