

# Founder's Day Parade Grand Marshal

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Staff writer

**F**rank Clark will be honored as the Founders' Day parade grand marshal.

Clark has been doing great things for the community since he arrived on the Divide. He is particularly proud of the bicycle program, conducted through the Growlersburg Camp.

Clark transferred from Tulara County to Growlersburg Camp toward the end of 1973. At the time the camp ranger was Ray Little (the father of well-known local talent Keith Little). Ray was very involved with the community, as was Frank.

Clark's participation in the bicycle program began on Christmas Eve 1973, working with one of the fire captains. There were only about five or six bikes given out. They selected the families who would receive a bike and the oldest child in each family received a

bike. Frank saw one family of five kids, with only the oldest receiving a bike. Frank saw the look on the faces of the other four and he said, "Only one got a bike. That got to me." For the next 28 years Clark helped grow the bike program and it continues today.

Right after Christmas each year Clark would have Growlersburg inmates and staff build bikes by hand. Junk bikes were obtained and donations came from paint and automotive shops. Many inmates were from bike clubs such as the Hell's Angels. These inmates wanted to make the bikes look like low riders and Clark let them go with the design.

"When those kids saw that type of bike low in back high in front they went crazy," Clark recalled. "We gave out 50 bikes in 1974, then each child that could ride a bike got a bike."

By 1975 they were donating 100-125 bikes. Members of the local Rotary and Clampers organizations were backup for donations in order to keep the



Courtesy photo

**Frank Clark, standing, will ride in this year's Founders' Day parade as grand marshal.**

program going. When the kids would wear their bikes out, Clark would have them refurbished.

up as Santa and he would drive a red pickup with red lights flashing and sirens wailing to help deliver the bikes.

A correctional officer would dress

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While making deliveries Clark he noted many children were without jackets in the December cold. He then organized a jacket collection for the kids.

For a number of years along with these deliveries, the Rotary and Corner Kitchen donated frozen turkeys to families in need. Clark would visit the children later and find not all received a turkey dinner, so Growlersburg started preparing hot turkey dinners and delivered them to these families.

At that time the El Dorado County Superintendent of Schools and a state child development program learned of Clark's work and requested annual reports to note the program's increasing success.

In 1992 a new law was enacted requiring those younger than 18 to wear a bicycle helmet. As Clark didn't have the funds for the helmets, he went to the state child development program. They provided the appropriate helmets for the kids. The program also donated jackets and sleeping bags.

During this time the Active 20-30 Club in Placerville (a club that helps children in need) would arrange with Clark to have 10-12 children go to Placerville the morning of Christmas Eve. First the kids would receive a nice breakfast at the Corner Kitchen, donated by the owners. Claudia Wiley and Evelyn Morris, two local school bus drivers, would drive the kids to Placerville. The 20-30 Club outfitted them with \$50-\$100 worth of clothing.

In addition to the bike program the community can see the results of Clark's efforts in local parks, landmarks, cemeteries and schools. As the California Department of Forestry Captain in charge of Growlersburg, Clark was in charge of many local work projects. One of the areas where a lot of work was conducted is now Garden Valley Park.

The school district owned the property and had Growlersburg do clean up as the area was a heavily flooded swampland. After the land was cleaned up people started using the property for picnics and outdoor activities. The Georgetown Divide Recreation District then took over the land.

At the time many of the trees were bent and gnarled. Clark staked them and within a few years the trees had grown strong enough to stand on their own. At the Fourth of July celebration when Clark was honored he said, "The trees here today are a result of the decisions I made to save them years ago." At that he received a full round of applause and cheers.

Clark has a number of other hats he wears proudly. He serves on the El Dorado County Cemetery Advisory Committee. The Cemetery Advisory Committee has found there are a number of private cemeteries on the Divide and they are working to preserve those.

Clark has also been involved in the Georgetown Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. Charley Wilkerson owned property just up Wentworth Springs Road. Wilkerson noted World War II and Korean War veterans were having trouble navigating the location on Main Street. He then donated 10 acres of land to the VFW, where the current VFW Park is located on Wentworth Springs Road.

Clark worked with Wilkerson, along with Growlersburg crews, creating the park. The plan was to build a new center on the property but the cost of many permits made the project prohibitive. Clark found another way to use the property and honor veterans. He coordinated the installation of electricity, running water, a restroom and charges veterans an affordable rent to have trailers on the property.

Clark also worked with Ray Little's family when the Stamp Mill was donated to Rotary Park, and he was involved in placement of the WWII plaque and VFW-donated flag pole also at Rotary Park.

Clark is a member of the Fleet Reserve Association, Marine Corps League, the VFW and American Legion. He has been with the Garden Valley Fire Department since 1975. He was volunteer assistant fire chief and is currently on Garden Valley Fire's five-member Board of Directors. He's also served on the Georgetown Fire Department's Board of Directors.

Clark was born in Dubuque, Iowa. His family moved to California when he was 3 years old. His dad served in World War I and when he left the Army worked for the FBI. Frank served with the Navy Seabees construction battalion that built bases and airfields. Clark missed Korea by one year and served in Vietnam.

Clark has given the community so much and to recognize that he will be the grand marshal at this year's Founders' Day parade Sunday, Oct. 16, on Main Street in Georgetown. Founders' Day festivities will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. with the parade starting at noon.