

Sooner Nation

The Misanthropic Philanthropist BY TOM KERTSCHER

What do three degrees from the University of Oklahoma prepare you to do? Be a political science professor? Do TED talks? Give away millions of dollars? Yes, if you are Allan Saxe.

A 77-year-old, full-time-teaching, full-on philanthropist who — when it comes to his giving — calls himself “a very strange man” who claims not to love the world, but enjoys the world’s attention.

Set, hike

An Oklahoma City native, Saxe attended OU from 1961 to 1969, earning a bachelor’s, master’s and Ph.D. in political science. He was an undergraduate during the final three years the Sooners were coached by the late Bud Wilkinson, who, football fans know, won an astonishing 90 percent of his games at OU.

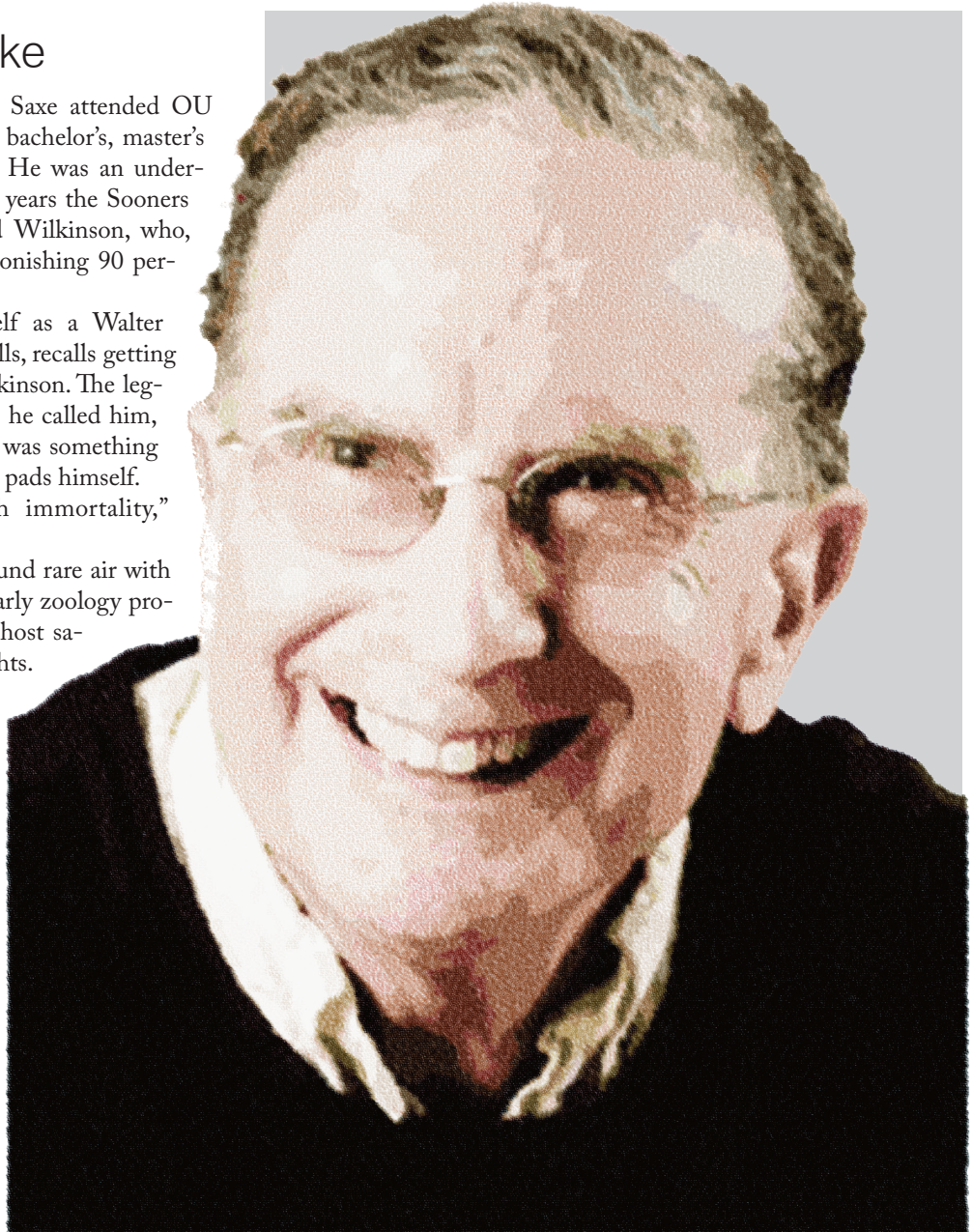
Saxe, who describes himself as a Walter Mitty-type with no athletic skills, recalls getting a phone call one day from Wilkinson. The legendary coach wanted “Saxy,” as he called him, to tutor some of his players. It was something akin to putting on the shoulder pads himself.

“This was my touch with immortality,” Saxe says.

The budding scholar also found rare air with academics in Norman, particularly zoology professor Paul David, who would host salons at his home on Friday nights.

