

Bill Wilson and Law School

Bill writes in the Big Book (page 2): "I took a night law course...I studied economics and business as well as law...Potential alcoholic that I was, I nearly failed my law course. At one of the finals I was too drunk to think or write...By the time I had completed the law, I knew the law was not for me."

Dan Demarest, a former Stepping Stones board member (Stepping Stones is where Bill & Lois lived the last half of their life) and a lawyer himself, was curious about Bill's almost-law career and contacted Brooklyn Law School for more information. He writes:

"I spoke on the telephone yesterday with Dean Traeger of Brooklyn Law School, who had before him the School's file on Bill Wilson's academic career as a law student in the early 1920's.

"He stated that, in Bill's first year at law school, his grades varied sharply from brilliant (90 in Contracts, 89 in Torts) to mediocre (77 in Agency and in Partnerships). In his second year, his grades were ever more up and down, including some high marks and also a 67 and a 68; which were flunking grades. Both of these failed courses Bill took again and passed.

"In February of 1923, Bill flunked a course on Equity and left the Law School. His file shows that he returned in September, when all his courses were third year courses except for Equity, which he repeated and passed. "He was scheduled to graduate in June of 1924, except that he failed a course called "Executors and Administrators" (relating to wills, estates and trusts).

"He again returned in the fall and began repeating the Executors and Administrators course, but left the Law School finally on November 20, 1924 without, according to Dean Traeger's records, again taking the exam for the Executors and Administrator's course.

"My surmise is that in later years Bill remembered that he had more than once made up for and successfully passed a test previously failed but that he did not recall that he had not gotten around to retaking this last examination."