



Stepping Stones News

A publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Fall 1994



STEPPING STONES STEPS OUT

Stepping Stones is a New York State Historic House, so established in 1984 replete with the customary blue and yellow marker which is given to buildings so honored.

Organizations usually place their markers conspicuously by a road or other prominent place outside. But when Lois accepted the designation, she did so only with the understanding that the marker not be placed outdoors during her lifetime. Neither Lois nor Bill wanted any kind of memorial to them after their deaths. Their graves in East Dorset, Vermont, are simple without mention of their Al-Anon or AA associations.

Also, Stepping Stones is not located on a major thoroughfare where cars passing by might be tempted by the sign to stop in as is the case with so many other historic places. And, we try our best to keep a low profile in the neighborhood.

Since Lois' death in October, 1988, and until recently, the marker sat half-hidden behind a large red wing chair on the second floor. Some of you who have visited Stepping Stones probably remember it, but large as it is, it was often overlooked.

No longer. The sign has been placed on the Stepping Stones grounds, so those of you who will be visiting can have their photo taken near the sign, as Lois did in the accompanying picture.

STEPPING STONES

HOME OF BILL & LOIS WILSON
"BILL W" WAS COFOUNDER OF
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS - 1935;
"LOIS W" COFOUNDER OF
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS - 1951

SEMINAR BRINGS ALCOHOLISM LEADERS TOGETHER

Last October, the SSF convened an extraordinary meeting involving alcoholism leaders from the fields of treatment, government policy and education to discuss the important issue of alcoholism advocacy. SSF wanted to explore what has been done and what could be done to establish a strong and vocal alcoholism constituency.

Despite much hard work and dedication on the part of scores of people in the field, barriers to alcoholism ad-

vocacy still exist. SSF felt that by bringing together leaders with the highest credentials and expertise, new ways of inspiring recovered alcoholics and their families and friends would be created.

The response to our invitation was exceptional. Almost everyone we asked accepted, and those who could not come made it clear that only prior engagements prevented them from doing so. (Con't. pg. 2)

SEMINAR BRINGS ALCOHOLISM LEADERS TOGETHER

Those attending included: **Doris Aiken**, President, Remove Intoxicated Drivers; **Johnny Allem**, Director of Development, Society of Americans for Recovery, Inc.; (SOAR); Dr. **William Butynski**, Executive Director, National Association of State Alcohol & Drug Directors; **Paul Curtin**, Executive Director, Alcohol Services, Inc.; Dr. **Carlton Erickson**, Chairman, National Advocacy Committee, Society of Alcoholism Researchers; Dr. **Anne Geller**, President, American Society of Addiction Medicine; Dr. **Enoch Gordis**, Director, National Institute on Alcoholism Abuse and Alcoholism; **George Hacker**, Director of Alcohol Policies Project, The Center for Science in the Public Interest; **Senator Harold Hughes**, Chairman, SOAR, **Linda Kaplan**, Executive Director, National Association of Alcoholism & Drug Abuse Counselors; **Stephen Long**, Director of Policy Analysis, NIAAA; **Sarah Mullady**, EAP Consultant, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse; **Walter Murphy**, Assistant to the Chairman, The Smithers Foundation; **Jane Nakkan**, Director of the Public Policy Center, Hazelden Foundation; **James O'Hanlon**, Associate Commissioner, New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services; **John T. O'Neill**, Executive Director, The Alcoholism & Drug Research Communication Center; **Pamela Rahn**, Prevention Coordinator, Stepping Stone of San Diego; **Paul Samuels**, Executive Director, Legal Action Center; Dr. **Bettina Scott**, Acting Associate Administrator for Alcohol Policy, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration; **Robert V. Shear**, Public Health Leadership Fellow, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Dr. **John Slade**, Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, St. Peter's Medical Center, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Dr. **Paul Wood**, President, National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc., and **Migs Woodside**, President, Children of Alcoholics Foundation, Inc.

Also attending were representatives from Al-Anon Family Groups and Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office. The fellowships

came in the tradition of participation with the professional community and to offer historical information and clarification without endorsement or affiliation.

