



# The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Spring 2005

P.O. BOX 452 ♦ BEDFORD HILLS, NY 10507 ♦ 914-232-4822 ♦ stepsfoundation@aol.com ♦ www.stepsstones.org

## The Presidential Connection

Having contact with, meeting a President or even someone from his family is a rare occurrence for most of us. In the case of Lois and Bill, this happened several times.

In the Stepping Stones photo archive collection, there are four snapshots of Teddy Roosevelt in 1912 on a campaign swing through Manchester, VT where Lois' parents summered. It is not clear which of the Burnhams took the photo, but they have her handwriting on them and come from one of the many photo scrapbooks Lois created.

In the library at Stepping Stones hangs a 1955 telegram to Bill from President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent to AA as it commemorated its twentieth anniversary at the Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis, Missouri. It reads:

Dateline: The White House; Sender: The President of the United States

Please convey to all those who participate in your Twentieth Anniversary gathering my good wishes for a successful meeting. Your society's record of growth and service is an inspiration to those who, through research, perseverance and faith, move toward the solution of many serious personal and public health problems.

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

In the 1950s, alcoholism was widely viewed as a moral problem. The President's statement framing it as a public health issue in those less enlightened days makes it even more remarkable.

His vice-president, Richard M. Nixon, also featured prominently in AA history. Also in the library is a photo of the then President Nixon receiving the one-millionth copy of the Big Book. The presentation was made in a White House ceremony on April 16, 1973 by Dr. Jack Norris, non-alcoholic chairman of the AA General Service Board.

First published in 1939, it took 34 years for the book to reach that milestone mark. Today, the book sells almost one million copies yearly.

Our archives also hold a letter from President William J. Clinton dated



*Richard Nixon and Dr. Jack Norris*

September 22, 1993. The occasion was a three-day seminar for leaders in the field of alcoholism. Heads of major organizations, government agencies as well as a former U.S. Senator attended. The letter reads:

Greetings to everyone gathered for the Stepping Stones Foundation's seminar on alcoholism advocacy, "Building An Alcoholism Constituency - Putting the Pieces Together".

Alcohol abuse plagues our nation, claiming thousands of lives each year and destroying families. Efforts that educate and enlighten people about treatment of this heartbreaking disease contribute to greater understanding for those who suffer because of this sickness.

The Stepping Stones Foundation draws a distinguished group of leaders in the field of alcoholism. The work of Bill and Lois Wilson, who dedicated so much of their lives to alleviating the suffering of alcoholics and their families, continues with vigor and imagination. Your commitment to their legacy ensures a stronger nation and a bright future for all of us.

Best wishes for a successful endeavor.

*Bill Clinton*

Another interesting and much closer connection existed with Lois' family and the son, grandson and granddaughter of Abraham Lincoln. Robert T. Lincoln, the son, built an estate, Hildene, in Manchester, Vermont - now open to the public. Robert T. was good friends with Lois' parents, especially her father, Clark Burnham. Both were avid golfers, Dr. Burnham being one of the

*Continued on page 2*



## The Presidential Connection *cont. from page 1*

founders of the Rutland Country Club. A photo of Robert T. and Lois' mother and father is among her pictures in the archives.

When Lois applied as an occupational therapist during World War I, Robert T. wrote a letter of recommendation. This letter is in the Stepping Stones archives. Written on September 27, 1918, Robert T. notes that he writes the recommendation with pleasure, hoping that it may be of service to her and the good cause. "Mrs. Wilson is a daughter of my old friend Dr. Clark Burnham of Brooklyn who has a summer residence here and I have enjoyed his friendship since her young girlhood. Her husband and a brother are in military service in France. Mrs. Wilson is held in high esteem and affectionate regard by all of our friends here and I am sure that they would all agree with me in saying to you that her character and qualifications make her a most unusually desirable acquisition to your organization."

Lincoln Isham, Robert T.'s grandson, was Lois and Bill's contemporary and friend. His half-sister, Peggy, and Lois were close summer friends. A photo Lois took of Lincoln shows him looking handsome and vibrant, as does his grandfather in the group shot. Many years later Lois



*Lincoln Isham*

wrote to a Manchester friend, "I'm so glad Hildene is being preserved. I have just sent in my check to become a charter member [Friends of Hildene]. R.T. Lincoln was a good friend of my father's so I have many memories of him and his grandchildren. Peggy Beckwith was a pal of mine."



*Robert T. Lincoln far left. Lois' father, standing middle, Lois' mother, seated left. 1905*

I have a picture of Peggy Beckwith in her pony cart. Bill and I asked Lincoln Isham, R.T.'s grandson by another daughter, to be an usher at our wedding. But when we had to predate the wedding he couldn't get down. I also have a snapshot of him.

