



The House Call

The Official Newsletter of Dr. Bob's Home

Fall 2024

"Do you know how you spell 'love?' T-I-M-E"
-Vic M., Cleveland, OH

The near continuous pounding of the keys on the old Underwood typewriter that filled the dining room ceased.

Sue Smith leaned back and massaged the inside of her hand which was sore from typing. Only recently enrolled in secretarial school, she had never done so much typing, though, transcribing pages and pages of personal stories for Bill and her father's book project proved good practice.

The house was quiet. The soft tones of a big band ballad floated from her mother's radio while men's hushed voices bled from the kitchen nearby. She could just make out the stiff Vermont accent of her father, the halting cadence of another male voice, and an occasional interjection by the man from the newspaper jotting down notes.

It had been several years since her father's last drink, and finally he seemed to have found peace working with the steady stream of drunks coming into their home. Everyone in the family had been recruited into his new calling. Everyone, that is, except her brother Smitty who was off somewhere - probably in the basement garage siphoning gas from their father's hulking Pierce-Arrow (or the 'Fierce-Error' as her father would quip about the car's mechanical issues).

The home was happy now, not free from the effects of the Great Depression, but happy, nonetheless. It was a marked change from before her father met Bill that Mothers' Day weekend just three years ago. It was a welcome change for Sue's mother who had spent years hoping and praying for her husband to get sober. How much suffering she must've experienced in their 23 years of marriage. So much so, that Anne Smith picked up smoking in her 50s.

"Is it right or wrong?" her mother asked. Sue turned and looked at Anne sitting in the corner chair, a phone receiver cradled on her shoulder as she lit a fresh cigarette.

There was a pause and then, "Well, Hen, you have to ask yourself: is it true or false, ugly or beautiful, and how is it going to affect the other person?"

Her mother listened to the woman on the other end of the line, Mr. Dotson's wife. They spoke almost every morning and 'checked' their guidance, the regular practice of the Oxford Group.

There was a sharp knock at the front door. Anne said a clipped goodbye to Henrietta, smoothed her plain dress and apron as she rose, and went to greet the visitors. Sue's father came into the dining room from the kitchen as a small scrum of people entered the home: two cleaned up men holding up a shambolic drunk, a tearful woman and small boy, bewildered, clutching a Raggedy Andy doll.

"We got a fresh one, Doc," chimed one of the bright-eyed men in a remarkably cheery voice.

Sue's father, always tight-lipped, intoned, "upstairs; bedroom on the left."



Dr Bob looked at the wife and child as the men hustled the drunk up the stairs. Maybe he remembered the horrors he had inflicted on his own family not so very long ago.

"It's ok, Robert." Anne said softly. Only simple words were needed to express the weight of their journey, through good times and bad, as husband and wife.

He offered a tight smile and turned to go upstairs.

Anne knelt before the child and offered a candy from a pocket on her apron. It was a small gesture but enough to just coax a small smile from him.

Anne then took the boy and his mother by the hand and led them to the kitchen. She promptly kicked the newspaper man and his companion out as she put on a fresh pot of coffee.

Slapping down a fresh stack of notes, Jim Scott, the news hawk, joked "Sue, we've been evicted by mater familias..."

Sue clucked her tongue, loaded a fresh sheet of paper and began to type as the men set down to work again.

For over a century, the home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith has stood at the corner of Ardmore and Everett Avenues in Akron, OH. For 89 years, it has been part of the collective story of Alcoholics Anonymous and for 40 years it has been a pilgrimage of many a recovered drunk to drink a cup of coffee at the kitchen table. This has been made possible by the dedication and time of Dr. Bob and the early fellowship, successive generations who have carried the message, and the volunteers who continue to share the story of 855 Ardmore.

Where do we spend our time, but, more importantly, how much do we love?

"I think the kind of service that really counts is giving of yourself, and that invariably requires effort and time." - Dr. Bob

Save the Date

2025 Founders' Day Weekend

June 6, 7 and 8
Akron, OH

855 Ardmore Avenue, P.O. Box 449, Akron, OH 44309

330.864.1935

drbobshome.org

facebook.com/drbobshome

40 years of Love and Service

What a journey it has been. Yes - miracles do happen, but always "in God's good time!" When the Founders' Foundation was formed 40 years ago, they put their vision in God's hands and today it is still evident that 855 Ardmore is the House Full of Miracles! There were struggles at times but lessons learned and here we are.