The group met from Sunday, Oct. 3rd through Tuesday, Oct. 5th, 1993 and looked at advocacy from various historical and professional perspectives. They discussed barriers to advocacy and the ways to overcome them. The participants determined that a major obstacle has been the issue of anonymity. They felt some recovered people are confused about the anonymity tradition and extend it to mean that they cannot join a group, write a letter or make some kind of statement about alcoholism because they are AA or Al-Anon members, even if they do not identify themselves as such.

An achievement of the seminar was the adoption of the Stepping Stones Accords, named after Stepping Stones because we convened the meeting.

The accords set out a number of positions and actions which are the first steps in helping to build a constituency of people whose voices need to be heard. This should help the organizations which were actively represented to continue their exploration of an important issue.



Sen. Hughes addresses the meeting as Pam Rahn looks on.



George Hacker, Dr. John Slade and Dr. Enoch Gordis arrive at Stepping Stones.



The seminar participants in the living room.

THE STEPPING STONES ACCORDS

A solution to America's health care crisis will only be found when far greater attention is paid to the nation's number one health problem — alcoholism and related diseases and consequences.

Because of this urgency, we hereby agree to the following accords:

1. To fight for a comprehensive range of quality treatment services for alcoholism and related addictions as primary diseases in the nation's health-care system.
2. To acknowledge that family members have a right to specific and appropriate care whether or not the addicted person is in treatment.
3. To develop immediately plans that bring the weight of our organizations to bear in the ongoing health-care debate.
4. To submit a list of resources and special skills that our organizations will commit to these accords.
5. To acknowledge that the research technology is now available to find the precise causes of addiction and the capability to develop more effective approaches to treatments, prevention and public policy.
6. To update our message to the public so we state pride in our accomplishments, acknowledge our limitations and offer hope for medical answers to addictive diseases in the future.

AS NELL WING REMEMBERS



An interesting thing happened to Nell Wing on her way to Mexico in 1947 to become a sculptor. She took a temporary receptionist's position at AA and stayed on until retirement. In 1950, Nell became Bill's secretary. In addition to working with Bill in the city, Nell would take the train to Stepping Stones every other weekend from

Grand Central Terminal to rural Bedford Hills, about a hour's journey. "Bill would meet me at the train at 5 PM" Nell recalls, "and Lois would be preparing dinner when we arrived. While we waited, Bill would always play the violin while I played the piano."

Music was a big part of Lois and Bill's life, she points out. They all enjoyed classical music. Lois was an accomplished pianist, and Bill played the cello, as well as the violin. These instruments are on display in the living room at Stepping Stones.

Nell describes a typical weekend: "Saturday mornings were like any other at Stepping Stones. Bill and Lois would have their quiet time upstairs in the library where they would meditate, read, often to each other, and talk. Then Bill would come downstairs to make coffee after which he and I would get to

work. Bill would dictate while I typed at my desk upstairs in the corner. Lois would work also, handling Al-Anon matters from her desk at the other end of the study area.

"Although visitors came anytime, Sunday was especially popular and many old-time AA friends would stop by. Often a person would call saying he was in trouble with alcohol, and Bill would tell him to come over and spend time talking to him."

Lois loved all aspects of living at Stepping Stones, Nell recalls, especially decorating since she had been a professional decorator at one time. Lois sewed curtains and slipcovers as well as much of her clothing, and it is interesting to see at Stepping Stones the small Wilcox and Gibbs machine she used. Lois made the displays in the library and wrote the captions for the scores of pictures. And Nell fondly remembers how Lois loved working in her vegetable and flower gardens well into her 90s.

Nell still returns to Stepping Stones today often with guests from all over the world, and taking a tour with Nell is a treat for anyone. She wrote about her AA experiences and her friendships with Bill and Lois in her delightful book, *Grateful To Have Been There*. Published in 1991, it is available from Parkside Press.

Nell served as a Director of The Stepping Stones Foundation coming on the Board when Lois first established it in 1979. Two years ago, Nell decided to retire, but the Trustees unanimously designated her Trustee Emeritus, the only former Board member to be so distinguished.

STEPPING STONES - THE HOUSE, THE GROUNDS & MORE

Several years before she passed away, Lois tackled the persistent problem of what to do about Stepping Stones after she died. She and Bill never had children, so the future of the house was uncertain.

