

# The House Call

The Official Newsletter of Dr. Bob's Home

Spring 2017

## Exciting new additions to Dr. Bob's Home offer a unique glimpse into history

By Paul G.

We are excited to let you know that we have been gifted some wonderful new historical items at Dr. Bob's Home by some of our very benevolent friends. They are spools of wire from 1947 that contain actual voice messages from Bob, Anne, son Robert Jr. (Smitty) and their dear friend, Bill Wilson, as they communicated across state lines from Akron to New York and back. This is an audio time capsule that offers us the only known recording of Anne's voice, as well as a brief, yet insightful, glimpse into the significant and enduring friendships between the Smith family and Bill at that time.

A device was fabricated to give us the ability to hear individual clips of Dr. Bob, Anne, Smitty and Bill. Hearing these voices coming from the very spot in the universe where they were recorded can be both mesmerizing and moving to those who appreciate their significance.

As the story goes, in 1947, a man named George Hood was on his way to visit Bill Wilson in New York. In his possession was a wire recorder – a breadbox-sized device that could record voices and sounds, which was fairly new technology in those times. However, instead of heading straight to New York, George made a stop in Akron to see Bob, Anne and Smitty and to offer them the opportunity to record a message for Bill. Bill's reply to the Smith family, as recorded at Bedford Hills later that summer, is also included.



Upon George's arrival, and after hearing his offer, the Smiths evidently thought it was a good idea because the machine was brought straight upstairs and set up in the bedroom so that Anne, who had been convalescing after recent eye surgery, could be the first to speak into this new contraption. Bob was also recovering from his own surgery, but Anne is heard to immediately announce that "Robert wants me to start



first – he's afraid." No secrets in this house. Though her clip is only 43 seconds long, we quickly get a sense of her humor, wit and humility.

Abruptly and authoritatively, Anne then passed the microphone to her husband announcing, "Here's the Robert." Serious, but not without a sense of humor, Dr. Bob sounds almost Shakespearean in his speech as he explains to Bill his medical travails and, with a wry twist, the lessons he has learned from them. He also expresses their regrets at not being able to accept Bill's invitation for them to vacation in Bedford Hills.

Son Robert Jr., aka Smitty was also present and he next adds his own greetings to Bill along with a little gentle inventory taking of his father who, for all we know, may well have been in the room.

In these recordings, made spontaneously in the casual and unscripted setting of an upstairs bedroom, we hear the lighthearted nature of a home rich in peace and a message rich in love to their counterparts in New York.

Mr. Hood then packed up his gadget and headed off to his meeting in New York to play for Bill the message from his Akron friends.

At some point, Bill recorded his reply which is fascinating from a personal as well as historical perspective. In it, he expressed his sympathies for the Smiths' medical issues, referenced discussions on the "state of AA affairs throughout the country" and alludes to the need for getting organized and having a "reorganization" plan. In the last clip, we hear George giving the introduction "now we have 'Bill the Virtuoso'" and without further comment, Bill launches into a violin solo of a somewhat plaintive and introspective piece.

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# Give to Dr. Bob's endowment fund

Dr. Bob's endowment fund supports the ongoing physical maintenance of the house in perpetuity, so generations to come will be able to experience "where it all started."

## Why give?

- Making an endowment gift provides you with the opportunity to "give back" for all the Smith family and their legacy have given us.
- Our endowment provides us with an ongoing source of income that support the maintenance and upkeep of Dr. Bob's Home. The larger our endowment, the more we receive annually from endowment earnings that we can use toward supporting our mission.
- Your gift to the endowment creates a lasting legacy that will forever support Dr. Bob's Home.

## Make a gift today!

Your gift may be directed toward:

- Renovations
- Endowment
- Operations

To make a gift, call 330.864.1935, go online at [DrBobsHome.com](http://DrBobsHome.com) or mail the included envelope to: Dr. Bob's Home, PO Box 449, Akron, OH 44309.

