

The House Call

The Official Newsletter of Dr. Bob's Home

Fall 2017

Edgar R. — A.A.'s First Prospect

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"There were two firsts in A.A. — the first one who accepted the program and the first who refused it." Eddie R.

Shortly after Bob sobered up in June 1935, a neighbor of the Smiths sent Edgar R., also known as Eddie, over to the Smith's home. Edgar, his wife and two children were facing eviction at the time and Anne Smith invited the family to stay with them and put them in Sue's bedroom.



Bill was still in Akron and staying with the Smiths. Both men set to work on trying to sober Eddie up and stay sober themselves. Bill used to say that he could keep an army sober; however, getting Eddie sober was a true test to the 12-Step work. Both Bob and Bill were flying blind as they tried one thing after another. Smitty, Dr. Bob's son, felt that Bill and his father were determined to make a convert out of somebody at the time. He recalled that our co-founders would lock Eddie up in a second floor room in an effort to keep him sober.

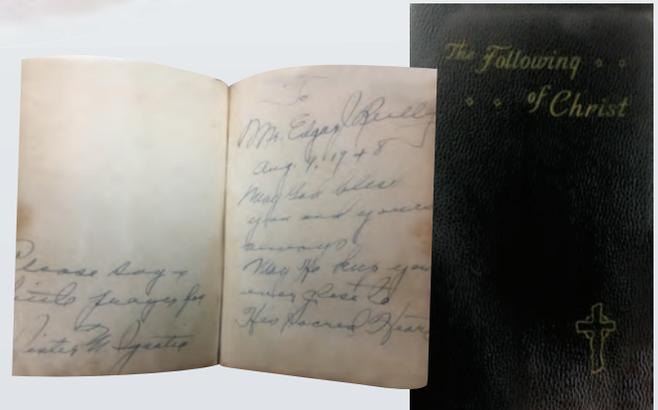
But it was a tough road. Eddie's difficult journey is one that is often shared and discussed here at 855. For instance, Eddie was known to beat his wife after she shared her indiscretions even though she was advised to do so by the Oxford Group. She would come down to breakfast with bruises and a black eye. According to *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers* that is where we get "when to do so would injure them or others."

Then there is the time he called Bob and Bill threatening to throw himself into Lake Erie. Dr. Bob and Bill drove up to Cleveland and brought him back. Another time, Eddie slid down the drain pipe and was running down the street. Bob chased him by car and Bill by foot.

The final episode is when he chased Anne with a butcher knife after she fed him a tuna fish sandwich. Anne ran upstairs and fell to her knees praying the "Lord's Prayer" to calm him down when Bill rescued her and managed to get the knife. Reluctantly, they had to let Eddie go. But we learned another early lesson that you don't "wet nurse a drunk."

However, the story does not end here.

Eddie reappeared sober at Dr. Bob's funeral in 1950. Bill was happy to see him. In later correspondence with him he states, **"Few events in my A. A. life have given me more satisfaction than your ultimate recovery, coming on the eve of Dr. Bob's passing."**



Curiously, there is a book *Following of Christ* signed to him by Sister Ignatia in August 1948.

We recently came across a letter written by Eddie's wife, Helen. Eddie would go on to stay sober and work for the National Committee of Alcoholism in Youngstown, Ohio, and serve as their newly elected president. He died with 17 years of sobriety in December 1963. She states in her letter "He used to include the Four Absolutés in his thinking as he used these personally in all of his affairs and they were always part of his leads. He was my husband and of course I loved him for that, but I was also proud of his AA. He was a giant."

**New Hours at
Dr. Bob's Home**

**11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Memorial Day
weekend through Labor Day**
**Noon – 3 p.m. The day after
Labor Day through the day
before Memorial Day**

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 supports 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 or mail the included envelope to: Dr. Bob's Home, PO Box 449, Akron, OH 44309.

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

- W. Paul and Thora J. Mills Foundation
- R.C. and Katharine M. Musson Charitable Foundation
- Charles E. and Mabel M. Ritchie Foundation
- Three Trees Fund at Akron Community Foundation

Chairman's Corner

Welcome Home

The words you first hear upon arriving at Dr. Bob's is "Welcome Home!" There is a deep spiritual significance to our greeting.

