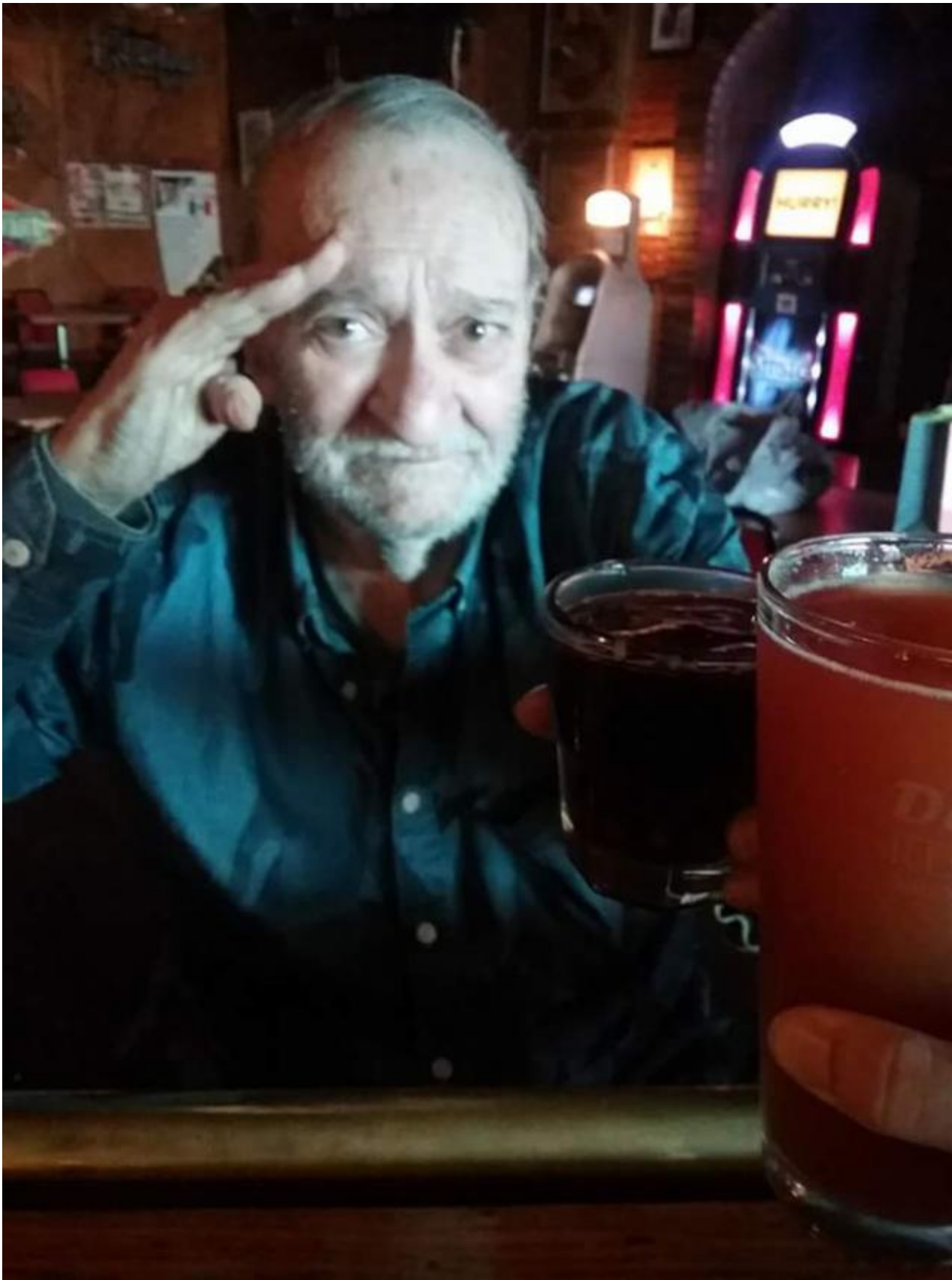




# **Remembering Don: Owner of Downtown Alton landmark remembered fondly**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - Don Bonacorsi, the "Don" of Downtown Alton's Don and Penny's, is being remembered with great fondness throughout the region.

Don's family says there has been an outpouring of condolences to the business and funeral home since his death just before 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 27, at his Alton home.

Born in Jacksonville, Bonacorsi worked as a geophysicist in the petroleum industry before retiring in 1988. He married Penny Petty - the "Penny" from Don and Penny's - in 1968. The two of them opened their bar/restaurant in 1988, just after Bonacorsi retired. He is survived by his wife, Penny, daughter, Trudy Bonacorsi of Brighton, two sons, Bill and Bob Kinnamon from Alton and New Castle, Oklahoma, and two grandchildren, Khatie Kinnamon and Nikki Burelson.

A celebration of life will be held from 4-8 p.m. Sunday, July 2, at Don and Penny's Restaurant and Bar on State Street. Gent Funeral Home in Alton is in charge of the arrangements.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker said he would remember Bonacorsi as a friend. He said Don and Penny's is one of his favorite establishments in the city.

"I've known Don for years," Walker said. "I would consider him a good friend. He was a boxer when he was a kid, and I love boxing, so we used to talk about that. Don and Penny's is a mainstay in the downtown community. It is a great bar ran by great people."

Shawn Lintz, an Alton attorney, was close friends with Don.

"He was almost like a grandfather to me," Lintz said. "I know a lot about him. Some would have never dreamed the life he had. He was a geophysicist and graduated from the University of Illinois. He traveled all over the world working as surveyor in the petroleum industry. Eventually, he started his own company and did very well. Of the places he visited, Alaska was his favorite. He was also really into firearms as well as hunting."

Lintz described Don with some simple words: "Don was an all-around great guy who would do anything for anybody else. He loved Jeopardy. That is one thing a lot of people who know him know he was good at, playing Jeopardy. He loved to read and read, book after book. He was always reading a book.

"Don gave me all kinds of life advice," Lintz said. "He would always welcome you with open arms. I looked up to him and respected him."

Don's son, Bill, said Don was a wonderful dad to his children and grandfather to his grandchildren.

“He was the smartest guy I have ever met,” Bill said. “He put his whole heart into everything he did, from his family to his business. He was a very, very intelligent man.

Bill said his dad was part of a group that discovered America’s largest oil find in Trudeau Bay, Alaska, back in the 1970s, which was one of his claims to fame.

Penny, Don’s wife, was his best friend and soul mate, Bill said.

“Dad and Penny were very close,” Bill said. “They were married 50 some years. They literally worked hand in hand together the last 30 years. When my dad wanted to go hunting she would go. Whatever they did, they did things together. He was her lifeblood.”

Don and Penny’s has been open at its State Street in Alton location for 22 years after seven years in Jerseyville. Bill said the business will continue as it has all these years.

Don and Penny's is known throughout the St. Louis region because of the catchy name. For the two of them, they did consider themselves as one, Don and Penny, not two or divided. Within the community, people loved Don, Bill said. He said customers would always look for either Don or Penny to converse with when they came into the bar /restaurant. Some would come back years later looking to see them both and wait until they were present.

“You can tell how many people loved him by all the comments that are flooding into us about him,” Bill said. “He was always there for his family and always put his family first.”

[Cory Davenport also contributed to this story.](#)