

January 1951

Without heroics ... as he would wish it,



this is the story of

Dr. Bob

the physician whose 'practice' reached

half across the world ...

Dr. Bob was born August 8, 1879, in St. Johnsbury, Vermont, a typical New England village of some 7000 souls. As the only son of parents prominent in civic and church activities, his early childhood was spent under strict parental guidance.

Signs of inner revolt came at an early age. In later years the doctor liked to tell his children, Sue and Robert, of how he was put to bed every evening at five o'clock. He would go quietly enough, a fact which might have led the modern child-psychology-wise parent to suspect the worst, but which seemingly went unnoticed by the young man's parents. As soon as he was reasonably sure that he was considered safely asleep, he would arise, dress and slip quietly downstairs and out the backdoor to join his village gang. So far as is known he was never apprehended while on his nocturnal expeditions.

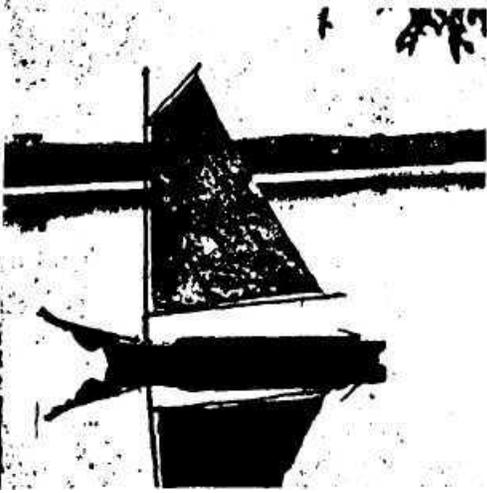
The call of the woodland trail was far more fascinating to young Rob, as his schoolmates called him, than the stuffy schoolhouse to which he was forced to make his reluctant way each morning. His active young mind was more apt to be concentrating upon the best method to trap a bear than on the dull drone of his teacher's voice. He wanted to be free to roam. Rebellion surged within him at the thought of restraint of any sort... study and home-work were "musts" ... even the keenness of his youth-



a rebellious student

ful mind was not enough to make up for his lack of application to his daily lessons. Serious repercussions often followed which led to accusations of "waywardness" by his parents and his teachers.

Though his scholastic neglect may have disgraced him with his elders upon occasion, his schoolmates loved him. Whether it was because his habitual and sometimes adventurous revolts against restraint gave him a glamorous aura or because of the accuracy with which children often sense traits of character obscure to adults, they made him a popular and sought-after member of their class.



they made their own sailboats

Freedom from some of the "musts" came with vacations. He was released, then, to wander the hills, hunt, and trap and swim in the sea. Often Rob and his friends went into Canada on hunting trips. On one of these forays into the wilds, hunting was so poor that the boys lived on eels, blueberries and cream of tartar biscuits for three weeks. They did flush a particularly large woodchuck. They stalked him for several hours. Finally they had him within shooting range.

After being shot at for sometime, the woodchuck disappeared. This episode later caused Rob's father, the Judge, to remark that the woodchuck probably went in to get out of the noise.

The incident of the woodchuck and a tale of a great bear chase cast some shadow of doubt on young Rob's prowess as a hunter and woodsman. Off to the woods one day, went the young hunter and a

schoolmate. The boys sauntered along, kicking at stones ... building castles in the air ... talking about the things that spirited adolescent males talk about. Suddenly they saw before them a huge bear. The bear, who was probably as astonished as the boys, took to the woods at a gallop. The young hunters were hard at his heels. The day was hot, the brambles thick, courageous daring was at its height ... the bear got away. "I don't believe," Dr. Bob used to say, "that we ran as fast as we might have!"

In the summers the family often spent some weeks in a cottage by the sea. Here Rob became an expert swimmer. He and his foster sister, Nancy, spent many hours building and sailing their own sailboats. It was here that he saved a young girl from drowning. This event must have left an impression ... probably of the advisability for every child to learn to swim at an early age. He taught his own children, Robert R. and Sue, to be expert swimmers at the age of five. The three of them would set out every vacation morning to swim the channel near their cottage. This feat often caused distraught neighbors to call their mother to tell her that her babies had fallen out of a boat in the middle of the channel.

While the boy, Rob, was high-spirited, considered rebellious and wayward he was industrious and labored long and hard at anything



the home in St. Johnsbury, Vermont... here Dr. Rob was born...

he wanted to do. He was still very young when it became apparent that he was ambitious as well as willing to work. He wanted, above all else, to become a medical doctor like his maternal grandfather.

When he was about nine years old he began to show signs of liking to work, especially out of doors. That summer he was at a neighbor's farm helping the men load hay. Perhaps he was resting, perhaps he was prowling around poking under bushes to see what he could see ... he saw a jug... he pulled

the cork and sniffed. It was a new odor to this son of strict New England parents. It was an odor that he liked. If the stuff in the jug smelled so good, it should taste good too. And it was good. He liked the taste. He liked the way it made him feel. A little boy; a jug of hooch; the first securely welded link in the chain.

By the time he reached his teens, Rob was spending parts of his summers working on a Vermont farm or juggling trays and lugging baggage as a bellhop in an Adiron-

dack summer hotel. His winters were passed trying to avoid the necessity of having to attend high school in order to receive a diploma. It may have been during his high school days that young Rob learned much of what there is to know about a billiard table. Later when his son, Robert, would tease him about this accomplishment as being the product of a mis-spent youth, Dr. Bob would just smile and say nothing. He was a good student in spite of himself and graduated from St. Johnsbury Academy in 1898.

It was at a party given at the Academy that Dr. Bob first met Anne. A student at Wellesley, she was spending a holiday with a college chum. It was a small, reser-



ved girl whom the tall, rangy Rob met that night. With an agile mind to match his own, Anne had a cheerfulness, sweetness and calm that was to remain with her through the years. It was these same qualities that were in the future to endear her to hundreds as Anne, Dr. Bob's wife.

After high school at St. Johnsbury Academy came four years of college at Dartmouth. At long last the rebellious young colt was free of his parents' restraining supervision. New experiences were to be explored and enjoyed without having to give an accounting.

His first discovery in his search for the facts of life on the campus was that joining the boys for a brew seemed to make up the greater part of after-class recreation. From Dr. Bob's point of view it was the major extra-curricular activity. It had long been evident that whatever Rob did, he did well. He became a leader in the sport. He drank for the sheer fun of it and suffered little or no ill-effects.

