

October 1970



Bernard B. Smith

1901-1970

The AA General Service Board was still called the Alcoholic Foundation when he joined it, in June 1944. His advice influenced the decision to hold the first General Service Conference, in 1951. Chairman of the Board and the Conference from January 1951 to April 1956, he was serving as first vice-chairman of the Board at the time of his death. He was an attorney, an author, and an advocate of Anglo-American understanding; for his efforts in that cause, Queen Elizabeth II awarded him a decoration, Honorary Commander of the Order of the British Empire, in October 1957.

A tribute from Bill:

I deeply regret that my health will not permit me to attend the services for my old friend Bern Smith. His death is a great personal loss to me, for I have leaned heavily upon him for many years. His wise counsel was always mine for the asking; the warmth of his friendship, mine from the beginning.

From the very beginning, Bern Smith understood the spiritual basis upon which the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous rests. Such an understanding is rare among "outsiders." But Bern never was an outsider — not really. He not only understood our Fellowship, he believed in it as well.

Just one month ago today, Bern made a remarkable and inspiring talk to some 11,000 of our members gathered in Miami Beach to celebrate our Fellowship's thirty-fifth anniversary. The subject of his talk was Unity — truly an apt subject, for no man did more than he to assure Unity within our Fellowship.

For that matter, he did much to assure our very survival, for he was one of the principal architects of our General Service Conference.

Bern Smith would not want, nor does he need, encomiums from me. What he has done for Alcoholics Anonymous speaks far louder than any words of mine could ever do. His wisdom and vision will be sorely missed by us all.

I can only add that I have lost an old and valued friend; AA, a great and devoted servant.