



MIDDLEBURY — **Russell Laslocky**, 95, passed away on Aug. 26 after a brief illness.

Born on June 28, 1930, in Riverside, N.J., Russell was the proud son of Stephen and Aurelia Laslocky, who immigrated to Philadelphia from Hungary in the early 1900s. He grew up helping his parents on their large dairy farm, Millside Farms, and followed his beloved brother Emory to Bordentown Military School. Emory would later die in the Battle for Brest in France in August 1944, and this tragedy haunted Russell for the rest of his life.

Russell graduated from Ohio State University — an institution he attended largely because Fleur Aylsworth, the daughter of family friends, was there. He had first met Fleur when they were six years old and fell in love with her in his mid-teens.

In the mid-1950s, Russell joined the U.S. Army and was stationed at Wertheim Flugplatz Airbase in Germany, where he served as a forward observer and ran the Officer's Club. He traveled around Europe during his leaves and amassed a collection of art and antique beer steins that decorated his home to the end.

It was about 1956 when Russell got the letter that would determine the course of the rest of his life: Fleur was ready to reciprocate his affection. As soon as he returned from Europe, he and Fleur were engaged; they moved to Columbus, Ohio, where he began his studies as a veterinarian.

Fleur and Russell married on September 14, 1957, and later returned to New Jersey, where he managed the care of the herd on his family's farm. They also converted a barn on their property (one with very good acoustics) into a performing arts center and on Saturday nights, the air was filled with the jazz notes of Dizzy Gillespie, Nina Simone, and Herbie Hancock.

In 1960, Russell and Fleur welcomed their first daughter, Jenna, and in 1962, they invited Axel von Koch, a fifteen-year-old boy Russell had known in Germany, to visit for the summer. Axel stayed, attended high school, and was forever after a beloved son to Russell and Fleur. In 1963, Russell and Fleur welcomed a son, Stephen, and in 1966, their daughter Meghan arrived.

Shortly thereafter, upon the death of his parents, Russell and Fleur moved their family to a farm in southern Delaware, where Russell took up farming alfalfa and experimented with dehydrating and cubing his crops — an innovation that was radical at the time. This was but the first of his many wild, beautiful Rube Goldbergian dreams.

Vermont called in 1973, when Russell and Fleur bought a farm in Shoreham. There they stayed for 10 years; Russell continued to farm alfalfa and in the winters worked as a meat inspector with the Vermont Department of Agriculture. In the early eighties, he experimented with cubing waste paper from IBM for residential fuel, yet another innovation — one that unfortunately went by the wayside with the arrival of the Reagan administration.

In 1983, Russell and Fleur gave up their dreams of farming and moved into Middlebury, where they bought a home on East Munger Street that featured dramatic views of the mountains to both the east and the west. There they planted trees and extensive gardens, and Russell built many stone walls. Russell continued working for the State of Vermont, and was known for his uncompromising integrity and kindness.

In his retirement, he began adopting old sheep and goats. At first it was to keep the fields trim, but as he came to know them, it was to provide them with good lives in their final years. This was not unusual for Russell: He was a man of modest but deep generosity and opened his home to so many who needed to find a safe place in the world.

He and Fleur ran a bed and breakfast and made dear friends from all over the world in the process. His crème brûlée French toast and raised waffles were legendary. (And as a meat inspector, he always knew how to select the perfectly marbled ribeye.)

Russell and Fleur moved into The Residence at Otter Creek in Middlebury in 2017; there they made still more close friends. When Fleur, his beloved wife of 66 years, died in January 2023, he soldiered on and cherished and relied upon these friends.

While he didn't live at the property on East Munger Street, Russell remained keenly interested in it until his death — to the point that just weeks before his passing, he worried about what could be done about the soggy basement. And, ever the farmer, in his last hours he relished the news that it had rained that morning: “We need it.”

For most of his life, Russell was a voracious reader, particularly of the history of World War II. When macular degeneration robbed him of his ability to read print, he continued to listen to books on tape for hours every day, nearly to the end of his days.

Russell's family will forever miss his gentle humor, warmth, and unconditional love. While he wasn't a religious man, Russell was privately a firm believer in the afterlife: He was confident that Fleur and other loved ones who predeceased him, including a band of dear pets, were waiting for him.

He is survived by his daughters, Jenna Laslocky and Meghan Laslocky of Middlebury; his son, Stephen Laslocky, of Bangkok, Thailand; and Axel and Debra von Koch of Landenberg, Pennsylvania.

A celebration of life for both Russell and Fleur will be held at 11:30 am on Sept. 14 — what would have been their 68th wedding anniversary — at The Residence at Otter Creek in Middlebury.

The Laslocky family would like to extend their deepest gratitude to the caring staff at The Residence, and to the staff at the Porter Medical Center. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made on Russell's behalf to Homeward Bound, the Addison County Humane Society or to the Vermont Association for the Blind.