



The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

FALL 2010

Orientation/Welcome Center Opens

Stepping Stones is excited to announce that the Orientation/Welcome Center is opening soon. Almost ten years in the making, this project was undertaken by the Board of Trustees to further preserve the historic house, while enhancing the visitor experience. Stepping Stones has transformed the garage adjacent to the main house, which was built by Bill Wilson, into an attractive and useful orientation space. Designed by historic preservation architect Stephen Tilly, the building alterations were carried out by David Gengo, owner of Salem Preservation, Inc., a local construction company that specializes in historic preservation projects. Currently on display are the original map used to keep track of AA meetings, an exhibit outlining Bill and Lois' lives, and audio recordings from Bill and Lois' talks.



Bill Wilson in front of the garage.

By shifting some of the visitor activity out of the house, Stepping Stones has made a giant step in the long-term preservation of the house. Having the Center allows us to turn off all of the water in the historic house, avoiding the danger of broken pipes and potential damage to the collection. The small gift shop has been moved out of the house to the Center, and the port-o-sans are gone, replaced by two rest-



The Welcome Center on November 15, 2010.

rooms, one completely ADA accessible. The Center provides comfortable space to learn more about this remarkable couple while flipping through copies of their correspondence, enjoying graphic dis-

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Bill and Lois Wilson: In Their Own Words

In an effort to share materials from the Stepping Stones archives with the general public, Stepping Stones has created "Bill and Lois Wilson: In Their Own Words", a staged reading of letters and talks about the life story of the Wilsons and how their experience helped millions recover.

Sponsored by MCCA and Fr. Martin's Ashley, Stepping Stones hosted four performances at the Bedford Hills Community House (where some of the first AA and Al-Anon meetings were held) on September 30 and October 1-3, 2010. The response was terrific. "I never knew there was so much to learn about Bill and Lois, or what they went through. The fellowship has become a new family for me, and this [show] made me feel like I was opening a box filled with family history. I loved it, and I love Bill and Lois Wilson," said MaryBeth C.

"It is time to start sharing the archives material that Lois left behind. Bill and Lois' personal and professional memorabilia tell a perfect story of young love and hope for the future, alcoholism and its effects on a family, hope for recovery and the starting and nurturing of one of the most

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Counterclockwise from top: Jake Lewis and Maya Kazan play "young Bill" and "young Lois"; John Bedford Lloyd and Anne Twomey, special guest readers, in the final scene of "In Their Own Words"; Jim Smith as Older Bill Wilson narrates while Younger Bill (Jake H. Lewis) writes a letter in "In Their Own Words" on stage. Not pictured is June O'Neill, playing Older Lois.



Photos courtesy Bedford Community Theatre.



The Stepping Stones archives, today.

Campaign to Preserve the Archives: Can You Help Us Meet the Challenge?

The goal is to create microfilm and digital copies of a large and important manuscript and photograph collection, totaling approximately 118,000 pieces of paper, which Bill and Lois left behind. The collection includes letters dating from Bill and Lois' childhoods through the founding and nurturing of AA and Al-Anon Family Groups, manuscripts, diaries, scrap-books, photographs and more.

Lois built the existing office and archives room to preserve these materials for future generations, in the hopes that it would aid in a greater understanding of alcoholism and its recovery. Today, Stepping Stones carries on that tradition. The next important step is to safeguard the collection by creating a backup. This project will also make the collection more accessible to the general public.

We Need Your Help

The Stepping Stones Board of Trustees has accepted a challenge from an anonymous donor to raise funds to preserve the archives. *We are attempting to raise \$150,000* – an

Stepping Stones is excited to announce its campaign to preserve the archives at Stepping Stones. The

unprecedented amount for an unprecedented project in a very short period of time. *Donor John L. will match every dollar we raise up to \$20,000.*

The sooner we raise the funds, the sooner the project can start. Every day without preservation is a day that the collection is at risk. *Fire, flood, faulty sprinkler systems, and overuse can ruin this collection. Precious history is often lost by institutions that thought a disaster would never happen to them.*

John L. left a tour of Stepping Stones recently with a keen understanding of the value of the archives and a yearning to do his part to help. He said, "I prayed and meditated on how to be useful. We can work together to preserve the history of one of the most successful social and spiritual movements of all time. We should do it now, before it's too late. I hope everyone who hears about this project will join me in making a donation that is personally significant to them." It was then he offered to make a donation of \$20,000, *but only if the community joins him by matching his amount by April of 2011.*

Three Reasons to Meet the Match

- Preserve the Wilsons' history for **this and future generations.**
- Make the archives more accessible.
- Help further the understanding of alcoholism and its effects on the family.

The total project cost is approximately \$150,000, and it will begin in early 2011. Stepping Stones aims to have its entire paper collection safeguarded and digitized by a carefully chosen preservation firm by early 2012. View the website for periodic updates throughout the year.

