

Biography of Don & Eva Hevener

Donald Ray Hevener, the youngest of three children, was born to Fillmer and Estie Hevener on July 19, 1946, in Augusta County, Virginia. His sister Dorothy was twenty when he was born and his brother Fillmer, Jr., was thirteen. His mother was forty-two and certainly did not plan on having a third child. Don's parents said he was born with a love for tractors that came to him honestly through his Grandpa Hubert, whom Don never met. Hubert owned a saw mill and did custom sawing and threshing and baling for his neighbors. Hubert died of a heart attack at an early age leaving his wife and six children. Don's dad, Fillmer, was too young at the time to help much with the saw mill and custom farm work but the three older brothers carried on their dad's business throughout their entire lives. Don has fond memories of his uncles' sawmill, timber business and farming adventures.

Fillmer especially loved operating woodworking machinery. He and his new wife Estie moved early in their marriage to Hagerstown, Maryland, where his older sister Eddie lived, to find employment in the woodworking industry. He got a job in a factory making wooden station wagon bodies. As the demand for that product declined, he began working at Jamison's Cold Storage Door Company making wooden, cold storage doors.

It was while in Hagerstown that Don's mother and father learned and accepted the Seventh-day Adventist message, which they later took back to Virginia to their families. They started the first Adventist Church in Staunton, Virginia. About this time, the depression was beginning to crush America. Fillmer lost his job at Jamison's and moved back to Virginia where he worked at his brothers' sawmill. While times were tough, Don's parents always had plenty to eat even though there were weeks when they couldn't buy a one cent postage stamp.

Don's uncles' timber businesses continued to do well during economic hard times because they sawed ship timbers and railroad ties when the housing market crashed. Don's dad had saved a little money while in Maryland, and one day while in Staunton he was moved to go by the Ford dealership. That day "Fill," as he was called, left his 1920s era Star automobile at the Ford dealership and went home in a new Model A Ford. Don's mother "hit the ceiling" when she realized Fill had spent their savings on a new Ford. It was only a few days later that the banks in Staunton closed and all that money would have been lost. Don's mother said later she knew the Lord led Fill to buy that Model A. They had a new car but not enough money for gas at times.

Don's Dad didn't see a lot of future working at the saw mill by the hour. He looked for work opportunities and settled on representing the W.T. Rawleigh Company in his area. The Rawleigh Company produced home, farm, garden, and personal supplies, and Fillmer took these products house to house in Augusta and Rockingham Counties. Many of his customers were Amish and Mennonites who didn't drive cars and they appreciated the delivery of Rawleigh products to their homes.

It wasn't long until Fillmer had saved enough money to buy a five-acre tract of land sandwiched between three large farms. He sold enough timber off the land to pay for it

and soon built a new house, garage, barn, and chicken house. Don's dad often bragged that their frame, weather-boarded, two-story house had a carload of lumber in it from his brother's sawmill. The home was heated by a black, Warm Morning stove. His mom cooked on a wood range that also heated their water. There was a crank telephone on the wall with a twelve-party "gossip line." There was no TV in the home while Don was growing up.

Don remembers these five acres well and daily helped his mom and dad maintain the property and care for the milk cows and laying hens his mother kept. They began tending the land and garden with a walk-behind, David Bradley garden tractor with a sickle bar and cultivator attachments. The David Bradley, with a small air cooled Briggs and Stratton engine, was too light for the job and Don's dad began looking for a Farmall Cub. He found and bought a 1949 Cub that was well worn. Don loved this tractor as a young boy and spent hours sitting on it and pretending he was farming. The Cub had been poorly maintained. It started hard, smoked, and ran rough. When the oil was changed, it came out black and thick. The drain under the oil filter was clogged and the oil barely dripped out. Don's Dad realized an overhaul was necessary. That fall the Cub was taken to a local mechanic for an overhaul and paint job. It came home looking and running like new. Don spent hundreds of hours on the Cub mowing the pasture, plowing and cultivating the garden, and plowing snow, all of which cemented Don's love for tractors. His dad said, "He is willing to do about anything if it can be done with the Cub." He also said, "Don isn't afraid of work - he can lie down beside it and go to sleep."

