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# ***Allegany Area Historical Association***

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March 2021

[www.allegany.org](http://www.allegany.org)

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## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Well, here we are, still not able to open because of the pandemic. But now there is some hope as two vaccines are becoming more available. Hopefully by summer or fall we may be able to have people at the center again.

We have had some deaths in the Allegany community. Merle Schultz passed away in October. I'm sure a lot of you knew Merle through his employment with Murray-Page auto dealers, which became Herb Hallman, which became John Hardy Chevrolet. He was the service manager there. I know he made many friends while working there. He also served as the caretaker for Allegany Cemetery, taking over after his father, Howard, retired. He will be missed.

Peter Wintermantel died in January. Peter was in business with his brothers, Dan and Mikel, for 41 years at Studio 4 East. When you went in the shop, you could count on Peter coming from the back room with a big grin on his face to greet you. He had a marvelous sense of humor, some would even call it goofy. He was a village trustee for 10 years. One of the things he loved most was playing the harmonica. He will be missed by his wonderful family, the citizens of Allegany who he worked so hard for, and by all who were fortunate enough to know him. Read his complete obituary at Casey, Halwig & Hartle Funeral Home.

Rosemary Ryan passed away in January. I always thought of her as the matriarch of Chipmonk. I think she was related to almost everyone there. She served as Comptroller of the Town of Allegany, as well as many posts in the county's Democratic Party. She and her late husband, Paul, had eight children, and in a rarity, seven of them are living in the Allegany area. Her obituary is at Casey, Halwig & Hartle Funeral Home.

Member Mary Petro passed away in December. Mary and her husband Tom lived in Syracuse. She was a devoted reader of the newsletter, and emailed many times to talk about articles we had.

My daughter, Mary Pendl, is retiring from teaching after 32 years and is cleaning out her files. She donated 17 elementary school yearbooks to us. I never knew that there was such a thing. Each one is small, about 20 pages, and has pictures of each grade and the teacher. Should make a nice display.

The October 2020 issue of Buffalo Spree magazine had an interesting article about the Temperance fountains of Western New York. These were erected by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the WCTU, all across the country. Allegany has a fountain which is located in front of the Town Hall. It has three troughs, for horses, people, and dogs. It used to sit right by the street, but was moved back in 2015. It is connected to water but is turned off for now because of Covid.

**Francie Potter, President**

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**Continuation of oral history interview done by Wes Martin with Michael Nenno -2020.**

Michael enlisted in the Navy, intending to be a pilot. His draft number was low enough that he would have been in the Army, so he chose the Navy. When he was going through physicals in Pensacola, Florida, it was noted on his records that he had a history of migraines. So, the Navy said sorry, but you can't be a pilot, and discharged him. His local draft board said he had fulfilled his military obligation. So he went to law school at the University of Buffalo. During the whole four year program he also worked full time. When he graduated, after 8 years of college and law school, he only owed \$3, 200 in student loans, at 2% interest. But he wouldn't recommend working full time while you are in law school – law school was enough.

The last two years of law school, Michael worked for Paul Kelly. Michael's two cousins and he had purchased some apartments in Olean and Paul Kelly did the incorporation papers for them. Since Paul was in need of a law clerk, he asked Michael if he would be interested in the job. So Michael spent one day a week, either Monday or Friday, clerking for Paul, while he finished up law school. It was a great education doing this. Michael graduated from University of Buffalo in 1973 and took the bar exam in July of 1973. He was admitted to practice in February of 1974, and became an attorney in Paul's practice. In 1976, he became a partner and the firm was called Kelly & Nenno. The practice was mostly real estate, estate work and some criminal work, which Michael handled as Paul didn't like to do it. They also had several corporate clients in the area.

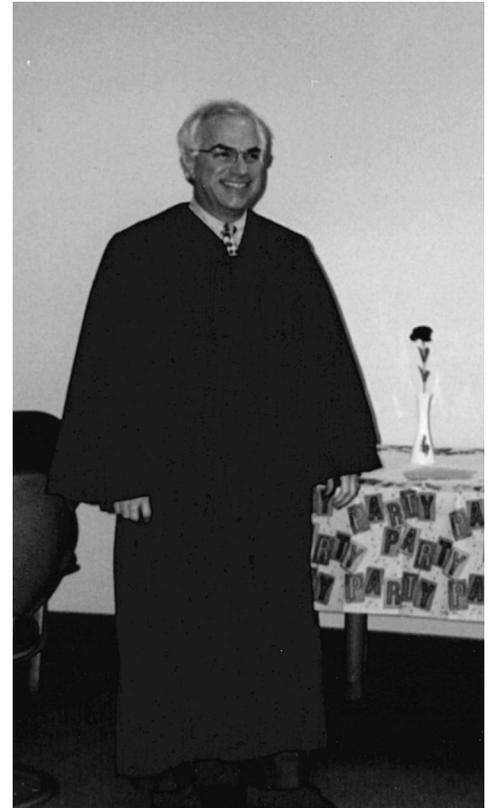
Paul Kelly was appointed a Cattaraugus Judge in May of 1985 to fill Judge James Crowley's seat, and was elected in November of 1985. In May of 1991, Michael hired Wendy Tuttle to help at the firm, and it was her first job as an attorney. Michael was elected County Judge in November of that year. Paul and Michael served together as judges for 1992, when Paul had to retire in December of that year. New York State law says that a judge must retire in December of the year he turns 70. Michael retired December 31 of 2016.