Fame came to him at Dartmouth—no accolades for scholarship... no letters for athletic prowess... his fame came for a capacity for drinking beer that was matched by few and topped by none...and for what the students called his "patent throat." They would stand in awe watching him consume an entire bottle of beer without any vis-

a young man with ambition



1902; Anne, a girl with quiet charm

ible muscular movement of swallowing.

The prospects of getting drunk in the evening furnished Rob and his cronies with conversations which ran on all day. The pros and cons of whether to get drunk or not to get drunk would invariably drive one of their mild-mannered friends to distraction. He would rise in spluttering protest to say, "Well! If I were going to get drunk, I'd be about it!"

As often as not...they *were* about it. There were times, though, when a change of scenery seemed more to their liking. Like the time Rob and a friend got it into their heads that going to Montpelier, Vermont was a fine idea. Admiral Dewey had just returned from Manila and was to parade through the town. Being in the usual state of financial embarrassment, how to

get there caused a fleeting problem, but being convinced that where there was a will, a way would certainly present itself, they hopped a freight. In the morning weary but mightily pleased with themselves, they descended from the boxcar in Montpelier. As they walked up the street toward the parade route they met a fellow Dartmouth student. The boys greeted him with as much dignity as their grimy faces and straw-flecked garments would allow. To their astonishment his "Hello" was most cordial. Wouldn't they like to go to the State House with him? There, from the reviewing stand, the boys viewed the parade with their Dartmouth friend, whose father was the Governor of Vermont.

Through the carefree days at college he studied just about as much as he had to, to get by. But he was a good student none-the-less. Here he made friends whom he was to know and to see from time to time through his life...friends who did not always approve of his drinking prowess, but loved him in spite of it.

His last years at Dartmouth were spent doing exactly what he wanted to do with little thought of the wishes or feelings of others...a state of mind which became more and more predominate as the years passed. Rob graduated in 1902...

"summa cum laude" in the eyes of the drinking fraternity. The dean had a somewhat lower estimate.

Now that he held a Dartmouth diploma, it seemed advisable that the willful young man settle down to making a living and a solid, secure future for himself. He wasn't ready to settle down to a job. The strong desire to become a medical doctor was still with him. His mother, who had never approved of this career for her son, hadn't altered her views. He went to work.

For the next three years his business career was varied, if not successful. The first two years he worked for a large scale company; then he went to Montreal where he labored diligently at selling railway supplies, gas engines of all sorts and many other items of heavy hardware. He left Montreal and went to Boston where he was employed at Filene's. What his duties were there, have never been recorded.

All through this three year period he was drinking as much as purse allowed, still without getting into any serious trouble. But he wasn't making any headway either. Whatever his duties at Filene's were, they certainly were not what he wanted to do. He still wanted to be a doctor. It was time he was about it. He quit his job at the store and that Fall entered the University of Michigan as a pre-medical student.

Again he was free of all re-

straint and doing just as he wanted to do. Earnestly, he got down to serious business...the serious business of drinking as much as he could and still make it to class in the morning. His famous capacity for beer followed him to the Michigan campus. He was elected to membership in the drinking fraternity. Once again he displayed the wonders of his "patent throat" before his gaping brothers.

He, who had boasted to his friends..."Never had a hangover in my life...began to have the morning after shakes. Many a morning Dr. Bob went to classes and even though fully prepared, turned away at the door and went back to the fraternity house. So bad were his jitters that he feared he would cause a scene if he should be called on.

He went from bad to worse. No longer drinking for the fun of it, his life at Michigan became one long binge after another. In the Spring of his Sophomore year, Dr. Bob made up his mind that he could not complete his course. He packed ed his grip and headed South.

After a month spent on a large farm owned by a friend, the fog began to clear from his brain. As he began to think more clearly he realized that it was very foolish to quit school. He decided to return and continue his work.

The faculty had other ideas on the subject. They were, they told him, completely disgusted. It would

the diploma secure; Dr. Bob, M.D.

require no effort at all to get along without his presence on the Michigan campus. After a long argument they allowed him to return to take his exams. He passed them creditably. After many more painful discussions, the faculty also gave him his credits.

That Fall he entered Brush University as a Junior. Here his drinking became so much worse that his fraternity brothers felt forced to send for his father. The Judge made the long journey in a vain effort to get him straightened out.

After those long disasterous binges when Dr. Bob was forced to face his father he had a deep feeling of guilt. His father always met the situation quietly, "Well, what did this one cost you?" he would ask. Oddly enough this feeling of guilt would come, not because he felt that he had hurt him in any way, but because his father seemed, somehow, to understand. It was this quiet, hopeless understanding that pained him deep inside.

He was drinking more and more hard liquor, now, and coming up to his final exams he went on a particularly rough binge. When he went in to the examinations his hand trembled so badly he could not hold a pencil. He was, of



course, called before the faculty. Their decision was that if he wished to graduate he must come back for two more quarters, remaining absolutely dry. This he was able to do. The faculty considered his work so creditable he was able to secure a much coveted internship in City Hospital in Akron, Ohio.

The first two years in Akron, as a young interne, were free of trouble. Hard work took the place of hard drinking simply because there wasn't time for both. At one time during his internship he ran the hospital pharmacy by himself. This added to other duties took him all over the hospital... running up and down the stairs because the ele-

vators were too slow...running here, rushing there as if the devil were after him. All this frenzied activity never failed to bring about an explosive, "Now where is that cadaverous young Yankee!" from one of the older doctors who became particularly fond of him.

Though the two years as interne at City were hectic, Dr. Bob had time to learn much from the older men who were glad to share their knowledge with him. He began to perfect his own skills so that he might become a specialist, a surgeon.

When his two years of internship were over he opened an office in The Second National Bank Building, in Akron. This was in 1912. His offices were in the same building until he retired from practice in 1948.

Completely out on his own now, and again free to do as he chose — some money in his pocket and all the time in the world. It may have been that reaction set in from all the work, the irregular hours, the hectic life of an interne; it may have been real or imagined; whatever caused it, Dr. Bob developed considerable stomach trouble. The remedy for that was, of course, a couple of drinks. It didn't take him long to return to the old drinking habits.

