

## **Allan Saxe**

### **Political science teacher at UTA**

*Interview conducted by  
Sarah Rose and Trevor Engel  
in 2015 in Arlington, Texas  
Transcription by  
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Disability Studies Minor  
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### **Biography**

Saxe was born in 1939 and acquired polio at the age of eight. He got his masters at the University of Oklahoma and while he was finishing up coursework for his PhD took a job at Arlington State College which is now known as the University of Texas at Arlington. Saxe has graciously donated to the community around him and many facilities are named after him. He currently teaches undergraduate political science classes at the University of Texas at Arlington.

### **Topics discussed**

- Health and family background
  - Arriving at UTA
  - Students and faculty with disabilities
  - How polio affects the body and life
  - UTA's impact on accessibility and disability
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#### **Rose**

This is Sarah Rose.

#### **Engel**

And Trevor Engel.

**Rose**

<topic>Health and family background</topic>

Interviewing Allan Saxe for the Texas Disability History Collection. It is October 9, 2015. We're in University Hall at UT Arlington.

Let's start with your childhood since you had polio, and the year you were born.

**Saxe**

I was a sickly little child most of my life. I really did not know what was going on. When you're very young a lot of times you're not aware of the afflictions or the diseases that you have. My parents, especially my mother was very protective of me and didn't want to tell me what I had, as if I could've never understood it. I think I could've. They would do things that now I think most people would be not acceptable practice, but they did it out of a great concern not to try to torture me in any way.

For example, I had to go to the hospital a lot and did not know where I was going or for what reasons. They'd tell me we're going out to get ice cream and end up in the hospital. After a while you begin to say "What is going on?" They tried to protect me in that way but it worked against me. Now I don't like hospitals. I've had this, not fear, but apprehension even though frankly I've given quite a bit of money to hospitals in this area, Parkland Hospital in Dallas, John Peter Smith in Fort Worth, Arlington Memorial Hospital in Arlington Texas, part of the Texas health system. Hospitals were important in my life but I don't like going there. I don't even like visiting people there. I think I trace that back to my early childhood where you'd go out to get an ice cream cone and you end up in the emergency room of a hospital. That happened a lot. I found out that that was not very common, but I have a medical doctor friend who used to tell me it happened to him too when he was young. It'd be the same thing. That was my early early early childhood.

**Rose**

When did you get polio?

**Saxe**

It was probably when I was about eight years old, when it comes to my mind. I think some people could get it even much later in life if I'm not mistaken, but eight was number that sinks in my brain at this point. I never knew I had it.

As a little kid I used to take the bus and go downtown... I remember sitting at a bus stop in the summer, another reason why I never liked summers. I'm standing at a bus stop in Oklahoma City, I'm trying to remember the exact location...I want to say it was like on 10<sup>th</sup> St. or 23<sup>rd</sup> St. I'm waiting for the bus, hot summer day, July or August. All of the sudden it's like somebody had come up and hit me in the back of the head with a board. I didn't know what it was and it was a terrible headache, terrible. Later on it was diagnosed as polio. Different people have had different ways in which they found out they had it. It took a while to diagnose it. By the way it was sort of an epidemic at that time. It was almost panic, it was a combination of what we have in our own lifetime of HIV fear. Nobody knew what it was exactly, or how it was caught. Later on they found out how it was transmitted. Those days, stay away from swimming

pools, stay away from the crowds, don't go near them. A lot of overprotective parents would keep their children in, which is understandable, away from crowds, away from swimming pools.

**Rose**

What year do you think this would've been?

**Saxe**

This must've been in the late 40s late 1940s.

**Rose**

When were you born?

**Saxe**

I was born in 1939, so it's probably the very late 40s.

**Rose**

Maybe 1947 or so?

**Saxe**

Yes, and trailed over to the early 50s, if I can say that without stuttering. Another one of my handicaps is stuttering. I'm a good speaker, there's no question about that, I'm proud about that. I can get up in front of the crowd and speak, but at some point I also start stuttering. I stutter on certain words and letters. I do it in classes even to this day, I don't know what causes it, but it does it. My mouth just doesn't hit those numbers right. Sometimes it happens [tries to pronounce 50]. It happened in class the other day, I couldn't come out with "Fifty" now I can say it quite well, in class I couldn't do it so I moved on to another number that I could talk about.

It was quite a time of hysteria. Mia Farrow was here at the university yesterday. I understand from what I read she had polio. She talks about this hysteria that went on when she got polio, you never knew it with her either. Hard to know it with me, although I do have a very slight limp or gait in my right leg, but it's not bad. My right leg still bothers me a lot and has for many many years. I attribute that to what we now call post polio syndrome. Everything is a syndrome now. Luckily I'm able to get along very very well, but I had braces on my leg when I was very young. I don't know how long, and this is what's strange...If you knew my family you'd say it's not strange at all, or my mother or my father. They've been gone for a long time now, but my cousins who are also pretty well up in age now or gone told me they said "Did you know that you had braces on your legs?" I said "No I didn't!" I didn't know it! I didn't remember it! They told me! It's interesting and they have photos of them somewhere. The cousin that told me that just passed away a year ago and he's the one that told me about it. I never remembered it, I must've been very young. I was a sickly child and it wasn't just polio, it was a number of things that hit me when I was younger.

