

**Annual Meeting for 2014
Executive Director Remarks
August 10, 2015**

Good afternoon and I repeat Chair Elizabeth Beim's welcome to the Museum's Annual Meeting.

Recalling the highlights of 2014, which ended more than seven months ago, seems like ancient history because we have been so active and busy making this year another success story.

Again this year, I too responsibly start with recognition and appreciation to all those that do so much work. It is really thanks to people and the teamwork they provide that the Museum is able to accomplish so much. Please rise and let us acknowledge you in your group...the staff....the Board of Directors.....others serving on Board Committees....volunteers.... and interns. Your quality of output and quantity of hours devoted to the Museum makes the most important difference in the present and the future. Many thanks.

The process of transformation, from an historical society to modern museum that seeks more visitors, and more members, and more patrons, is in fact happening. The short essays in the front of the printed 2014 Annual Report (hold up for those to see) detail the increases of all of these significant measures. The pages and pages of lists of names represent the growing family and friends that will lead the Museum in its transformation.

Our Chair highlighted the comprehensive capital campaign and so I will concentrate on the operational highlights of 2014.

Last year I used the organizing principle of a top ten list of what the Museum accomplished, and this year I will do so again. Even though David Letterman has retired, David Nathans has not. So here are the Top Ten Things the Martha's Vineyard Museum accomplished in 2014:

10. Restored the Cooke House historic herb gardens, thanks to volunteer Cathy Piece, and restored the House's 18th-century fireplace masonry and brickwork, thanks to Edgartown Community Preservation funds. We also were awarded another \$136,000 of Community Preservation grants from another four towns for restoring the Marine Hospital roof.

9. Attracted more than 40,000 visitors over the year to our Edgartown campus and the three lighthouses we steward—Edgartown, Gay Head and East Chop—and while doing so we earned \$150,000 for our efforts!

8. Applauded Chief Curator Bonnie Stacy as author of Arcadia Press' pictorial history of Martha's Vineyard in 220 photos, all from our collections.

7. Celebrated another record-breaking event at the annual Evening of Discovery benefit with a group of 383 people for dinner, many dressed in the 1960s theme taken from our popular exhibition of that summer.

6. Purchased a new sail for Vanity, our floating historic catboat, captained by Board member and generous volunteer Chris Murphy.

5. Curated and mounted more than five special exhibitions, including the one on the decade of the 1960s, and one on Toys and another on The Art of Advertising. My two favorites were the shows on the strangely extraordinary poet Nancy Luce, subtitled Madonna of the Hens, and one just strangely titled, on a family of artists called Moore and Moore and Moore.

4. Expanded our educational outreach beyond the traditional K-through 8th grade to include pre-K in collaboration with a local Head Start group and elder populations in our program called ‘Museum Conversations’. And we also collaborated with a high school teacher and class taking an elective seminar to mount an exhibition on “Women in Crime”.

3. Partnered with MV Film Center in presenting the 1968 classic film “The Graduate” with commentary by Academy-award Director Mike Nichols to a sold-out crowd. And we partnered with MV Sail and Mystic Seaport to produce family programming during a four-day visit of the last remaining whaleship, the Charles W. Morgan, when it was docked in Vineyard Haven.

2. Led with other Vineyard Haven non-profits and local businesses in the establishment of the Vineyard Haven Harbor Cultural District, the 25th such district recognized and the first on the Island.

1. And finally (although I claimed the same thing last year about receiving our grant from the Mellon Foundation), the Museum was awarded its largest grant ever from the National Endowment for the Humanities: it is a \$500,000 challenge grant to build a \$2 million dollar endowment for education.

Over the five years I have addressed this Annual Meeting, I have talked about serious things, as annual meetings are indeed required and serious meetings. Two years ago I talked about the Museum as a four-legged stool of Collections, Programs, Planning and Finance, and how critical it is to keep each of these legs balanced for a stable Museum. Last year I concluded my comments by talking about the Museum as being in the people relationship business, reminding all of us that it is the value of these human interactions that contributes most to our collective success.

Today, I want to conclude by talking about two words: one uses the first three letters of a word, but that is also a word in-an-of itself. The word is FUN.

A March 2014 *New York Times* editorial opinion column was entitled “Why Fund-Raising is Fun.” It noted that “Nonprofit leaders serve others, and help build causes.” It went on to say that “When people give their time or money to a cause they believe in, they become problem-solvers. Problem-solvers are happier than bystanders and victims of circumstance.” The opinion writer referenced psychologists from Harvard and University of British Columbia who, in their rigorous study, confirmed “that in terms of quantifying “happiness”, spending money on oneself barely moves the needle, but spending [money] on others causes a significant increase.”

The writer outlined a very high calling for fund-raisers: “Fund-raisers facilitate an alchemy of virtue: they empower those with financial resources to convert the dross of their money into the gold of a better society.” He concluded that “by investing their own time, talent and treasure, every American can bring his or her core principles to life. That can mean promoting literacy, conserving nature, saving souls” ...or, for my addition, transforming a museum.

Thank you for coming to today's annual meeting, and let's be sure we all put some fun into our lives.

David Nathans
Executive Director