



Muskegon Irish American Society

# NEWS



Fall 2015



Don't miss our club's very own

## Whiskey School

Wednesday, November 18, 6:30 pm, at



We have been hearing for months about how much fun is to be had at the monthly whiskey schools at Hennessy's. But the whiskey schools sell out so fast that many of us have not had the good fortune to participate in this educational endeavor. So what to do? Let's ask Hennessy's to put on *our very own* whiskey school, and our fellow member and great friend Mike Hennessy said "YES"! Thanks to Mike Hennessy and our club's relationship, we can attend our own special whiskey school at the unbelievable price of merely **\$10.00 per person!**

Just what is the whiskey school all about? At the whiskey schools Hennessy's closes the front restaurant section to the public, and up to 60 participants sit at the booths and tables there. A buffet that includes some of Hennessy's favorite food offerings is set up, and is available all evening. Our instructor will be Alistair Jackson, who hails from Scotland and is an expert on whiskeys and other libations. Hennessy's staff distributes tasting glasses to everyone, and pours a small sample of whiskey in each glass. The instructor explains the history and gives information about the whiskey, and the whiskey is tasted. Then the tasting glasses are cleared away, and everyone has food from the buffet. New glasses are brought out, and this is repeated for about a two hour period, with a total of six different whiskeys being tasted. The idea is to introduce a variety of whiskeys with different tastes. Some may be sweet, some will have milder or stronger flavors, etc. The instructor selects the whiskeys. This is an event not to be missed - regular price is \$25.

Please pay close attention: **The total maximum number for this event is 60 members. After 60 reservations are made, reservations are closed. To make your reservations call Kathleen Marek asap at 231-759-7344.** Reservations will be made in the order they are received. If more than 60 members want to make reservations, a waiting list will be kept. See you there!

# Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame 2015 induction held at Music Festival on September 19



Sister Alice Wittenbach, O.P. Hon. Michael F. Cavanagh Cameron Bonner Michael Kelly Mayor Phil O'Dwyer Patrick Bonner

On Saturday, September 15, our club inducted five outstanding new members into the Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame.

As one of two inductees in the field of Public Service, the Hall of Fame named retired Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, the Honorable **Michael F. Cavanagh**. Justice Cavanagh joined the Michigan Supreme Court in January of 1983. He was elected Chief Justice in January of 1991 and was reelected Chief Justice in January of 1993, serving until January of 1995. Justice Cavanagh's fourth eight-year term on the court started in January of 2007 and he retired from the Court in 2015. Throughout his career, Justice Cavanagh was an active leader in legal and civic organizations, including the Incorporated Society of Irish American Lawyers.

Also In the category of Public Service, the Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame inducted the Mayor of Berkley, Michigan, Mayor **Phil O'Dwyer**. In addition to his job as mayor, he works full time as director of a mental health clinic in Garden City, Michigan. He began his education in Thurles, Tipperary, and at age 24 came to the U.S. He attended Notre Dame, and earned his Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from the University of Detroit and his Doctorate in Counseling from Wayne State University. He is a Certified Social Worker and a Certified Addictions Counselor. Dr. O'Dwyer has been a long-time Irish community and government leader. Mayor O'Dwyer gave permission for us to print his remarks, and his speech can be found after this article.

In Arts & Entertainment, the Hall of Fame inducted legendary Beaver Island fiddler **Patrick Bonner**. Patrick (Pat) Bonner was born on Beaver Island on November 7, 1882, and lived most of life there. He died October 26, 1973, at the age of 91. Nationally known American folklorist Alan Lomax spent time on Beaver Island in 1938 recording Bonner's music for the Library of Congress. Pat also wrote poems relating to Irish and Beaver Island heritage, some of which were also recorded by Lomax. Bonner made a living as a small farmer and worked at jobs that became available on Beaver Island. His first priority however was his fiddle and his Irish music. He was able to play until shortly before his death in 1973. His award was accepted by his grandson, Cameron Bonner.