Please show your support for this project by making a donation using the form below; at steppingstones.org; or by calling (914) 232-4822. Your support will be recognized as part of the "Made possible by..." list on the first piece of microfilm. **Make a donation in honor of someone on your holiday gift list and a personalized holiday card will be mailed to them.**



- Yes, I will do my part to support the campaign and protect the archives at Stepping Stones in the amount of**
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 Other amount _____ . \$ _____ per month until your goal is realized.
- I would like to give \$ _____ in _____'s name in the spirit of the holidays.**
Please send gift acknowledgement to this address: _____
- My check, made out to Stepping Stones is enclosed. Please charge the above amount to my credit card:
 Visa / MasterCard (circle one) _____
Account Number Expiration Date
- Name: _____
 Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
- I prefer my gift to be recognized anonymously.

Please mail this form and your contribution to Stepping Stones, 62 Oak Road, Katonah, New York 10536 or make it on-line at www.steppingstones.org.

Thank you for your support!

Window and Roof Restoration Complete

Stepping Stones is pleased to announce that the windows and roof of the main house have been completely restored. Because of chronic leaks in the dormers and the roof, and loose, rotting windows, controlling the temperature and humidity inside Bill and Lois' house was difficult. Stepping Stones sought and received an Historic Preservation grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to bring the house up to the standards of care for historic house museums. In addition



Before: Stepping Stones, looking as lovely as ever, but with triple-track storm windows, historically inaccurate shingles (which were badly weathered), leaking flashing, and aluminum gutters and leaders.

to the repair and restoration of all 28 windows, a new roof, new copper flashing on the dormers, new copper gutters, and new historic wood storm windows that filter 99% of UV light were installed on the house. The result is a sturdy shell that will prevent light damage and enable us to monitor and

minimize temperature and humidity fluctuations. The project cost over \$70,000, half of which was reimbursed by New York State. The other half was provided by the Stepping Stones community of friends. Thank you!

(This is a long way from when Bill and Lois Wilson moved in in 1941, to a house with no heat. Bill quickly found a coal furnace that a Bedford Hills bar was throwing out, paid \$10, and took it home. He installed the furnace in the basement and cut a hole in the middle of the living room floor so the heat would make its way upstairs!)



An example of the windows, before restoration.



Window restoration, completed.

For Stepping Stones' Calendar of Events, visit www.steppingstones.org.

List of Bill and Lois Wilson's Books Now Available

One of the most frequent requests at Stepping Stones is for a list of the 1000+ books in Bill and Lois Wilson's library. Thanks to a cataloging project made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the hard work of Anna Konstantatos and her team of volunteers, this list is now available in the Archives section of the Stepping Stones website (www.steppingstones.org).

The listing includes notations found in the books, possibly made by Bill or Lois, and inscriptions from others. One favorite is *The Little Me and The Great Me*, a children's book by Lou Austin. It sits next to Bill's copy of *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (a gift from his spiritual advisor Fr. Dowling) among only a small number of books in Bill's private writing studio, Wit's End.

One of Bill and Lois' favorite pastimes was to read to each other. They took quiet time every morning to do so, and Lois' diaries highlight many times throughout their lives when they spent an entire afternoon that way. This list of books may provide some insight into what inspired Bill and Lois.



This children's book sits directly above Bill Wilson's desk and is inscribed by the author, "For my friends Bill and Lois Wilson - who know these things. - Lou Austin" One page reads, "When I am the great me, I am very happy. Of course, I cannot always be happy. Nobody can be happy all the time... The GREAT ME knows what to do when things are sad. The GREAT ME does not cry or worry. When things are sad, the GREAT ME looks around to help somebody else..."

*Among the gems discovered in the cataloging process was a copy of Helen Keller's *The Story of My Life*, inscribed by Ms. Keller herself. The inscription, however, was not to Bill or Lois, but to a Mr. Momuro, possibly a friend or "fan" of the Wilsons who gave them the book. The inscription reads: "They say my world is sombre and drear. To me it is warm and joyous, and stars shine in the dark that cannot be seen by day. Cordially, Helen Keller"*



Bill's Cello Restored

It was said that if you visited Stepping Stones while Bill lived here you would be guaranteed a concert from him, whether you wanted one or not. Many people don't know that Bill Wilson was a violin player, much less a cellist. In fact, Nell Wing, the Wilsons' closest friend said of the latter, "I always believed if he had really pursued this instrument he could have had a successful career." Bill was self-taught from age 3, his mother recalled.



Bill and Lois entertaining friends at Stepping Stones. Bill has the cello that was restored in his hands. The cello and piano are still on display at Stepping Stones in the same place they are in this picture.

In early 2010 the folk band Basket Landing hosted a fundraiser at Stepping Stones to raise money to restore Bill's old cello, which sits in a corner of the Wilsons' living room. Band member Joanie Stein grew up hearing stories about Saturday music nights at Stepping Stones from her father, Tom Powers Sr.,

who played often with Bill and Lois. It was important to Joanie and the whole band that the money they raised preserve the spirit of music at Stepping Stones.