When I first was looking for a job back in 1915 or 16 I asked Mr. Lincoln for a character reference and he sent me a very kind little note, which I still have."

After intense training at New York Presbyterian Hospital, she served as an occupational therapist in a shell-shock ward at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC.

# NEWS

Good news for visitors wanting to come to Stepping Stones by bus but thwarted by local zoning laws not allowing commercial buses on our residential streets, not to say the problem of getting coach buses up our narrow driveway. There is a solution! The Town of Bedford and the Bedford Community Church, both nearby, have agreed to let visitor buses park on their premises. A small bus or van will then bring the group to Stepping Stones.

Here's how it will work: The group contact calls Stepping Stones in advance and arrangements explained. Then we will confirm the parking with town or church depending on which will be available. The group will contact the local transportation company and arrange for the transportation to the property. After years of meetings, telephone calls and lots of work, large bus groups can be accommodated. Its not perfect, but its the best and only solution possible. Trust us! We continue to encourage our visitors to utilize vans and cars when visiting Stepping Stones. If only Bill and Lois had found a home on a main street.



*Tom Serpe and one of the new Elms from page 5.*

## Interesting fact!

The telephone for Stepping Stones rings in the main house and in the office. This is the very same number that Bill and Lois used. After Bill built his studio to get away from the main house and write, he named it Wit's End. That way, when people called the house to talk to Bill, Lois could say that he wasn't there. We suppose she also could have said "He's at his Wit's End." - and mean it.

### A word from one of our generous volunteers, David T.

"Often people look at me with a quizzical expression on their face when they realize that I have traveled farther than they have to get here. I guess it makes perfect sense that I should live locally.

I have been doing these tours for about ten years now, and this is what I've found: that somewhere along the line, in every tour, the careful observer can spot that one moment *Continued on page 5*

## EXPERIENCING STEPPING STONES

The Stepping Stones office and visitors center is open for tours by advanced appointment. We want to be accessible to you and will do our best to accommodate your request. **We ask that you make your appointment as far in advance as possible, by emailing us at [stepsfoundation@aol.com](mailto:stepsfoundation@aol.com), or calling 914-232-4822.** We have a small staff but your calls are very important. If we do not answer please leave a message and someone will return your call as quickly as possible.

Stepping Stones looks forward to reaching more friends each year. If you are planning a group workshop or retreat, consider adding a trip to Stepping Stones to your roster.

If your group can't come to us, we will come to you! We have a slide presentation and skilled speakers to add the perfect touch to your seminar or workshop. Please call Annah for more details.

# Letter from Eileen

Dear Friends,

This is a bittersweet letter for me. After 15 years, most of them as Executive Director, it is time for me to move on. I have resigned my position. I do so with happiness and gratitude for what I received here and for what I was able to do here.

What I am most grateful for is all of you. All of you who visited here as an AA or Al-Anon, all of you who came here with such grateful hearts, all of you who stood near the gardens or in the living room and responded to the amazing reality that you were standing at the home of the two people who changed your life, your families' lives, your workplace and communities. I experienced that with you.

I remember particularly the non-AA from White Plains, NY who made a secret appointment to bring her English AA mother here as a surprise. She did not tell her mother where they were going, and when they arrived, her mother cried. She cried at the door and she cried in the house. She cried so much, she took the tour with a roll of bathroom tissue under her arm, rolling off paper to dry her face.

And the many otherwise tough guys who sat at the kitchen table where Bill and Ebby sat at what would become a turning point in Bill's life and so many millions thereafter, who choked up and turned their faces away and brushed a tear. Or Scott L. from Nashville who just sat there and sobbed. Others did that, too.

My favorite memory is the first Al-Anon International Delegates visit many years ago. The delegates arrived on an October late afternoon. We had lit candles in most of the rooms, and the house had a particularly lovely glow to it. In came people from all over the world, most of them never expecting to ever be in Lois' home. Their reactions were tender and deeply affecting. After walking around the house, chairs were brought into the living room and the delegates sat down and had a meeting. The topic was gratitude, and I felt privileged and humbled to be there. What they talked about was the gratitude of recovery, but also the gratitude for being at Stepping Stones and what it meant for them. I realized then, on the deepest level, how lucky I was. The meeting began with an Irish delegate saying the Serenity Prayer in Gaelic and ended with a Japanese delegate saying the Lord's Prayer in Japanese. There was a feeling of such unity and love expanding beyond language, religion, nationality and race.

What those visitors felt is what I have felt everyday. I am deeply moved and grateful to have been a part of Stepping Stones for so many years. When I first came here in 1989, I had no idea. And now that I have, I find I cannot adequately express it. Just know how full my heart is and how much I thank each of you who came, still come and will come to Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones needs you, needs your support, and you need it. It is part of the history of our two great Fellowships, and it must and will endure.

