

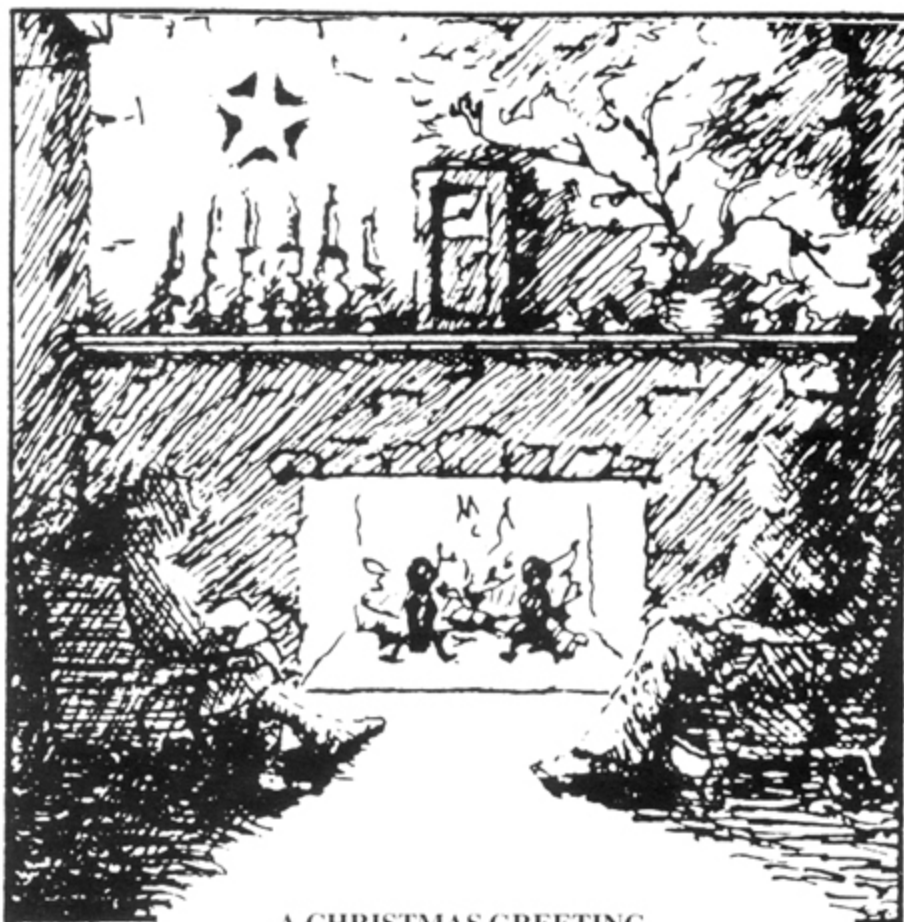


The Stepping Stones News

A publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Winter 1997

Merry Christmas 1970 From Lois and Bill



A CHRISTMAS GREETING

As many a visitor to Stepping Stones knows, Lois W. was a wonderful artist who charmed friends with her sketches and watercolors. One way of sharing this talent was through the holiday cards Lois sent throughout the years. Our logo in the upper left corner of this page was drawn by Lois and depicts her and Bill standing in front of their home. It adorned Lois' cards for many years.

The drawing here is less well known. It represents Lois and Bill sitting in front of the imposing Stepping Stones fireplace that Bill loved so well with a warm blaze shedding light into the living room. Also shedding light is the star especially created for Lois.

Crafted out of black metal, the star contained several jets and was attached to the neck of a small propane gas cylinder. At holiday time, the star was placed

on the mantle and lit with a spectacular effect that delighted Lois every year.

However, we are told some of their holiday guests, while appreciating the dramatic effect, were less enthusiastic. For as the star burned on the mantle, behind it would be a huge bough that Bill every year would chop from one of the evergreens around the house and tack up on the stone face of the fireplace. Bill did this early in December and by the time their annual Twelfth Night party occurred in early January, the bough was bone dry. Every year, guests would watch the star burn, with another enormous blaze coming from the fireplace itself, and were sure that this would be the year Bill burnt the house down. Thankfully, he never did.

The card shown here reflects the good memories that Lois and Bill associated with the Christmas season. It was sent by Lois in 1970, the last Christmas she and Bill would spend together. The following month, he would no longer be with her.

