

Pioneer Award Recipient Fred Waldon



While you may not recognize the photo of this year's Pioneer Award recipient, Fred Waldon, you've all seen his purple semi come through town with Waldon Family Trucking written on the side. It's a fixture here in Middletown. Often times when you see him driving around Middletown he is donating his truck time to the community to do things like deliver and haul sand for the school playground, dirt from the site of the "new" library, base rock for the new museum, and gravel and topsoil for the baseball fields and Central Park.

Born in Oakland in 1948, he moved to Napa when he was just six months old. In 1951 his sister Roxanne was born and the family moved to Middletown the same day. They returned to Napa just two years later where Fred excelled at baseball and was the best catcher in the league. He would go on to graduate from Napa High and attend Napa College. He wouldn't get the opportunity to finish college due to the draft, but he was allowed to finish out the current year.

Fred's father, a Marine, his uncle, a paratrooper, and another uncle who was in the Navy decided to take matters into their own hands. Just before Fred had to report, they took him to see a Navy Recruiter in an attempt to keep him away from the fighting. And, so in 1968 Fred joined the Navy only to be stationed in a

war zone off the coast of Egypt where they were tasked with keeping the Russians from dropping supplies.

After his discharge in 1972, he moved to Klamath to join his family who had moved once again. It was here that he met his sister's roommate and his future wife, Sally Lynn.

Fred hauled logs until the logging industry stopped. And, in 1981 he decided to bring the family, which by now included Dore' 5 and Donny 3, to Middletown. Fred worked for MR Service for a few years until the family decided to move to Colorado because of the boom in oil shale. Subdivisions were being built in a month and Fred was going to drive a truck hauling concrete pipe. The week he got there, everything closed up. Eventually, Sally Lynn got sick prompting their move back to Middletown

In 1985 Fred started Fred Waldon and Family Trucking. He added "Family" because it truly was a family affair. His brother-in-law Terry Sanderson loaned him the money to buy the truck; his parents were always there when he needed help buying parts and fixing the truck; and, even the kids pitched in and washed the truck.

When he wasn't working, Fred enjoyed spending time with his family and coaching for the local little league. A league started by Sally Lynn, his sister Roxanne, and Sally Lynn's close friend Debbie Breland.

On New Year's Eve 1986, after 15 years of marriage, Sally Lynn passed away.

Fred's desire to give back to the community all these years, he says, was spurred by the outpouring of support that he received from the community during this time. Middletown pulled together to help him do his books, pay for the burial, make sure he had work and even to watch his children.

Eventually, Fred and Debbie, mourning the loss of wife and best friend came to rely on each other. They were married on August 8, 1987, and the family became five with the addition of Debbie and her son Mathieu now the middle child.

Fred worked a lot in those days. He worked at the Geysers, for Red Archers Equipment and Pivniska, and sometimes even worked a third job at night. When they weren't working they were watching the Giants or gardening. Debbie, an avid gardener, loved to incorporate antiques like her father-in-law's coffee grinder, an old windmill and a metal bed frame into the garden. Fred and Debbie competed to see who could find the best roses.

They were married for 25 years until her sudden death on March 31, 2012.

Fred's still hauling, only slowing down for the Valley Fire which took his home, but not his truck. The night of the fire Fred parked his truck by the Calpine Visitor's Center and "hoped for the best." We at Central Park hope the future holds nothing but the best for Fred and would like to thank him for his years of community service.