For her many years of leadership and accomplishments in the category of Education, The Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame inducted Dominican **Sister Alice Wittenbach, O.P.** Sister Alice taught biology and humanities at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids from 1969-2004. While at Aquinas, she supervised the Tully Cross Ireland program, leading student groups to Tully Cross many times. Her deep ties to Ireland led to her being named "Spirit of Ireland" for the 2011 Ancient Order of Hibernian's St. Patrick's Day parade in Grand Rapids. Sister Alice's ancestors came from Ireland to the Lowell area in 1837, just before the great famine in 1840.

For his leadership in the field of Business & Industry, the Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame inducted **Michael L. Kelly**. Kelly is the Owner and President of Environmental Maintenance Engineers, Inc., which provides environmental remediation services in Michigan and Ohio. He was born in Detroit, the oldest son of Joann and the late Lawrence M. Kelly (County Mayo, Ireland) and grew up in Detroit. Kelly is on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Irish American Chamber of Commerce (MIACC) and was recognized as the 2014 Entrepreneur of the Year. He is President of the United Irish Societies (UIS) and strongly advocates to promote and recognize all of the charitable contributions the United Irish Societies and the entire Irish Community make in Detroit and throughout the State.

# Remarks of Mayor Phil O'Dwyer upon his induction into the Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame

(Editor's Note: In today's political environment it is common to disparage public officials, and it is easy to forget that across our great nation are thousands of dedicated public servants who work hard to fulfill their duties for their fellow citizens. We were reminded of this when Phil O'Dwyer, an Irish immigrant who is the Mayor of the City of Berkley in Southeast Michigan, made these remarks at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony.)

Mr Chairman, Friends,

I am deeply honored to accept this award in the category of Public Service. I am humbled and grateful to be inducted into The Michigan Irish American Hall of Fame and I thank you.

I was born in Holycross, Co Tipperary, where I embraced the abiding lesson to make a difference in the world. That pervasive message was conveyed through many aspects of that Irish Catholic Culture.

Then, by the age of 12 I heard the historic words of John F Kennedy issuing a challenge to America and the World: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," These were inspirational words 55 years ago and they still remain inspirational today.

As High School turned to College I came to realize that public engagement is the key to a thriving democracy and that it can be fulfilled in many ways. The challenges of the day will not be solved by skeptics or cynics but by those that believe that Public Service is a noble endeavor and are willing to put the common good ahead of self-interest.

As a dual citizen of Ireland and the United States I hear the beat of 2 different drums; the empowering melody of a rich heritage and the enduring challenge to not stop thinking about tomorrow.

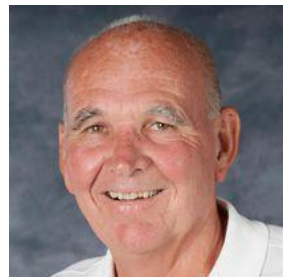
We Irish celebrate the past to awaken the future. As the great Irish author George Bernard Shaw once said: "Some men see things that are and say why, but I dream dreams of things that never were and say why not?" That is my vision of public service. It is a vision expressed through many professions overrepresented among the Irish: In politics, the clergy, the law, in healthcare, among others. We inherit a passion to serve. I am thankful to the residents of the City of Berkley for giving me the opportunity to serve as their Mayor.

The history of the Irish in Michigan is the history building up our State. Today, the Irish American Society of Muskegon inducts 5 new members into the Hall of Fame and I am honored to be among them.

Beyond today's celebration may I thank the Irish community here in Muskegon and across this great State for your hospitality and for all you do to celebrate our heritage and preserve our cultural values.

## R.I.P Denny Duff

On September 28 our club and the Muskegon community lost a dedicated husband, father, grandfather, friend, and active supporter of many causes, when Denny Duff passed away at age 72. Denny was the father of our club's Treasurer, Bruce Duff. Denny was a Muskegon native and alumnus of Muskegon Catholic Central. He was a career firefighter for the City of Muskegon for 33 years, and in 2002 he retired as Battalion Chief. In addition to our club, Denny was a member of Our Lady of Grace parish, the Knights of Columbus Council #706, the Vikings, and the International Association of Retired Firefighters. He was also a volunteer for the Red Cross and our Michigan Irish Music Festival. Denny loved fishing and cooking, and his specialty was "Duff's Pizza." Denny is survived by his wife of 53 years, Sue, and their four adult children and several grandchildren, along with many other relatives. Denny will be greatly missed by all who knew him.