It was hard for those who knew and loved Lois to imagine Stepping Stones without her. But Lois, always practical, took the bull by the horns and made plans to secure Stepping Stones' future after her death.

Bill had addressed the problem, in a way, by asking AA if it would take the house after he and Lois no longer needed it. AA reminded Bill that tradition would preclude it from owning any property - something which he should have known in the first place since he wrote the tradition. Perhaps, he thought an exception would be made in his case. It wasn't.

Bill then did, as one AA put it, "what any alcoholic would do - left it to his wife to figure out." And, his wife did.

In 1979, Lois created The Stepping Stones Foundation to care for the house and grounds in perpetuity. That's a long time! Also, she charged the Foundation with doing works which would educate and raise awareness of alcoholism and its affects on the family and society.

A charter was written, by-laws established and a Board of Trustees set in place. Today, a Board of ten members meets regularly to set policy and to see that Stepping Stones endures, grows and fulfills Lois' wishes.

Lois and Bill have their wishes fulfilled in part whenever visitors come to Stepping Stones. They knew that Stepping Stones would be of great historic interest to Fel-

lowship members since so much of AA and Al-Anon history can be traced here.

In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say almost everyone in AA and Al-Anon can trace their sponsorship to the two people who lived at Stepping Stones. So, coming to Stepping Stones is like coming home to so many of us.

In addition to maintaining the house and grounds, the Foundation has produced two successful television Public Service Announcements with the then - National Council on Alcoholism. One focuses on the dangers of drinking during pregnancy and the other on alcohol as a dangerous drug aimed at adolescents.

We also created an hour-long documentary on the high rate of alcohol-related illnesses in hospitals which are seldom correctly diagnosed called, "We Never Talked About My Drinking." The video was co-produced with Connecticut Public Television and has been shown on

PBS stations throughout the country.

Our present endeavor involves a seminar on alcoholism advocacy to be held this fall. This is the second such seminar sponsored by us.

The first was held in the Stepping Stones' living room in October, 1984, and presided by Lois herself who called the seminar "one of the thrilling moments in my life." She surrounded herself with experts in the alcoholism field to explore why, despite so much that has been written about the disease, "there was still very little understanding

of the problem of alcoholism," as she put it. Out of that seminar came the "We Never Talked About My Drinking" video.

The Foundation endeavors to carry on the work begun by Lois and Bill. For in her words, "It takes one person to begin something but many to carry it out.



Two of Bill and Lois' favorite rooms - the living room, above and the study area, below.