# Chairman's corner

## Three pertinent ideas

In our life-changing program there are three pertinent ideas contained in our last three steps:

- In Step 10: The word **continue**
- In Step 11: The word **improve**
- In Step 12: The word **practice**

At Dr. Bob's we take these ideas to heart. Simply said, we strive to improve, continue and practice the education, preservation and restoration that we emphasize. To that end, that means we are custodians of Dr. Bob's Home and 859 Ardmore Ave., also known as "The House Next Door."

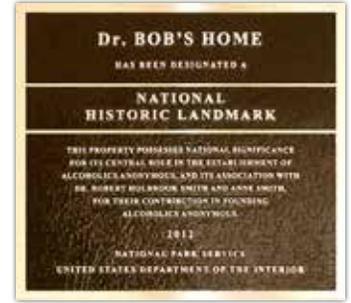
The year 2017 affords us opportunities to follow both our mission statement and our strategic plan by finishing the work that needs to be done at 859 Ardmore, where our story is not only revealed, but completed.

This house is "Home" for many historical and archival items. It also includes our gift shop, educational center and administrative offices. This structure is an integral part of the Dr. Bob's Home experience and is vital to our efforts to preserve the past, so we can understand the present and may secure our future.

Updates, renovations and restoration have already begun, with many more projects on the horizon.

We at Dr. Bob's want to thank you for past support and your continuous generosity. With people like you, the "Friends of Dr. Bob's," WE can and will fulfill OUR destiny!

May God bless and keep you—until then,  
Harmon V.  
Chairman, Dr. Bob's Home



## We thank the following foundations for their gifts to support Dr. Bob's Home:

- Berlin Family Foundation
- Kenneth L. Calhoun Charitable Trust
- Samuel Reese Willis Foundation
- Shaw Foundation Fund at Akron Community Foundation
- Welty Family Foundation

## Thank you!

We thank our non-managing trustees and friends of Dr. Bob's Home for their efforts to raise funds throughout the country and abroad. Fundraising events were held in New York, Washington, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and England. Your dedicated work and service supports improvements to Dr. Bob's Home and The House Next Door. For upcoming events, visit [drbobshome.com](http://drbobshome.com). Anyone interested in hosting an event to benefit Dr. Bob's Home, call 330.864.1935.



Exciting new additions continued from page 1.



Numerous listeners and iPhone apps have tried to definitively identify the song without a clear cut answer as of yet. This is the only known recording of Bill playing the violin and at the end, we hear his heartfelt farewell to the Smiths back in Ohio – “So long dear people, we’ll be seeing you soon.”

We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Hood for his efforts in making this recording and can only

speculate as to his motivation for lugging his device up the 12 steps to the front door of 855 Ardmore in Akron, to New York, and then back to Akron once again. We realize this was a time when such a mission could be very difficult considering that the interstate highway systems as we enjoy them today did not exist yet. We also marvel at the fact that the entirety of this exchange could have easily taken place as a simple telephone conversation thereby evaporating forever as soon as the receiver was replaced upon its cradle.

Thank you to those who presented us with such an incredible gift and a rich and endearing glimpse into the lives of those we hold so dear.

## Security and safety update

### New security system provides major safety enhancements for both houses

The new security systems for both houses at 855 and 859 Ardmore Ave. are now up and running. Each employee, volunteer and board member now has a unique code used to operate the deadbolts and alarm systems upon arrival and departure. Board members also receive text alerts when the properties are unlocked, go into alarm status, or even if a battery is running low on a sensor. And it all comes at 30 percent less than we had been paying.

What’s more, the system can detect electrical abnormalities and shut down a circuit before a fire can start, but is smart enough to minimize any chances of nuisance trips. In fact, it has already prevented a fire, due to an old table lamp that evidently needs rewiring.