Now he began to know the real horror, the suffering of pain that

Anne, Dr. Bob's bride in 1915...

goes with alcoholism. In hope of relief, he incarcerated himself at least a dozen times in one of the local sanitariums. After three years of this torture he ended up in a local hospital where they tried to help him. But he got his friends to smuggle him in a quart. Or, if that failed, it wasn't difficult for a man who knew his way around a hospital to steal the alcohol kept in the building. He got rapidly worse.

Finally his father had to send a doctor out from St. Johnsbury to attempt to get him home. Somehow the doctor managed to get him back to the house he was born in, where he stayed in bed for two months



a young father with his son...

before he could venture out. He stayed around town for about two months more, then returned to Akron to resume his practice. Dr. Bob was thoroughly scared, either by what had happened, by what the doctor had told him, or both. He went into one of his dry periods and stayed that way until the 18th Amendment was passed.

In 1915 he went back to Chicago to marry Anne. He brought her back to Akron as his bride. The first three years of their married life were free of the unhappiness that was to come later. He became established in his practice. Their son Robert was born and life began to make a sensible pattern. Then the 18th Amendment was passed.

Dr. Bob's reasoning was quite typical at this time, if not quite logical. It would make very little difference if he did take a few drinks now. The liquor that he and his friends had bought in amounts according to the size of their bank accounts, would soon be gone. He could come to no harm. He was soon to learn the facts of the Great American Experiment.

The government obligingly made it possible for doctors to obtain unlimited supplies of liquor. Often during those black years, Dr. Bob, who held his profession sacred, would go to the phone book, pick out a name at random and fill out



the prescription which would get him a pint of whisky.

When all else failed there was the newly accredited member of American society, the bootlegger. A moderate beginning led to Dr. Bob's usual ending.

During the next few years, he developed two distinct phobias. One was the fear of not sleeping and the other was the fear of running out of liquor. So began the squirrel-cage existence. Staying sober to earn enough money to get drunk...getting drunk to go to sleep...using sedatives to quiet the jitters...staying sober... earning money ... getting drunk ... smuggling home a bottle ... hiding the bottle from Anne who became an expert at detecting hiding places



Teen-agers Sue and Bob with their father...

This horrible nightmare went on for seventeen years. Somehow he had the good sense to stay away from the hospital and not to receive patients if he were drinking. He stayed sober every day until four o'clock, then came home. In this way he was able to keep his drinking problem from becoming common knowledge or hospital gossip.

Through these mad years Dr. Bob was an active member of the City Hospital Staff and often he had occasion to go to St. Thomas Hospital, where in 1934, he became a member of the Courtesy Staff and in 1943, a member of the Active Staff. It was during one of these visits to St. Thomas, in 1928, that in the course of his duties, he met Sister Mary Ignatia.

The meeting seemed of no particular consequence at the time. Many Sisters came to St. Thomas, then departed for duties elsewhere. Though neither of them knew it, the meeting was to have great importance to them both in the years to come. Sister Ignatia, like the others, never knew of the inner turmoil with which this man was beset... "He just always seemed different than the rest... he brought something with him when he came into a room... I never knew what it was, I just felt it..."

So perhaps it was, then, that the Hand that moves us all was beginning to speed up the events that led to Dr. Bob's meeting with the stranger.

Anne and the children now lived

in a shambles of broken promises, given in all sincerity. Unable to see her friends, she existed on the bare necessities. About all she had left was her faith that her prayers for her husband would somehow be answered.

It then happened that Dr. Bob and Anne were thrown in with a crowd of people who attracted Dr. Bob because of their poise, health and happiness. These people spoke without embarrassment, a thing he could never do. They all seemed very much at ease. Above all, they seemed happy. They were members of the Oxford Group.

Self conscious, ill at ease most of the time, his health nearing the breaking point, Dr. Bob was thoroughly miserable. He sensed that these new-found friends had something that he did not have. He felt that he could profit from them.

When he learned that what they had was something of a spiritual nature, his enthusiasm was somewhat dampened. Unfortunately his childhood background of church twice during the week and three times on Sunday had caused him to resolve that he would never appear in a church so long as he lived. He kept that resolve for 40 years except when his presence there was absolutely necessary. It helped some to find out that these people did not gather in a church but at each other's homes.

That they might have the answer to his drinking problem never en-

tered his head but he thought it could do him no harm to study their philosophy. For the next two and one half years he attended their meetings. And got drunk regularly!

Anne became deeply interested in the group and her interest sustained Dr. Bob's. He delved into religious philosophy, he read the Scriptures, he studied spiritual interpretations, the lives of the Saints. Like a sponge he soaked up the spiritual philosophies of the ages. Anne kept her simple faith in prayer...and her courage - Dr. Bob got drunk.

Then one Saturday afternoon, Henrietta called Anne. Could they come over to meet a friend of hers who might help Bob...

At five o'clock Sunday evening they were at Henrietta's door. Dr.

a young couple... a new home...



Bob faced Bill W. who said, "You must be awfully thirsty...this won't take us long..."

From the moment Bill spoke to him, Dr. Bob knew that here was a man who knew what he was talking about. As the hours passed, Bill told of his experiences with alcohol; he told him of the simple message that a friend had brought... "Show me your faith and by my works I will show you mine..."

Slowly, at first, then with sudden clarity, Dr. Bob began to understand. Bill had been able to control his drinking problem by the very means that Dr. Bob, himself had been trying to use...but there was a difference. The spiritual approach was as useless as any other if you soaked it up like a sponge and kept it all to yourself. True, Bill had been preaching his message at any drunk who would listen; he had been unsuccessful

'til now, but the important thing was that by giving his knowledge away, he, himself, was sober!

There was one more short binge for Dr. Bob after that talk. On June 10, 1935, he took his last drink. It was high time now to put his house in order. With his quiet professional dignity, his ready humor, he got about it.

Bill stayed on in Akron for several months, living with Dr. Bob and Anne. It wasn't long before they realized that they needed another drunk to help, if they could. The two men went over to City Hospital. They asked the nurse on "admitting" if she had an alcoholic in the hospital. They were taken to a room where a man lay strapped to the bed, writhing in agony, "Will this one do?" the nurse asked. "This one" would do very well. That human wreck to whom they talked that day and several times after, came out of the hospital, sober. Bill D. became the third member of the little group ... AA Number Three!