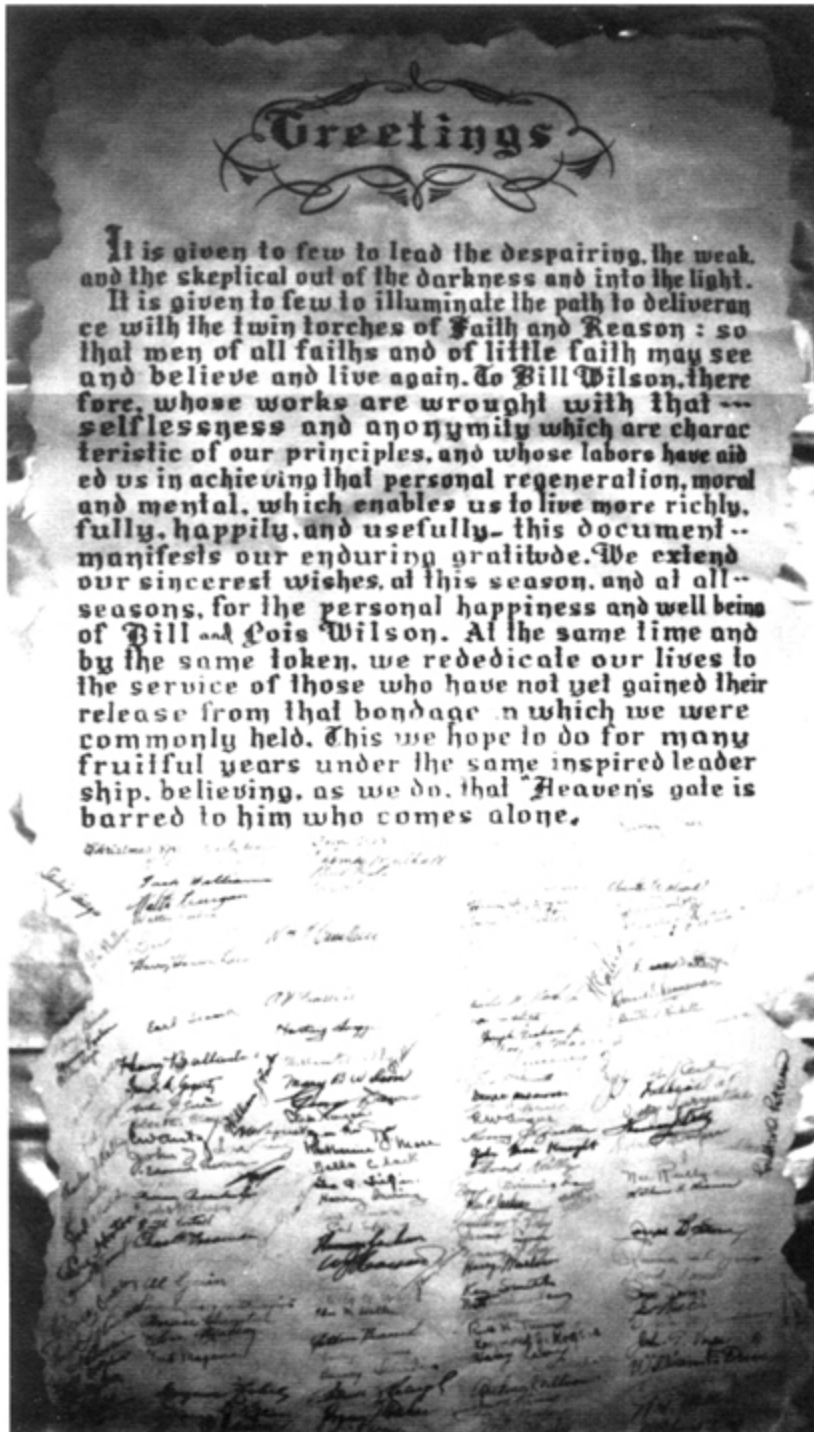
Bill and Lois spent 29 Christmas together at Stepping Stones, and Lois would continue to celebrate the holiday with her family and friends for 17 more. One of their early Christmases is shared with you inside as we glimpse into Lois' diary of 1944. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did. Below is Lois' holiday greeting and one which we at Stepping Stones extend to you with love:

"Merry Christmas to you all and may the New Year be gracious to you."

From the New York Group to Bill, Christmas 1941

Nestled in one of the nooks in the upstairs library at Stepping Stones is a large framed scroll entitled "Greetings". In her caption on the wall describing it, Lois writes: "This scroll of signatures of members of the New York Group was a tribute to Bill that was presented to us for Christmas 1941. It expresses their gratitude that he stayed with A.A. instead of returning to Wall Street, as he was often tempted to do in the years immediately after the Big Book was published."

