

Christmas, 2014

I can't believe we are at the end of yet another year!!!

Our year started off beautifully, with the birth of our first grandson, Troy Arthur Dardenelle on January 14, 2014 to our son Scott and his wife Sonja. Carlos and I travelled up to see them in March to meet Troy, and it was a wonderful time, even if it was only for the day. Troy is now 11 months old and I believe he weighs in at 142 lbs. Such a gorgeous smile and winning personality. Scott and Sonja, as has the rest of the family, fallen in love with this newest member of our family.



Scott has "retired" from teaching as he is now a full time "stay at home Dad" taking care of Troy while Mom goes to work. They were transferred to Andrews Air Force Base so now live in southern Maryland (Mechanicsville) and have purchased a home. Sonja was promoted to Major and as such only works days, Monday through Friday.

Katie and Matt are still working for Los Angeles County as eligibility workers. My oldest granddaughter, Kristina (now 16) and my youngest, Julianna (now 4) are wonderful. Thanksgiving evening found Kristy and her Grandpa Carlos playing the piano...amazing me. Kristy is showing a remarkable interest in music. She plays by ear, and says "I just play what sounds good to me". I'd love for that to last. Julie is in a day care where she is learning what 4 year olds learn, and loves it there. She learns something new every day. Matt & Kate are still living here in the valley with Georgia and we all get together as we can.

January saw us transfer Mom to a nursing home for a few months, after she was released from the hospital for some fainting spells. In May we decided that coming back to the house really wasn't an option because she needs more care than I can give her. We looked at many assisted living apartments, and found one about 4 miles away in Tarzana. On May 1, she was transferred to her new apartment, all fixed up with her own bed, television, dresser; everything that was here at the house is now there in her apartment. She has pretty much stopped asking when she can "come home" and has said she is very "content" there and at 93 seems to be doing

OK. She doesn't participate in the activities as I'd like but that's OK. She is considered a "high fall risk" and as such has fallen several times, requiring medical attention for head injuries. Early December she was admitted to home hospice care as she continues to deteriorate...sometimes it seems right before my eyes.



On July 9, I tripped at home and fell flat on my face (luckily there was no video to witness the clumsiness) but I was injured very badly and fractured my "femur neck" of my right hip. I laid on the ground for about an hour before help came, as it took me nearly that long to place a telephone call to Carlos. He called 911 for me and I was taken to the hospital in probably the worst pain imaginable. The surgery that followed as a hip replacement and after the hospital it was about 15 days in rehab (call it what you want but it was a nursing home...) until I could walk with the walker and be sent home.

I understand that hip replacement surgeries can take many months to recover and walk without help, and currently I'm still using the walker to get around. All in all it could have been worse than it was...so I'm lucky in that regard.

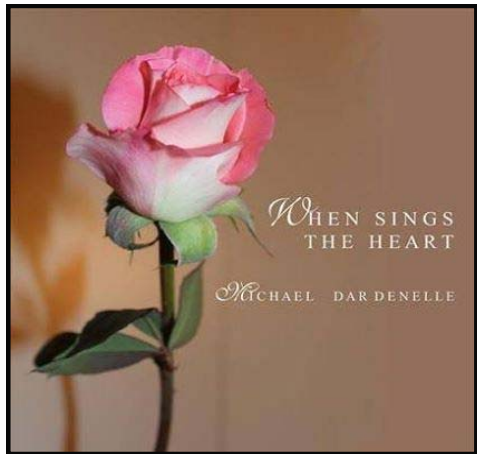


Here's a picture that doesn't happen often:



It is exciting to see that nearly all the states in the country are recognizing equality and allowing same sex couples to marry. I laugh at all the news when a state simply doesn't want to comply.

This year we visited the Hollywood Bowl many times with free passes that Carlos receives from his volunteer work. The highlight of the season though, was when our chorus was invited to participate in "The Simpsons Take The Hollywood Bowl" in mid September. 115° heat...but it was spectacular.



Many of you recall my plans to record again, and I mentioned in last year's letter that it was in the works. After nearly 18 years of not recording for various reasons, I made it happen. A definite bucket list item I could scratch off. The album is called "When Sings The Heart" and I decided to put a deadline on it to have it ready to go by Mom's 93rd birthday June 21...and it was ready to go 3 days early. You can hear the tracks at www.michaeldardenelle.com/music. I hope you get the chance to listen and enjoy it. I recorded this for the spirit and love I have for my music, and not for an audition.

May the warmth of this holiday season be yours now, and into the New Year. I think back through all the years...the many many years... and am so humbly grateful for all I have...for all I am...and I wish the same for each and every one of you.

Love from Mike and Carlos

