



## A Tribute to Maurice "Popeye" Enos

by Jan Kelly

*(Editor's Note: Jan wrote the following column for the July 4th Issue in 1998—2 years to the day before Maurice's death as he prepared to march in the July 4th Parade 2000.)*

**H**ard working Maurice Enos, lovingly dubbed "Popeye" will rest his arduous, seven days-a-week, length of town, bottle and can business, to don his sailor suit and march in the parade. Maurice "Popeye" Enos is our local bottle and can man.

Winter and summer, you can see Maurice pushing his A&P cart hauling in the five-centers on a daily route that spreads from the Holiday Inn to the Provincetown Inn. The length of town, seven days a week. I thought Maurice was looking very fit this year. he used to work six days a week telling me "you gotta rest sometime" and his route covered less territory. But now with his friend Helen gone, Maurice tells me he's "gotta keep busy. Hangin' around the house is no good. It'll drive you up the walls. You know [how it is], I see you get out on your bike."

Maurice and his business have gone through transitions over the years. He left a good job in Attleboro at the *Brook Manor Restaurant*. There, Ann & Jack Leito befriended him and it was Jack who nicknamed Maurice "Popeye." Maurice used to love to direct traffic on parade days sporting his sailor outfit and chewing on a corn cob pipe, hence "Popeye."

Friends in Attleboro were fine, but Maurice was homesick and came back to Provincetown to live with his sister Margaret on Anthony Street. Maurice brought the name "Popeye" home with him and so displaced his childhood nickname "Cap'n Funder." He was dubbed that moniker because he had an aversion to thunder.

Ever the worker, Maurice was off to the Wharf Luncheonette. We called it the "Barf Luncheonette" and the stories are many. One day a customer complained to the counter waitress Dahlia, "Can't you do anything about the flies in here?"



Popeye & Jan Kelly, Carnival 1999

"You should see the kitchen!" she retorted.

It was our greasy spoon, open at 3 am for the fishermen to grab a bit of ballast and java before heading out. Maurice was cook and clean up man. It was the mid 80's that Gene Poyant "cornered" (that's how Gene Poyant talked to you) and laid out what he thought was Maurice's great future. Maurice seized the idea, kept his clean up job at the Old Colony Tap as a buffer and began his career as bottle and can man. The Massachusetts Bottle Bill launched his career.

He liked the independence, the walking, the fresh air and the constant contact with others. "Nice talkin' with folks, they all got somethin' to say. Glad I'm not in that hot building cookin'." The business has always been orderly, 9 to 5, and began as six days

a week. In those days, Maurice used to say "ya gotta rest some-time," and he and Helen would take a block of A&P cheddar, a box of Triscuits and sit in the Old Colony (O.C.) window watching the crowds that were watching them.

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A busman's holiday suited Maurice well. He loved strutting around the O.C., greeting locals and tourists telling them not to spill too much beer because he'd be back early morning to clean it all up. In those days, Maurice rode a bike, "they gave me a good deal at Arnold's. I walk the hills anyway. I don't trust those cars that jump out of side streets." That bike had a shopping cart rigged on the back. The next vehicle was a pushcart assembled out of scrap plywood with baby carriage wheels attached.

On a busy summer day, Maurice could always fill the large wheeler. Now, he pushes a ready-made A&P cart. "Let someone else do the work. Rain don't bother this one." Now we can hear Maurice a block away. He may be a long time coming that block though. There are so many people to converse with, all of them

with a story.

When Helen first became ill, Maurice cared for her, but eventually, the Cape End Manor was a better solution. Maurice visited every day, fed Helen lunch and would return to his busy work schedule. "She don't know nobody but me, only me." "Oh, sorry Maurice. Helen has Alzheimer's?" "No! She don't got that! She's got old timer's disease, old timer's disease!"

I witnessed a touching scene outside Adam's Drug Store. Maurice used to take Helen on outings, pushing her wheelchair past familiar sites. This day had a stop at Adams' and Maurice was spoon feeding Helen ice cream, hovering with loving concern as she sat in the sun, clearly enjoying the day, the ice cream and Maurice's attention. "I bought that wheelchair," he told me, "Hell, she's gotta get out sometimes and see the old places and get some fresh air."

Maurice misses Helen. "But whatcha gonna do?" he quizzes. "You gotta work. You gotta pay your bills. If you don't pay your bills, they'll kill you." And off Maurice "Popeye" Enos goes, rattling away with another load of five-centers. Many of us save bottles and cans for him. Each property has a spot set aside for Maurice to come in and pick up every day. If you have bottles and cans regularly, just let him know and you will become part of Maurice's daily route and soon you will have a lesson in faithfulness pass right through your life daily.

## Maurice "Popeye" Enos

*Thank you, Maurice,  
for years of good humor,  
good company  
and another view of life.*

*You are wiser than most.*

*You'll be missed,  
but we'll always be happy  
when we think about you.*

*With love,*

*Jan Kelly*

*I suggest that all of us who saved our bottles for Maurice determine a central drop-off point for bottles and that the proceeds be used to establish a scholarship fund to be awarded to an "Industrious Student Who Has Developed Good Work Skills & Habits. - Jan Kelly*