GREETINGS



It is given to few to lead the despairing, the weak and the skeptical out of the darkness and into the light.

It is the given to few to illuminate the path to deliverance with the twin torches of Faith and Reason: So that men of all faiths and of little faith may see and believe and live again. To Bill Wilson, therefore, whose works are wrought with that — selflessness and anonymity which are characteristic of our principles, and whose labors have aided us in achieving that personal regeneration, moral and mental, which enables us to live more richly, fully, happily and usefully — this document — manifests our enduring gratitude. We extend our sincerest wishes, at this season, and at all — seasons, for the personal happiness and well-being of Bill and Lois Wilson. At the same time and by the same token, we rededicate our lives to the service of those who have not yet gained their release from that bondage in which we were commonly held. This we hope to do for many fruitful years, under the same inspired leadership, believing, as we do, that "Heaven's gate is barred to him who comes alone".

There are about 180 full-name signatures underneath this message, among them Marty M., who was one of the the first women in A.A. to achieve sobriety and who later founded the National Council on Alcoholism. Scott L., a visitor from Nashville, was very moved reading the scroll and said, "That last line reminds me of a Buddhist saying which goes, 'You cannot get to heaven unless you bring someone with you.'"

From Lois' Diary 1944

Stepping Stones is the place where the fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon come together because it was the home of their respective co-founders, Bill and Lois W. Through letters to friends and each other, we get a wonderful glimpse of how Bill and Lois spent their time at Stepping Stones, but nowhere do we get a closer look than through the diaries of Lois. Lois kept journals most of her life and almost until the end of it. She records many of her & Bill's

joys, triumphs and disappointments in her little books.

We want to share with you, from the Stepping Stones archives, Lois' diary of 1944 around the holiday season. There was a war going on, Bill and Lois were spending their third Christmas at Stepping Stones and the Big Book still hadn't sold like the gangbusters Bill had expected it to. Here's a look at Christmas at Stepping Stones fifty-three years ago.

WED., DEC. 6 "Bill walked to the station and I took the 10 a.m. to White Plains where met Barb and finished Xmas shopping. I also had time for movies. Bill doesn't come home tonight as he goes to meeting about new club house which is to have house warming and Xmas party Dec. 23rd."

FRI., DEC. 15 "Bill helped me alot this season sending out Xmas cards. We sent over 300, a lot of them, cards on which was the snap of us taken in L.A. The rest of the cards being the map to "Stepping Stones" (which we have decided is the name of the house), which I worked out to scale and drew a la Tony Sang. Annie Green's firm printed it for me with red ink on green paper. 1000 of them, notepaper size which I folded in 3 and fastened with red scotch tape, not using an envelope. We addressed and stamped them together doing the job up in no time compared to other years."

TUES., Dec. 19 "5 degrees above zero."

WED., Dec. 20 "Snow all night so I went out early and shoveled a path to the garage and then as the snow was very light although about 6 in. of it, I tried to break the road with the car and was able to do it all the way to the highway. Bill in town."

THURS., DEC. 21 "Bill came home for the night".

FRI., DEC. 22 "Finished up doing up presents and got George to put on the chains and drove to Chappaqua to have dinner with Tom and Ginny. Bill got off the train at Chap. we had a nice evening and then drove home."

SAT., DEC. 23 "Bill got boughs and we decorated the living room with them and ground pine. Tom B—— came in the afternoon bringing gifts and then we left on the 6 p.m. train for N.Y. We went to the office first to get the records Chrys gave us for Xmas and check them and then to the new A A cosmopolitan club for the opening and Xmas party. Very gala - about 500 there. They have done wonders with the club in a week."

SUN., DEC. 24 "Cleaned up the house and then drove to Dot and Leonards for a Xmas dinner and had a

nice visit and then drove home. We couldn't spend the night because of the fires. Dot and Leonard seem happier and Buddy is to be married soon. We stopped at Burr's and Ruth's on the way down. It has been melting and the snow was off the roads so took the chains off. (Phoned Rog at the office in the a.m. and he is terribly discouraged and upset about Laura.)"

MON., DEC. 25 "We had a grand day. Left home at 9:00 and drove to Barb and Cy's for breakfast where were of course Kitty and Hobe and Floss and Lyman. Had a grand time at breakfast and at the opening of the presents. We all spoke to Rog on the phone. Got home at 5 p.m. and had our own presents and then Bill went for Fred B—— and we hoped a car full of the other men at Chester Crest, but Alten wouldn't let them come "

TUES., DEC. 26 "Bill went to town early. I put the presents away and then went in on the 4:39 to have dinner with him and Bobby at Toodles Hunter and then all went to the meeting at the new A.A. cosmopolitan club. Morgan R— was there and also Charley C——."