**Rose**

Do you know what kind of stuff?

**Saxe**

I don't, I really don't. Other than polio I don't know what it was. It was enough to land me in the hospital at different times. So hospital life became not routine but it was certainly a part of my life. When you're little kid you want to have nice things going on. The things that I remember are not nice. I remember hospital wards and doctors and nurses, that protective covering. Those kind of things I have in my brain to this day. It was not, I remember I heard voices, I can remember the voices in hospital wards, I don't know what it is, it's a gift or a curse. I remember things so well out of my childhood, and even out of yesterday that's not just short-term versus long-term memory, it's memory across the board. I remember things that are incredible.

On the other hand another handicap arose that today would probably be diagnosed as some kind of a learning disability. I tell my students this and they don't believe it, but it's true. It is extremely difficult for me to read, very difficult. I can read a half a paragraph or a page. I can read a magazine article I think for maybe a couple of paragraphs. I cannot read a book! It's very difficult! I can read maybe a book every three or four years. A person may ask, "How did you get all those degrees?" I don't know! It was very difficult! At graduate school at the University of Oklahoma, I would have one book with me almost a whole year and I remember the other graduate students would laugh at me and they would say "Saxe, you still have that book?!" I said "Yeah!" I didn't let on that it was difficult for me to read. I could not read, and to this day it is difficult for me to read. Orally I can hear people's voices, and that's how I learn. I learned through oral presentation, television, other things are very helpful to me. Reading is tough!

**Rose**

How did you pass?

**Saxe**

I don't know! I don't really don't know! I think I just studied and studied and studied and picked up lectures from professors, but it wasn't from books! A little bit here, a little bit there, a little piece here, a little piece there. Little pieces, but it was not like most people do in graduate school, especially in earlier years where you read tons of books. I don't and didn't. It's a disability that I have to this day.

**Rose**

What about your dissertation in political science?

**Saxe**

That's a good question! It was done primarily on what you might call primary interviews, primary sources. I interviewed people! My dissertation was on the desegregation of Oklahoma and Oklahoma schools. I went around and interviewed people. I interviewed governors, politicians and civil rights petitioners, very famous ones! He mentioned some very famous cases when Professor Dulaney came in

here. I interviewed some of the most famous people and civil right cases like Ada Lois Sipuel, if people know civil rights they'll know that name. [George W.] McLaurin. These were important cases, all US Supreme Court cases that came before the very famous case of Brown VS Topeka. I interviewed these people, Sweatt VS Painter, a very famous case of UT Austin. I interviewed his name was, Sweatt, S-W-E-A-T-T. His first name spelled like Heman, and I think it was pronounced Heman [He-man]. I interviewed these people and that's how I learned.

My dissertation was put together through primary interviews. I did obviously bring in some written material as well, but it was built around first-hand information that I could remember and have recordings, even then and put it down. It was the way I learned and still learned today. I can talk, you can tell I can talk and writing is difficult. Writing was a torture. Writing is very difficult to this day. I've written very little, I have a lot to say, but I can't get it down on paper! It's a disability.

### **Rose**

You wrote enough on your dissertation, modified so you could actually do it. I assume the same thing when you were going up for tenure?

### **Saxe**

I would do a little bit in pages, page here, a page there, five pages in one month. It was difficult, I don't know how I did it but it was very very arduous but I made it through. I am the least academic and intellectual person on any college campus. I pride myself on that!

I know life well, I am a great observer of the human condition. I can observe things and maybe that's part of that disability. Instead of being able to write, my handicap transformed itself into great observation skills. I know the world well. Nobody wants to know my version of the world. I know the world well. I love to listen to television at this time because I pick up things. The radio is a great great learning exercise for me.

### **Rose**

You grew up in the Golden age of radio, right?

### **Saxe**

Yeah, I love radio. I'm on the radio a lot talking politics. I pick up these things and I learned from first-hand information. It was difficult in graduate school where other people could go through much easier by reading, by doing all the traditional things. It was not traditional for me. It was very arduous, very time-consuming, and I don't know what a person would do with a disability today like that!

### **Rose**

They would have a screen reader. I've had students, their eyes didn't focus, but they could write beautiful essays if they dictated. There's all sorts of accommodations now, but you didn't have any of those.

**Saxe**

When I was around there were no accommodations, you're right. I had to slug my way through it. There was no accommodations whatsoever. I don't know if that was a part of polio or not, but I'm neurologically impaired slightly in some ways. Information comes in to me in different ways. I find out that what is good for me is not good for all my students sometimes, I tell my students that'd to be in a class that I'm a talker, I'm a storyteller. I can tell stories of politics, that's what I can do. I tell them "If you're not good at this, this may not be the best class for you because I don't use PowerPoint presentation." I don't know what it is, I don't do it, I'm not big on a fifty page syllabus as most of my colleagues are. I'm a storyteller. I said "If you can't pick up information from stories, this may not be the class for you." Some like it, and some do not. That's how I was taught. I had teachers who were storytellers, and I'm a storyteller. That's the interesting thing about it, I'm a storyteller.

