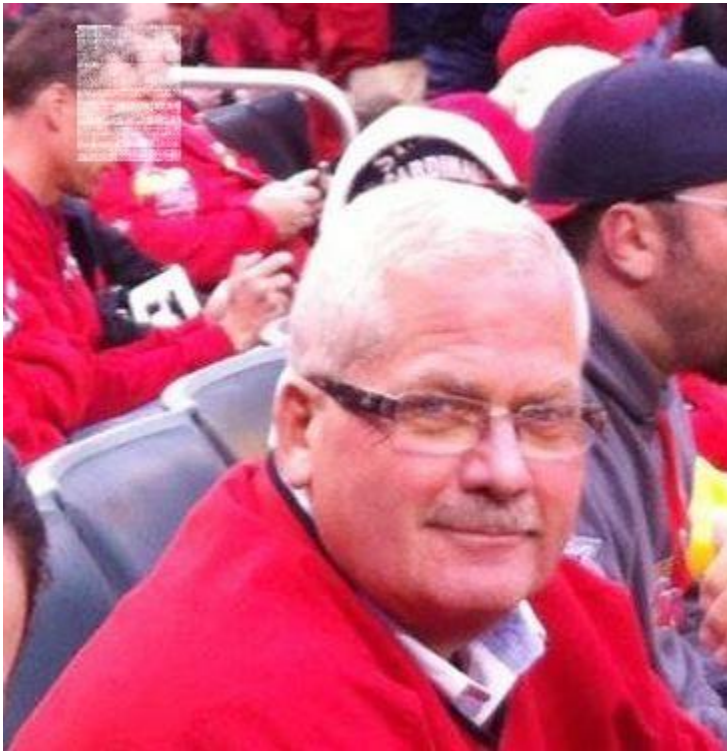


Fast Eddie's legacy will live on in Alton, worldwide

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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Jack Maloney took RiverBender.com down memory lane remembering his friend Eddie Sholar Sr. He recalled his solid work ethic, his start in life and their nearly lifelong friendship that started from childhood in Alton.



Maloney lived in the 1400 block of Liberty as a kid, just around the corner from Eddie and his family. The Maloney home was situated next to Haskell Park.

“We had the same milkman, same mailman and we walked to church and school together at St. Mary’s in Alton,” Maloney said. “He was always a pleasure to be around.

My brothers and sisters were his age. I can remember playing softball at Haskell Park, ice skating, sandlot football, baseball and all kinds of youth sports, he was very athletic.”

Once, Maloney said at St. Mary’s Church in Alton, he and Eddie Sr. were serving as altar boys when Jack’s dog “Prince” wandered into the service. Eddie was fast with his reflexes even back then and raced to get the dog and removed him from the service. Even when the dog nipped at him, Eddie never complained about it, Jack said.

Every time Maloney returned to Alton, he stopped at Fast Eddie’s Bon-Air and visited with his old friend, like so many others who knew Eddie when they were younger. He said once you were a true friend of Eddie you were his friend from then on, period.

In 1981, Maloney started working with Edward Jones in Morristown, Tenn., and at the same time, Eddie purchased the Bon-Air on Broadway. Sam Balaco, and later his son, Lotteo, owned and operated Bon-Air for 50 years. Since the start, Fast Eddie’s has grown from 80 chairs with a few beer cases to more than 400 chairs and a huge facility to accommodate the large crowds.

Maloney said his family contributed several Irish artifacts from their travels that Eddie placed in his bar and that meant a lot to him to see the memorabilia every time he came back for a visit.

Maloney said he loved seeing and listening to the commercials with Mike Shannon where they went back and forth.

“Eddie was an icon and put a lot back into the community,” the Edward Jones financial agent said. “He always had that respect and dignity about him. I always admired him and when I would go back I would say, ‘Eddie, what is going on around here and he would give me the low down on everything.’”

Maloney said his sister Louise Ellen was the same age as Eddie and she thought a lot of the Alton entrepreneur.

When asked about Fast Eddie’s nickname, Maloney said it came when he had his chicken business on Central Avenue.

“He was fast with his chicken and that is how I think he got the name,” Maloney said. “It was deep fried and always good.”

Maloney said of Eddie’s character that he was always great to the customers and built a landmark business from his caring nature.

“It hurts me to talk about him,” Maloney said. “I had such respect for the guy. He worked hard all his life. I feel sorry for him and his family at this difficult time.”

Maloney is not surprised at the success that Eddie Sholar Sr. had with his restaurant.

“If Eddie put his mind to it, there was no end to what he could do,” Maloney said. “He didn’t know defeat and had a supreme work ethic. My dad always said he was just a great businessman and that he had a winning way and would always succeed in life.”

Eddie Sr. liked to have fun, but when it was time to work, he was there with complete dedication and he was always devoted to his family and taking care of them, Maloney added.

Maloney said he thinks Eddie Sholar Sr. will go down as one of the most known people to ever come from Alton.

“To me, he is as famous as Robert Wadlow,” Maloney said. “Fast Eddie’s is known all over the world. I travel to London, Australia, Hong Kong, Italy and I have talked to people in these locations and tell them about Alton, Illinois, and they know of Fast Eddie’s. They have a story about the shrimp, the Big Elwood or something else there.”

“Eddie took care of the working guy,” said Maloney. “His clientele always patronized him because he took care of them and never took things for granted.”

“I will remember Eddie until the day I die because of our relationship with our family and growing up around the corner from him,” Maloney said in closing. “He was truly a great friend and his legacy will live on.”