I will always be a part of Stepping Stones. I intend to be a volunteer or just a visitor sometimes. It is too much of a part of me for me to ever leave entirely. Perhaps we will meet at the AA International Convention in Toronto or here again at Stepping Stones.

It was Bill and Lois' deep wish that Stepping Stones be visited by AAs and Al-Anons forever. So when you come here, you are doing something truly wonderful. Please remember that and remember how much I loved meeting you all.

With a grateful heart,  
Eileen Giuliani

Anyone wishing to contact Eileen can write to her in care of Stepping Stones or email her at [eileencg46@aol.com](mailto:eileencg46@aol.com)



*Annah Perch and Eileen Giuliani.*

## A New Executive Director For Stepping Stones

Finding the right person to run the Stepping Stones Foundation was a challenge for the Stepping Stones Board of Directors. Besides word of mouth networking, advertisements were placed in the Week of Review section in the Sunday New York Times and in The Chronicle of Philanthropy. The selection process absorbed the Search Committee as members read through piles of resumes from very qualified people. A small number was selected and called. Then, a group of excellent candidates were interviewed in person.

"Stepping Stones is so pleased to announce that Annah Perch, of New York City, is our new Executive Director," announced Board President Robert Hoguet. "Annah is enormously talented and enthusiastic besides having a warm, welcoming personality. We are extremely happy with the choice and look forward to working with Annah in the years ahead."

Don Harrell, Search Committee Chairman said, "We really had a difficult time of it because so many of the applicants had solid resumes and were eager to assume the role here with gusto. But Annah has all the qualities needed to run the Foundation, welcome visitors and help us find support for Lois goals."

Please join us in welcoming Annah to Stepping Stones. You will have many chances to meet her, either as visitors here or at our great annual picnic in June.

Feel free to contact Annah at 914-232-4822 or at [StepSFoundation@aol.com](mailto:StepSFoundation@aol.com).

### The Stepping Stones Foundation Board of Directors

|                                   |                         |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
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## Keeping in touch...

John L. visited Stepping Stones in February of 2004 with his family. He sat with them at the kitchen table referred to in "Bills Story" and remembered the part in the story that reads 'Each day my friends simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men.' I want you to know that my visit not only invigorated me inside, it may have played some part in helping others."

Mike R. wrote, "I was there in 1995 and I still remember it. Thank you so much for the tour."

Keep your emails, letters and telephone calls coming.

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## Fun ways to help:

Lois was enthusiastic about birds and always had many birdhouses and feeders around the 8.5 acre property. Some birdhouses are thriving and several are aging beyond repair.

**Seeking birdhouse builders** who would like to create replicas of those on the property. If interested, call Annah at 914-232-4822, or send an email to [stepsfoundation@aol.com](mailto:stepsfoundation@aol.com). Your participation will help preserve Stepping Stones and give homes to many feathered friends.



**Cross-stitch experts:** Inside Stepping Stones is an AA related sampler that was given as a gift to Bill and Lois. We seek a crafty person to create a pattern to replicate this sampler that visitors over the years have asked for copies of. Qualified candidates should fax a sample of their original work to 914-232-2580, or email a photo with a pattern to [stepsfoundation@aol.com](mailto:stepsfoundation@aol.com).



The first sign  
of spring  
outside the  
back porch  
in early  
April 2005.

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## More Bluebirds Today

Looking out from the patio past the trees down to  
the pump house  
I see two full-grown deer sleeping at each corner  
In a bed of last autumn's leaves as if they were  
Waiting for both of you to come home  
Voices of children repetitive calls  
Of birds and drone of the distant town try to muffle  
The fickle-wind sound of the branches, firs and sunlight

They are still waiting, dozing on their damp bed  
Among the skunk cabbage – still at each corner -  
closest to your home  
They look too, once in a while, twitch an ear and  
stretch out again

I could paint this, can you see this, yes  
All these ships of the spirit sailing the rolling landscape  
It is laughingly crowded and perfect weather for it too  
Days afternoon light sparkling on the swells of the land  
The helm is loosely tied – and we are in the slot  
Sailing before the wind and set wing-to-wing

*Ken B. Tour Guide, volunteer, Bethel, CT*

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## from David T (Continued from page 2)

when the lights go on in someone's head. They just get it!

It's a very special miracle moment. And as a volunteer tour guide, I live for that moment. It is well worth the 100 mile trip I have to make to get to Stepping Stones on any given Saturday or Sunday."

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## NEWS Continued

We are pleased to announce that we have received the designation as a National Historic Place, and are now listed on the State and National Registry's of Historic Places. According to Pete Shaver of the NYS Preservation League, this designation is based on the importance of Bill and Lois as individuals rather than simply the historical nature of the house.