From the Archives

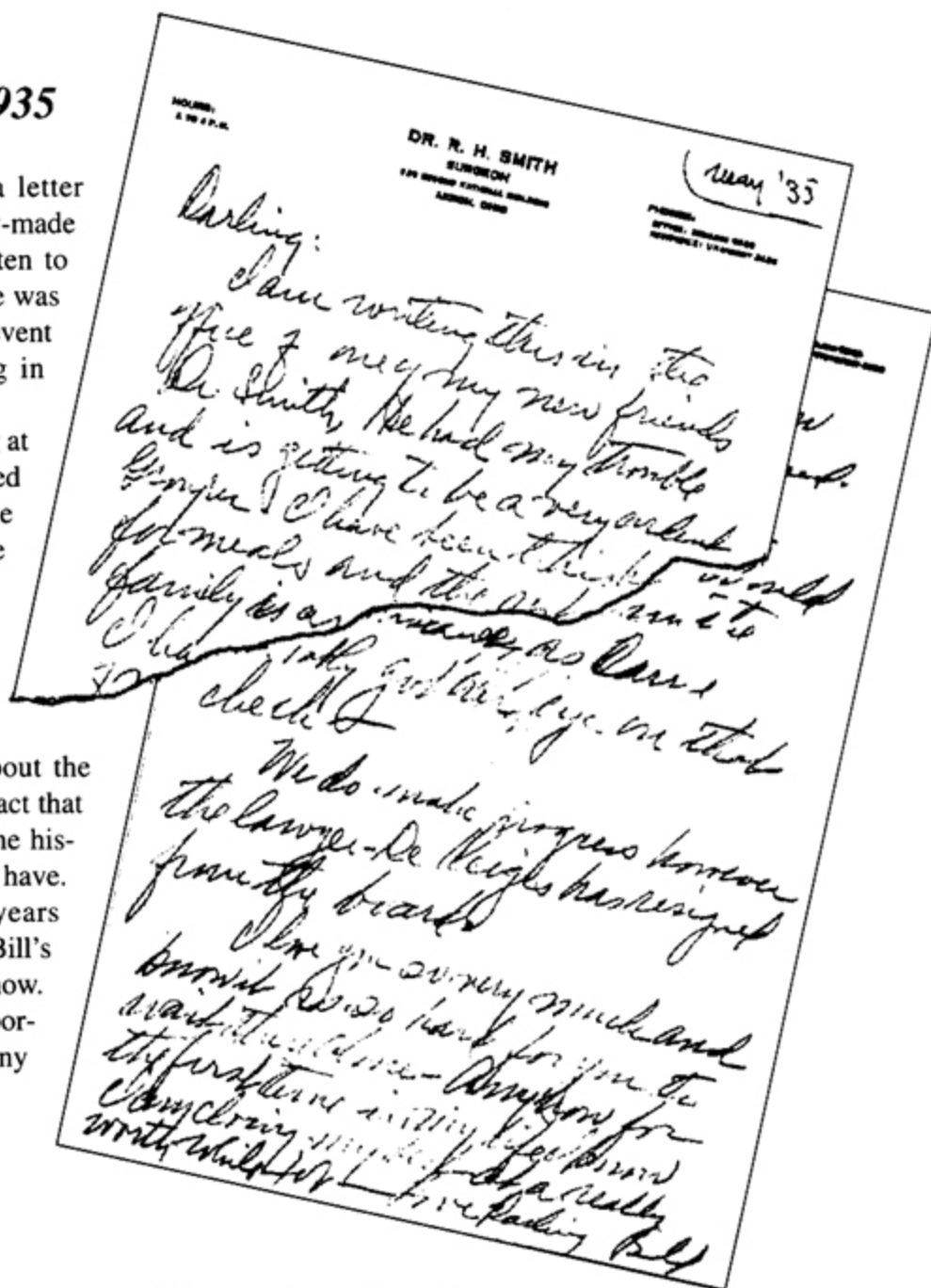
Bill to Lois .. May 1935

Just imagine receiving a letter from your spouse about a newly-made friend. Such a letter was written to Lois in 1935. At the time, there was nothing remarkable about the event just two men with something in common meeting each other.

But what a letter! Looking at it now, one cannot but be moved by the first written record of the meeting that would change countless lives for the better. It's the letter written by Bill on the stationary of his new friend, Dr. Robert Smith of Akron, Ohio.

What's so remarkable about the letter is its simplicity and the fact that neither man had a clue as to the historic impact that meeting would have.

When Lois was asked years later why she saved so many of Bill's writings, she replied, "I don't know. I just thought they might be important some day." As with so many things, Lois was right.



" I am writing from the office of one of my new friends Dr. Smith. He had my trouble and Anyhow, for the first time in my life - I know I am doing my best at a really worthwhile job..."

About the Newsletter

The Foundation has started this Newsletter to share events at Stepping Stones, interviews with people who remember Lois and Bill and articles from the Archives. If you have a memory you would like others to read, please contact us. If you know someone else who would like to receive the Newsletter, just send us the information. You may contact us at:

The Stepping Stones Foundation
P. O. Box 452
Bedford Hills, N.Y. 10507

The logo chosen for our newsletter is a drawing done by Lois Wilson. Lois loved to sketch, even illustrating her diaries. The picture shown is of Lois and Bill contemplating their new home, originally called Bill's Break and later Stepping Stones. This image was used by Lois for her bookplates and note cards for many years.

On the List ?

The Greater New York Al-Anon Family Groups Intergroup notifies groups about the annual picnic here through its "Intergroup Reporter" mailing. Please contact them at (212) 260-0407 or (212) 254-7236 if your group needs to receive the "Intergroup Reporter." Intergroup says that much of its mail is being returned which indicates that somehow it has not been advised of address changes. Please update them on your current addresses -- we'd love to see all of you here next year!

To Visit the House ...

Please call us at (914) 232-4822 ...we are open by appointment and will be happy to make one for you.

**The Stepping Stones Foundation
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