**Rose**

That's interesting. I wanted to go back to polio from your childhood, other polio survivors, the hospitals really loom large in their memories too and rehabilitation centers.... Did you know any other kids who had had polio?

**Saxe**

Yes, but I never mentioned it to them. A few of them died. There are different types of polio, one called bulbar polio that affects your lungs, if I'm not mistaken. I may be mistaken, but that's what really killed a lot of people. I had a different kind where it's more of a paralytic, the medical definition is infantile paralysis. That's what it did, or there was another name, poliomyelitis, I might be wrong about that. The myelin sheath or something like this in your back, in your spine. I was partially paralyzed for a while, but not nearly as extensively as most people.

**Rose**

Do you remember what parts were paralyzed?

**Saxe**

It was my right leg primarily, and even to this day I wobble a little bit. I think it affected me in different ways. We always tend think polio people, it has to do with their walking. It's usually true, but it also affected other people in different ways. Some people it affected their arm, or their shoulder, I think it did me. For example I cannot pull my hand back behind my back as you can tell I can't do it. I've never been able to do it. I cannot pull my hand back. I don't know whether that's anything with polio or not, it very well may be or it may be because I'm getting old now, I don't know.

The one thing that really does hit me about hospitals, I remember being in these dark dark wards where other people would be there. I remember the voices of people coming through like at two or 3 o'clock in the morning. You're a little kid lying there, not sure what's going on, and you hear these voices. If I wasn't paralyzed already from polio, I was paralyzed from that! That has affected my whole view of the world. I think the world is a catastrophe. You may not want to put that down here, but life on this planet is a catastrophe. I want to talk to the manager! Whoever did this!

That along with other things, that's what made me look at the world. Very few people look at the world the way I do, and still keep ticking and laugh about it. I laugh a lot as a lot of my students know, I'm the best comedian on this campus and I really am. As a lot of people know, comedians, good ones have two sides to them! There's tragedy and comedy, and I alternate back and forth. I use tragedy and comedy. I joke about elderly people, I am one, but I joke about them. I joke about people with disabilities, I am one. For example, can I tell you this on the tape? This is gonna outrage all the disability people, but it's funny! It's funny! When you see people in a little scooter going down the hall, or supermarket, why don't we make them productive? Put little waxing wheels at the bottom of it so when they're going through they can wax the floor as well as going to wherever they want to go! I think it's a brilliant idea!

**Rose**

Sort of like putting them on a cat!

**Saxe**

I'm just joking of course, but I laugh about that kind of stuff. I have found out that many people with disabilities like the Maverick basketball team here, the Movin' Mavs, they're interesting men and women. You can joke with them, you can laugh with them, and everybody full well knows their tragedies and their hardships that they've gone through. Jim Hayes who started the disability program here at UTA and the Movin' Mavs basketball team, he was a great athlete before he got injured that way, jumping off a cliff into a shallow pool of water. Not a swimming pool...

**Rose**

He was jumping in a lake.

**Saxe**

You could laugh with him, you could joke with him. I know, I know he suffered a lot psychologically and physically as well. He laughed and he was strong. I was never strong as Jim. We were very good friends. I had some others in my class, Sam Provence.

**Rose**

Yeah I want to get to them, can we just go back and finish off a couple things you mentioned to me before. You've told me a little bit before about your family's reaction and it took you a little while to learn how to walk...your father, his reaction.

**Saxe**

Yeah, my father was a pretty stern man. The only argument I think I ever heard my parents is when, I still do this today, I shuffle. I shuffle down the hall. I don't wobble, but I shuffle. I drag my shoes, shuffles. I find myself doing that all the time, I've done that most of my life. I remember my father saying "Pick up your feet! Pick up your feet!" My mother would tell him "He can't!" I never thought of it that way. That was the only argument I think my parents, I'm sure they had them, but that was the only argument was over how to treat me, what to do.

My father was "Leave him alone, he'll be okay! Leave him alone!" My mother was very protective, I'm the only child and she was very overly protective. She was a very emotional woman, overly protective. My father was not, very opposite, very stern, tough. "You do it!" my father would say "Leave them alone, he'll be okay, he'll get over it!" My mother was very overprotective and said "He will never get over it!" She was right! I still shuffle a little bit. When I do, I remember my father's words in the back of my brain and he's been dead for [he died in 1961] 55 years and yet I remember his words in the back of my brain, "Pick up your feet!" I still don't.

## **Rose**

Did you ever have any encounters at school or other kids because of how you walk?

## **Saxe**

Yes, I was a nerdy guy in school and it also made me dislike public schools intensely. Kids can be mean, really mean. When everybody says "They love kids," don't. They're mean. I remember going to school and I was pushed around because I couldn't walk very well. I wasn't incapacitated, I could make it, but I remember being shoved around. I was never very good at anything athletically. If there was a basketball or a football game, I tried to get involved. Let's say for a baseball game, you could have five people show up for nine person team and I still wouldn't be chosen. It's one of those things where I wanted to get involved, and yet the kids wouldn't let me.

