

AA Leader Identified At Death

MIAMI BEACH (UPI) — "Bill W." — the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous — once declined an honorary degree from one of the nation's most distinguished universities because he insisted on sticking to AA's tradition of personal anonymity.

It wasn't until after his death late Sunday that it was revealed that "Bill W.", as he was known to the hundreds of thousands of alcoholics aided by his organization, was William G. Wilson, a businessman from Bedford Hills, N.Y.

His identity was made public following his death, in accordance with his wishes. It had been revealed that Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith was the other founder when he died in 1950.

Wilson died at the age of 76 in the Miami Heart Institute. Private funeral services will be held at his family home, Stepping Stones, in Bedford Hills. The time of the services has not been set.

Wilson, a Wall Street broker, began drinking heavily during the depression years. Twice he was admitted to Town Hospital in New York City and during the second of those hospital stays he became acquainted with a spiritual program advocated by the British Buchmanite religious movement. Later he found that by working to help other alcoholics break away from the bottle, his own recurring desires to drink would fade.

In 1935 in Akron, Ohio, he met "Dr. Bob" Smith, who also had a serious drinking problem. They decided to help other persons as a way of fighting their own problem.

In the next three years they had helped about 100 alcoholics. Based on the experiences of these men, Wilson prepared a text which included the organization's now-famous "twelve suggested steps for recovery." The name of the book was "Alcoholics Anonymous," which gave the movement its name. Since it was published in 1939, more than 800,000 copies have been sold.