



Merle Nancy Scolnik

June 4, 1943 - January 24, 2021

Merle Nancy Scolnik, age 77, passed away on January 24, 2021 at the Poppen Hospice Residence in Muskegon. Merle was born in Pittsburgh, PA on June 4, 1943 to Mollie and Milton Ruttenberg. She grew up in Pittsburgh and Trenton, New Jersey, graduating from Taylor Allderdice High School in Pittsburgh. She met a recruiter from Michigan State University at a College Fair and decided to attend Michigan State University. Merle's career and life revolved around children. After receiving her degree from Michigan State in K-12 Special Education, she worked at Eastern Orthopedic School in Grand Rapids before finding a great special education position with the new Multi-Cap program at Muskegon Public Schools. She earned a master's degree in Special Education from Western Michigan University and refused to get her PhD because in Muskegon Public Schools, it was only worth a few hundred dollars a year in additional pay. She has been very involved with her Congregation, Temple B'Nai Israel, and served as the Principal of the Sunday School for over 25 years. She has been a long-time board member and served as President of the Congregation. She liked to read and was an active member of two book clubs and was involved with the Women's Division of the Chamber of Commerce, the Garden Club, Doll Club and was a Board Member of Read Muskegon. She mentored young women and served as a CASA...Court Appointed Special Advocate... to advocate for children who are living in foster care because of abuse or neglect. She also was an active member of the American Association of University Women for many years. She formed her own Red Hat Group, the Crimson Hat Queens and as the Founder, she will forever be the Queen Mother. She belonged to a second Red Hat group, the Crimson Cruisers...and she stayed very busy with her friends. One of her life-long passions was Mah Jong, a Chinese game played with tiles that is a favorite of Jewish women on the East Coast. Her Mother played and when she moved to Muskegon, she could not find a game to join. There is a little gambling involved and the players love the game and the getting together. So, after moving to Norton Shores, and not finding other players, she taught people to play...probably 100 or more over the 43 years she lived here and two of the women she taught, still played in her original Monday night game. She frequently played three times every week. Her other passion was collecting Dolls and she amassed a giant collection of them, with many displayed in a huge custom

case built into a wall in her living room. She met her future husband 51 years ago at a single's dance at the Park Street Congregational Church in downtown Grand Rapids. It was pure chance, two Jews meeting in a church, and they immediately hit it off. They were both smitten, and Bob proposed within a week. They married 7 months later and celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this past July. They both took a leap of faith and it was a great journey. They had two terrific children, Amy, and Michael and two perfect Grandchildren, Mara, and Ethan Murphy. Merle and her husband, in many ways, were a perfect team. Bob, who started his first business soon after they married, frequently credited Merle with his future successes. Her teacher's salary supported them for the first 7 years of their marriage, so he could reinvest in the family business. He talked of her sacrifices and her trust in him as the reason for their success as a family. In their 50 years of marriage, they never went to bed angry and shared similar values. Merle loved people and she loved entertaining. She helped organize countless events and enjoyed parties and dinners at her home and especially, large New Year's Eve parties. She had a legion of friends including Mah Jong partners, teaching colleagues, her Temple family, Red Hatters and other dear friends that she traveled with and had lunch more times than you could count. She was loved by many. She is survived by her loving husband of 50 years, Bob Scolnik, 2 children, Amy (Lance) Murphy, and Michael (Stacey) Scolnik. 2 Grandchildren, Mara Murphy and Ethan Murphy and her beloved sister, Carole Schwartz-Cohen. She was preceded in death by her parents and brother-in-law, Joe Schwartz. She is also survived by eight nieces and nephews and many cousins. Because of the COVID-19 restrictions, a private graveside service will be held at Mona View Cemetery with Rabbi Alan Alpert officiating. Her family is hoping to have a large celebration of Merle's life at her home on Mona Lake later this summer. She loved large parties in their backyard, overlooking her Lake. Memorial Contributions may be directed to Temple B'Nai Israel, 391 West Webster, Muskegon, MI 49440, or Read Muskegon, 26 E. Broadway, Muskegon, MI 49444. Arrangements handled by The Lee Chapel of Sytsema Funeral Homes, 6291 Harvey St, Norton Shores, MI 49444. Sign the guestbook online at www.sytsemafh.com

Cemetery

Mona View Cemetery

3335 Mona View Drive

Muskegon Heights, MI, 49444

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - January 26 at 12:56 PM



“ To the Scolnik family: May God grant you his healing power and eternal rest to Nancy.

Roger Tharp

Roger Tharp - February 02 at 05:02 PM



“ I am grateful to be counted as a friend of Merle's both as an educator and at the Mah Jongg table. She will be missed by many!!

