



Grand Marshalls Express Gratitude for Community That Feels Like "One Big Middletown Family"

This year will be the 54th annual Middletown Days, and June 24 will be the 55th wedding anniversary for this years' Grand Marshalls, Jim and Carol Bolander. But, they won't be sitting in their usual spot in front of "Breland's old place." (That's Five Star Towing for any of you, like me, who have been here less than 25 years.) This year they will be riding behind Bob Donnelly's team.

Riding with Bob will bring things full circle for Jim. Soon after the Bolander's moved to Middletown, the Lion's Club held a function to raise money to help out a member of the Middletown community. Bob donated his time and horses pulling kids around Central Park. Jim drove past and Bob asked if Jim could drive a 6 up. Jim said yes he could, but he couldn't do it right then because he was on his way to an appointment. Bob told him, "Yeah, I figured you'd say something like that." So, Jim got out of his truck, told him to move over, laced the lines through his fingers and drove those kids around Central Park. When he got back Bob was impressed that Jim was telling the truth, and that he really knew how to drive. Jim told him he'd driven 8 before and he'd never lie because then he'd have to cover up with a lie. From then on Jim said he was accepted.

Carol (76) grew up in Downy and Jim (73) grew up in Long Beach. They met on blind date. Jim walked Carol to her door after the date. When he got back to the car the couple that set them up asked him what he thought of Carol. Jim declared that he was going marry her. And, on June 24, 1960 that's just what he did.

Jim worked for 23 years as a machinist for PG&E and Diablo Canyon Power Plant in Morrow Bay before he transferred to the geysers in March of 1983. Carol came up for a visit 3 months later on a Friday night. There were no street lights and the drive up the mountain scared both her mom and her aunt. Jim drove them from Nacho Perez's on Santa Barbara to Beaulah's (both ends of town) and asked her "What do you think?" She remembers thinking, "*Where am I?*"

She also remembers coming up in sweats and having to borrow some clothes the next day for Middletown Days as she was not properly dressed for 100 degree weather. She ended up working a booth during her first Middletown Days with Lila Velarde. She also pitched in and worked the beer bar.

During my conversation with the Bolanders they never used street names. Everything was Breland's old place, or Sweat's, or the Old Rumfield house which they used to live in on Douglas Street with their three children. They explained there weren't a lot of street signs then. Everything was known by the house name. There also were no stop lights, and everything closed at 4 p.m. except for Noble's Saloon.

The Bolanders have a long history with Middletown. Carol joined the Lioness Club in 1984, the year after the Middletown chapter began. The Lionesses worked on cleaning up the visitor's center when it was located on Bush street in Middletown next to the doctor's office. The year she joined was also the first year that the Lionesses had an entry in the parade. They teamed up with the Lions for a circus theme and she dressed as a clown. This lead to her dressing up as a clown for the annual Halloween Party which she did every year until 2013. She couldn't understand why kids were scared of her until it was explained that anymore, TV clowns are "bad" so in 2013 she finally hung up the outfit.

For the last 5 years she's been a part of the Hidden Valley Garden Club. She was also a member of the Search and Rescue Dog & Equine team for over 10 years. The team went schools and parades around the county where

they held safety classes for the kids. They also trained by repelling into ravines, off of bridges and even off of the tower at the Lake County Fair Grounds, though she never was called upon to use those skills during a search and rescue while on the team. "It was one of the most fun times of my life," she said.

"Pop" Bolander, as he's know, coached the first football league in Middletown. And, the second year Carol made the uniforms and was Cheer Mom.

Jim was a Lion from 1984 to about 1997 and helped put up the Lion's Club building. He was also the game keeper for 5 years at the Guenoc Ranch and ran the Middletown Trap Shoot for 13 years.

He has regularly opened up his creek for years to kids for trout fishing. And, he has a rather large soft spot for the kids. He began to tear up when speaking about one boy in particular that they'd had over to fish. The boy passed away not too long after. He was beaming when he left and Jim was happy to have made a that child feel special even if it was only for one day.

The Bolanders feel strongly about giving back to the community that they love. And, they've always tried to be there for anyone that needed them. Even cutting wood for an elderly neighbor.

Several times while I was speaking with them the Bolanders expressed gratitude for this community that feels like "one big Middletown family." They also expressed gratitude at knowing so many of the older folks like Earl Wrieden who shared all the old stories with them. The have a real love of Middletown and all it's history and the people who live here.

They were trying to determine why they were chosen to be Grand Marshall and related to me what someone told them, "You're old! But, you're lucky. They wanna get you before you die!" Did I mention they also have a great sense of humor.

The Bolanders are a part of our Middletown history. And, as if to prove it, they showed me their copy of the 1994 Lake County Visitor's Center map. A caricature of their Appalachian, Blue, is on the map greeting those who enter Lake County via Middletown and HWY 29 just as he does in real life.