I was always an outcast and I became, I get very dramatic, I became an observer of life rather than a participant. Even to this day I'm a brilliant observer of life, but not entirely a participant. I can observe, and I have a bad tendency to stare at people. You go into a restaurant and I stare at them. I look at the way they eat food, the way they conduct themselves. I have some great observations of life and how people react and what they do. I've joked about it. I'm not the first person to say this, but if a couple is married, they're walking at a distance of each other. If you want to see a couple that has just met, a man and a woman, they are clinging to each other. They're all over each other almost. Then when you get married they are afar. You look at the older couples, the two men are in the front seat of a car, and the two women are in the backseat of a car talking. I always joke about that, and there may be some truth to that! That that kind of stuff happens.

I'm a great observer, I like the way that people eat. You go to a restaurant and sometimes before they're served there's a little anxiety in their talking and all of a sudden the food comes in! They quiet down a little bit, they're satiated, they become more happy. Their bellies are being talked to. I do this a lot, but I have a bad tendency, I can stare at people. The danger is they know it sometimes. All this comes from my earlier days when I became an observer of the human condition. I'll football game or a baseball game I'm looking at the game and all of a sudden I'm looking at the people around me and the crowd and I'm staring at people. I'm looking at people. I think that comes from my very early days of being an outcast. I still think of myself as an outcast. I know a lot of people would say "That's impossible!" It is, I think of myself as an outcast, somebody that's not quite included in the inner circle, not that I care anymore. I did at one time. I still think I'm an outcast today for a variety of reasons.

My body. I'm getting very psychological. I don't like people to touch me, is that Asperger syndrome? I don't know! It's not because of that, I think it comes from those early days. I don't think I'm worthy of being touched. Isn't that dramatic? But it's true! I've had people come up to me, especially women, and I love women, a woman will come up to me and she'll put her hand on my shoulder and I'll jump away. I always want to tell them "It's not you, it's me!" But that's not a good excuse. That's been all my life. I think somehow I'm not worthy of being touched. That goes all the way back to those days.



**Rose**

From what you said, I doubt you remember this...I'm curious, do you remember being treated at all for your leg? I know there were a lot of painful treatments.

**Saxe**

I remember being placed in hot towels on my legs, all over my body, hot towels. I remember that.

**Rose**

Physical therapy, being moved around?

**Saxe**

It was painful. I remember seeing people in iron lungs, I was not in an iron lung but I saw people in iron lungs. Those images are with me. I remember, the sounds, I remember I can hear things.

**Rose**

The sound of an iron lung?

**Saxe**

That's right, I can hear things very well.

**Rose**

You said you were a March of Dimes poster child?

**Saxe**

I was called a "Polio Pioneer." I'm not sure if it was March of Dimes or not, I can't remember. [Polio Pioneers were actually from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis]. That's how March of Dimes first started, Franklin Roosevelt. Now March of Dimes I think deals with birth defects if I'm not mistaken.

I was called a "Polio Pioneer." What it was is when we were first bringing in the Salk vaccine. They wanted to introduce it to the broader population, the broader community. I was used along with other people for that. I remember getting some kind of publicity, I was a "Polio Pioneer," telling people to go out and get the vaccine.

**Rose**

So "This doesn't happen to you" type of message?

**Saxe**

Yeah. It was interesting that I could be used that way, and liked it that I could be used that way in a positive way.

**Rose**

So you enjoyed doing that?

**Saxe**

I really did. I enjoyed it because you're doing something useful for a good organization and that was important and that was good.

**Rose**

One other question about your childhood. Do you remember other students with disabilities in schools? They didn't have a legal right to go.

**Saxe**

Not much. They did have a legal right to go?

**Rose**

They did not, not until 1975, it was really up to parents and schools.

**Saxe**

Oh, do you mean other people with polio?

**Rose**

Or any kind of physical or sensory issues.

**Saxe**

They could go, but there was no... I didn't know that.

**Rose**

It was by principal pretty much and by teacher. Would a principal move a class to the first floor? Could parents get them up the stairs?

**Saxe**

If a disabled student couldn't do that, then that was it? Boy have we come a long way!

**Rose**

Yeah, they had no right. 1975 was when the law for education for all handicapped children was passed.

**Saxe**

No, the school seemed to be, as far as I know, very receptive to me. They didn't treat me any differently, but I remember that there were no major obstacles from the school itself just from the students, who made life rather unbearable at times, but that's what goes on. I've never liked kids.

**Rose**

Did you have to do PE all through high school too?

**Saxe**

I remember staying off to the side. Another observer thing, there was a lot of physical education in junior high school. I went to a junior high in Oklahoma City, I don't know if it's there anymore called Taft Junior High School. They were big, ornate, the school buildings in those days are really different from today. I remember other kids are climbing ropes and I'm sitting on the gym, on a chair or a bench watching all the kids climb ropes or go swimming. I was always the observer again, but I would be there in their presence, but I'd be off to the side. Again, I'm the outcast, out to the side.

**Rose**

Were there other students like that at all?

**Saxe**

There were a couple, but not a lot. They had different disabilities.

**Rose**

What kind?

**Saxe**

I think a blind student, I can't remember but there were some other students that did have some disabilities. I can't remember what they were exactly, but I remember watching all my other classmates play, have fun, do things and I was very envious of them. Even to this day I'm clumsy. Maybe that goes back to polio in some way, very clumsy.

