

Cook County Jury Awards Paralyzed Man \$7,670,000

September 2, 1998

A Cook County Circuit Court jury last night awarded Leslie Harris \$7,670,000 as a result of a construction site accident in which he was injured in October of 1990. His attorney was Philip Harnett Corboy Jr., of Corboy & Demetrio.

Leslie Harris, now age 40, was working as a laborer in the construction of a chemical processing tank at the Henkel, Inc., facility in Kankakee, Illinois, on October 5, 1990, when a 600-pound boom being supported by a forklift fell off of the truck and landed on his back. Harris was airlifted to Northwestern Memorial Hospital, where he was diagnosed with paraplegia. He spent the following two and a half months at Chicago's famed Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. Upon returning to Missouri to begin his new life, Harris, a high school graduate at the time of his injury, attended college and received his associate's degree in accounting and is now working for a trucking company handling its accounting/bookkeeping needs and performing office duties.

During the two-week trial before Judge Themis Karnezis, Corboy presented evidence that Harris was installing a support pole that was being helped into place by a forklift and boom attachment being operated by his co-workers when the attachment came off, hitting his back. Henkel was the owner of the property and project manager of the operation. Precision Stainless, Inc., was the prime contractor that had hired Harris' employer and his co-workers to supply the labor for the operation. The jury found Precision Stainless in violation of the Illinois Structural Work Act. No liability was assessed the owner, Henkel.

Corboy stated:

I feel very happy for Les Harris that a Cook County jury did not desert him in his hour of need. Being paralyzed from the waist down, his entire life has been tragically and sadly rewritten for him all because

Attorneys

- Philip Harnett Corboy Jr.

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of the actions of an indifferent contractor. This is but another example of why tort reform should never rear its ugly head again in the State of Illinois. If tort reform had been enacted in this case, Les Harris would have had to spend the rest of his life in his wheelchair without receiving full and just compensation from the party responsible for his injuries.

Les, who was married at the time of this occurrence, lives with his wife and 16-year-old daughter in Springfield, Missouri. Edward G. Willer of Corboy & Demetrio assisted Philip Harnett Corboy, Jr., at the trial of this case.

Henkel, Inc., was represented by Johnson & Bell partner, Kurt C. Meihofer and Laura Glasser. Precision Stainless was represented by Kralovec & Marquard partners, William E. Spizziri and Michael J. Mullen.

Harris v. Henkel, Inc., and Precision Stainless, Inc. 92 L 1480.