Dr. Bob now was a man with a purpose and the will to live. When the fog cleared out of his brain, his health had improved. He felt so good in the summer of 1935, at 56 years of age, that he took Bob and Sue out to the tennis courts one day. He played them six straight sets of tennis. The kids were done in.

young master Robert on Dad's arm

Anne began to live again, too. She was happy with her husband's new-found, joyful sobriety. She was no longer friendless, alone. Her kitchen table was almost always littered with coffee cups, a fresh pot-full sat waiting on the stove. Her faith, her belief in prayer and divine guidance went far to carry the men through that first summer.

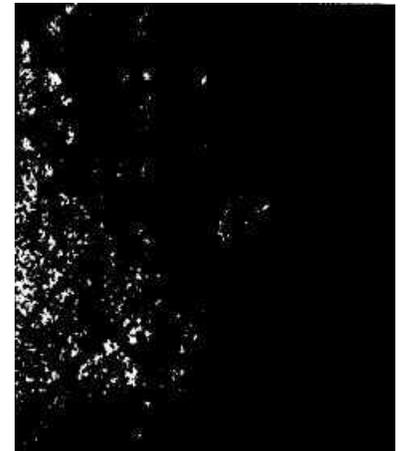
In the year 1935, there were few men alive who would accept the fact that alcoholism is a disease, which should be treated as such. Prejudice and ignorance were some of the problems facing Dr. Bob as he set about helping sick alcoholics with his professional skill and his new-found spiritual understanding. City Hospital was often filled with drunks smuggled in under trumped-up diagnosis. The old-timers who were hospitalized during those first years were admitted as suffering from "acute gastritis."

Since he was on the courtesy staff at St. Thomas, run by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, Dr. Bob felt that he might enlist the help of Sister Ignatia. He knew that it had never seemed right to her that a drunk should be turned away. She couldn't understand why a drunk on the verge of DT's was turned away but a drunk with a bashed-in head was admitted. They were both sick. They both needed help.

His first approach to her on the

subject was casual. He didn't tell her much nor did he make any promises. He just told her that he was trying to treat alcoholics by a new method. He and some other alcoholics, he said believed that alcoholism could be controlled by medical attention coupled with the spiritual. His remarks, though brief, made sense to her.

It wasn't long before Dr. Bob brought in an alcoholic. Sister admitted him as having acute indigestion. He was put to bed in a double room. Then Dr. Bob told her quietly, "We'd like to have him in a private room in the morning." As if it weren't bad enough to have an illegal admittance on her conscience this man was asking for a private room! Morning found the patient peacefully asleep, on a cot in the room where flowers were trimmed and arranged for patients' rooms!



a portrait of Anne...

After that more and more "acute gastritis" cases woke up in St. Thomas Hospital. In August, 1939, Dr. Bob brought a patient to Sister for admittance. So far as is known, he was the first alcoholic ever to be admitted into a general hospital under the diagnosis: Alcoholism. Dr. Bob never could remember just what the policy of the hospital was at that time, nor did he recall ever having asked.

Since that August day there have been 4800 cases admitted into St. Thomas. Until Dr. Bob retired, he visited the ward each day to give personal attention to each patient. His cheerful, "Well, what can I do for you?" was heard in the ward for the last time, on Christmas, 1949. On that day Sister played the organ for him and showed him the beautiful new chimes...talked of her hopes of more beds and furniture for a lounge outside the ward. The chimes tell the story of the bitter criticism of 10 years ago to the complete co-operation from everyone connected with the hospital today. But so long as Sister Ignatia goes about her duties on the admitting desk and in the AA ward, whenever a drunk is brought in a call will come, "Sister, you'd

better come. One of your boys is downstairs!"

Dr. Bob and his first few red-eyed disciples continued to meet with the Oxford Group. But they were a 'special interest' bloc. The unpredictable nature of the alcoholic and his preoccupation with the earthy realities of drinking and drunkenness, led the tactful Doctor to the idea of separate meetings.

Without fuss or bother, Dr. Bob announced that there would be a meeting for the alcoholics...if any of them cared to come. When the meeting came to order, all of the little band were there. Dr. Bob put his foot on the rung of a dining room chair, identified himself as an alcoholic and began reading *The Sermon on the Mount*. Still not known as Alcoholics Anonymous, this was the first Akron meeting for alcoholics only.

Word of the work being done in Akron began to spread to nearby Cleveland. Men began coming over to be hospitalized in St. Thomas or City Hospital. The growth of the group speeded up. By 1939, they were meeting in Akron's Kings School. They had long since outgrown Anne's small house. Through all the growth, the hurts that come

*a prayer... a church directory...
a nickel...*

with growing pains, the gossip, the little grievances, Dr. Bob listened to them all.

Occasionally, he advised. He became the "father confessor" to the group. So sacred to him were confidences, that he would not break them for anybody or anything. Anne used to tease him about he being- "so close-mouthed" that she claimed she didn't know a thing that was going on. She laughingly told him that she would di-



voice him unless he told her some of the things he knew...but she was quick to retract her statement because she knew, even for her, he would not break a confidence.

By 1939, there were enough men coming to Akron from Cleveland to make it seem advisable to start a Cleveland Group. The first meeting was held in May of that year. The break away from the Akron group brought with it disagreements. The only thing that kept them on an even keel, say those pioneers, was the sound wisdom of Dr. Bob. How he kept his sanity seemed a miracle. There he was, they say, in the midst of a bunch of unstable people, not yet dry behind the ears. It may have been because he would never allow one man to speak ill of another unless that man were present, that the Cleveland off-spring survived.

By the end of 1939, Cleveland had proved a big point in AA his-



tory. It had proved, first that one group could break from another. This they proved conclusively because by the end of the year there was not one Cleveland group... there were three! The two splits had been brought about by differences of opinion. It seemed that no matter what happened the group activity would go on. Cleveland proved, too, that alcoholics could be sobered up on what almost amounted to a mass production basis. By 1944, the Cleveland membership was well past 1000. Dr. Bob's wise counsel was right... "there's no use worrying about these things. As long as people have faith and believe, this will go on."

In the years that came after that meeting on Mother's Day, 1935, Dr. Bob gave freely of himself to all who came to ask for help, to seek advice... to laugh or to cry. In so helping others, he began to rebuild himself. Professionally, he became loved and respected by all who worked with him ... socially he was once again the kind, dignified man who Anne and their friends knew and admired.