## Last Event

(Editor's Note: Last August 13 about 40 of us attended the outstanding Irish play "Outside Mullingar" at the Howmet Playhouse in Whitehall. Our fellow member and entertainment critic, Bill Iddings, published this review on Facebook, and gave permission for it to be reprinted here.)

### Iddings' Thoughts on "Outside Mullingar" by Bill Iddings

For the next two days you can't spend a better night in a local theater than "Outside Mullingar," running at 7:30 p.m. today and Saturday at Howmet Playhouse in Whitehall.

As hilarious as it is touching, the production that opened its three-performance run Thursday under the fine direction of Bryan S. Engler features a dream cast, and sports Jessica Reilly's moveable feast of a set lighted by Tom Klonowski in a way that moves "Outside Mullingar" along seamlessly.

What "Outside Mullingar" especially has going for it is one of the finest contemporary scripts you're likely to encounter. Set on a cattle farm in rural Ireland, the show is written by John Patrick Shanley, the wondrous playwright who gave us not only the Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Doubt," but also the Academy Award-winning screenplay of "Moonstruck." "Outside Mullingar" again reveals Shanley to be not only an artist but a craftsman.

Like he did with "Moonstruck," Shanley with "Outside Mullingar" taps into family and love with a sensitivity that few modern writers possess. The quality of his writing is not strained, and this time he turns his attentions not to Italian-Americans ("Moonstruck") but the Irish. The laughs come often, yet they're merely a setup for swelling the warm heart that beats in the lovesick soul of "Outside Mullingar."

The crankily sage and aged -- he can make Methuselah seem spry in comparison -- Tony Reilly (Tom Harryman) has a farm. On this farm he has a 40-ish son, Anthony (Joe Carmolli), whom the geezer da rags to distraction, mainly because he does not trust turning the farm over to Anthony after he dies; and judging by Tony's hacking and coughing, that could be any moment now.

Coming over from the farm next door is Aoife Muldoon (Sheila Wahamaki), around the old farmer's age and just back from burying her husband. Tony and Aoife share a past, and he has a secret he intends to take with him to his grave.

Outside in the rain -- there's a metaphor if ever I've seen one -- is Rosemary (Kimberly Harsch), Aoife's daughter who will remind theater lovers of Josie Hogan in Eugene O'Neill's "A Moon for the Misbegotten." Rosemary smokes like a chimney, and Anthony has carried a lifelong torch for her that he has been unable to light.

Not to worry: Sparks will fly. Rosemary bears Anthony an ancient grudge that harks back to a slight in their childhood, one he barely remembers. He'll get reminded soon enough don't you know.

Everyone can relate to the familial love and ache of unrequited love on display in "Outside Mullingar," especially in the last scene when Anthony and Rosemary make some startling revelations that will make you both laugh and cry. For the more sensitive among us, do not bring just an extra handkerchief to "Outside Mullingar"; bring an absorbent bed sheet.

And what a cast! Brandishing fine Irish accents as if they were born to the manner, Harryman, Wahamaki, Carmolli and Harsch form an ensemble that would be tough to top. They give and take with an ease and alacrity rarely witnessed around these parts.

The result is a theatrical experience in which uproar and hubbub are punctuated by the sound of silence. Shanley, Engler and this acting quartet know how to not only take a play that's on a roll, but also pause and take a breath, and that's when "Outside Mullingar" grabs you where you live. The final scene between Carmolli and Harsch is one of the funniest and most gripping pieces of stage artistry I've ever seen. Oh, see if you get the reference "Celtic tiger."

## New Raffle Announced

By now we have received our annual raffle tickets for the drawing to be held at our pub party on January 31, 2016, at Hennessy's. This raffle is our major fundraising project for the year, and it helps to support all our club's activities and the newsletter. This year's raffle prize has a value of \$850.00. It includes a year of monthly whiskey schools for two persons at Hennessy's, and a Waterford decanter and two glasses in the classic "Cooper" pattern. We are asked to purchase or sell two raffle tickets, which are priced at \$10.00 each. Please follow the instructions in the letter you received with your tickets for turning in your sale money or the tickets.

