

Rescuing Family Farms, One by One



This is a guest post from Gordon Huston, Turning Point director. Gordon's post was originally published in September 2011. Watch the [Turning Point](#) episode of Farm Rescue at www.BYUtv.org.

The story of Bill Gross and the genesis of his organization, [Farm Rescue](#), is truly inspiring. However, you can't appreciate the magnitude of what Bill and Farm Rescue are doing until you understand the battles that farmers constantly fight to not only bring food to America's families, but to provide for and protect their own families as well.

Before directing this story for BYUtv's new series [Turning Point](#), I thought that the small family farm was a thing of the past. I thought the only farms left today were owned by huge corporations and that they were run with enormous crews of men and vast reserves of cash. Was I ever wrong.

While far too many of America's family farms have disappeared and taken whole communities with them, most American farms are still small operations. They vary in size from a few hundred to a few thousand acres, and they are commonly worked, planted and harvested by a single family. To these families, farming is not just a job; it is their life. They cannot imagine doing anything else. They have a love for the land and for what they are doing that is profound, and they are willing to face both man and nature year after year in a battle where they are almost always the underdog.

The possibility of a crop failure is always a reality. Events out of a farmer's control can conspire to destroy all of his efforts. Many farms cannot survive even a single crop failure.

Bill Gross experienced all of this as he grew up on a family farm in North Dakota. He saw his parents struggle to survive the difficult times. He saw his neighbors' farms fail. He saw his hometown literally disappear. While he loved farming, he and his brother had to leave the family farm to seek education and employment in order to survive.

Bill is now a 747 Captain for UPS, and when you meet Bill for the first time it's easy to be a bit intimidated. He possesses all the characteristics of an airline captain. He is punctual, confident, organized and in control of the job at hand. However, you only have to visit with him for a few moments to learn that while he has the mind of a 747 captain, he has the heart of a farmer with a deep love for the farm families who work the land.

As he flew over the farmlands of America, he often turned over ideas in his mind of how he could help these families. I'm not going to give away his journey here, but it ended up with the creation of Farm Rescue.

Simply put, if a farmer cannot get his crop planted or harvested because of illness, injury or natural disaster, Bill and Farm Rescue are ready to help. Bill and his volunteers will arrive at a farm with state-of-the-art equipment, and work around the clock as necessary to either get the seeds in the ground or the crops out of the field. Since 2005, they have helped countless farmers weather difficult times.

We followed Bill around for a week to get to know him and the families that he is helping. While it meant that we went without sleep for most of the week just to keep up with him, we found family after family who expressed their gratitude to Bill for saving not only their farm, but their family. Yeah, there were a lot of tears shed. There's a chance that even some of the crew may have teared up a time or two, but I'm not confessing to anything.

While we drove hundreds of miles across the state in the middle of the night, ate food that was strange to us, longed for just a few hours without the howling wind, froze in the cold rain one day and sucked in the dust churned up by the tractors the next, this story was worth every bit of effort that we put into it. From Bill to the volunteers to the farmers themselves, Farm Rescue's adventures are full of extraordinary people. As a director, it was a privilege to tell their story.