

The Great Snow Storm Of 1982 Still Brings Back Memories For Alton Natives

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
February 1 2022 11:00 AM



ALTON - The man who now coordinates snow removal for the Illinois Department of Transportation on big snowstorms and another from his neighborhood vividly remembers the massive storm of January 30-31, 1982, that extended to Feb. 1, 1982, that dropped 17 inches of snow in Madison County.



Joe Monroe, an operations supervisor for IDOT, said he was fifth grade at St. Matthews School in Alton when the massive snow in 1982 hit the region. He added that the snow kept youth out of school for a week.

“The forecast was not supposed to be a big storm and it turned out to be especially significant,” he explained. “It was a totally different scene back then. I lived nine houses away from the Hanlon family on Omega in Alton and I remember sledding in the neighborhood with Pat Hanlon, Jim, and Dorothy Hanlon’s son. That week was one to remember.”

Julie Gonzales, Jim and Dorothy’s daughter, remembers her siblings enjoying the snow days and outside fun in 1982. She remembers how active they were during that time period.

Jim Hanlon, a well-known United Way volunteer, and former Olin employee had taken a bunch of St. Matthews boys to a large grade school basketball tournament at St. John’s School in Carrollton when the big storm hit.

“The St. Matthews boys won the consolation third-place game and bad weather was predicted, but nothing like what it ended up,” he said. “I had a nine-passenger Chrysler station wagon and I had six or seven boys with me and we headed home from Carrollton and it started snowing and then it got really bad. I remember I took some of the kids home in Godfrey and I remember coming down the BeltLine toward McDonald’s and Humbert and the road snow was so deep I couldn’t get through the intersection.

“The snow was 5 to 6 inches deep when I was driving into my driveway after delivering all the kids. I think there was a strip through Alton that received 13.9 inches of snow during that storm.”

Jim remembers Joe Monroe, now the person who helps clear snow for the region, coming down and sledding with his boys and daughters.

“Joe was a really good athlete,” he said. “He may have been on the basketball team with my son. Back then Oscar Hill was a big deal for the kids.”

Joe said his parents weren't too keen on him going to the Oscar Hill but preferred him to stay closer to home.

Jim Hanlon also remembers snowstorms from the winter of 1977 to 1978 that dropped snow it seemed like every day. Those are the two snowstorms that stand out in his mind over the last four decades.

Bryan Hensley, a riverbender.com salesperson, remembers the snow of 1982 in Alton and he also lived near the Hanlons. He said he and Patrick Hanlon, now an attorney in Champaign, loved to build igloos and he added that they were “perfectly made.”

Hensley said his brother Todd and Tim Connell also participated in igloo building in the neighborhood and Jon Lamb was with him in other snow escapades during that time.

“We wanted to spend the night in the igloos but our parents wouldn’t let us,” he laughed. “It was a lot of fun being off school that week playing in the snow.”

