Agriculture was at the center of Williams Hughes Diller, Jr.’s life. For several decades, Diller managed a handful of farms in the area. It was a duty the lifelong Springfield resident relished. “That was his life,” said his widow Barbara Weitekamp-Diller. “He was active. He loved to be the trustee of the farms.”

Diller passed away on June 4, 2011, at the age of 94. Following his death, the William Hughes Diller, Jr. Scholarship Fund was established at the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln to help other area residents seek a career in an agricultural profession. The fund provides a scholarship for a male or female student from Sangamon or surrounding counties to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to pursue an agricultural degree.

“He thought it would be a good thing,” Weitekamp-Diller said. “He felt that was very important. The agriculture donation was something he really wanted to do.”

Diller attended the University of Illinois prior to graduating from Grinnell College in Iowa. His family has a long history in Springfield, including his grandfather being acquainted with Abraham Lincoln.

Prior to his death, Diller was also the oldest member of the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield. The local roots led to Diller having an avid interest in the Civil War. An Abraham Lincoln impersonator attended Diller’s 90th birthday party. “He loved anything about the Civil War,” Weitekamp-Diller said.

Diller’s mannerisms harkened back to days gone by. He didn’t spend a lot of time on words. He let his actions speak for him and the focused thoughtfulness of his fund fit his personality.

“I always described him as a gentleman and a gentle man. Those two things describe him,” Weitekamp-Diller said. “He was a very quiet man. He was very intelligent.”