

This Ain't Christine Barkdull's First Rodeo (Parade)



Grand Marshal Christine Barkdull was born to ranch, greeting the world for the first time in 1948. Her grandfather bought the Bar W in Hydesville from the Weizel family in 1944. She loved herding cattle and riding the high ridges above Ferndale, where she could see the ocean. She was in her element in the saddle, too. Christine rode off with the title of Best Junior Cowgirl in the 1956 Fortuna Rodeo Parade. Nine years later, she was named a rodeo theme girl, like a rodeo queen, just not a registered official one. Barkdull absorbed all she could

about the family ranch. "I always knew I was going to run it. I had it in my heart," she says. She graduated from Fortuna High School alongside four classmates who started school with her at Bridgeville Elementary. She attended California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo, earning a degree in agricultural business management. The Bar W was always in the back of her mind. After graduation, Barkdull could not find a job in her field so she worked for the IRS before heading back to Humboldt. The Bar W was not ready for her just yet. Never one to sit still, Christine taught at then

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A young Christine Barkdull in her role as a 1965 rodeo theme girl. Submitted

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1965 rodeo theme girl Christine Barkdull (right).
Submitted

But the Bar W is the center of Barkdull's world. She loves what she does, and where she is able to do it. The high Hydesville ridge is 35 minutes from town. "It's the perfect lady's ranch. Paved road to the door, 35 minutes to town, not much snow, no rattlesnakes." She pauses before adding that she did see one rattlesnake, shaking its warning from a coil of rusted barbed wire. "Even if you've never seen one, you know what that sound is!" Fortunately, the rattlers stick to the other side of her high ridge. Mostly.

Grand Marshal Christine Barkdull blazed a trail from the Bar W gate that eventually led back. Show her you are glad she marked that trail for others to follow back home to Humboldt. Pick your spot by 11 a.m. on July 19. Raise a cheer for Christine in the 104th Fortuna Rodeo Parade as she passes along the same route she rode at the 35th Fortuna Rodeo Parade. *

Humboldt State University while she earned her CPA. That degree led to a position with an accounting firm in Sacramento. But Sacramento was not Humboldt.

"Country girls find our way off, then find our way back," Barkdull says before confessing that by 1979 she could no longer resist the call of the range. She and her mother bought a ranch together in Lolita, where her mother was raised. "Mom was an astute businesswoman, ahead of her time. Dad was a great stockman, but she had the head for business." They ran the business together for almost 10 years before buying out her aunt and uncle's stake in the Bar W herd. When her mother passed away in 1999, Christine took over. The little girl who once rode the ridge dreaming now picked up the reins and kept herding black Angus from the back of her nimble quarter horse.

Barkdull says she enjoys ranching because it allows her to work as she wants. "I love running cattle," she said. You can hear that love in her voice. But she is her mother's daughter — an astute businesswoman. Like most successful ranchers, she keeps her ear to the ground. That includes being a member of four trade associations: California Cattlemen, California Cattewomen, Humboldt Cattlemen and Humboldt Cattewomen. That is dedication.

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