Dr. Bob, as Anne had known him to be, was possessed of calm professional dignity which gave courage and heart to his patients. In the years to come, this dignity, was to play a large part in the lives of the hundreds who came to his door. Never given to loose talk, Dr. Bob controlled his tongue

as surely, as steadily and as potently as he did his scalpel. He used the gift of speech with the same concise economy, the sureness of purpose, that went into each deft movement of his surgeon's hands.

More often than not his observations were sprinkled with salty humor. Dr. Bob had the rare quality of being able to laugh at himself and with others. As much a part of him as his quiet professional dignity, was this keen sense of humor. He spoke with a broad New England accent and was given to dropping a remark or telling a riotous story absolutely deadpan. This sometimes proved disconcerting to those who did not know him well, especially when he referred to the poised, charming Anne, as "The Frail."

Seldom did he call his friends by their given names... it was Abercrombie to those men of whom he was particularly fond — or Sugar to close women friends ... a friend in the loan business was Shylock. This tall "cadaverous looking Yankee" who held his profession sacred and walked through life with dignity would tell anyone who questioned him as to his hopes, his ambitions... that all he ever wanted in life was "to have curly hair, to tap dance, to play the piano and to own a convertible."

One of the very early Akron members says that the first impression he had of Dr. Bob was of a



the gatehouse... Bill met Dr. Bob... Mother's Day, 1935.

gruff person, a bit forbidding, with a habit of looking over his glasses. He gave the impression of

This AA says that he got the impression that Dr. Bob knew exactly what he was thinking... and found out later that he did!



Dr. Bob and Anne's home...

... faith in God. The new man went to his employer and, for the first time, saw the practical power of real honesty. A problem which had looked insurmountable, vanished, just melted away.

Dr. Bob always began his day with a prayer and meditation over some familiar Bible verse, then he set about his work in "My Father's vineyard.. "The work in the"vineyard" was not easy in those years. No "preaching" would have served, either to the alcoholics who came his way or to those skeptic members of his profession. He began, now to make AA a way of life.

When he met Dr. Bob for the first time, what was offered seemed to the new man, a perfect answer to an immediate and serious problem... it was something to tell a boss who, at the time was none too sympathetic to his drinking. Dr. Bob knew that the man wasn't being honest with him, and he knew he was kidding himself. No lectures were given, no recriminations. Dr. Bob began to make a habit of stopping by the man's house after office hours. About twice a week he stopped for coffee and the two men discussed ... honesty. Then Dr. Bob suggested that the man stop kidding himself. Their discussion moved on to faith

His life began to be an example of patience and serenity for all to see and to benefit by if they so chose. It was too early in the years of education on alcoholism to be able to speak of the disease above a whisper... Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia developed a little code... the boys on the third floor were called the Frails, while the surgical patients were spoken of in the most proper professional terms. Often while he went about the business of washing up he had to listen in silence to bitter remarks from his fellow doctors..."Too bad this hospital is so full that a fellow can't get a patient in... always room for the drunks though —"

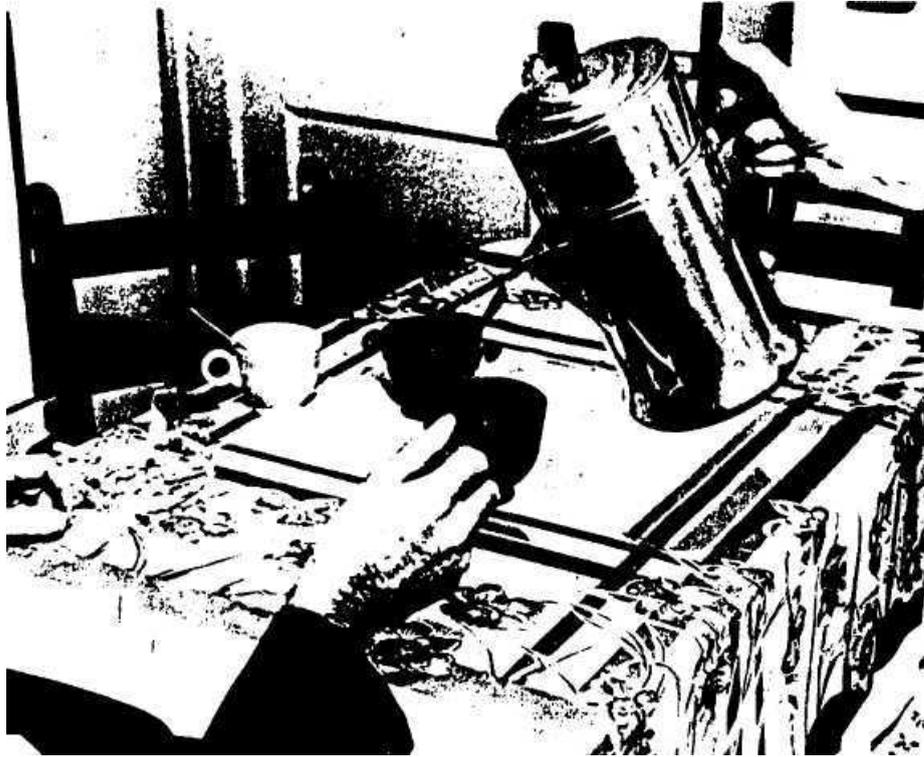


the living room as Bill first saw it that June, 1935

In the years to come he was to live to hear himself introduced as the co-founder of "the greatest," "most wonderful," "most momentous movement of all times... " For these tributes he was grateful, but he laughed them off and upon one occasion was heard to remark... "The speaker certainly takes in a lot of territory and plenty of time... "

In his drinking days, Dr. Bob was two people, two personalities. After his return to sobriety he remained two personalities. As he made his rounds through the hospitals he was the medical practi-





just two cups, at first — Anne's coffeepot was ever ready...

tioner but as he entered the door of the alcoholic ward he became, Dr. Bob, a man eager, willing and able to help his fellowman. Those who worked with him say that as he left the hospital each day they felt that two men went out the door... one a great M.D., the other a great man.

Dr. Bob and Anne lived simply and without pretense in their modest home. Here they shared the joys of parenthood, the sorrows, the companionship of their friends. He was an industrious man, will-

ing to work for the creature comforts that he loved. He accepted with humility any material wealth that came his way. Something of a perfectionist, he loved diamonds, not for possession, but for the beauty of their brilliant perfection. He would go out of his way to look at a diamond owned by another... he would go out of his way, too, to look at a favorite view of his beloved mountains and sea.