Esther Block - February 21 at 09:19 PM



“ My thoughts and prayers are with you Bob---but how wonderful to read about your beautiful 51 year love story!

With much sympathy,
Diane DeGrazia

Diane DeGrazia - January 31 at 03:50 PM



“ Bob we are so sorry for your loss. She will be missed by many. Our thoughts are with you in this hard time. May her memory be a blessing to all who knew her.

Gary & Elaine Reynolds

Gary K Reynolds - January 29 at 04:30 PM



“ Susan Vredeveld lit a candle in memory of Merle Nancy Scolnik



Susan Vredeveld - January 28 at 08:07 PM



“ I have many memories. I was also one of her mahjong students. Remember many fun New Year's Eve parties. Enjoying lunch with her at WDCC. Great memories. A wonderful lady.

Peggy Tully - January 27 at 11:08 AM



“ Commissioner Scolnik and family,
Sorry to hear of your loss. Our love, thoughts and prayers are with you at this time of great grief. Although such times are destined for all of us, we pray that you are comforted in remembrance of the wonderful life that your wife, mother, grandmother and aunt lived. She was definitely an "Angel" amongst us.

Vernon & Wanda Nash - January 27 at 10:00 AM



“ Sharing a piece of cake and searching for the earring at Lee n Bob Suits anniversary party Love the beautiful Woman Merle

Pat Camp - January 27 at 09:43 AM



“ Steve and I are so sorry to hear about Merle's death. From reading the obituary it sounds like she had a very fulfilling life. We remember boy scouts with Michael and Joel and the fun they had. I will let Joel know about her death. We will keep her and your family in our thoughts and prayers.

Cindy Anderson - January 27 at 09:29 AM



“ Such a beautiful tribute to Merle and the picture is perfect, Bob. Thinking of you and sending prayers for comfort for you, your family, and all who loved Merle.

Kathie Olsen - January 27 at 03:59 AM



“ I watched the family selflessly physically bury (shovel the soil) in the freezing cold, one by one, taking turns, unto their loved one and said to myself, now that is LOVE! Everyone knows she was an amazingly kind and personable Lady and will be very much missed by many.
My heartfelt sympathy to the family, she is smiling from ear to ear.



Linda Pace-Wright - January 27 at 12:13 AM



“ Don And MaryAnn Scofield lit a candle in memory of Merle Nancy Scolnik



Don and MaryAnn Scofield - January 26 at 10:22 PM



“ Bob, I lost my partner of 68 years on November 28. So I understand your pain at losing Merle. May God grant you His consoling peace. Ben Bush

Ben Bush - January 26 at 06:51 PM



“ Thank you, Bob, for your recount of Merle and your life after MSU. Merle was my freshman roommate at Michigan StateUniversity, when two other juniors didn't want a third roomie. What a year that was. I learned so much about Jewish religion and customs. I remember that she brought back bagels and lox and salt and vinegar potato chips, something a northern Michigan small town girl never heard of. How I wish we had stayed connected over the years, but you invited me into your life for the past two years. It seems we had a lot in common...school teaching, organizing dinners/parties, traveling, even a love for North Carolina, where we have lived 35 years. My sincere sympathy to you and your family. Nancy Williams Gustafson

Matt and Nancy Gustafson - January 26 at 05:27 PM



“ Bob Deepest Sympathy on the Loss of your Beloved Wife, Merle! Know she is at Peace & no longer suffering. May She Rest in Peace!

Esther Edwards

Esther Edwards - January 26 at 03:48 PM



“ Dear Bob, Amy and Michael,
My heart goes out to you at this difficult time. Merle was a darling friend..always with a smile and willing to help. We have many great memories of joy and laughter shared through the years. She was ALWAYS gracious, patient and kind. I will truly miss her. Give yourselves hugs and know you are in our prayers.
Ernie and Seconda Addicott

Seconda Addicott - January 26 at 03:47 PM



“ Dear Bob,
I was an outgoing commissioner on MCCAEO when you joined, so we only briefly met. My condolences to you and your family on the passing of Merle. Wishing you peace and solace knowing that she is resting now.

Sheu-Jane Gallagher

Sheu-Jane Gallagher - January 26 at 03:22 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Merle Nancy Scolnik.



January 26 at 02:56 PM



“ We met Merle when she and Bob attended the 40th class reunion of Bethlehem Central School in 2002. Bob went to that school and helped Mary Ann through grade 9 algebra. Since then we got together on many cruises and other reunions. Merle was always a gracious presence at those events. They were precious times and will stay with us always. As all of her friends and family know, it is very hard to say good bye to such a lovely lady. We will miss you, Merle.

