

# "A Special Man": Art Williams Marks 100th Birthday, Is Recognized By Area Club

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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ALTON - Art Williams is a special man and has an equally special group of friends - The Big Dogs - who honored him before his 100th birthday on Dec. 3, 2023.





Godfrey Mayor Mike Mike McCormick read a proclamation that makes this Dec. 3, 2023, “Art Williams Day” in the village.

“We are excited about Art’s birthday,” McCormick said. “He is one heck of a guy and one of my better friends. He is one of the smartest people I have ever met.”

Art said he was very thankful for the club honoring him and is looking forward to his family marking his actual birthday with him.

"These are a great bunch of guys," he said. "I am part of the group. I am thankful they did this today."

In 2022, Art was the parade marshal of the Alton Memorial Day Parade. Art served in World War II and is a veteran who was in the service from 1942 to 1945. He served in the Pacific for a period during World War II.

He also is a former plant manager at the old Shell Refinery in Wood River and was with Shell for 35 years.

Chris Slusser, the Madison County treasurer, and his uncle Dick Bold, owner of multiple area McDonald’s locations, both couldn’t say enough positive things about Art.

“Art is a good friend and a blessing to all of us,” Slusser said, joking that he brings the average age of the loosely organized The Big Dogs down significantly. Bold agreed that it was great to celebrate Art’s birthday at Castelli’s.

Gary Osborne helped organize the event and said Art had a huge impact on the region. Karl Doucleff of Duke’s Bakery fame in Alton, agreed with the others on the significance of Art’s life and his contributions to America and the world in general with his innovations in offshore drilling with Shell.

Art said he was trained in mechanical engineering and spent most of his working career in offshore drilling before he accepted the plant manager role in Wood River, then retired here. He lost his wife, Joyce, “the love of his life,” to cancer and said he still thinks about her every day. He also said he treasures his memories with his beloved wife, who was his high school sweetheart in Oregon.

The couple has four children, 11 grandchildren, and 24 great-grandchildren, and they are coming from all over the country and world for his 100th birthday. He said his family is coming from Seattle to London for his actual birthday.

"Turning 100 kind of sneaked up on me," Art said. "Time goes more quickly when you are older. It has been a wonderful life."

Bill Drake was the founder with Bob Walters and some others of The Big Dogs. The Wannabes gather monthly at a restaurant for lunch and great conversation. Several prominent individuals in the Riverbend area are part of the fun group.

The Big Dogs made Friday, Nov. 17, 2023, Art Williams' day in deserving fashion. The group provided moments that day that Art will never forget.