If he had any pride in possession it was for big gleaming automobiles. He owned, through his

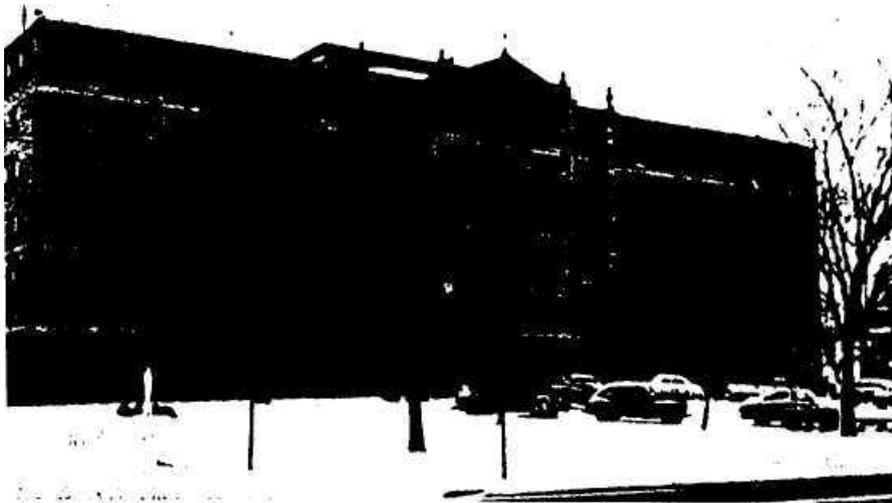
life, many of them. He treated them with the care that their mechanical perfection deserved. The car that he probably loved the most was the last one he bought just before the end ... the convertible. The car that symbolized a lifetime ambition. His friends will remember him in the summer of 1950, at 71, speeding through the streets of Akron in his new yellow Buick convertible—the long slim lines made even more rakish with the topdown. No hat, his face to the sun, into the driveway he sped, pebbles flying, tires screeching, he'd swoosh

to a stop! Fate, however, permitted him only 150 miles of this joyous "hot-rod" driving. It was with reluctance, that summer, that he gave in to his illness. For the forty fifth year he returned to his home in Vermont... in the staid and sedate sedan... "I won't be able to see the mountains so well...but my legs are a little long for that roadster..."

Until the last summer his days were spent in the routine of the hospital... his office and his club, for recreation. During almost all of his adult life in Akron, Dr. Bob

City Hospital, Akron, Ohio... here, the third man ...





St. Thomas Hospital... 4800 alcoholics...to each a personal word

lunched at the City Club. In his drinking days, it was often to hide away in a room until he was found by friends. But in later years it was to enjoy the companionship of his good friends, some of whom joined him in his new-found sobriety, others had no need of the help he could give them... other than the pleasure of his friendship.

Noon would almost always find him at the same table in the corner of the men's dining room. There, for more than ten years he was served by the same waitress, Nancy. Dr. Bob always greeted her with, "How's my chum today..." They were good friends. As Nancy served him his simple lunch of melon

or grapefruit, soup, milk or coffee and his favorite Boston CreamPie, they discussed her problems. Once, Nancy, who was ill at the time, became uncontrollably angry and threw a cracker basket at another waiter. Dr. Bob admonished... "Now, now Chum, don't let little things bother you..." The next day he sent her "As a Man Thinketh So Is He" and "The Runner's Bible."

Nancy always looked forward to serving Dr. Bob and his friends... "he was such a good fellow..." Often when there was much discussion, arguments and pros and cons, Nancy would ask him why he didn't say something, to which

he'd answer... "Too much being said already!" To Nancy, Dr. Bob was "such a good kind man... he had such a simple faith in prayer."

After luncheon, if time permitted, Dr. Bob joined his cronies for a game of Rum or Bridge. He was expert at both; and he always played to win. The man who would give you his last dollar, though his own creditors might be hard at his heels, would take your last cent away from you, if he could, in a card game ... but he never got angry. He had the habit of keeping up a steady chatter through the game, his cronies say that it could have been annoying except that it



Sister Ignatia... the new lounge, the ward and coffee-bar...





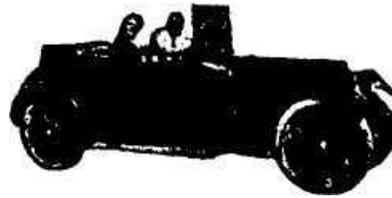
was always so funny that you had to laugh.

Dr. Bob vowed that it was silly to take the game seriously ... never could see how these tournament players got so serious about this thing. Once when he and Anne were in Florida, he was airing his views to a stranger on the seriousness of some bridge players. The subject had come up because a bridge tournament was scheduled for that day. The two men sat together discussing bridge until they talked themselves into entering the tournament ... since they had nothing better to do. The stranger and Dr. Bob made a good showing among the "serious" players. They won that afternoon but upset their opponents to such a degree as to cause one to remark, "If you had bid right and played right you never would have won!" Whereupon Dr. Bob said, "Quite so," as he accepted the first prize.

For some obscure reason, Dr. Bob always carried a pocket-full of silver. It may have been a hang-over from the insecure squirrel-cage days of the eternal fight to keep enough money in his pocket to buy a quart or it may have been

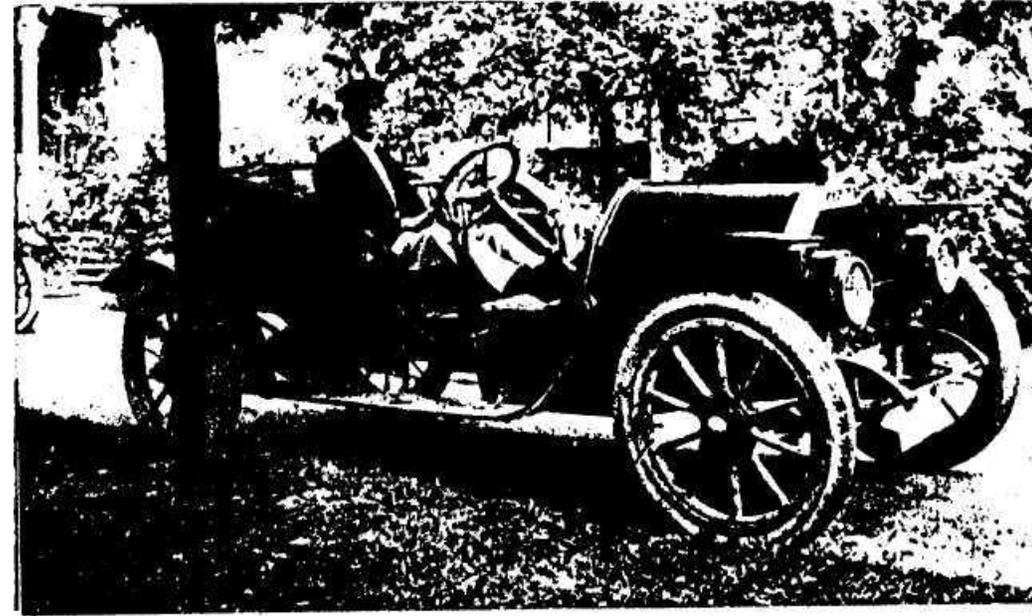
just because he liked to hear the jingle but there were times when he had as much as ten dollars in his pocket.