Mary Ann Waters - January 26 at 02:00 PM



“ Dear Bob and family, my heart goes out to you upon the death of your wife and partner in all you've done together for our community. Bless you!
Barb Wenk

Barb Wenk - January 26 at 12:44 PM



“ Ellen Pallasch lit a candle in memory of Merle Nancy Scolnik



Ellen Pallasch - January 26 at 11:30 AM



“ Bob,
We send our deepest condolence to you and your family. May you take comfort in knowing she is at peace. Sending a virtual hug.

Peace be with you, Alan and Tammy Jager



Tammy Stone-Jager - January 26 at 11:11 AM



“ Bob, Many prayers go out to you and your family during this time of grief. May you find solace in the many memories you shared with one another.

Meredith Smillie-Bethany Christian Services

Meredith Smillie - January 26 at 10:36 AM



“ Bob - I only met Merle once, at a United Way Annual meeting a couple of years ago. However, just as is recounted in her obituary, she exuded immediate friendship and inclusion. My deepest sympathy to you and your family as you celebrate her wonderful life. Jim Rynberg - Mayor, City of Fremont

james rynberg - January 26 at 10:01 AM



“ Michigan Association of Counties purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Merle Nancy Scolnik.



Michigan Association of Counties - January 26 at 09:54 AM



“ I had the honor of meeting Merle a few times when Bob and Merle were planning their special events. When they needed costumes for their event they would always come to The Kostume Room. It was always a pleasure to see them and be involved in a small part of their special events. I am so blessed to know Bob and Merle and I and Randy give our condolences to Bob and his family.

Randy and Gayle Vaartjes (Kostume Room) - January 26 at 09:12 AM



“ Bob, so sorry to hear of your loss. May God grant you peace.

Jon Campbell

Jon Campbell - January 26 at 09:10 AM



“ To Bob and family so sorry for your loss it was a pleasure to have known Merle. You were a perfect pair rest assured she is in great hands and your (Diamond) will be well taken care of. George E Thomas (UPS)

George E Thomas - January 26 at 08:48 AM



“ Bob and family- saddened by the news of Merle. She had a spirit that kept her going and took life on with zest. We always enjoyed our conversations. Thinking of you during this difficult time. Love & hugs Nina & Dan



Nina Leask - January 26 at 07:44 AM



“ So sorry to hear of Merle's passing. I was one of the station wagon drivers for the Multi-Cap program. Hoping all your wonderful memories help you through this sad time.

Pamela Broughton - January 26 at 01:08 AM



“ "Miss Merle" was my son's very first teacher when he attended MultiCap at the age of four - 38 years ago. She was wonderful with all the kids. I remember her having a Christmas party for the class, and it wasn't until later that I learned Christmas was not even a holiday Merle herself celebrated. She will be missed by many children and parents she had helped through the years. Our sympathies to her family on the loss of such a wonderful person. -- Denise, Walt and Matt Krbez

Denise Krbez - January 25 at 11:16 PM



“ Loving memories of Merle in our days of teaching/caring for special children in Multicap PreSchool and afterwards at all our reunions. May God bring comfort and peace to you as you mourn her passing.

Ruth Bryson - January 25 at 10:28 PM



“ Merle was a kind and generous friend. She will be remembered by all who knew the pleasure of her company. May you find old friends and students in heaven who love Mahjongg.

Mary Daenzer - January 25 at 07:51 PM



“ Blessings and peace to this wonderful family. May you experience the comfort of your faith as you celebrate and mourn.

Daryl Sieplinga - January 25 at 06:41 PM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Merle passing. I know how worried you have been and how great your loss is.

Rita Raap - January 25 at 06:34 PM



“ She was an AMAZING woman and friend to many. No one can replace her. She was a great Mahjongg teacher and I looked forward to our Monday night games. She will be missed at those games. One day we will play again. Eileen and Bob Grunstra

Eileen Grunstra - January 25 at 05:31 PM



“ Dear Bob & Family~
Merle was such an asset to Muskegon and many of its needs. How proud you must be of all her accomplishments. Always fun, she could light up a room with her energy. With sincere sympathy, Mardi Monroe Williams



M Williams - January 25 at 05:26 PM



“ Bob and Family,
My heart goes out to you and pray you feel God's comfort in this time. I will miss seeing Merle out in the community and especially at Rotary events. She will remain an amazing part of Muskegon.
Doug Wood

Doug Wood - January 25 at 03:23 PM



“ I met Mrs. Scolnick once while visiting her home as a nurse visit. I always remembered how kind she was and the dolls! So sorry for your loss.

Linda Doctor - January 25 at 03:04 PM