As a student, Saxe was invited to join professors from a variety of disciplines, and a few other students, to share deep thoughts. “I’m sitting there trying to make sense of it and not to be too ridiculous in my comments,” Saxe recalls.

No doubt the faculty could foresee that one of their own was among them. Saxe went from OU to his political science post at the University of Texas at Arlington, where he is a frequent go-to man for media interviews on politics. Saxe has been at UTA



for more than 50 years and has excelled. He was inducted into the school's Academy of Distinguished Teachers in 2003. And in 2014, he received one of the annual outstanding teacher awards from the University of Texas System.

"Students are urged to voice their opinions on subjects pertinent to lecture topic," he wrote in receiving the award. "The overall goal is to inspire student thinking independent of any professorial perspective. And usually it works."

But what distinguishes this honored teacher from many others is his unusual philanthropy.

Gift to a nun

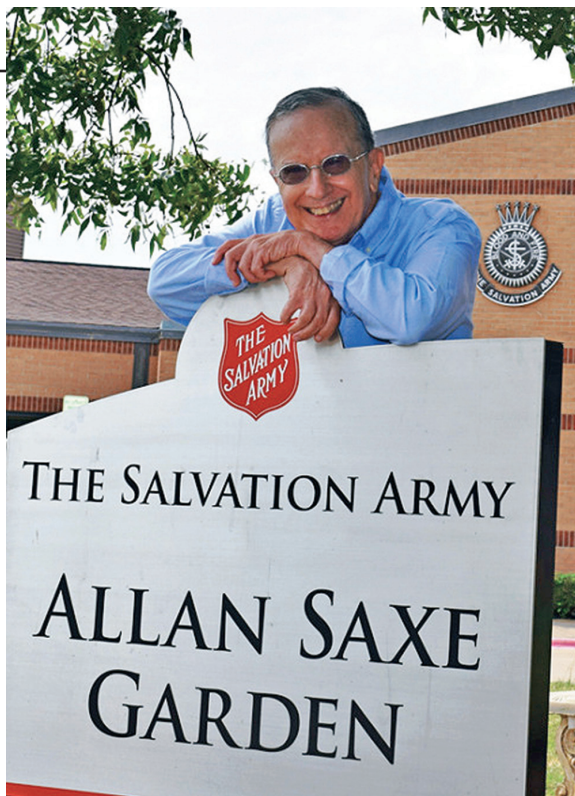
Saxe traces the rush he feels about giving to his time in Oklahoma City when, as a young man, he gave \$100 to a nun at St. Anthony Hospital. She was exceedingly gracious. But what impressed him more was that he was supporting an institution that not only cared for the sick, but prepared hot meals for the homeless.

That led to what Saxe says is the giving away of nearly all of his money over the past several decades — millions, he estimates, including all of a \$500,000 inheritance from his late mother. A sampling:

- Allan Saxe Scholarship, for a disabled student at UTA
- Allan Saxe Field, home of the UTA women's softball team
- OU capital campaign benefitting political science
- Allan Saxe Corner Garden at Texas Christian University
- Allan Saxe Park in Arlington
- Allan Saxe Dental Clinic, for low-income residents in Arlington

Saxe's name doesn't go on all of his gifts. A leading JFK scholar, he's also made major donations to Parkland Hospital, the Dallas institution that treated President John F. Kennedy for the mortal wounds suffered in his 1963 assassination.

In a TED Talk from 2013, Saxe explores the reasons behind his philanthropy in *Money: Why I Give It Away*. "I can't build things, I can't even tie my shoes, so I give money to those who can," he says.



Although Saxe plays down any altruistic bent to his philanthropy, saying he just likes to see his name on things, he has urged his students to volunteer at service institutions and community projects for years.

Saxe has a complicated relationship with giving. He wants to help a world that he wouldn't bring children (or even his pets' offspring) into.

"Life, to me, is so hurtful, is so tragic. It's so absurd. It's so hard that I would not bring anything into this world. But once it's here, you take care of it," he says.

Saxe is candid about what he describes as the selfish nature of his giving.

"I'm a very insecure human being and that's the way I try to give myself some purpose," he says. "I want attention. I think a lot of people do. I want recognition. But I'm not after power.

"In my own little way, it makes me feel good that I've accomplished some things."

Saxe Facts

His 1969 dissertation:

Protest and reform: the desegregation of Oklahoma City

His books:

"Humans Really Irritate Me" (a paperback) and "Politics of Arlington, Texas."

On his philanthropy:

"Philanthropy means the love of man. I can assure you, I do not love my fellow man. I give away money because it validates my own life."

On YouTube:

Parody of "Thriller": Saxe plays Michael Jackson's role in a send-up of the music video to Jackson's "Thriller."

In the media:

Saxe was profiled in Fort Worth Weekly in 2005 and his philanthropy was highlighted by D Magazine in 2009.

Tom Kertscher is a PolitiFact Wisconsin reporter for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. He started his career as a news reporter at the Tulsa World.



Watch Dr. Saxe's Ted Talk, "Money - Why I Give It Away," in the Fall 2016 online edition at <https://sooneromag.ou-foundation.org>.