FRI., DEC. 29 "Josephine couldn't come to clean but got another Foglio for me, Mary this time too young to be much good. The house got a lick and a promise. Bill came home for supper."

SAT., DEC. 30 "Helen Wilson arrived about noon from Montreal and Mag and young Bob V—— after supper to spend a couple of nights and help me with the party. Helen looks well. Big Bob is in Johannesburg S. Africa and will be home around Feb. for Schering & Co."

SUN., DEC. 31 "Terrible day, rainy and freezing. Popsy and Sandy were the first to arrive. Only 30 altogether. The last arrival, Mac L——, arrived about 10 and had to leave at 12 p.m. We had the food upstairs, gallons of coffee which we kept warm on electric stove, doughnuts, popcorn, potato chips, cookies, and fruit punch. Washed cups upstairs also. Anne and Devoe and Charlotte brought Bill socks Anne had knit and me 2 aprons. Bill went to get Freddy in the afternoon and he is to spend the night."

Al-Anon's First Solo Convention – And, Some History, too

Al-Anon Family Group members will celebrate 47 years of fellowship by holding their International Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah, July 2-5, 1998. It is also the first time Al-Anon's convention is independent of AAs Internationals; all other Al-Anon conventions have run tandem time and place with AA's.

The convention's theme is "Our Window Of Hope" and will feature meetings (Al-Anon, Alateen and AA), workshops, dances and special entertainment. All Al-Anon, Alateen, AA members and their friends are invited to attend.

The registration fee is \$75.00 prior to December 31, 1997, and \$80.00 prior to May 15, 1998. On-site registration will be \$85.00. All prices quoted are US. For more information or to obtain a registration form, call Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters weekdays between 8am-6pm EST at (757)563-1600.

It is gratifying to extend Al-Anon's invitation through our newsletter as Stepping Stones has a special place in Al-Anon's history. The fellowship was founded at Stepping Stones by Lois W. in 1950 and made its home here for the first few months of its existence. The first Al-Anon office was upstairs in the library and its landmark, Lois' desk, is one of the most photographed spots in the house.

From the beginning families and friends of alcoholics had been gathering together as their recovering alcoholic family members and friends met. Most notable were the gatherings in Anne S.'s kitchen at her and Dr. Bob's home in Akron.

Later on, Lois met with the wives of AA members upstairs in one of the rooms above the 24th Street Clubhouse where the New York members had found a home in February, 1940. (Bill and Lois made their home there also in one of the upstairs rooms in November of that year, about six months before their move to Bedford Hills.) There were many more AA meetings than ever before, and Lois and a group of spouses began meeting to discuss their particular problems as well as the changes in their new lives. Many believe this was the beginning of the family groups.

However, it was in 1950, at Bill's urging, when Lois and Ann B. of nearby Chappaqua decided to see if any spouses would be interested in a formal organization for themselves similar to AA. Some 87 letters of inquiry were mailed and the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic – a second 12-step group was born and gave to the family and friends of the recovered and still-suffering alcoholic a program of hope and recovery which endures and flourishes today with 31,608 Al-Anon Family Groups worldwide!

As Lois once wrote, "It takes only one person to begin something but many others to carry it out."

Our visitors write...

"Just wanted you to know that the three of us truly appreciated the time & effort you put into making our day sooooo wonderful!!!" Sue, Reba & Marge, Westcon NJ.

"Sally & I again want to express our gratitude for your hospitality and kindness during our visit to Stepping Stones. It was the highlight of our visit to NYC." Ned, San Francisco...

"Just a short note of thanks for taking time for our group...It was awesome!" Jim, Cologne, NJ.

"I've been having pleasant flashbacks all day to my guided tour of Stepping Stones... I've thought a lot about the house and the images it brought to mind...The visit has affected me more than I thought it would. I am just so grateful for what the fellowship has give to me." Andrew, Victoria, Australia.

"I still remember the deep and thoughtful impression I had while visiting Stepping Stones. You made it a lasting success and a great gift for me...I wish you God's blessing for keeping the wonderful place of Stepping Stones alive so all forthcoming visitors may find it in the same brilliant condition as I was allowed to see and feel the good spirit." Herbert, Herrenald, Germany.



Please tell your friends and those in your groups about Stepping Stones and encourage them to call us at (914)232-4822 to arrange a visit.