## Building and grounds

When you visit Dr. Bob’s Home at 855 Ardmore Ave. or the archives and gift shop at 859 Ardmore Ave., you will see our efforts in continuing to move forward with preservation and conservation. Taking care of the property and the priceless personal items of the Smith family is a team effort. We would like to extend a special THANK YOU to everyone involved, especially our cleaning and preservation crew, who truly defines love and service! Whether it be the cleaning crew who takes care of the inside of both buildings or our master gardener who maintains the exterior gardens, your hard work and dedication is evident and continues to impress us all. It is truly breathtaking! Soon we will begin our renovation of the archives and gift shop. We invite all to stop by. As always, it is our goal to improve and share our vision! Your support is greatly appreciated. *Ryan G.*

## Humility Plaque



## Come home for Founders’ Day 2017

Founders’ Day weekend is June 9, 10 and 11. More than 10,000 people will come to Akron to celebrate the 82nd year of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous – a gift from God.

Please accept our personal invitation to “COME HOME” at Dr. Bob’s Home during Founders’ Day weekend. Remember there is no place like “HOME.” A visit to the Smith home over Founders’ Day weekend makes the journey to Akron complete.

To see the fellowship, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. The House Full of Miracles is waiting to greet you with these simple but profound words... “WELCOME HOME!”

### Gift shop

To better serve everyone who visits the home during Founders’ Day the gift shop that is located outside in the garage will now have the ability to accept credit cards.

Visit the gift shop for a Pewter replica keychain of a 1935 payphone, once located at the Mayflower Hotel in downtown Akron. They are \$10 each. The keychains are made by a recovering artist here in Akron who wants the artwork to be a symbolic reminder for all of us to call before you pick up a drink.



## Take a virtual tour

You can now take a virtual tour of Dr. Bob's Home via our website at drbobshome.com.

Although we are still developing the full tour, the first part is now up and running. Once you've clicked on the virtual tour link from the home page, you will be able to imagine you have just walked in the door. Using a mouse or your mobile device, move the image in any direction – right, left, up or down – and you will see the first floor as if you were standing there. Welcome Home.



## Receive our newsletter

Visit the website to sign up for our newsletter and never miss an update about the great things happening at Dr. Bob's Home!

## Join our team!

What an amazing service position I have! I get to coordinate an awesome group of dedicated people who have the privilege of greeting and taking our guests through the house where it all began. We have around 25 volunteer guides who give their time at Dr. Bob's Home. Because of them, we are able to staff the house and gift shop, year-round.

Being a volunteer at Dr. Bob's Home is one of the most satisfying service positions I've experienced. If you would like to join us, it's easy to get started. Simply submit a volunteer application. Once accepted, you receive a script and stories about each room of the house. Most of our volunteer guides study more to enable them to give our guests a better view of the house and what transpired there. We sure don't need to embellish on the stories – they are truly amazing in their own right; we just try to get them right.

If you live nearby or are visiting the house, we would be happy to show you what we do and maybe you'll decide you'd like to join this spectacular team!

In love and service,  
Wayne A., volunteer coordinator

## We love volunteers!

Looking for an opportunity to serve Dr. Bob's Home? We welcome your time and your talents! Here are a few opportunities:

- Cleaning and housekeeping
- Data entry
- Fundraising events
- Gardening
- Home tours
- Photography
- Translation
- Writing for newsletter

For more information, please contact Wayne at 330.864.1935.

## New, expanded hours for Dr. Bob's Home

Starting April 17, the Home will be open every day from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Come visit us and shop our gift shop.



## OUR MISSION

Our primary purpose is to maintain, restore and preserve the property at 855 Ardmore Avenue, which was the family home of physician Robert Holbrook Smith, affectionately called Dr. Bob, one of the founding fathers of Alcoholics Anonymous. This historic site in Akron, Ohio is the birthplace of this internationally known fellowship, which subsequently became the foundation of numerous 12-step programs that are improving the lives of millions.

Second, our ongoing mission is to help alcoholics by preserving the atmosphere of acceptance where early members achieved and maintained their sobriety. This prevailing attitude is simply expressed in our greeting "Welcome Home."

Third, we educate the local community and beyond on how Dr. Bob's Home played a part in the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous and the manner in which alcoholics were helped in the early days.

## BOARD LISTING

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Kent C., vice chairman  
Dennis T., secretary

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