With the help of the almost 80 volunteers that are still at the front door to "Welcome Home" the over 160,000 visitors a year. And our trusted volunteers are at the home over 10,000 hours each year. True example of Service done with Love. The volunteers are the heart of home and you, our visitors, are like the blood that flows through it. We have grown to a Campus now with three homes that are all over 100 years old and without all of our donors and you that would not have been possible. Our mission to maintain, preserve and educate continues to grow and there is still work to be done. We could use your help! We are getting ready to restore the third floor of Dr. Bob's Home. It will be a major task, so we will do what we have always done and put it God's hands!

Thank You all for continued love and support. The Spirit and legacy of the Smith family continue to flow through 855 Ardmore.

Ryan G.
Chairman

"If service is the secret of sobriety, then serving as a volunteer at Dr. Bob's Home is the secret sauce."

- Dave L.

Join our email list

If you would like to receive email communications and announcements from Dr. Bob's Home, please visit drbobshome.org/about/guestbook.

Make a gift today!

Your support is appreciated and will be used for ongoing renovations and general operations and upkeep of the grounds and homes.

To make a gift call 330.864.1935 or visit drbobshome.org.

Please consider including Dr. Bob's Home in your estate planning. A gift made through your estate or investment assets will help ensure the long-term future of Dr. Bob's Home and may provide tax benefits to you.

Update From The Building And Grounds Committee

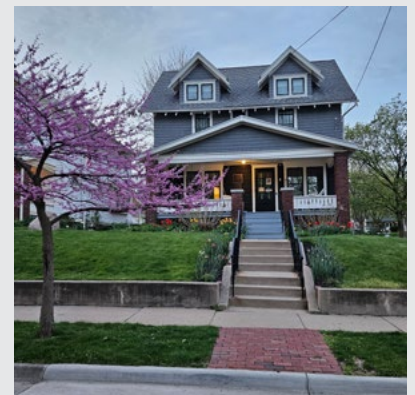
I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our volunteers. Your commitment is the cornerstone of maintaining Dr. Bob's Home. From the Cleaning Crew who cares for three historic houses to Annie Smith's Garden Club, and the team that keeps our grounds beautiful, your efforts make our campus a welcoming place for all who visit.

Recently, we've completed a significant improvement to our facilities. A new HVAC system has been installed in the Gift Shop, replacing the old unit, which had been in service for nearly 30 years. This upgrade will improve the comfort of our visitors, enhance climate control for the shop's contents and offer improved energy efficiency.

Looking ahead, we are focused on raising funds for much-needed restoration to the third floor of Dr. Bob's Home at 855 Ardmore. This will help preserve this historic space, ensuring its structural integrity and supporting our mission of providing a welcoming place for reflection and recovery.

Lastly, thank you to our Ambassadors and donors. Your support allows us to preserve the legacy of Dr. Bob's Home for future generations. Together, we ensure that "Welcome Home" will continue to be heard at 855 Ardmore for many years to come.

Aaron R.



The Beginning of Giving

On June 13, 1984, a group of local AA members in Akron got together to see if they could find a way to purchase the home at 855 Ardmore Avenue. The home where Dr. Bob and Anne Smith lived and where Bill Wilson stayed while the program Alcoholics Anonymous was formulated.

Among those in attendance was Joe and Pearl G., KC and Kay S., Sue W., Bruce S., Frank M. and one out of town, Wesley Parrish.

The text below is from the minutes of the above meeting:

"We are asking people to donate \$5 towards the purchase and restoration. Wesley P. volunteered to be our Public Relations man."

By March 1985 donations had been received from almost every state in the country and most provinces in Canada, along with monies from Scotland, South Africa, Australia and Mexico. Some donations were \$1, some were \$2. They continued to arrive, and the Founders Foundation closed on 855 Ardmore Avenue in April 1985.

Our Ambassador program, which we so lovingly call it, started back in 1984 when gifts from all over the world were sent. Wesley P. was undoubtedly our First Ambassador.

We continue to share this story and remind each other that the home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith at 855 Ardmore Avenue is OUR Home, purchased, restored and maintained by YOU.

Sheryl R.



Annie Smith's Garden

Butterflies are a reminder of our own transformation on the spiritual path. I created a Monarch Way at Annie Smith's Garden to feed the pollinators on their journey to and from either Mexico or California. I have always promoted pollinators here, and even had ladybugs delivered one year that caused quite a chuckle among the volunteers.