He had one particular friend with whom he would match a fifty cent piece by way of greeting. No matter where the two met, each would silently reach into his pocket, draw out the silver and match. Silently the winner took the money from the other. The first time Dr. Bob underwent serious surgery, he could not have visitors. His coin-matching friend came to the hospital to call. He was met there by Emma, the woman friend and nurse who cared for Anne. Emma met the visitor in the guest lounge. She greeted him silently with a coin in



her palm... silently they matched. Dr. Bob was the richer by fifty cents.

This man of two personalities would weep as he told you of his fear that his skill would not enable him to save the life of a charity patient; then again he would weep as he told of what seemed to be a miraculous recovery. He would weep, too, from laughter at some story which struck his fancy.



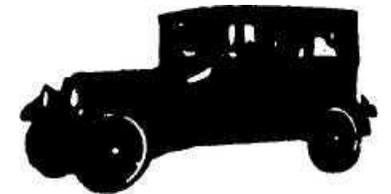
...he had one pride of possession... big shiny cars.

As his son, Bob, grew into manhood, Dr. Bob shared with him the incidents and the fun of the day. He could hardly wait, it seemed, to get home to tell young Bob some story picked up at the hospital. Young Bob tells of how he would tell a good story, or listen to one, then lean back in his chair to laugh until the tears streamed down his cheeks. Then with a familiar gesture, he took off his glasses to wipe the tears away... still chuckling. "Our home was a happy one, in those days," said young Bob, "I never heard a cross word between my mother and my father."

The war, then marriage took young Bob from home and to Texas where he now lives. Bob laughs as he tells of his father's first

meeting with his bride-to-be. He looked her up and down then remarked, in his dry and disconcerting fashion; "She's all right, son. She's built for speed and light house-keeping!"

Young Bob often remarked to his father about his seemingly endless knowledge of medicine, philosophies and general bits of information. To which Dr. Bob would reply, "Well, I should know something, I've read for at least an hour every night of my adult life —



drunk or sober." Sometime during the course of all the reading, he delved into Spiritualism ... he even tried the mysteries of the Ouija board. He felt that in some far distant centuries, the science of the mind would be so developed as to make possible contact between the living and the dead.

All the reading of the years had included studies on alcoholism, too. This scientific knowledge coupled with his experiences with alcoholics including himself might well have led him to a strictly scientific approach. He could, with ease, have spoken of statistics, cures and the like because he undoubtedly listened to more "case histories" than any other man alive. He listened patiently to each man in the ward, to every person who came to his home for advice, and there were hundreds.

He remained plain Dr. Bob, alcoholic, who came to believe that the disorder was more on the psychological and spiritual side rather than the physical. The thinking of the alcoholic patient was all beclouded, his attitudes were wrong, his philosophy of life was all mixed up, he had no spiritual life ... the whole man was sick. As one man said, "He came to me in the hospital, he sat quietly by my bed and talked, then he prayed to his God for me ... that's what stuck...that he took the time and interest and the compassion to pray for me..."

The happy years of Dr. Bob's sobriety were marred, at last, by Anne's illness and blindness. Cataracts were completely covering her eyes, so that she could not see ... even after surgery her last years were spent in shadows. Dr. Bob began, then, to be her eyes as much as he could. Still in medical practice, though, he could not be with her every hour. It was then, in his own quiet way that he found a solution.

In 1942, years before Anne's blindness had become serious, two strangers came to his office, a man and his wife, Emma. The man was seeking the help that Dr. Bob could give him. The three sat in his office and talked for almost an hour, while in the reception room waited the "paying patients." Occasionally, after that first meeting, Dr. Bob and Anne stopped by their house; they saw them each week at the AA meeting in King School.

Dr. Bob knew that Anne's blindness was fast growing worse and that she needed daily care... he knew too, that she would be unhappy to think of herself as a burden to anyone. It came vacation time, the children were gone which meant that the house must be left empty ... the dog to his own devices. What better plan than the nice couple, who lived down the street should come to the house while they were on vacation ... to keep it in running order and watch



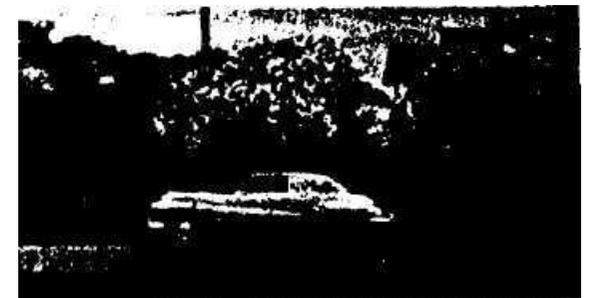
once he rode a bull

over the dog? Would the couple consider throwing some clothes into a bag and going over to the house? So it was for eight years Emma, a nurse, and her husband came from time to time to stay at Dr. Bob's house... until it was necessary for Emma to be with Anne at all times. In the last years of Anne's illness she kept house for them and during the day, when

Dr. Bob was at his office, she watched over Anne.

Through those last years together Anne, though in ill health, stood ever ready to give words of hope and encouragement to all who came to her door. Her first thoughts were for others, never herself, no matter how badly she might feel. When Dr. Bob and Anne prepared for their last trip together, Anne said, "You know, I don't really care to go but Dad wants too, and he may never be able to make the trip again... it will make him happy." Of the same trip, Dr. Bob said of Anne, "I don't really want to go, but Anne wants it. It will make her happy." Each took the long trip feeling that it was making the other happy.

