Objects of Affection—2019 Special Appeal
An Invitation to Support Preservation of the Wilsons’ Personal Effects

The “Objects of Affection—2019 Special Appeal” is a new opportunity through September 2019 for friends of Stepping Stones to raise $25,000 for preservation treatment, display, and storage of key artifacts and memorabilia. Visitors often wonder how the Wilsons’ home came to be filled with such treasures and curiosities. The décor is a unique mix of items made or procured by Lois and Bill, keepsakes from childhood, heirlooms from their families, as well as gifts given by friends from around the world. A complex but beloved challenge for Stepping Stones is the ongoing preservation of the 10,000+ objects, including many in critical need of professional treatment. Our special appeals in recent years have been a success because so many supporters have worked in unity and have been so generous. We invite your contributions of any amount to ensure that the objects that lend so much to the warm, authentic, and fascinating atmosphere at Stepping Stones can continue to be cared for and enjoyed.

A contribution envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thousands of visitors came to celebrate recovery with the Wilsons, and many gave tokens of appreciation that we safeguard, such as crafts from visitors’ home countries, books with thoughtful inscriptions, and seashells and dinosaurs for Lois’ collections. The centerpiece of the “Objects of Affection” appeal is, perhaps, the most stunning gift given to Bill. It is the iconic, original painting, Came to Believe, by Grapevine volunteer Robert M. Known as the Man on the Bed, the painting depicts the cofounders’ meeting with “A.A. number three,” Bill D. It was the December 1955 center spread in the Grapevine. “The whole heart and essence of A.A. can be seen just by looking at it,” wrote Bill to the artist. The popular piece quickly found its way into the hearts and meeting places of A.A.s around the globe. (Reproductions are available through our shop.) Conservation of the painting in 2008 revealed its original vibrance, which can only be fully appreciated in person. Participants in this appeal will help put this treasure back on view for visitors in a suitable display with proper conditions and will help with other precious materials in our care.

Continued on page 3
Greetings from the Board & Staff

Dear Friends,

It is an honor to share the gratitude of the board and staff of Stepping Stones for your enthusiasm and support. It has been an exciting time for Stepping Stones. We ended 2018 very appreciative of all who contributed to the success of the fall 2018 Annual Appeal for general operations and the summer 2018 beautification appeal.

In 2018, we hosted 2,750 tour visitors, which is the annual municipal limit. To friends who had hoped to visit but kindly postponed, we thank you for your understanding.

We are sad to share with you that in late 2018 a dear friend of Stepping Stones, Don Harrell of New York City, passed. Don was a beloved, longtime Trustee (2004–2016) and Vice President. He will be remembered for his good humor and kindness.

In January 2019, we were so pleased that 1,000 of you participated in our survey by sharing your insights and the fondness you have for Stepping Stones. In February 2019, we embarked on strategic planning to set a course for the next three to five years.

We offer our gratitude to Trustees who have concluded their service in the last 12 months: past President John Koster and past Secretaries Jane Tolar and Valerie O’Neill. The legacy of their hard work and generosity is visible throughout the home and archives.


Thank you for your involvement and encouragement.

With gratitude,

John J. Quinn, President, Board of Trustees

Sally A. Corbett-Turco, Executive Director

MISSION: The Stepping Stones Foundation is dedicated to inspiring recovery by preserving for the public the historic home, archives, and legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson, cofounders, respectively, of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups.

(Approved February 2019)

Preserve a Legacy in Your Will

Lois Wilson thoughtfully included Stepping Stones as a beneficiary in her will. To learn more about supporting Stepping Stones in this way, please call 914.232.4822 or email info@steppingstones.org
Most of the antique furnishings, rugs, and art in the home were from **Clark and Matilda Burnham**, Lois’ parents. Exceptions include the humble dining room table handcrafted by Fayette Griffith (the grandfather who raised Bill), the Mason & Hamlin piano given by Bill to Lois in 1928 before he hit bottom, and the tiny desk that Lois’ aunts brought via ship on their move from Europe to the United States.