**Rose**

I guess if it did affect your arm and not your leg.

**Saxe**

Yeah, very clumsy. I was an observer again at many sports events. They didn't exclude me, I was just sitting on the sideline at school and that happened a lot.

**Rose**

That's interesting.

**Engel**

<topic>Arriving at UTA</topic>  
How did you end up coming to UTA?

**Saxe**

I was at University of Oklahoma, just finished up my Masters degree and started most of my coursework toward my PhD. I'm up here on the University of Oklahoma campus, it's a beautiful campus, big library. I'm not good on architecture, but it was one of those old ornate libraries, still there, just beautiful. I'm walking in the hallway and another graduate student comes up and says "Are you finished up your masters?" I said "Yeah, I did that last semester, starting to take PhD work." They said "Well, if you want a job, there's a job available at Arlington State College!" I said "What is that?" That's how it happened. I was very lucky. One of my favorite statements is "I'd rather be lucky than smart." I was lucky. This is when higher education was blossoming, it was exploding. This was during the Cold War, the government was throwing lots of money into higher education. It was just exploding. Jobs were fairly available if you had any kind of a graduate degree.

I finished my Masters degree and completed most of my Ph.D work and went here to interview. I interviewed as Professor Dulaney said with a man by the name E.C Barksdale who was the chairman of history, government, sociology, philosophy, it was all under one roof. He was an interesting guy, he came from UT Austin. He was a friend of some great noteworthy historians at UT Austin at the time, Walter Prescott Webb, Roy Bedichek. These were great names that people in the history field know from UT Austin. He was their friend, he knew them, had them as professors I think at UT Austin. He knew these people. E.C Barksdale came here, he was an old-time liberal Democrat, which I am not, but I was then. That didn't matter, I'm just trying to portray who he was. He rolled his own cigarettes. I don't even think there was tenure then, or was just coming in with the UT system, I'm not sure. He was a ferocious defender of his faculty. Even though he may not of liked somebody, and there were plenty of people he didn't like, he'd defend them.

I remember the first things I got from him--I'll go back to how he hired me. He came up to me after I've been here about three months and he said "Now is this administrator comes up to you and says "What you think of this person?" "He's great."" I didn't know who he was talking about I said "Okay, he's great!" He defended his people and it was very important. I walked into his office, it was over in Preston Hall, which I haven't been in maybe two or three times since then...he had a big office over there with old hardwood floors. I walk in, a summer afternoon, June or July, and I was simply going to take the place. Some professor had resigned or become ill, and they needed somebody, for one summer. I was there for one summer and fifty-one years later I'm still here! That's really what happened.

He was an interesting guy. He sits across the table with me, he says, "I don't know what you want to come here for." This is no joke, "I don't know what you want to come here for, the pay is bad." He told me all the bad stuff about the then president, that then Dean, the then administration. This is my introduction to the University, I found out he did that to many people that he was going to hire. I kept thinking "How does this man stay on the campus without himself getting into jeopardy for this job?" When he tells you out loud that he doesn't like this person? I found out what it was after a while! He had great connections with Austin. He was the quintessential politician in Arlington to Austin, he knew them all. They weren't gonna mess with him. If they messed with him, they'd have to mess with the governor, the Board of Regents, the whole crew! He did things that other people could never get away with, but he did it and that was part of his reputation.

Also on Friday afternoons, an afternoon like today, he'd have in his home.... I wasn't invited initially, but if you are invited you knew that you were in the "in group." He'd have a group of professors over from UTA, only a few of his friends, not just from this department or from history or government, but English, other places, also politicians. You'd go there and you'd see somebody who was running for governor or state legislator. His family, his wife by the name Marge Barksdale. She was a great promoter is the word, initiator of people who ran for office. that we would know their names, Jim Wright who became Speaker of the United States House of Representatives from Fort Worth. She was one of his early early supporters. That was the kind of family that they were.

He had two sons, one I think is an historian somewhere in the college in the United States. The other is a medical doctor who I've seen periodically. He knows me and I know him, he knows how I regarded his father with a great deal of affection. He's always been grateful for that and I've been places where the sons been there where I've talked about his father and he just sits there with a smile on his face and he knows that I have it down pat. I could interpret his father, I can mimic and interpret people perfectly sometimes. That's one of my skills. I couldn't write it very well, but I could express it orally. I remember him sitting in the audience saying "That's my father, that's my dad." (Laughs)

He was a great guy, a really good man, really important. He defended his people, he believed in freedom of speech. That was so critical in those days and today. I think if he was around today he'd be very strongly against what we know as "Political correctness" although he was a liberal Democrat and was a strong liberal in every sense of the word. He would make a mockery of the kind of political correctness that now goes on in the name of a fair and decent society. That's what I loved about him. That's the way he was all of his life. He would walk down the hall, rolling tobacco, rolling cigarettes, and there would be a trail of tobacco behind him.