The event raised the majority of the funds, Stepping Stones contributed a small amount, and an in-kind donation of labor by Ron Fletcher permitted the restoration to be completed in March 2010. The cello is not in playing condition (nor should it be, per historic

preservation standards), but it is polished, the strings are intact, and a broken neck piece is back in place. We think Bill would be proud to have the cello displayed in this fashion, and thank Basket Landing and everyone who made this project possible.



Basket Landing performing at Stepping Stones in 2009. Right, Bill Wilson's cello, today.



Volunteering Opportunities

When Bill and Lois lived at Stepping Stones, they did practically every home improvement project with the help of volunteer friends. When the Wilsons vacationed, volunteers would oversee the house and have it ready upon their return.

Today, we **need your help** to make Bill and Lois' home available to visitors from around the world. With one full-time and one part-time staff member, Stepping Stones relies almost entirely on volunteers to make visiting a wonderful experience.

We would like to expand our hours and increase our educational offerings in 2011. Increasing the number of volunteers is the only way to reach these goals. Current volunteer opportunities include:

Tour Guides (Docents) and Hosts – Offering guided tours to visitors from far and wide is at the heart of the Stepping Stones experience. Guides are needed **every day, year-round**. Commitments range from 1 day a week to 1 weekend per month, for 3 hours per visit, plus special events as you are available. **Tour Guides** follow established guidelines for tours and storytelling, and work from a script. They are gentle leaders. Knowledge of AA and Al-Anon history is helpful but not required; extensive training is provided. **Hosts** assist the Tour Guide by making guests feel welcome, operating the Gift Shop, and monitoring the Welcome Center. They are not **responsible for delivering the tour. This is a great service commitment for a duo – sponsor and sponsee, partners or friends**. Our volunteers currently come from as far away as Brooklyn and Rockland County, New York.

Gardeners – Maintaining her gardens was Lois' favorite pastime; her diaries are filled with her adventures in gardening. In summer, the flower garden is the focal point of the visitor's outdoor experience. Volunteer gardeners plant and maintain one or more of Lois' 11 flower beds. A well-maintained garden helps Stepping Stones to be a good neighbor and truly carries on in Bill and Lois' spirit. Individuals or groups can sponsor a plot and come up with their own schedule of maintenance. The commitment runs from May 1 to October 1.

To inquire about being a Tour Guide, Host, or Gardener, or to nominate someone you know, call Annah at 914-232-4822. Or call with any other ideas you may have about how your expertise can benefit Stepping Stones. We look forward to hearing from you.

Online gift shop: www.steppingstones.org

Thanks to Our Volunteers

This year volunteers traveled from Connecticut and New York City to help catalog the collection, tour guides worked above and beyond the call of duty to meet the demand for tours, and a myriad of amazing helpers were there on picnic day. Stepping Stones benefitted from raffle ticket sellers, a baker, a seamstress, an architect, gardeners who traveled from Pennsylvania, friends who invited Stepping Stones to speak at conferences and others who spoke on our behalf. A host of volunteers from around the country participated in focus groups to help in the development of "In Their Own Words." Several supporters and groups hosted fundraisers to benefit Stepping Stones' historic preservation projects. Stepping Stones simply could not function in the spirit of Bill and Lois Wilson without our gracious volunteers. We thank you!

Donor page left blank deliberately.
Please contact the foundation for a list of donors.

Stepping Stones Loses a Friend

In October 2009, Stepping Stones volunteer and former staff member Sharon Mooney died. If you have visited or called Stepping Stones in the last 14 years, it is likely that you had contact with her. Sharon, a non-AA or Al-Anon member, loved history, which resulted in her love for Bill and Lois Wilson.

In a conversation just before she died, Sharon noted just how much her time at Stepping Stones meant to her. Sharon considered it a distinct pleasure to meet and get to know every visitor who crossed her path here; chances are, she remembered you. Everything about people was fascinating to Sharon, and she loved to share the personal legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson.

Sharon will be missed by her four children and many grandchildren. Stepping Stones' staff, Board of Trustees and volunteers past and present will remember her dedication, knowledge, patience, and grace. A special fund has been set up in Sharon's honor, the proceeds of which will further Stepping Stones historic preservation activities. To donate, make your check payable to Stepping Stones with Sharon Mooney noted in the memo section, or note Sharon's name on the credit card donation slip.

The Stepping Stones Foundation

62 Oak Road
Katonah, NY 10536

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Looking for a special way to be of service? Want to spend quality time with a friend while giving back? Consider being a Volunteer Tour Guide or Host for Stepping Stones today.

62 Oak Road • Katonah, NY 10536
(914) 232-4822
www.stepsstones.org

Stepping Stones is only one hour north of New York City by car or Metro-North train (Bedford Hills stop).
Visitor hours are Monday-Saturday at 1pm with reservation, and other times by appointment. No group is too small.
Open for tours with a reservation and all the time on the web.
Call or email for details.



Come home to Stepping Stones today.

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