Lois had a keen eye for decorating and design and a talent for sewing and reupholstering as evidenced by her floral curtains and seat covers. **She had a way of curating and displaying objects from different ends of the earth that made them seem right at home together.** This is apropos for a place where the Wilsons’ hospitality made people from all over feel that they belonged. **To participate in the object preservation special appeal, an envelope is enclosed.**

Bill Wilson’s life in 1941 was looking up. Alcoholics Anonymous was growing as he had wished, and Bill and Lois finally moved into their own home in Bedford, N.Y. that spring.

But, with these changes came growing pains and conflict. There were numerous challenges within A.A.—some the result of differing opinions, and others due to personality traits Bill believed were typical of the alcoholic: the need for power and control. Bill struggled to resolve these problems and believed a set of guiding principles or traditions were needed to foster A.A.’s growth and harmony, just as the 12 Steps had helped individuals. But still, Bill understood that whatever was developed could only be suggested because nobody could tell alcoholics what to do.

During this time, Bill read the paper as he rode the morning train to Manhattan, becoming engrossed in the news of the day. **The war overseas was escalating dangerously. He believed America’s involvement was inevitable, and it often consumed his thoughts.** Some days were a battle to push the worry of impending war to the back of his mind so that he could focus on A.A.’s growth and promise.

Bill kept maps on his office walls. Pushpins were added to a North America map to track the new A.A. groups, meetings, and loners.1 (That map—now restored—is at Stepping Stones.) **He also used a map to track the war’s many battlefronts.**

Bill was a patriot from a **family with a tradition of military service**, and had served with honor during World War I.2 By the time the United States entered World War II in December 1941, Bill was 46. Regardless, in March of 1942, he chose to reenlist to serve his country and be a better provider for Lois, who had supported him for many years. In his application, he included a letter touting his success with A.A. He wrote, “**The year 1934 brought a radical change in my affairs. I took an interest in the cure of alcoholism which resulted in my becoming the founder of an organization known as Alcoholics Anonymous which has since made possible the recovery of some 5,000 cases of alcoholism of the most acute kind. Growing rapidly, this organization will probably clear up 5,000 new cases during the current year.**”

Bill secured an interview to serve as captain of the Army’s **Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot**. He was rejected after his physical exam found issues, including “free joint bodies in the right elbow joint.”4 That diagnosis may have resulted from overuse during his school years when he strived to be his baseball team’s star pitcher.

Months after the Army’s rejection, Bill tried again but to no avail. Disappointed that his World War I experience wasn’t appreciated, he wrote in a May 25, 1942, letter to his friend and advisor, **Father Ed Dowling**: “**Still struggling to get in the Army. No luck yet. Maybe I’m supposed to be a missionary after all. I wish I knew.**”5

---

1. Objects in need of conservation in Bill’s writing studio include the Winston Churchill and Buddha ceramic figures.
2. **Lois W., Living Room, Stepping Stones**
3. **1941: Winds of Change and War**
4. **www.steppingstones.org**
5. **Continued from page 1**
1941: Winds of Change and War  

Bill also wrote to Louis B. Hershey, Selective Service Director, hoping to create another opportunity to support the war effort. Bill explained that although some active alcoholics in the military may need to be medically discharged, those who have recovered and are members of A.A. should be allowed to serve. He offered to help the Army, encouraging the military to use the A.A. organization’s experience. He even suggested A.A. groups could be contacted for references for sober military candidates.

The Army responded—another rejection. At the time, they believed that allowing a man in recovery to serve would remove him from a secure environment to one of immense stress that could tempt him to drink. Such thinking persisted until the 1960s when the military changed its stance and developed an alcoholism and drug use program for military personnel. Today, a map of the world with pins for each A.A. group would show that sober military members carried the message of recovery and started groups in many places where they were stationed around the world, even in combat zones.