Don's dad often bragged that Don was a good driver . . . not only did he drive the Cub well at a very young age, he could also drive the 1918 Model T pickup with a wooden bed they used on the place. While the Model T was a useful farm truck, it had to be hand cranked and was difficult to start. Don remembers his brother being "kicked" backwards twelve to fifteen feet while cranking the Model T. Fortunately his arm wasn't broken. Fillmer grew weary of the Model T and sold it for \$25. Don was disappointed to see the Model T go, especially when his dad bought a 1929 Model A Ford sedan to replace it. They needed a pickup not a sedan! The Model A was taken to a cousin who was a good mechanic to be "dehorned." He cut off the top above the windshield and removed the entire body except for the two front seats. Then a good quality, used, metal pickup bed was bolted and welded to the frame making a great "convertible pickup." Don grew to appreciate the Model A pickup. It was a three speed with the small wire wheels and tires, and man was it "peppy." In fact it would outrun Fillmer's Rawleigh truck, a 1949 black, six-cylinder Ford panel truck, on the crooked, hilly country roads of Virginia.

Don got a real dose of "humble pie" one day in front of visiting relatives. The dark blue, four-door, 1954 Ford family sedan had been parked in the yard behind the house for a wash job. When the wash job was finished, Fillmer told everyone standing around watching that Don could drive the '54 Ford very well. Don got in, started it up, put it in low gear, and let out on the clutch. Don was scooted down in the seat so far to reach the clutch that he could barely see over the hood. He had gone only a short distance when, "Crash!" he ran the car into a large stump in the pasture and came to a quick halt. He got out to examine the damage, and his dad came running. Fortunately, the heavy chrome bumper had endured the impact without dents or damage and the stump had received only a small scar. Don's dad insisted he get back in and finish moving the car. He told the relatives, "Don isn't quite ready to get his permit yet," and laughed. Don was relieved that his dad wasn't upset and disappointed with him.

Don remembers loving the John Deere A used by the farmer to the south. The neighbor's farm hand, named Joe, was an older African American gentleman with snow white hair and a shiny gold tooth. Joe was a gentle giant who was always happy to see Don coming for a ride. When Don heard the A start up, he would cross the fence and catch a ride with Joe. Don also remembers riding on the A while it pulled the John Deere combine. Looking back, that must have been very dangerous but he certainly enjoyed it.

That John Deere A inspired Don's parents to buy him his own 1/16 scale model toy John Deere A with a pull combine and a manure spreader. They also bought him a 1/12 scale Ford 900 and two toy trucks. These were his only toys other than a bicycle and pedal riding tractor. He still has a large collection of 1/43rd, 1/16th, and 1/12th toy tractors, cars, and trucks on display in his home.

In 1957 the Smiths, neighbors to the north, were transitioning their dairy farm to more modern equipment. Don remembers their new, 1957 Ford 800 tractor pulling a horse-drawn, dump, hay rake. That combo seemed a bit unusual. Then in 1959 the Smiths bought another new Ford tractor. This one was a beauty. It was a shiny, red and grey, 861 Powermaster with the power of an M Farmall but in a smaller frame. This would be Don's favorite tractor of all time as he spent hundreds of hours on it while working for the Smiths.

Don started working at Smiths mowing their yards and tending their gardens for twenty-five cents per hour. He remembers the evening after supper when the Smith brothers were short of help and asked him to go help bale a field of hay. They had recently purchased a brand new, New Holland baler that was pulled by the 861. Don's job was to pull the bales from the chute on the baler and drag them back to Eugene who was stacking the hay on the wagon. Wendell, his older brother, was driving the 861. The hay was tough, and the bales were so heavy that Don couldn't drag them out of the baler. Wendell stopped the tractor and asked Don if he could drive while he helped stack the hay. That was a glorious moment, and a huge smile appeared on Don's face. That was the first time Don actually drove the 861.

Don especially remembers how the 861 would backfire while going down a hill when the throttle was pushed forward. He also remembers hauling silage with it at a neighboring farm. (Farmers often shared tractors and equipment during busy times such as when filling silos.) This farmer used all, two-cylinder, John Deeres, which were great tractors. The Ford was able to make three loads to a John Deere's two loads. Don was proud as a teenager to haul more silage than the older men. He worked evenings, weekends, and summers at Smith's Dairy until he married and moved away. Working at Smith's Dairy proved to be a great blessing. It taught him how to work, provided spending money, and kept him out of trouble. He says the hard, dirty work never hurt him.

