

Scolnik's Holiday Newsletter

December
2014



From our house to yours...



Holiday Greetings from Bob and Merle

2014 ends ... it's a wonderful life ... and so it goes

By Bob Scolnik

Another eventful year has come and gone and while I was pleased when I looked at the list of what had been accomplished and experienced, it is also clear that time is taking a little more of a toll each year. I write about this not to complain, but as a reminder to those of you who are reading this and are younger. My advice is to take that vacation, spend more time with your kids and enjoy life as much as you can. As Merle and I are getting older there are some things we just can't ... or don't want to ... do any longer. I'm thinking of trips to less developed places and things requiring a lot of

physical activity. Don't put them off. My free advice.

I've had a very busy year with most days filled with meetings of some sort. I'm entering my 23rd year as a politician (starting with over 10 years as a Norton Shores City Councilman), just being reelected as a Muskegon County Commissioner for a 7th term. It was the first time I didn't have either an

opponent in the Primary election or an opponent in the General election. I'm not sure if I really liked the lack of an opponent because I wasn't really energized about the election like I usually am. I've worked hard at trying to be a good elected official.

I study the issues and I'm very visible in the community, attending as many public events as I can. I talk to lots of people and keep my finger on the pulse of public opinion. Plus I'm easily accessible and meet lots of people over coffee or lunch. I can't always help, but I can listen.

I continue with my role as Producer and Presenter for my Mona Lake Productions company. I'm in my 8th year and by the time you read this, I'll have produced two more shows ... "A Concert with Friends" plus "Tony Kenny's Christmas in Ireland" ... both in our wonderful and elegant Frauenthal Theater in downtown Muskegon. I'm planning on producing my 5th New Year's Eve Dinner Show this year, but more about that in another paragraph. This year, the net proceeds from these shows went to benefit the new Boys & Girls Club of the Muskegon Lakeshore. I'm on the founding board of this club and I



Mara, Ethan, Lance, and Amy visit the Scolnik House

think it can be a big help to our youth in guiding them on a successful path for the rest of their lives. We hope to have the new Boys & Girls Club operating by spring in 2015.

Much of each year is measured by a series of "projects" that I take on. This year the big one was the restoration of two World War 1 cannons that were in our Veteran's Memorial Park. These cannons were placed there in 1937 and have basically been untouched for 77 years. Some people had noticed and there was a need for these cannons to be restored but no one ...including local government...could come up with the money or plan to get this job done. I offered to help and came up with a plan and began a public fundraising effort to raise enough money to have these guns cosmetically restored to their original condition. A local company was found who could do the job and the original estimate was \$12,000. So that goal was set and donations began coming in from many individuals and organizations. I soon found that goal was too low as we wanted new concrete pads for the cannons, plus an appropriate donor monument to list the 200+ donors. I'm pleased to report that the fundraising

total ended up well over \$21,000 and the beautifully restored cannons are now in a warehouse and will be installed with a rededication ceremony this coming spring. This was a fantastic community effort.

Merle and I went on another cruise in September this year. Once again we left from New York City and this voyage covered parts of the East Coast, going to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Saint Johns and the Bay of Fundy in Canada, Bar Harbor Maine, Boston and Newport, Rhode Island and then back to New York City. We were with a group of about 16 of my friends from high school in Delmar, New York and we had a great time. We were on the maiden voyage of the brand new Norwegian Gem and it was a beautiful ship. Here's the bad part: While in Halifax, I rented a Segway Personal Transporter to take a tour of the