Bill said his repeated rejections were hard. However, these afforded him time to focus on and become intimately involved with every part of A.A. Had he served in World War II, Bill may not have carried out seminal work, including developing the democratic principles of A.A. and writing the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

---


*Indicates books available through the Stepping Stones Shop
Saluting Our Volunteers

Without dedicated volunteers, Stepping Stones could not offer the profound experiences that visitors and event guests enjoy. Our gratitude goes to our Appointed Committee Members and Advisory Board. We welcome Advisory Board Member Cynthia Russell and Archives & Collections Committee Member John Barton.

We applaud our docents and event volunteers. We especially thank Chris P. for including Stepping Stones in his 2019 trip to New Zealand, where he gave four “Stepping Stones Comes to You” illustrated presentations. To bring a presentation to your area, email office@steppingstones.org.

To the event volunteers for the A.A. and Al-Anon Delegate group visit days, the 67th Annual Picnic, and more, we are grateful for your service.

Our thanks also go to groups and individuals who did special projects. We thank the River Group for continuing their annual gardening day.

To all who spread the word about Stepping Stones and help to further the mission that Lois set forth, we appreciate your good works and invite others to join your ranks. We especially thank longtime supporters, Linda V. of New York and Vannoy S. of Texas, who are respectively celebrating 30 and 50 years of involvement in service. Each has organized dozens of projects and off-site events to bring new friends into the fold with Stepping Stones. To celebrate Vannoy’s milestone, Linda donated 12 rose bushes to be planted at Stepping Stones this May. To learn about being an ambassador in your own community or to receive copies of this newsletter to share, please email office@steppingstones.org.

Docent Recognition

Thank you to our docents who collectively gave more than 1,000 in volunteer tour hours in 2018. For their commitment to serve and love of the history, we recognize their years of service: Barbara L. (8), Chris P. (8), Chris P. (4), Doon C. (6), Greg H. (3), Joe H. (4), John F. (8), John M. (5), Levi P. (7), Mildred H. (7), and Ron T. (3). Welcome to new docents, James T. and Suzanne C.

Are you coming to the area for A.F.G. TEAM or A.A. N.E.R.F.?


Volunteer at Home or at Stepping Stones

Contact us for the following individual and group opportunities!

Remote
- Online research
- Audio / video editing
- Raising awareness
- Editing / writing
- Hosting presentations
- Graphic / Web design
- Social media

On Site
- Greeting / Hosting
- Gardening
- Language interpreting
- Leading tours
- Photo / Video
- Trail maintenance
- Light maintenance

www.steppingstones.org
The Stepping Stones News

Stepping Stones was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2012.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:
John J. Quinn, President
Walter Stuart, Vice President
Ashton McFadden, Treasurer
Bill Barton Terry Bedient
Amalia Castillo Fred Doulton
Joan Ramsey Will Runyon
Susan M. Vairo

STAFF:
Sally Corbett, Executive Director
Kathryn Liszewski, Site Operations Manager
Alisa Veverka, Foundation Assistant

Military story written by: Gia Miller

Connect with us!
Facebook & Twitter @BillWhome

Get the Stepping Stones Diary!
Update your email with us to receive the new seasonal email, Stepping Stones Diary.

©2019 Stepping Stones Foundation. Text and images property of Stepping Stones. Permission is required for further use or transmission.

Photos: Man on the Bed (detail, below), ©2019 Grapevine, (See p. 1); site photos by Alisa Veverka.

68th Annual Stepping Stones
Lois Family Groups Picnic
Saturday, June 8, 2019, Noon–5:00 p.m.
All Parking & Shuttles from Bedford Hills Train Station

Free Advance Tickets Required
Order online at https://picnic68.eventbrite.com

Noon–2:00 p.m. & 3:30–4:30 p.m.
Home & Studio Viewing
2:00–3:30 p.m. Speakers

Speaker Nominations are Always Welcome
Nominate friends who met the Wilsons to speak or be interviewed.

Help Plan the Picnic & Volunteer
To sign up, email office@steppingstones.org

Picnic Speaker Recordings
Recordings are available for purchase at the event or through our shop.

Plan a Tour Visit
To check availability for tours of the home and studio held 1 p.m. Monday–Saturday (no Sunday tours), email info@steppingstones.org, call 914.232.4822 or see http://www.steppingstones.org/visit.html.