There were other people on the campus like him. There was the chairman of the English department who was name was Duncan Robinson, who taught Mark Twain, and he was Mark Twain. You get an idea of who these people were. It wasn't all good, I'm not going to paint this beautiful rosy picture. I think things actually are even better today than they were years ago in general throughout the campus. There were some people like E.C Barksdale, Duncan Robinson, a few others in different departments, and they were all buddies. There was a guy, head of the library, his name was John Hudson, and he was another one of them. It was interesting. They kept their personal lives apart from their intellectual lives. Some of these

people were, like John Hudson, a deeply devout Baptist I believe, you'd never know it. They never let that life in encroach on their other life, except in the way they behaved.

George Wolfskill in the history department, that I don't think many historians today know who he was, he was a great man. An old Marine. He was a strong liberal Democrat, I mention that because I'm going to get in a couple of partisan wars, the old liberal Democrats were different than today. They were strong protectors of free speech, disagreement, of allowing you to do your thing without any kind of incrimination. George Wolfskill was one of those, old liberal Democrats. George Wolfskill was an old Marine and he was tough. He used to smoke a pipe. I remember him walking down the hall here and he'd smoke a pipe a lot.

They were all friends! They knew each other. They'd have the Friday parties together. When I got invited to the Friday party one afternoon, I thought "Wow, this is great. I've arrived!" They had liquor there. Think of this! Hard liquor! I don't drink, but it was there! "You want some liquor? You want some beer?" It was that kind of group! I don't know if you can get away with it or not today, but they all were buddies with each other. I don't know if that's true today. I love this university, I like all the people here, I sincerely do, that's not just being patronizing. You don't know any of them, I don't know any of them. Frankly, I don't want to know them. Once I leave school, I've left! I don't want to know anyone here, I don't want to know them there. Those days the difference is, they knew each other's children, they went to churches together sometimes. They knew each other, they were Boy Scout leaders together. It was a different kind, but the campus was smaller. It was just a smaller place. The same thing was probably true at TCU [Texas Christian University] in the old days or SMU [Southern Methodist University]. Some of the old professors here lived within proximity of the campus.

### **Rose**

George Green who still lives within walking distance.

### **Saxe**

I tried, I tried that's right, that's right.

George Green may remember some of the stories. His interpretation may be a little bit different than mine, but it's true. He came about the same time I did, it may be a little bit later, but pretty close.

### **Rose**

Maybe '67 or so.

### **Saxe**

Jerry Rodnitzky, the very same thing. For some reason I really began to like these people and know them. These were honorable, good, men and women. In the English department there were characters, you don't have any characters today. I always tell people this, the professors today on this campus, and other campuses I think in general, are more professional, they're more responsive to their students, they're scholarly, they churn out articles, but there's less uniqueness, there's less colorfulness, with some exceptions. Colorful is different today, just because somebody says something outrageous, which a professor does every other day at some of the big universities. It's because of what they said, not who they are necessarily.

The professors of these days I'm talking about, they were colorful personalities. When I say Duncan Robinson taught Mark Twain and was Mark Twain, that's who he was! I don't know what school he graduated from, maybe UT Austin or somewhere, but that's who he was! They were colorful people. I can describe them to this day, I can see them walking down the hallway. It's interesting because I remember my professors at the University of Oklahoma the same way, not that I liked all of them, but I remember them. I didn't like them, I liked a few, but I remember them...

**Rose**

<topic>Students and faculty with disabilities</topic>

When you came did you encounter Bob Hester who graduated in 1969? He used crutches and remembers going up and down the stairs in Preston Hall? Do you remember anything about the accessibility situation?

**Saxe**

There was no accessibility as far as I know. I don't remember exactly when it happened, I think it was before the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Rose**

Oh yeah, the first thing we found is in 1970. Sam Provence, before Jim Hayes came on campus, formed the Handicapped Students Association.

**Saxe**

I knew Sam well, he was a student in several of my classes. He had polio if I remember correctly, completely disabled, in a wheelchair. He blew through a little straw to control.... I don't know for sure what it was.... He was able to manipulate things through a straw. Remarkable guy, if I remember correctly he had red hair.

**Rose**

That's what we've heard.

**Saxe**

He had a sense of humor that was bitter, I loved it. I would say things in class and I'd say "Oh God, I hope I didn't offend you, Sam." He says "Don't worry about anything you say!" That was him, he was straight on. It may have been a defensive mechanism, I don't know, but whatever it was he was the real thing. Completely incapacitated, in a wheelchair, no problem whatsoever what you would say about him. In fact, he said things, incredible! He embarrassed women, he was just a tough guy! He had the single-mindedness about helping people with disabilities on the campus, and he did that a lot. His family was very supportive, and now I believe that the several disability organizations honor him with awards, Sam Provence award.

**Rose**

We're actually going to go speak to his siblings next month.

**Saxe**

I knew his parents. Are they still around, I don't know.

**Rose**

Oh really? His parents are both dead. Wow, what were they like?

**Saxe**

They were very supportive of Sam, very supportive. For some reason, very kind to me, I don't know why...Maybe because Sam was in several of my classes. I think Sam followed me around to a lot of my classes, and I don't know why.

**Rose**

Was it undergraduate or graduate?

**Saxe**

Undergraduate. I never taught graduate classes.

**Rose**

We know that he had to come back here for graduate school because Baylor wouldn't accept him for the school of law because of his disability. St. Mary's wanted to but wasn't accessible. Like a lot of people who came back and wound up in the history department because it was accessible and did a Masters in history.