What does this designation mean for Stepping Stones? Besides recognizing that Stepping Stones is historically significant, the designation makes us eligible for government and private grants that might otherwise be unavailable. It also places Stepping Stones on "the map" of historic places and provides another way to let people know that we exist. In fact, not only are recovering families interested in the life of Bill and Lois and the history of AA and Al-Anon, but so are historians, spiritual leaders and those interested in medical and social history.

For a virtual tour of Stepping Stones visit us on the web at [www.stepsstones.org](http://www.stepsstones.org)

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# Two Elms Grow at Stepping Stones

The great American elm tree was so prolific throughout the eastern part of the United States that almost every town boasts an Elm Street or Elm Road or the like. These magnificent trees towered 100 feet with an enormous span of huge graceful boughs and delicate leaves. They were the pride of many a place, including Manchester, Vermont.

Lois Burnham spent her summers in Manchester from childhood through her marriage to Bill Wilson in 1918. Her father, Dr. Clark Burnham, brought his family from Brooklyn to southern Vermont each year to escape the city summers and attend to his well-to-do clientele who also summured in Manchester. Eventually he bought a house, "Elm O'er", named because of the gigantic elm in the front yard. There are many photos of "Elm O'er", in the Stepping Stones archives, including a ring of some ten people surrounding its trunk. In her book, *Lois Remembers*, Lois writes that one of the Burnhams' favorite picnic sites was under a big elm at Dorset Pond, which would soon be re-named "Emerald Lake", and where she and Bill first met.

At one point, at least one elm graced the lawn at Stepping Stones.



*From the archives, the Burnham Family summer home and the Elm.*

It succumbed like millions of elms in the 50s, 60s and 70s to a tragic blight, Dutch Elm disease. Communities where elms were the pride of streets, parks, historic sites and neighborhoods watched helplessly as elm upon elm were devastated by the unstoppable epidemic.

Over the past decades, horticulturists have worked to propagate disease-resistant elms and the efforts have been successful. One of the varieties is the Liberty Elm. Here's the great news – Stepping Stones has two!

Caring for the trees at Stepping Stones is a huge job – there are hundreds of trees on the property – and Tom Serpe has been doing the job splendidly for several years now. He and his father, Carmine, have given us two beautiful Liberty Elms. They are fast growing and should reach maturity in about 30 years – that's fast for trees. We are deeply grateful to the Serpes for their generosity and thoughtfulness. These trees are a wonderful gift. (See picture on page 2).



Lois at picnic in 1955

## You Are Invited To Attend! *The Annual Family Group Picnic At Stepping Stones*

### Saturday, June 4, 2005



Bill, being helpful in 1955

Carrying on a tradition started by Lois and Bill (seen here) in the early 1950s, picnic at their home in Bedford Hills for AL-ANON and AA Friends

**Grounds will be open from 12-5**

**THE HOUSE WILL BE OPEN FOR TOURING**

**Open Meeting Starts At 2PM**

Featuring this year's speakers Pam and Mark W. from Topeka, Kansas. The couple has been members of A-Anon and A.A., respectively for 10 years. An Alateen member will also speak.

Bring your own food – we supply the soft drinks

**Directions:** Rt 684 to exit 6, go west onto Rt 35. Turn left onto Rt 35. After 1 mile, turn left onto Cherry Street, turn right onto Woodfield Rd., turn left onto Oak Rd. For more detailed directions visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org). **Please observe parking instructions.**

**CARS and VANS ONLY NO BUSES!**

**Public Transportation** Metro North to Bedford Hills station taxis at station can bring you to Stepping Stones. You can walk, but it is about 20 minutes up a hill much of it without sidewalks about 1.5 miles from Stepping Stones.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL – (914) 232-4822**

# Stepping Stones Note Cards Sale



Due to popular demand, we are pleased to offer Stepping Stones note cards, as seen here, for sale. If you would like to purchase a set of cards, please send \$11.00 (includes shipping and handling), along with the below pledge card to Stepping Stones Foundation, PO Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507; or visit us on-line at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org).

\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to order \_\_\_ sets of note cards (limit 5)  
 \$11.00 per set, includes shipping and handling  
 NYS Residents add 8.25% sales tax (or the appropriate amount for your area)  
 \_\_\_ I would like to order \_\_\_ sets of note cards and add \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 as my gift to Stepping Stones so that I may support the preservation  
 of Bill and Lois' home for generations to come.  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ total amount enclosed



**Ship to:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



Proceeds from the sale of cards go directly toward the preservation of Stepping Stones - so that we may be available for generations to come.

(clip here)

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Address correction requested

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