



Local Grand Marshals Earn Their Spot

If you have lived in Middletown for any period of time, and have participated in any type of community improvement or service organization, you have probably crossed Bill or Gail Wright's path. We have been blessed with this couple since 1976. They are "just" the people next door, the people that work hard, dedicating themselves to their families, community and friends. They are the people that just get things done – and they don't want anyone to recognize them for the deed it is.

This year's Middletown Day's Grand Marshals are Bill and Gail Wright. As a couple, the Wright family has lived in Middletown since 1984, where they have lived and raised two of their four children, John & Ashley. Both children attended and graduated from Middletown Unified School District. Bill's two older daughters, Keri & Tracey both graduated from Del Oro High School in Loomis, California. Bill and Gail are grandparents to four granddaughters; Nicole, Kaitlyn, Melissa and Sarah.

Gail has lived in Middletown all of her life, where she grew up attending school in Middletown. She rode horses bareback freely throughout town with her friends. Often riding to the pool or trotting around town picking up bottles, trading them in for candy bars at Reed's Drug Store. She and her friends competed in gymkhanas in a field across the street from today's arena. At that time, the property was owned by the Rhodes family – currently owned by the Peschon's.

Gail remembers being in the first Middletown Days parade, playing a shepherd's pipe, homemade, by Huck Hamman, who lived on Rabbit Hill. Tom Cory organized and taught a group of young kids to play the shepherd's pipes. Debbie Waldon, Beverly Mangué, Terry Rincon, Gehlen Palmer, the Hahn's children and others played the pipes and participated in parades and the Lake County Fair.

When Gail graduated from Middletown, she continued her education at Santa Rosa Junior College where she received her Associates Degree. Gail then moved back to Lake County working in Lakeport and Kelseyville areas until she met Bill through mutual friends and they were married in 1976.



Four Generations

Bill was born in Vallejo. The family moved often throughout California with his Dad, who was an engineer for PG & E. Bill later graduated from high school in Antioch, continuing his education at the California Maritime Academy, working summers doing small building projects. Bill graduated with a B.S. degree in Nautical Science. He then became a Merchant Marine Officer, sailing for four to five years on supertankers & research ships. With the lure of land, Bill ended his sailing adventure. He worked for an engineer, before getting tired of the city. He packed up, and with the prompting of longtime friends, relocated to the Lakeport area in 1975.

When trying to find a job in Lake County, Bill was told “he was too qualified to be a dog catcher”. Bill worked various jobs and it did not take long, before he once again was in the construction trade. Bill has been a licensed contractor since 1977.

Bill and Gail lived in the Scotts Valley area for a short while and then moved to the S bar S Ranch in Kelseyville. For over ten years they lived on the S bar S Ranch, while Bill worked construction and Gail began working for Hardester’s Corner Store.

Bill and Gail drove to Middletown from Kelseyville, leaving their car at Gail’s parents’ home on Santa Rosa Ave. Gail would walk to work in town and Bill would ride his bike eight miles to work construction at Guenoc during the first remodel of the historic Langtry House. In 1984, Bill and Gail built their home in Middletown, where they currently reside. They have made their little ranch into their own paradise. Expanding their home to include “Wright’s Pond”, where memories are made at their outside BBQ area.

After moving back to Middletown, Bill and Gail had two children together, John and Ashley. They lived close to Grandma and Grandpa Evans who babysat while they worked. Even before having children, Bill and Gail took great pride in their community. They Supported the FFA and 4-H clubs by providing livestock scales, and attending and purchasing many animals over the years at the Lake County Fair Junior Livestock

Auction. As their own children grew, Bill and Gail became leaders themselves for the Middletown 4-H Club; putting in endless hours educating the youth and supporting the community.

During all of this, Bill and Gail raised their two children; both of which were active in 4-H, school, and other activities. Due to Gail and Bill's youngest daughter's disabilities, Gail naturally became very active in the Redwood Coast Regional Center, helping others become more aware of disabilities. Bill was able to assist the school to become better educated in regards to serving students with disabilities.

While in High School, John became active in High School Rodeo, thus – so did Bill and Gail. They traveled throughout California, meeting many people along the way. They were supportive parents to the sport of high school rodeo.

The Wrights were one of the main supporters of our FFA Chapter when the program was re-instated under Mr. Don King, in 1983. Bill, his crew and the ag students built the big yellow barn at the ag department. Bill also helped transplant donated fruit trees. Bill served on the Agricultural Advisory Committee for many years; bridging the gap of community, local businesses and school.

Bill has served on the school board for the past eighteen years and can often be seen at different times of the day, stopping at the school, and meeting with teachers, district office employees or talking to parents.

Bill was an active member of the Middletown Merchants Association for years, serving as president for three of those years. The Wright Family supported Christmas in Middletown, working closely with Hettie Hendrickson, Sue Conley, Bobbie Meyer, Paulette Muscatt, Pat Giacomini and David Neft to name a few. They worked with others to insure that Santa showed up, pictures were taken, and the community Christmas tree was lit. Our town was always decked out and everyone had fun. They helped build the town playground behind the Lions Building as well. The Wrights continue to be Middletown Luncheon Club members, where Bill was past president and continues as a director.

Bill and Gail worked side by side, bringing the community together, digging the holes for the trees that now line our streets. Families and friends worked to plant those trees. They still remember son John as well as Collin and Sara Stromberg pulling their daughter Ashley in a wagon, helping to plant the pear trees.

The Wrights helped bring spirit and creativity into events such as the Friday of Middletown Days, when bands played, and the portable famous Middletown Days jail roamed the streets.

Bill and Gail think we are fortunate to live in Middletown; where kids can ride their horses through town safely and use our local Central Park arena for free. We have a park that is owned by the people of Middletown, for the people of Middletown. We have no traffic – or very little. The weather is ideal. It gets hot in the summer, but, it cools off at night. When asked what they do for fun, they respond, “we have twelve acres, what else.” As I drive away from this interview, I feel blessed that I have known the Wrights.