**Saxe**

I didn't know that. I knew his parents, not well, but I knew them. I think it was because I had Sam in so many of my undergraduate classes. Sometimes even when he wasn't in class he'd come wheeling in. He was the forerunner of so much of this in the city, in the community, as well as on the campus. UTA became a great bulwark I guess is a word for disabilities long before it was commonplace. UTA was building ramps, enlarging the bathrooms before the ADA act came in, parking places for disabled students long before it became a part of law.

**Rose**

Did you ever tell Sammy Provence that you had polio?



**Saxe**

No, never did. Somebody else I never did, there was a woman whose now retired and worked in the library, she's a year younger than me, her name was Leveta Hord. She's still around, doing well, never told her. The reason I never told her is that she had become more severely disabled. She might not like me talking about this, as I knew her she was one of my close friends when I came to the university and she had one crutch, a plastic crutch. I'm always afraid of the language to use.

**Rose**

One of the ones that goes around the arm?

**Saxe**

Yes, she had one. Then I think she went to two. Then she grew increasingly, maybe it was post polio syndrome worse, now I think she is confined to a wheelchair, if I remember correctly. She has a lift on her car.

**Rose**

When I met her she was using a scooter, that was 2009.

**Saxe**

I haven't even talked to her in maybe four or five, six years, but when I first knew her on the campus she had a pretty severe gait from her legs, one of her legs in particular and crutches. I never said anything to her. The reason why is that I was in such better shape and I never wanted to say "Well you know, I had polio too." I just didn't want to say that, I don't know why. It's just like, "Well I've recovered from cancer! Look at you!" That goes on all the time today with a variety of elements. I felt funny when I first came here. I didn't want to say "Well I had it too," and she is not nearly in the shape that I'm in. She was a good woman, worked in the library for a long time.

This is interesting, this John Hudson I talked about who was the library director, would hire people who had disabilities. It wasn't just Leveta, there were other people that had some kind of disabilities that a lot of people may not know about. He hired them.

**Rose**

Really? Do you remember any of their names?

**Saxe**

I don't, but there was another woman she was not disabled but she did have a certain birth defect that I didn't know about. Her name was Melva Baker. As I say this Melva Baker and Ms. Hord were very close with one another for a while then I think they parted ways. I'm always hesitant to talk about that era.

They were very good friends with each other but then they parted ways later on in life, and Melva went on. I think she quit school, she left UTA, she's now deceased. Melva is now deceased. I don't know what affected her but she did have some kind of a birth defect that was visible that I never wanted to inquire about it. She was very small in stature, very small, smaller than me, that's getting pretty small. She did have certain facial characteristics that made you.... I don't know if she could see very well. I think she could, but she had various facial characteristics that led a person to believe that she did have some kind of birth defects.

John Hudson, the library director, hired them both! Other people like that as well, in the library to do things that they could do very well, in those days. Libraries today are so different.... Card cataloging, things like that where they didn't have to stand on their feet too much. He was remarkable person as well.

**Rose**

Do you have any idea why he did that?

**Saxe**

I don't, he was just a very caring person. He himself is very controversial, a lot of people upon hearing this would say "What?" I liked him, he was sarcastic, he was tough. Maybe that's why, he was very very tough. He had one of his daughters--he adopted two daughters from Mexico, and they're still around. One used to work in the library for a long while. Her name was Lourdes. Another one that I think she's retired now, I forgot her name. He adopted them and sometimes he would say things like--one of them had me in class at one time and he would say things very critical that I had said in class he would say, "What are you saying that in class for?" He was that kind of person. I liked him, we got along very well. He said "That's just wrong historically." He wrote a book with George Wolfskill. "That's just wrong!" I didn't want to argue with him. I'd say "No it's not wrong!" He would be that kind of person. He could be very cunning, if you were too sensitive it could hurt you. I got along with him. He was a good man.

**Rose**

It's interesting that it was the library. The library today has really embraced disability studies, disability history.

**Saxe**

They embraced it?

**Rose**

Absolutely embraced it.

**Saxe**

John Hudson was maybe one of the forerunners, set the theme of what was going on later on.

**Rose**

I just saw an article about the American Library Association, as early as 1961, before any federal laws for disability rights or architectural barriers, they were figuring out how to make libraries more accessible. That librarians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the Library of Congress, had a recording room for the blind to use that they were figuring out different systems. The article were saying librarians have just been at the forefront of thinking about access often before governments. I don't know, maybe it's part of the culture. It's been very striking that there is easy access.

**Saxe**

John Hudson was a good man, I liked him a lot.

**Rose**

That's good to know. Did Sam Provence talk to you about his activism on campus in this?

**Saxe**

Yes he did. He was very tough, tough-minded and would say "We're going to do this" and he would set out goals. What I'm curious about myself is I don't know how close he was to John Dycus, another name that I'm sure you know. John is a marvelous guy in journalism. Again there's another thing, in a wheelchair. I don't know what John had, was it polio that John had too or not? I don't know. I don't think so. I think it was something else.

**Rose**

No, I think it was cerebral palsy.

