



A Lifetime Of Service: Retired Alderman Charlie Brake Honored As Alton Halloween Parade Grand Marshal

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - If anyone ever epitomized a life of service of Alton it would be retired Alderman Charlie Brake. Brake was a Ward 5 in Alton Alderman for 26 years and was first elected in 1997. He retired a few months before his 92nd birthday in June 2023.

On Tuesday night, Oct. 31, 2023, Charlie Brake will have one of the most special moments of his life when he rides through the Alton Halloween Parade as Parade Marshal. Steve Schwartz, a spokesperson for the Alton Halloween Parade, said he thought the East End Improvement Association, the sponsors for the parade, made a great choice in Brake's selection.

Brake always stood up for what he believed in during his time as Ward 5 alderman. He said when he retired he was going to relieve some stress and relax more.

"I worked all those years, too, and then had that alderman seat for 26 years," he said. "I was involved a lot in the construction projects. We did new fire houses and a new police station and I managed to be in the right place at the right time and fought hard to have the police station where it is located now. I feel we accomplished a lot during my time as alderman."

He described his time as an Alton alderman as a "tremendous experience."

"I can't believe how many good people are in the city and every election some of the same people come back time after time," he said. "I tried to take care of people in my ward like they were my relation. If people had a problem I didn't just note, but I took it to City Hall and passed on every call I received."

Brake said he values the people he met along the way as an Alton City Council member.

"I really got acquainted with the city," he said. "There are some very special people in this community."

He described his late wife, Patty, as the "love of my life." Patty Brake died in December 2013. Charlie and Patty married on June 30, 1950. The couple had five children, along with several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

“The first thing my wife and I did was make a vow she would stay home 24/7 and raise our children,” he said. “It worked.”

Charles said proudly out of his children and grandchildren several have college degrees. Charlie said that he and his wife always believed education was vital to be successful in life.

“I took courses at night after starting as an electrician at Laclede Steel,” he said. “I eventually became an electronics technician and a chief engineer there. My wife and I eventually went to Saudi Arabia and I worked as a technician for about five years before I came back home to Alton.”

“I have an absolutely magnificent family,” he said. “My wife was like a saint, she was vital in raising our family, while I worked.”

On Tuesday night, Charlie will likely be thrilled at his parade marshal honor, but he will also be thinking about his wife and wishing she was with him on his grand marshal ride.

“It is very well-deserved, he did a lot for Alton in his time as an alderman,” closed Schwartz.

Visit [RiverBender.com/events](https://riverbender.com/events) for [more information about the 106th Alton Halloween Parade](#). The parade kicks off at 7 p.m. on Oct. 31, 2023 at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Broadway. Check out [this article](#) on [RiverBender.com](https://riverbender.com) for details about additional Halloween celebrations in the Riverbend.