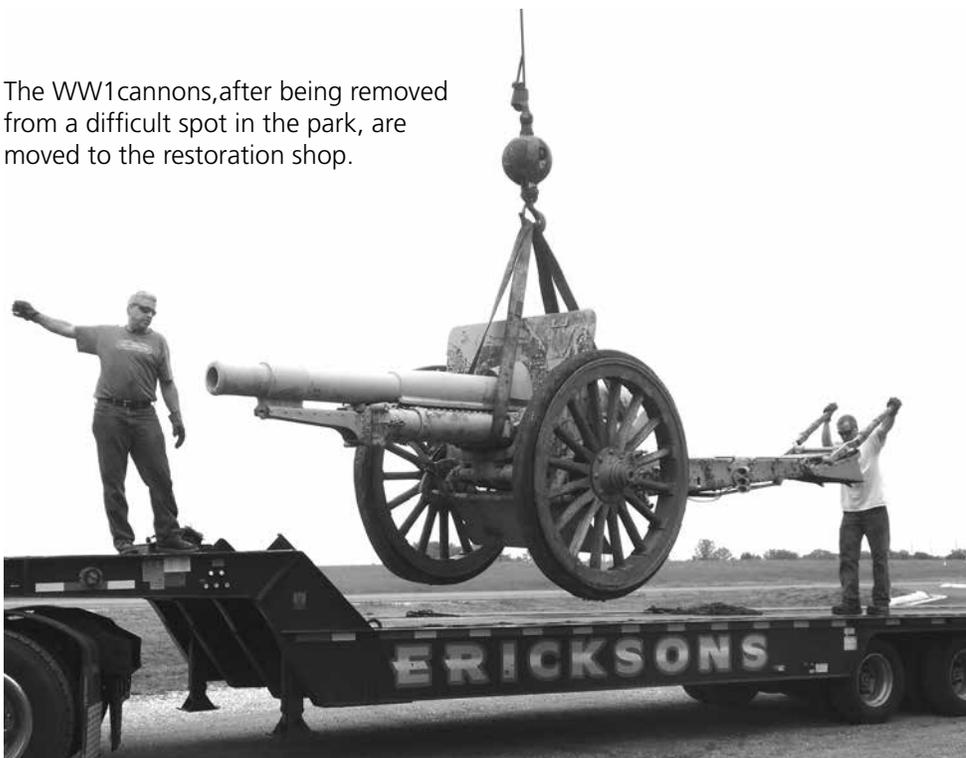


Bob and Merle at Hollywood on the Lakeshore with the Symphony

boardwalk/dock area. I received 10 minutes of training, signed 2 pages of legal forms and was off. About 35 minutes into the tour, I got too close to a curb and crashed. I badly hurt my shoulder and thought my ankle was broken. The ankle healed, the shoulder did not. After several months of therapy and a recent MRI, I'm having Rotator Cuff surgery on December 24th and I'm bummed. Right before my New Year's show and the timing could not be worse. What now? I don't know, but I'll write about it next year! I've been told this surgery has a very difficult recovery, but my arm hurts and is about 50% functional so it needs to be done. The surgeon said it may not work and option 2 is a shoulder replacement. Great.

Other notable events this year include a recent appointment by the Governor (and confirmed by the State Senate) to the Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity. This is a huge honor and I'm hoping to be able to make a difference as I work to improve lives in Michigan. Plus I'm scheduled to be Mother Ginger in a production of the Nutcracker by the Grand Rapids Children's Ballet when they perform in Muskegon. Plus I had some great fun as the Master of Ceremonies for the

The WW1 cannons, after being removed from a difficult spot in the park, are moved to the restoration shop.



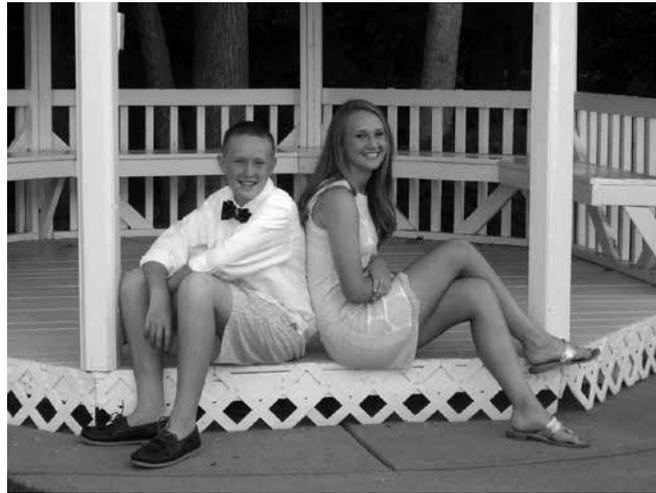
recent Hackley Follies and as the live auctioneer at the Black Tie for the Y and the recent "Trinkets 'N Treasures" fundraiser for the Women's Division. Both were very successful. And so it goes ...

Merle keeps on keeping on. For two old people (Yes, we are old) we keep pretty busy with interesting things and hopefully our bodies won't realize our real chronological ages. Merle still loves her Mah Jong games and usually plays twice a week (at least). We've been living off her winnings. She has lots of lunches and meetings and is active with her Garden Club, the Women's Division of the Chamber and her two Red Hat groups. The Red Hat groups seem to have too much fun and I'm a little jealous. For example this week she had 15 of her Red Hat posse (She's the Queen Mother) for a Hanukkah Dinner Party and, after a great brisket meal, she explained about Hanukkah, its traditions, then they played a rousing game of Dreidel. It was almost too exciting!

Earlier in the year Merle spent two weeks in Florida with some of her friends and they had a very enjoyable time. She's made plans to go for a month in 2015 (that's why I'm having my surgery on December 24th) leaving around February 1st. They've rented a penthouse condo with a roof deck that includes a hot tub and the best part is that Merle's sister, Carole, will join her for part of the month. I'm staying here with my friend Frosty the Snowman and his faithful companion, Blue Balls the dog.