Don remembers riding a McCormick-Deering grain binder and shocking and threshing wheat and barley. Threshing was a very dusty dirty job, especially when the separator was inside the barn blowing straw into the straw shed. He remembers shocking corn behind the corn binder and running it through the corn husker. Straw and fodder were important commodities to the dairy farm as the barns and loafing sheds were bedded down every night to keep the animals warm and clean. This meant there would be lots of manure in the spring, and Don helped dig out manure that was three feet deep in the barns. The manure was spread onto the land year after year. This saved buying expensive fertilizer. He says he wishes he had a dollar for every ton of manure he has scraped and hauled. Perhaps he would be wealthy.

Don's favorite job on the farm was filling silos with corn. Each fall the Smiths filled seven silos, providing enough corn was available to fill them. Any corn left after the silos were filled was picked for grinding into dry feed. Chopping the corn and hauling the silage required lots of tractor hours, making the job most enjoyable. A 1948 Farmall 04 Orchard Model was used on the belt to blow the silage into the silos. It was a challenge to line that 04 Farmall, with a hand clutch and poor brakes, to the belt on the silage blower. Don recalls climbing the silo ladders and securing the metal blower pipe. This was a job the older fellows did not like. Smith's Dairy also owned a Massy Harris 30 that was used for many jobs, but it was not a favorite of Dons.

After graduating from Buffalo Gap High School in 1964, Don attended Frostburg University while living with his brother who was an English Professor there. Don remembers his freshman year at Frostburg was rough and his grades were not very good. His brother insisted that he attend Washington Adventist University in the Washington D.C. suburbs for his sophomore year, and there he might meet an Adventist young lady.

Early in that sophomore year at the University Don spied a lovely young lady in the cafeteria line that he liked very much. After questioning his friends, he learned that Eva, this beautiful girl with the big smile, was not dating steadily and he staked his claim on her. The girl was Eva Gill the second daughter of Orville and Mary Gill of Fort Smith, Arkansas. She had grown up in the Fort Smith area and had lived in the neighboring towns of Dire, Alma, and, of course, Fort Smith. Don made his first visit to Arkansas when he came to Eva's folks' home in Fort Smith for a Christmas vacation. He said the area was much like Virginia, and he liked Arkansas very well. Since it was closer to Virginia than Arkansas, the young couple made several holiday trips to Don's family home. They dated two years and were married in Fort Smith, Arkansas, April 16, 1967. Early in their marriage and after completing college, Don and Eva bought ten acres from a ninety-acre farm her father had bought north of Muldrow, Oklahoma, just across the Arkansas River from Fort Smith. The couple lived on that property for five years.

Don wasn't certain what he wanted to do when entering college because his roots were in agriculture and farming. Eva convinced Don that they both should major in elementary education and perhaps would have the opportunity to work together in the same school. Don loved children and agreed that this was a great idea. Over the years, Don and Eva taught school together four different times at schools in Maryland, Virginia, and Arkansas.

Their son Alan was born in 1970, and Susan, their second child, was born in 1972. Don and Eva felt it was important that Eva stay home with Alan and Susan during their early years; therefore Eva worked in the home until Susan entered first grade in Fort Smith.

Later, while living and teaching in Virginia, Don attended James Madison University in Harrisonburg and received his Master's Degree in Education. It was while teaching in Vienna, Virginia, that Don became acquainted with a special student named Alan. Alan was very gifted and carried the responsibility of a five-hundred acre cattle farm in Manassas as a sixteen year old who had lost his father. Don took Alan under his wing and attempted to support and encourage him in every possible manner. Don spent many evenings and Sundays on Alan's farm working with an 806 International, a Farmall M, and a Ford 861. Alan's pride was pulling a six bottom plow at five mph with the 806. Alan didn't have time in the evenings to do much homework so Don agreed that if he paid attention in Algebra class and did well on the tests, homework wasn't an issue. Alan made an A in Algebra and in Geometry the next year. It was interesting that during Alan's freshman year in college

his Uncle Frank, his dad's brother, passed away and left Alan another farm with a thousand acres. Alan immediately quit college and successfully managed the two farms. Don was grateful to have the opportunity to support this young man during a very challenging time of his life.

Don's love for farming and tractors has always found a way to surface. He has owned a Ford 3000, '52 John Deere A, '57 Allis Chalmers WD45, '49 Allis Chalmers G, '51 Farmall Cub, and a '60 Ford 861 Powermaster. He most recently purchased a restored 1948 Farmall M from Larry Morrison. Don is delighted to own this nice "M" and be a part of Tired Iron of the Ozarks again after being a charter member and moving away.

