

Just by talking to Roald Amundson you would quickly learn two things: he is thankful for Farm Rescue and he truly loves his wife.

Farm Rescue and other local businesses came together to help Amundson plant his crops in his time of need.

Amundson has been farming for 28 years. He bought his property west of Redfield back in 1975, a year before a state wide drought hit the area hard.

Things have been hard on Amundson. Eleven years ago he began to notice small symptoms of Alzheimer's in his wife, Irene. Amundson took his wife to a couple of doctors who diagnosed her with Alzheimer's. "With Alzheimer's, it's pretty much a downhill slide with a variation of how steep the slide is," Amundson said.

Roald and Irene were married on October 7, 1961. They celebrated their 52nd anniversary October of 2013. "We're working on 53," Amundson said.

Amundson and his wife used to work together, at SDDC. "Some people would say how can you stand to work with your wife all night and then go home and be with her," Amundson said. "My answer to them is who else would I rather be with all the time?"

Before the Alzheimer's, things were vastly different. "She was such an ambitious person," Amundson said about his wife. They both participated in the daily chores. "Working around the house, cooking and baking, and doing everything." But now, Amundson takes care of Irene in all aspects of her life. "Looking back I'm glad we did everything together so I can just take over now. I can do everything for her, and I don't need a bit of help."

Amundson has learned to



Roald Amundson lovingly kisses his wife Irene Amundson.

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cope with what he has to do to make sure that his wife is well taken care of. If she has to go to the bathroom, or needs to be moved to the dining room table for supper, Amundson physically carries her.

Amundson has a daily routine with his wife. It begins with waking up in the middle of the night to take her on a bathroom break. He then puts her back to bed. When the morning comes he wakes her up for another bathroom break. At 10:00 a.m. he gives her pills and then lets her sleep for a little while longer. At 11:00 a.m. Amundson will wake Irene, shower her, dress her, and then feed her lunch. Another bathroom break follows. While Irene sits on her favorite spot on the couch, Amundson will do some chores around the house. 4:00 p.m. he gives Irene her pills and another bathroom break. Later he will get her ready for bed. More pills at 10:00 p.m.

"I'll get ready for bed then crawl in there and hug her and kiss her and pull her up tight to

me," Amundson said beginning to choke up with tears swelling in his eyes. "I'll say a few prayers. Maybe sing her a song. A made up song about how much I love her. And next thing we're falling asleep."

"By far the best thing I ever did was marry Irene," Amundson said. "She made me the man I am. Irene planted a seed in my heart and it's been growing ever since." But, being a farmer, when it comes to planting seeds in the field, Amundson would normally hire someone to do it for. He would then run back and forth from the field and checking on Irene. That's when his neighbor, Dustin Maher first mentioned Farm Rescue. Maher mentioned it to Wheat Growers who then contacted Farm Rescue.

Amundson filled out an application on a Friday and by Monday it was approved. "I was so happy they approved it," Amundson said. "It's a load off my shoulders."

Farm Rescue is a nonprofit organization that plants, harvests



The Farm Rescue truck, tractor, and seeder prepare to plant Amundson's crops.

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and hays crops free of charge for family farmers who have suffered a major injury, illness or natural disaster.

Faron Wahl, the Regional Operations Manager who is based out of Sioux Falls explains the process, "They go to our website, farmrescue.org, if they know about us, and want to apply," Wahl said. "It's a very simple process. There's an application and a couple additional pieces of paperwork that we provide and send it in. Then our Board of Directors make the decisions ultimately on what cases we can accept and their aims is to accept as many and help as many farm families in the season as we can. Applying is as simple as downloading the application, filling it out, and sending it to us."

Normally the farmer provides the inputs and Farm Rescue provides the equipment and the manpower, but in this case numerous donors stepped forward to help. RDO furnished all the equipment, Wheat Growers supplied all the wheat seeds. Appel Oil donated all the fuel. Cleberg Tires replaced a tractor tire. And Bank of the West filled out the balance sheets.

"All of our budget comes from our sponsors," Wahl said. All of the manpower is volunteer. "99.9% of the people you see are doing it for no compensation," Wahl noted.

Normally some of the cash donations would help pay for the volunteers to stay in a motel and have meals, but Amundson offered to have the volunteers stay at his house where he would feed them. That helped funnel more money directly to the farmers that need it.

"They donated time, money, fuel, and seed. It's just an act of kindness," Amundson said.

Farm Rescue came to Amundson's farm to begin the planting process on Saturday, April 19. They started planting at 5:00 p.m. and didn't stop until they were finished at 1:00 a.m. the following morning. In total they planted 165 acres of wheat using a 60 foot seeder.

"It looked really good when they planted and I told them I hope it looks that good when it comes time to harvest," Amundson said with a chuckle.

Amundson physically placed his hands into the hands of a volunteer to symbolize

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the passing of farming power. "I put my wheat planting right into their hands," Amundson said.

Amundson is forever grateful of the kindheartedness that Farm Rescue and the various donors provided. "It's a blessing," Amundson said. "I just can't thank them enough."

In the past, Farm Rescue has help people with just planting and harvesting assistance, but this year they've added haying for the first time. Farm Rescue did 50 cases in 2013. That's the most Farm Rescue has ever done in one year.

According to their website, Farm Rescue said, "Our ability to help families on the land is 100% dependent upon some pretty amazing people - volunteers, sponsors and individual donors. They give of their time, talents and financial resources to help put a crop in the ground or harvest its bounty for families that are in crisis. Selfless acts. Selfless people. It doesn't get much better than that in our book."

Farm Rescue will come back sometime in late July or August to help harvest



Faron Wahl, Regional Operations Manager, of Farm Rescue.

Amundson's crops. "I can't thank them enough," Amundson said. "There's just not enough words to thank everybody. I'm so appreciative. It's such an act of kindness that everybody has done for Irene and I."

Amundson would do anything for his wife. "It's not a job," he said. "It's just what you do when you love somebody. There's nothing more meaningful to me than just taking care of my wife."

Amundson has had it hard.

"To feed Irene even a bowl of cereal is like a half hour job," he mentioned. But with the help that Farm Rescue provided his days are less filled with worry and more with joy. "They did a terrific job," he said.

With the seeds in the ground and Amundson filled with less worry, one can only speculate that maybe the world is not such a bad place. Maybe, just maybe, there are people out there with hearts of gold and

actions that are bigger than mountains.

"Life is what it is. You deal with it the best you can," Amundson said. "I just hope I'm here forever for her."

Amundson would like to thank everybody that help contribute for their part, regardless of how big or how small for this Farm Rescue operation:

All the people at Farm Rescue

*RDO Equipment Staff
Bank of the West Staff
Dustin Maher
South Dakota Wheat
Growers
Appel Oil
Cleberg Tires
Dr. Holkesvik
Irene's Borthner Francis
All the volunteers and the
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The Redfield Press Staff
Keloland Staff
Roger and Barb Appel
Anyone else who made
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Thank you!*