As is the case with many words in the English language, Home can be used as a noun, adjective, verb, adverb or idiom. Some of the apropos definitions or meanings include:

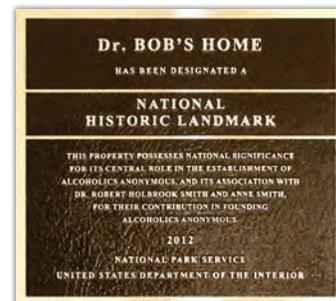
- 1 - The place in which one's domestic affections are centered
- 2 - Any place of refuge
- 3 - Principal or main
- 4 - To the mark or point aimed at
- 5 - A situation familiar to one, at ease
- 6 - Deep, to the heart

So simply said but profoundly stated, "Home" is where the heart is. "Home" is where we feel safe, secure and sound. The fundamental idea of "Home" and the natural desire for "Home" is deep down in every man, woman and child. "Home" is where your past is, where your present resides and where your future will live.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of allowing us to help preserve, protect and provide this beacon of light which is a safe haven for all of us to come "Home." Yes, Dr. Bob's is a "House Full of Miracles," but it's also the place we know and love as "Home."

Please accept our personal invitation to come "Home" or come back "Home" to have that spiritual experience when those magical words are spoken. Welcome Home - the language of the heart in its purest form.

Harmon V.
Chairman, Dr. Bob's Home



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.** Anyone interested in hosting an event to benefit Dr. Bob's Home, call 330.864.1935.

From the journal of Anne Smith's Garden

After all the rain in the spring, the irises on the 12 steps were in full bloom in early June with zinnias and marigolds to welcome visitors from all over the world for Founders' Day weekend. The apricot roses were blooming, bees were buzzing in the red bee balm and anemones. We were happy to receive lots of sunshine for grass to grow. The backyard was booming with daisies and day lilies.

We met a lot of people Founders' Day weekend and some were gardeners we greeted from New Jersey, New York, California, Tennessee, Florida and one from Hawaii. Everyone was happy, joyous and free in Anne Smith's Garden.

*By Cindy L.,
Master Gardener*



To fill three spare hours from a volunteer's perspective

By Paul G.

One day, some years ago, I unexpectedly found that I needed to travel from Cleveland to Akron for a business meeting. The meeting ended up being much shorter than expected. It was shortly after noon and I didn't need to be back in Cleveland at the steel mills until 5 p.m. to cover one of the night shifts for my "day job." So there I was with about three hours of extra time on my hands and no plan to use it. I am one who tries to be efficient in the use of my time because, as I'll freely admit, I have wasted far too much of it in the past. Time, as I have finally come to realize, is one of our most precious and valuable resources. So I asked myself how best to kill three hours without wasting them? Although there are always projects awaiting me at home, it would be pointless to try to stop there before going to work.

It then occurred to me that I was probably quite close to Dr. Bob's Home. I had learned that action taken, on even the vaguest of intuitive thoughts related to our fellowship, often led to good things. Ten minutes later, after a Google search for the address, I was walking up the steps and into the front door of Dr. Bob's Home.

Upon entering, I heard the "Welcome home" greeting that awaits all visitors. I stood in the entrance to the living room for a moment to become acclimated to the surroundings and slowly let myself be transported back in time. I looked around and realized there were a few other guests in the house. The voices led me into the kitchen area where there was already a lively discussion in progress. I was surprised to recognize one of our area's more enthusiastic members there talking jovially to some visitors from a distant state. I observed that these people had come a long way at great effort to be in that kitchen. I almost immediately had a sense of being in the right place at the right time. I am not sure how long we chatted but the time flew. I now felt a feeling of wonderment that here, once again, I had unwittingly found myself in the good company of committed and enthusiastic members of our fellowship. These were very similar to the feelings I had when I was new. I was in awe at the realization that moments such as these had happened at this very spot in God's universe in the spring of 1935.

It came out in the conversation that the long-timer was a regular volunteer at the house and had been involved for quite some time. It soon became obvious that there was depth and weight to the activities at the house and if I wanted to join in that, all I would have to do was show up. Leaving the house that afternoon and heading back to Cleveland, I reflected on how well my time there had been spent, indeed. The next day I called in and signed up to join the



volunteer crew. In the following weeks, I re-familiarized myself with some of the history, re-read some of our conference literature and studied the tour script which helped me to be a more effective and accurate volunteer. I established a spot in the volunteer rotation and for three weeks a month I look forward to my volunteer day. The house was open for three hours daily at that time and I would soon find myself coming early and staying late just because of the richness of the experience and in appreciation of what took place there.