One of Don's favorite places to live was at Springtown, Arkansas. Don and Eva purchased the thirty-five acre farm in Springtown where the big spring, headwaters of Flint Creek, flows out of the rocks at a rate of 4.8 million gallons per day. When they bought the property in 1992, the old, two story house, built in 1875, was in need of major repairs and the land was overgrown after being vacant for years. Don and Eva loved that place but, after five years of renovations, they ran out of money and energy to continue repairing it. It was with mixed emotions that they sold it in 1997 and moved to property on WPA Road in Gentry.

Don was driving home from Springdale one day in 2000 when he spied a well-worn looking Ford tractor sitting on the used tractor lot at Springdale Tractor. It looked like the one he had loved many years ago at Smith's Dairy. This old Ford was a 1960, 861 Powermaster instead of a 1959 but was basically the identical tractor Don had been searching for. It had a flat rear tire and a dead battery but the sheet metal was mostly straight; just dirty and mispainted. It ran great, and the clutch, brakes, and hydraulics were good. The salesman seemed happy to accept Don's offer and delivered the old Ford the next day. Don put his Farmall Cub and an Allis G up for sale to free his garage and provide funds to restore the Ford. The Cub and G sold quickly for the asking price. Don could have sold a dozen G's based on the calls he received.

Don placed the 861 on blocks and removed the wheels and all the sheet metal. After a couple of months of cleaning and sanding and new fenders, steering wheel, and gauges the Ford was ready to paint. Don added a chrome front emblem and chrome exhaust stack along with fresh decals to complete the restoration. It was a project that brought much joy and satisfaction to him. Soon after the 861 was finished in 2001, Don accepted a new job in Silver Spring, Maryland. What would he do with the tractor? He visited with the mover and they decided the Ford would fit in the front of the moving van. You can imagine the surprise and smiles of the neighbors when Don unloaded this gorgeous tractor and drove it up and down the streets of Laurel, Maryland. There were children there who had never been close to a tractor.

During their forty-three years of marriage, Don and Eva have lived in the states of Maryland, Virginia, Michigan, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Louisiana. It has been a tremendous journey where they have had the privilege of influencing the lives of hundreds of students. Don taught three years in Fort Smith public schools and worked the remaining thirty-six years in the Adventist educational system as teacher, principal and superintendent. In 2001 Don was called to serve as Vice President for Education at the North American Division headquarters of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland. This was a most challenging position with responsibility for a thousand elementary and secondary schools and fifteen tertiary schools in North America. It was during this time

that Don was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, a cancer of the plasma cells. Because of Don's illness, it was decided to accept a less stressful position with less travel in Shreveport, Louisiana, where he served as Superintendent of the Adventist schools in Arkansas and Louisiana until 2008. Before he left office, Don was given the Education Award of Excellence, which is the highest educational distinction awarded by the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters Educational Office,

This meant another move for the furniture and the 861. The tractor remained in Shreveport where it saw little use until 2006 when Don sold it to his son-in-law Sam to work on his twenty acres in Siloam Springs, Arkansas. Don is happy to see Sam and his two grandsons using the 861. Don frequently mows Sam's large yard and grades the long gravel driveway to their house with the tractor. He hopes the Ford will stay in the family forever.

Due to repeated rounds of flu, pneumonia, and bone pain, Don was forced to take medical retirement in the fall of 2008 he and Eva moved back to Gentry where he and Eva would be near their children and grandchildren as well as Eva's mother, father, sister and brother, who now lived in Gentry. Don is enjoying being Papa to his five grandchildren and hopes to pass his love for tractors on to them. He on has given three large boxes of toy tractors to his grandchildren and nephews.

One of Don's favorite activities today is spending time at Tired Iron of the Ozarks. He cherishes the friendships he has developed with Tired Iron members and greatly enjoys spending Tuesday afternoons with Johnny, Larry, Glenn, Anthony and Cleon at Johnny Berger's shop. Don looks forward to driving his Farmall M in shows and on trips with other Tired Iron members. He is grateful for the hands-on history lesson Tired Iron provides for the community and plans to be an active supportive member for years to come. May God richly bless Tired Iron and each of its members.



Don's 861 Ford Powermaster



Don and Eva on their 1948 Farmall M