



Russel and Billie Miner dedicated their lives to Faith, Family, and Farming.

In 1933, Russel was born in Waverly, IL, and was raised in rural Nortonville, where his father farmed. He served in the United States Army as a Gun Mechanic during the Korean War. Billie, born Willetta Bachmann, grew up on her family farm in rural Pleasant Plains, IL. She was the 4th generation to farm that land. Russell and Billie married in February of 1955 and resided on Billie's family farm for their entire 67-year marriage.

After a series of misfortunate events, Russel was left saying, "What next"? Subsequently, they named their farm the What Next Farm. At its peak, their farm was over 1,000 acres. It included both grain and cattle and feeder pigs. Russel spent summers traveling as a hail adjuster for The Hartford while Billie managed

the crops, livestock, and raising their three daughters. They also served as seed dealers for PAG seeds.

In their early years, they had a strong passion for tractor pulling, where they became as well known as the Wards tractor they pulled. They finished at the top of most pulls in both the men's and women's classes. While they had rivals on the track, they made lifelong friends outside the competition. Russel's Wards tractor won the 5,000lb M & W National Tractor Pulling Championship in 1969. In their later years, restoring, collecting, and showing antique tractors was their passion. It took them all over the country and is what most people know them for today. Three of their tractors have been featured in calendars and on Classic Tractor Fever.

Russel was always quick to share a story from a life experience that ideally related to the situation you found yourself in. Billie was much quieter but worked hard behind the scenes to keep the farm and family going. They were incredibly active at Zion Lutheran Church in Pleasant Plains, where Russel served in many roles, including Trustee, Elder, and Church Council. Billie played the organ for church services for over 50 years and was an active member of the Mary Martha Guild.

These few facts and tidbits don't fully encapsulate the magnitude of their influence and commitment to their community and agriculture. They were steadfast in their role of being stewards of the land that they farmed. Even committing to 100% no-till farming in the early 90s and their farms remain in practice today. Russel and Billie's legacy lives on through their family and the countless people they helped while serving the community.

2023 Recipients
Russel & Billie Miner
Pleasant Plains, IL