Life in a small town is different than life in a big city. Two of Michael's favorite stories involved Austin Finan, father of former Olean General Hospital CEO, Tim Finan. Austin was a professor at St. Bonaventure who came here from New York City right after the war when appliances were in very short supply. Without a stove, the Finans ate every night at a restaurant in Allegany. One night the waitress said that she probably wouldn't be seeing much of them anymore. When they asked why, she said that the stove and refrigerator that they had ordered had come in at Geary's Appliances and would be delivered the next day! The Finans were shocked that everyone in town knew their business! The Finans lived on Union Street in Allegany and one time there was a gas main leak there so they had to move out and stayed a while with another Bonaventure professor. One night, Austin received a phone call from his father in New York city. After a while, Austin asked his father how he knew how to get hold of him at another person's house. His father said that when he gave the operator at the local phone company the number, she told him about the gas leak and that the Finans were staying with another person. But if you have trouble, your neighbors are the first ones to offer help. Again, life in a small town.

In 1980, Michael was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Town of Olean Justice Court. He then ran that fall, was elected and continued in that position until 1991. He was elected a Cattaraugus County Court Judge in 1991, and then had to give up his local law practice as the judgeship is a full time position. He was re-elected in 2002 and again in 2011, and had to retire at the mandatory age of 70 in 2016.

Being a county judge was an interesting position. One job was to run training sessions for local town justices with no legal training. This included Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany counties. Since Cattaraugus County is small, the judge also serves as Family Court judge, Supreme Court judge and heard Surrogate cases also. Family Court was 2 days a week, Supreme Court was 3 days a week, and Surrogate Court was every other Monday morning. So you can see why it was a full time job.

During his time as County judge, things changed in Family Court. More fathers ended up with child custody than when he started, a sign of the times. Each case was judged on its merits. Michael interviewed each child, with his or her attorney, in his chambers before he made a decision. At seminars for judges, it was said the ideal is for both



Judge Michael Nenno in his robes - 2016



L to R Gloria Bilotta, Dan Walsh, Barbara Edwards, standing in back, Michael Nenno. Michael was Dan Walsh's campaign manager. Date is 1974

parents to be equally involved, but it very rarely works out that way. The child wants one place to call home, not to bounce back and forth every week or two between parents.

Some courts have "adoption week". Michael had adoptions every day of the week. When the parties were ready to proceed, he did the adoptions. One thing he did was to hand out Beanie Babies to each of the children. Over time, people who knew he did this gave him their collections, so much so that he wound up with two bins full of them! Pictures were taken of the whole ceremony, and sometimes parties were held. It was a very enjoyable part of being a judge.

Michael talked about the difference in politics back a few years and now. He used Amo Houghton a Republican, and John Ash, a Democrat, as examples. He found it a real pleasure to work with both of them. They represented their districts rather than their particular political party. Amo made enemies in the Republican party because he "crossed the aisle" to make things happen for the district. Not all Republicans liked this, and Michael knew of

at least one Republican who hated Amo. But Amo was well respected and liked in the district. John Ash, "a super guy", is proof that all politics is local. John Ash replaced William Smith, who was a Republican, and served 18 years. During that time the City Council was heavily Democratic.

Sometime in the 1980's, Michael was asked to be on the board of St. Francis Hospital, which was run the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany. He was serving as Chairman of the Board when the hospital was sold to Olean General Hospital. Hospital service today is much different and much better than it was 40 or 50 years ago. Hospital stays are much shorter, which has been shown to be much better for the patient. Instead of being in the hospital a week after having a baby, a mother now leaves after one or two days. When the negotiations for the sale started, both hospitals were running at 95% occupancy. When the sale was completed two years later, both hospitals were running at 50-55% occupancy. A study done at the time showed that the area couldn't support two hospitals at that rate.

Over the years, Michael was asked to serve on many boards of various organizations. For example, he served on the board of the YMCA for 9 years when it was still on Union Street. He said it was – and is – an outstanding facility but like almost all of the non-profit agencies in the area, it is always looking for money, which is hard when you have a small area to draw from.