It was in June, 1949, just after their return, that Anne passed away. At the time of her passing, Dr. Bob, said, "I will miss her terribly, but she would have had it no other way. Had she survived this attack she would have been in the hospital for months... then



ambition fulfilled...

the convertible. .

there would have been months at home in bed ... she would have hated being a burden ... she could not have stood it."

In the summer of 1948, Dr. Bob found that he, too, was suffering from a serious malady. He closed his office and retired from practice, so that he and Anne could live their last days together, quietly. For a time after Anne died, there was some indecision in the house. It was understood that Emma and her husband, who had by this time been spending most of their time at the house, would leave and go to their own home. Dr. Bob was to get a housekeeper or a nurse. He did interview one woman, but his heart wasn't in it. It was then that they all felt that Anne had reached out and made their decision for them.

For the first few weeks after Anne's death, Dr. Bob and Emma dreamed of Anne almost every night. To Emma, she seemed troubled. One night Emma's dream of Anne was so real as to be almost a vision. Emma knew what she must do. Next morning she faced Dr. Bob. "Do you want us to stay with you?" His answer was quick and simple, "Yes." None of them dreamed of Anne again.

So it was that the couple who once came to Dr. Bob for help, came to spend the last year and one half with him... they gave up their apartment and lived with him until he too, passed on.

Ever the professional man, Dr. Bob watched the progress of his disease each day. When at last, he knew that the malady was malignant and hopeless, he accepted it with calm and lack of resentment. He felt no bitterness at the doctors who had failed to make an early diagnosis.. "Why should I blame them? I've probably made a lot of fatal mistakes myself!"

Between the times that he was forced to stay in bed or to go to the hospital to undergo surgery, he lived his life as normally as possible and got as much enjoyment out of it as he could. After Anne's death, he and a good friend drove to the West Coast, where they renewed old acquaintances; then they went on to his home in Vermont... and to Maine. Where ever he went AAs showered him with attention and kindness. Of this he said, "Sometimes these good people do so much for me, it is embarrassing. I have done nothing to deserve it, I have only been an instrument through which God worked."

At home Dr. Bob settled down to enjoying his friends and the things he could do for them ... between his serious attacks he enjoyed "Emmy's" good food. "I never saw a man who could eat so much sauerkraut ... he would go without his dessert, just to have another helping!" Then came the television set.

Emma's husband went to Dr. Bob one day telling him that he



just before the parting... Dr. Bob and Anne, May, 1949...

was in the mood to buy a television set. "Well," said Dr. Bob, who didn't like television... would have no part of it... "I guess if you can buy the set, I can give you the chimney for the aerial." The beautiful new set arrived in due time but Dr. Bob would have none of it. He absolutely refused to look at it. Then one night, as he lay on the davenport, Emma caught

him peeking around his newspaper! The "sneaking a look" went on for days until he succumbed and became a fan. After that he spent long pleasant hours watching the TV shows... especially the tap dancers... "Hmph," he'd grunt, "that's easy ... nothing to it... anybody can do it!" At the time of the Louis:Charles fight, he stayed in bed all day so that he would be

rested enough to see the fight that evening!

As a patient, Dr. Bob behaved himself very well except for one thing. He refused to take his pills as they were scheduled. Instead he put his old "patent throat" to use. He kept a shot glass, which he filled with all the pills he was to take for the day. While Emma looked on in awe, even as the brothers of yore, he'd throw back his head and toss off the pills at one gulp... "What difference does it make? They all go to the same place anyway!"

That he knew the exact progress of his disease was evident to Emma and those close to him, although he never complained, even when in pain. After a doctor's call he would say to Emma, "Sugar, don't kid me now. This is the end isn't it?" Emma always answered with, "Now you know better. You know exactly what's going on!"

During the Spring and Summer of 1950, when he had to husband his strength and measure it out carefully, Dr. Bob expressed the wish to do three things. He wanted to attend the First International Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland. He wanted, once again, to go to St. Johnsbury, Vermont, for his vacation. And he wanted to spend Christmas with his son in Texas... two of his wishes were fulfilled.

As the days passed and the date of the Conference drew nearer, he

began more and more, to conserve his energy. Most of his days were spent in his room... on the davenport watching the TV tap-dancers and listening to the pianists. Those who were close to him watched him grow weaker... then rally...

While the last, mad days of preparations for the Conference were going on in Cleveland, it seemed, at times, to his close friends, that he would not gather the strength to do the thing that he so much wanted to do. Even to the last minutes before the Big Meeting, on Sunday, it was doubtful whether he would be granted the vigor he needed to appear in the Cleveland Auditorium to say the few words that he wanted to say to the thousands waiting to hear and see him.

Those gathered that hot Sunday afternoon, now know, that when at last Dr. Bob joined the others on the platform they were witnessing another milestone of the movement built on simple faith and works... At the time, this throng was perhaps too close to history to know the full meaning of what was taking place before them... Now he came forward to speak to the thousands... with quiet dignity... even as that night so long ago, when in Anne's living room, he put his foot on the rung of a dining room chair to read *The Sermon on the Mount*... he leaned forward against the lectern to say:



"My good friends in AA and of AA. I feel I would be very remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to welcome you here to Cleveland not only to this meeting but those that have already transpired. I hope very much that the presence of so many people and the words that you have heard will prove an inspiration to you — not only to you but may you be able to impart that inspiration to the boys and girls back home who were not fortunate enough to be able to come. In other words, we hope that your visit here has been both enjoyable and profitable.

"I get a big thrill out of looking over a vast sea of faces like this with a feeling that possibly some small thing that I did a number of years ago played an infinitely small part in making this meeting possible. I also get quite a thrill when I think that we all had the same problem. We all did the same things. We all get the same results in proportion to our zeal and enthusiasm and stick-to-itiveness. If

you will pardon the injection of a personal note at this time, let me say that I have been in bed five of the last seven months and my strength hasn't returned as I would like, so my remarks of necessity will be very brief.

"But there are two or three things that flashed into my mind on which it would be fitting to lay a little emphasis; one is the *simplicity* of our Program. Let's not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are interesting to the scientific mind but have very little to do with our actual AA work. Our 12 Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words *love* and *service*. We understand what love is and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind.

"Let us also remember to guard that erring member — the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.

"And one more thing; none of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to have done numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get the degree of smug complacency so that we're not willing to extend or attempt to, that help which has been so beneficial to us, to our less fortunate brothers. Thank you very much."