Merle continues to mentor her teenage friend, Me'Ari. She tries to see her as often as she can and they recently joined a Girl Scout group and meet every Sunday for about four hours. They spend a lot of other time on movies, lunch, shopping or reading and I think Merle's impact on her has been significant. Me'Ari and Merle are both Diabetic and Merle has been helping this young teenage girl to deal

with the disease. The other big thing this year has been a series of issues with Merle's health. Because she is Diabetic, she needs to pay close attention to foot care and her Arthritis continues to affect her mobility. She's had some issues that involved the wound clinic and I've been renting an electric scooter when we go on cruises. Plus the stair lift that we installed a year ago has been a huge help. And so it goes ...



Ethan and Mara ready for the big party. Ethan is happy ... the Service is over!

Probably the biggest thing that happened in 2014 was the Bar Mitzvah of our grandson, Ethan. He has been attending Sunday school and studying for his Bar Mitzvah for several years. The big day was on September 6th and held in Temple Kol Tikvah's new Temple and for us, it was



Ethan celebrates at his Bar Mitzvah. It was a great party!

exciting to see a new Temple with a young congregation. There were over 130 kids in their Sunday school and the Temple was just formed about 7 years ago and moved into their new building about 18 months ago. Ethan did an excellent job and conducted almost the entire service plus he read perfectly from the Torah. His speech to the large group at the service was fantastic. We were very proud of him

and our daughter Amy for continuing the traditions that are so important in our lives. Ethan plays Lacrosse and basketball and is in the National Junior Honor Society where he was elected Secretary. (Another politician!). He loves to work with a photo editing program using sports celebrities and he has attracted thousands of followers. But Ethan's best thing (in my humble opinion)

is his long-term volunteering with special needs kids sports programming. He calls them his little buddies and generally gives up an afternoon every weekend to volunteer. I know he recently gave up a night at a friend's house so he could volunteer on

Sunday. I love that. We are very lucky!

Mara is 15 and is a beautiful young woman. She is in tenth grade at Hough High School in nearby Cornelius, North Carolina. She is a straight A student, treasurer of her sophomore class (another politician), and an athlete. She plays competitive soccer with a Club travel team (The Carolina Rapids



Manicure day with Amy, Mara, and Merle

in the Premier League) and is very busy with practice, homework and a busy social life. She made the junior varsity basketball team and has been in most games. Considering her high school has 2500 students, it is quite an accomplishment.

Our daughter, Amy, her husband Lance and their family continue to live in Huntersville, North Carolina (a suburb of Charlotte). They've lived in North Carolina for 11 years now and really like living there. Amy started

working part-time a few years ago as her kids got older and she had more free time. She now works as a Cardiac Case Manager in Charlotte at a large hospital, the Carolinas Health Care Center. She still wants to have time to attend her kid's games and activities and she continues in a position that is only two days a week. She works with patients as they get ready to go home to be sure they have everything they need to be safe and fully recover. She's doing great!

Lance continues to work for Autodesk, a Fortune 500 company. He is the Director of Field & Channel Marketing for the Americas. Lance has worked for Autodesk for five years now and Autodesk is a software company that sells design software, 3-D design software, plus software for the media and entertainment industries. Most of the largest auto and aerospace companies use it and most of the 3-D movies (Avatar, Gravity, and many more) use Autodesk software. Lance continues to travel extensively and is a

fantastic suitcase packer. I hate traveling because of the stress of packing ... he could travel to the moon with a carry-on bag and be fine! Lance loves the shooting sports and although he is gone a lot, he finds some time for a little hunting and some target



Charter fishing on Lake Michigan. We caught huge Salmon and Lake Trout



Mike on his 32nd birthday!

shooting with Ethan. (I'm not sure he knows that I qualified as an expert with the M60 machine gun when I was in the Army.)

And finally, an update on our son, Mike. He left his job as a chemical operator a little over 3 years ago, went back to school and finished the HVAC program (Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning) and is now working for Carmichael Heating & Air Conditioning on Whitehall Road in Muskegon. He's been doing a lot of different things including some service work, but much of time is spent on new furnace installations. The work is interesting and challenging because while they do some new construction, much of the work is "Change outs" where old furnaces are replaced with new ones. Some are in crawl spaces and in places you really don't want to go, others are in tight spaces and some of the older furnaces that need to be removed are very heavy and hard to get out of the basement. He loves the company, enjoys the other employees and particularly likes the way the company feels like a family.

So that's our news for 2014! May you and your loved ones have a happy, healthy, and prosperous 2015!

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