The real "power behind the throne" is Michael's wife, Martha. She is a great cook, who grows flowers and vegetables, many of which she cans. She loves all kinds of puzzles, reading and playing bridge. Michael and Martha love having their kids and granddaughter come for visits. They joke about their house being a bed and breakfast with a revolving door, but they love being with friends and relatives, which is very enjoyable now that Michael is retired.

Martha has 3 children from her first marriage – two girls and one boy, who are all adults now. Martha loves to travel and has made several trips with her mother and other female relatives – Michael calls them "girl trips". She has gone to Alaska, Thailand and Venezuela among other places. Michael and Martha have made several trips together with friends, ski trips to Colorado and Utah, Canada, but not in the present time, and some overseas trips. One they particularly enjoyed was a river cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam, arriving in Amsterdam in time for tulip season.

Martha has a small family. Her grandmother lost her husband in World War I, and her mother was an only child. Her father lost his mother when he was very young, and was raised by his grandparents. She had two first cousins. They both said they are so very fortunate to have such good friends in the area, that it is a real blessing to see family and friends.



L to R Louis Nenno (Michael's father), Mother Elna Nenno, on her lap Evelyn Nenno, on R is Blanche Nenno No date

We received another interesting article by Gertrude Schnell. We certainly enjoy all she sends us – don't stop, Gertrude!

### Stone Pickers

When my Father, Aunts and Uncles grew up on the Schnell Farm on the Lower Birch Run Road, they were "stone pickers". After the fields were plowed, many stones came to the surface. These would interfere with the growing crops, cultivating and harvesting. Therefore, all of the kids became "stone pickers". A horse would pull a "stone boat" – a flat wooden sled – and the children would walk along on both sides picking up the stones and putting them on the stone boat. After it became filled, it would be taken to the far right side of the property and the stones would be dumped in the stone lot. A rainy day was much appreciated because no stone picking would be done.

Ed. Note – The kids today don't know how lucky they are!

### ***SPECIAL POEM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS!!!***

A row of bottles on my shelf  
Caused me to analyze myself.  
One yellow pill I have to pop  
Goes to my heart so it won't stop.  
A little white one that I take  
Goes to my hands so they won't shake.  
The blue ones that I use a lot  
Tell me I'm happy when I'm not.  
The purple pill goes to my brain  
And tells me that I have no pain.  
The capsules tell me not to wheeze  
Or cough or choke or even sneeze.  
The red ones, smallest of them all  
Go to my blood so I won't fall.  
The orange ones, very big and bright  
Prevent my leg cramps in the night.  
Such an array of brilliant pills  
Helping to cure all kinds of ills.  
But what I'd really like to know.....  
Is what tells each one where to go!

## GENEOLOGY

If you are looking for some help with genealogical problems, you can contact Steph at the Olean Public Library. Her email is:

[diggingwithsteph@gmail.com](mailto:diggingwithsteph@gmail.com)

This is her specialty, and she's good at it.



STEPHANIE BENENG  
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academia and the nonprofit sector in  
western New York and Pennsylvania*



*custom genealogy tutoring for  
individuals via web, phone, or in person*

*historical research for publications,  
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*custom projects for nonprofits*

mobile: 716.374.5257

email: [diggingwithsteph@gmail.com](mailto:diggingwithsteph@gmail.com)

[www.lightworkfarm.com/digging-with-steph](http://www.lightworkfarm.com/digging-with-steph)

# Memorials



For: *Jeanne (Wilber) Wilson*  
From: *Spencer Morgan*

For: *Peter Wintermantel*  
From: *Deborah Israel*

For: *Helen McCully*  
From: *McCully Family*  
(*Don, John, Dean & Joan*)

*David Mack-Hardiman & Family*  
*Reid's Markets*  
*Anthony Salmonson*  
*Gloria Burton*  
*Terry & Tiffany Brairton*  
*Francie Potter*

For: *Celestine Welch*  
From: *Margaret Parker*



The Wall of Honor was conceived of and given to the town as a gift in 1942 by Dr. Robert Forbes, a local dentist and car dealer. Before the end of the war, new sets of wings had to be added to the original wall. It was located next to the Town Hall. Near the end of the war, the names of the fallen heroes were changed to a black panel with white lettering with a star of genuine gold after their name. Many people would even come to pay tribute to the service men and women at night when it was lit.

**Does anyone know when the Wall of Honor was taken down? And what might have happened to it?**  
**Let us know.**

Allegany Area Historical Association  
P.O. BOX 162  
Allegany, NY 14706

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INSIDE SPECIAL ISSUE:

Presidents Report

Pickin' Stones

Where is the Wall?

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**WE WILL NOT BE OPEN FOR ANY PROGRAMS OR VISITORS  
UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.**

Message us on Facebook or email us at  
[Alleganyheritagecenter@gmail.com](mailto:Alleganyheritagecenter@gmail.com) with your questions.

Take care, stay safe, and wear your mask when in public.

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