Some of my favorite moments are at closing during bleak winter days when, after turning off all the lights and preparing the coffee pot for the next day, I will go to the front door to scan the street for late arrivals before locking up for the night. I often will pause for some time and listen to the quiet, or the wind outside, or to observe the waning afternoon winter light through the windows and reflect on the visitors who came in from the cold that day both metaphorically and literally speaking. Sometimes I can feel a sense of community even though I am totally alone. "Like a cog in something turning" to quote Joni Mitchell. At these times I smile and look to the sky.

Since that original visit, my experiences as a volunteer in service of the house have grown and matured. My involvement there adds more width, depth and color to the landscape of my journey in the fellowship. It had been awhile since my last commitment ended and I was looking for another way to be of service but I never expected it to be in Akron. As I sometimes jokingly tell the younger visitors, "it is a good gig." The blessings bestowed far outweigh any inconvenience or efforts expended. The joy in the faces of the visitors who come through our front door, with eyes wide or filled with tears of gratitude, provides overcompensation to all who serve. The opportunity to aid in the stewardship of the historic artifacts related to the founders of one of the most significant social movements of the 20th century is a calling never imagined. So once again I have seen that beautiful and vital paths are found in the service of a greater good and that those paths will oft times appear when I am least expecting it.

A worthy endeavor indeed...and all to fill three spare hours.



Spirit of sharing By Cassy G.

In early sobriety, I visited 855 Ardmore Avenue for the first time. I knew little of the history of Alcoholics Anonymous but was told, "This is where it all began." I felt a sense of ease and comfort from the moment my feet entered the doorway. There was a sweet spirit that seemed to wrap around me. It was indescribable! I continued to visit often. I would go after hours just to sit on the porch. It was my special place, where I felt most at peace. With each visit, my feelings intensified. My admiration and respect for the Smiths grew. My heart swelled with gratitude for their contribution! I wanted to know more of this family, who opened their home and hearts to those afflicted with alcoholism.

I had a friend who volunteered once a week. He invited me to join him and to "just hang out." I couldn't get enough! I was fascinated by the events that took place in that quaint house in Akron. I became a volunteer and my knowledge increased. My life began to change! I was surrounded by love and good friends. I became a part of something very special.

In 2016, I married that friend and we're still "hanging out." Dr. Bob's Home is a huge part of each of our lives, as well as something we share. We help take care of the home, archives and gift shop and serve visitors. I am now privileged to share with others what I have learned, as I walk them through the house, room by room. I see the expressions on their faces as those feelings I know so well come over them. They join me in that spirit of comradery and are forever changed! When they express their appreciation for me being there, I assure them that I am so very thankful for them! Along with the board members, volunteers and visitors from around the world, I have become a piece of the history of Dr. Bob's Home. I am so humbled and honored to greet others and say, "Welcome Home" and explain how, "This is where it all began."

Founders' Day in the news

For those who are interested in the history of our fellowship, you may have read the March 1, 1941 publication of an article in *The Saturday Evening Post* written by Jack Alexander. If you have visited Dr. Bob's Home, you may have seen the reprinted copy we have on display.

Every year, during Founders' Day weekend in Akron, our local paper, *The Akron Beacon Journal*, publishes an article about the events of the weekend and our history with photos of the gravesite or Dr. Bob's Home.

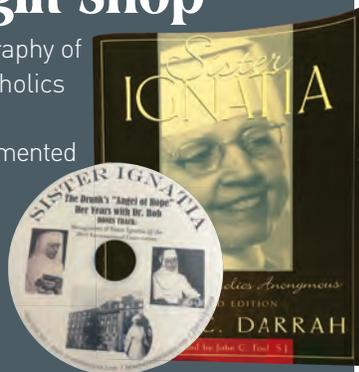
On June 7 of this year, *The Akron Beacon Journal* reprinted an article which they described as their first published account of A.A. This article, originally published on October 29, 1939, was written by Akron journalist Keyes Beech.

For links to the June 7, 2017 article reprint, or a downloadable copy of the 1939 article please visit our website at drbobshome.com/1939-abj.

Sister Ignatia in the gift shop

Visit the gift shop and browse through the biography of Sister Ignatia, also known as the "Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous," by Mary Darrah from Akron. This biography was the first and most thoroughly documented account of Sister Ignatia and Akron A.A. history.

We are committed to providing items that preserve the legacy of the Smith family and significance of Akron in telling the "story of miracles." Have fun looking through other books and literature in our gift shop in the House Next Door and online at drbobshome.com/shop. We are sure you will find the perfect item to take home.



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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