

Akron, 2026

At 7:00 AM three wrinkle faced men gathered in a driveway in upstate NY to begin a seven plus hour drive to Akron, Ohio. Our goal was to participate in the 91st birthday celebration of AA. All 3 were sober and curious. We had different philosophies and religious beliefs – one, an atheist and the other two, Christians of varying commitment. We were also regular attendees of AA meetings where our differences in what we held most important to maintaining sobriety often came out in discussion. Was it meetings, the big book, or perhaps the steps? However, in these discussions we also found a unanimity of commitment to our sobriety.

One of us had been there twice before and was enthusiastic about what we were to encounter. He spoke with reverence of the historic sites, myriad speakers, and topics we were to encounter. We also discussed the geography we were passing through: the Erie Canal, the Mohawk River, the Finger Lakes, the wine region, Lake Ontario, Niagara Falls, and Lake Erie. We even discovered that Buffalo, NY did indeed once have buffalo. The conversation drifted to rock and roll concerts, favorite musicians and a smattering of sports. The time and the miles flew by and by 3:30 we had reached our destination. We unpacked and headed out to beat the crowds and take advantage of our early arrival.

We started with a trip to DR Bob's house where he and Anne lived until their passing in 1949. Outside, people on the street were setting up tables and chairs, port-o-potties, and refreshments for the thousands who would be arriving the next few days. We went into the house and were greeted by a volunteer who gave us a tour. We saw original writings, books, and magazines, we entered the bedroom where they asked God's help, and saw the small kitchen table around which discussions and plans were laid out. We heard about bottles being hidden and people in need of help being sheltered. After we left, we continued on to the King School where a meeting was being held. The ranks swelled to over 600, strangers all, who during the next hour or two would somehow come together as friends and comrades at arms through laughter, kindness and ready smiles.

Over the next few days, we went to speaker meetings with close to a thousand in attendance, smaller groups of thirty, a play that was well-acted and funny, there was a dance and bar-b-que. There were food stations and the AA standard of coffee and cookies. We visited the Akron Intergroup, Dr. Bob and Anne's gravesite, the Seiberling Gatehouse, Hall and Gardens (not to be missed!) and the Mayflower Hotel. The last piece was in the Akron football stadium where approximately 5000 gathered. The feature was a countdown that showed the duration of sobriety ranging from 1 day to over 63 years.

The trip home was subdued, each of us rolling the events and conversations over in our minds searching for wisdom. We came away with a few words of advice for those who might want to follow: Wear comfortable shoes make sure to brogan sunblock and for those who are agnostic or atheist, get used to meetings closing with The Lord's Prayer instead of the Serenity Prayer.

Other than that, Enjoy.