When starting to tend to the garden over ten years ago I had no idea I would be on this journey. I just felt a pressing need to clean up the gardens and of course when I started asking questions about it, I was honored with the gardener position. Since then I have gotten a few helpers along the way to help curate and maintain Annie's Garden in keeping with the historical site.

All of us newcomers come to the rooms all twisted up in ourselves. I also have had to prune and tend with an all year-round bloom to keep up with growth and that is how spiritual life is. To continue to grow all

year round one day at a time. This year I added historical markers for the plants for continued growth and awareness.

A group of drunks tried something new and grew Zinnias from seed which feed all kinds of pollinators. Like a tool in our toolbox, something to continue, improve and then practice. So we grew them, planted them and watered them. To my surprise, they are tall. Just like us when we focus on God we grow and grow. Only God can make us grow, just like Zinnias.

On September 22nd, I came to prune and get ready for autumn harvest and on this day two beautiful, male Monarchs were flying in and out of the 12 steps to home. I wept with tears. This was the first time two Monarchs were there. Of course- I named them Bill and Dr. Bob! I was shocked and amazed before admiring their beauty. Flying, eating and bathing in the sun. Oh what a sight! Just as I am sitting here thinking about it. They have moved on but will be back because now they have a little home on the 12 steps another year around the sun.

Cindy L.

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

Akron Community Foundation

Charles E. and Mabel M. Ritchie Foundation

Kenneth L. Calhoun Charitable Trust

Laura R. and Lucian Q. Moffitt Foundation

Lehner Family Foundation

Lloyd L. and Louise K. Smith Foundation

Mary S. and David C. Corbin Foundation

The R.C Musson and Katharine M. Musson Charitable Foundation

Sisler McFawn Foundation

W. Paul and Thora J. Mills Memorial Foundation

Welty Family Foundation

From the Gift Shop

When Dr. Bob's Home, at 855 Ardmore, was opened to the public 40 years ago a small gift shop was set up in the living room, selling ashtrays, placemats and our signature coffee mug that reads "I drank at Dr. Bob's."

When the house was renovated and became a National Landmark in 2013, the gift shop was moved to where it is today in the archive house next door at 859 Ardmore Ave.

In 2023 the gift shop was remodeled and enlarged, adding an array of merchandise to appeal to our many visitors from all over the world to take home a memory.

Our signature mug is still a favorite, as is our house coin with the home and address on one side and our slogan "Welcome Home" on the other. Our book covers with the Humility Prayer are very popular as well.

We sell all products in store and online at drbobshome.org.

Sandy G.



I remember...

A day when visiting and having a cup of coffee at 855 Ardmore was only a dream, when buses at Founders' Day could only drive past the home of Dr. Bob and Anne Smith. So many recovering souls longing to be closer to the origin of their own miracle so deeply rooted in the history of the 12 step movement.

The home was sold in 1952 after Dr. Bob's death in 1950. After years of having a variety of occupants it was secured following a cold call on the current owner in November of 1984. This was the beginning. A small original group of members, including Dr. Bob's daughter, began to form a foundation and tackle the challenge of restoration of the home and securing funding to secure the mortgage and management of the property.

All of this was completed by June of 1985 in time for Founders' Day and the 50th Anniversary of the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous. At that time the home was put on the National Registry. In 2012 the home received the title of National Historic Landmark. It now belongs to the history and heritage of the United States.

The doors of the home remain open to this day offering a "welcome home" greeting to all who visit and capturing the hospitality of the Smith's with a chance to share in fellowship and a cup of coffee around the humble kitchen table. The history is alive in each room of the home as guests step back in time and experience the reality of a movement born in "A House of Miracles."

May we reflect at this time on all the efforts that have led to the preservation of Dr. Bob and Anne's Home. The countless number of volunteers, board members and all of those who have donated services or donations to the Foundation's efforts. The grass roots movement has blossomed into two other buildings housing a museum, gift store, library, archives and welcome center.

May we always hope that the home reflect the dignity and humility of Anne and Bob Smith and their love and sacrifices for the alcoholics and their families. May it continue to keep the doors open for all who seek to enter into this beautiful story of God's love for the alcoholic.

Gail La C.



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 birth place 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.

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