**Saxe**

John was magnificent and worked in the journalism school at the Shorthorn for many many years. He was one of the fixtures of the Shorthorn newspaper, the communication department. He was a fixture of it. He was similar to Sam, didn't want to be treated differently. "Don't mess with me, I'll get there!" It was very fascinating. I got drawn into it very early, I think it's called HRA?

**Rose**

It's Helping Restore Ability now, but it was the Handicapped Resource Association, and Arlington Handicapped Association before that.

**Saxe**

I got drawn into it in its very early stages. We met in a little community center on New York Ave. Which I think the city still owns, a community building close to what used to be the Boys and Girls Club. I don't

know if there's a Boys and Girls Club there anymore or not, it's on New York Ave. I was one of the first board members, they brought me over there. I don't know how they found me. There was another individual, I don't know his name, John Dycus would know his name. He had some birth defects, two big crutches, stood very tall in stature. His truck was modified where he could drive a truck. He was one of the heads of this group. I can see it in my face but I don't remember his name. John Dycus would probably know exactly who him I'm talking about.

**Rose**

I'm not sure who that would be.

**Saxe**

He was one of the early activists in this group.

**Rose**

In the community, not on campus?

**Saxe**

Right, in the community. It was an interesting group. I don't know what happened to them or where they are now, but it was a very interesting group. I got drawn into that group in the very earliest stages. In the past fifteen or twenty years I've had no contact with that group at all, which I'm sort of ashamed of. I don't have any contact with that group at all. They did have me speak about it ten years ago, maybe fifteen years ago at an event that they had where they wanted to tell people who Sam Provence was. I was able to stand up in front of the group and tell people I knew him, and I think his parents or some of his relatives were at that meeting. It may have been twenty years ago. It was a communitywide event.

**Rose**

What do you remember, it would've been the Arlington Handicapped Association. What were they working on when they brought you in?

**Saxe**

Yeah that's how I remember it. They were taking care of people, I don't know if they had gotten some government aid. They would take meals to people, they would try to find them jobs. There must've been some government money involved because they were always reports. It was very very limited but they'd help people, take them to different places. This I think is before the Arlington Handitrans service came in. They'd take people to jobs, they would take them food, get them out in the community. That's really what they were doing. It was very limited that they did a good job for what they had to do.

**Rose**

Did you stay in touch with Sam Provence after he graduated?

**Saxe**

No, I really didn't. I think he had some health problems after that so I lost track of him. He had some severe health problems later on.

**Rose**

What about Jim Hayes?

**Saxe**

Jim was wonderful. I got to know him, and I don't know how I got to know Jim. His office was in the downstairs of the student center, I don't know where it would be now. It's in this building now downstairs. He was such a strong, honest guy, an athlete, wanted to have this Movin' Mavs basketball team. Probably the first in the nation, wheelchair basketball team.

**Rose**

Yeah. Illinois starts the 1940s and there are a few others, 60s or 70s.

**Saxe**

He was just a strong-willed guy. He knew what he had, he knew his disability. I don't think he liked it. He fought against it which is understandable, it's a human reaction. But tried to make the very best that he could of it. He was very tough-minded. He's the one that we were talking one day, I just go down there on Fridays sometime and talk to him. We just talk about all sorts of things. He knew I had polio and we would just talk about things. He laughed about it, he said "Well you can walk!" I remember him actually saying that to me. I said "Yeah, I can walk but you've got the mind it doesn't matter!" But then he did. From him I got an inspiration to start a little scholarship program for students with disabilities which would go back many many years.

**Rose**

Trevor won one, last semester. We can talk after you want.

**Saxe**

I didn't know that! That's wonderful! You don't any disability! You can't tell, I say that in a half joking way.

I was talking to Jim on a Friday afternoon about it. I said "You know, I'd like to maybe start a scholarship program for disabled students." He said "That would be terrific!" He didn't miss a beat. He said "That would be great. He helped facilitate it, helped to broadcast it to the community. He was a very important part of it.

## [Recording stops]

### Saxe

<topic>How polio affects the body and life</topic>

I have a big dresser right next to my bed. I get up very slowly I put one hand on the dresser. The pain is sometime excruciating. I don't know whether it's post polio syndrome, old age, a combination of the two, but it is excruciating, the pain. I can't put my pants on, it takes me about ten-fifteen minutes. I got to waddle my legs around right to put my pants on right. One leg, then wait for another five or ten minutes and then do the other leg. Same thing with my socks. It is tough. I hope it doesn't get any worse. Then after I'm up, walking around a little bit, I guess the blood circulates a little bit, it's better.

Everybody tells me 'Get a cane!' But I don't want to get a cane. Yet. I don't want a cane yet. It can be very tough. I take no medication for it and don't want to, but I certainly can understand how people can take medication for pain and get hooked. I can understand it. We gotta do everything we can to help medicate people if that makes them feel better, give them whatever they want. People don't understand how excruciating that pain can be. I don't take anything and I don't want to. I'm afraid I'll get hooked on. I don't take anything.

### Rose

One thing about polio that I heard and just wanted to confirm, is that you don't lose the sensations, you just lose the ability to move, is that correct?

### Saxe

That's true as far as I know, that's right. I think that's exactly correct. Many people I discussed earlier, you never knew they had polio. There's a very prominent woman in town, never knew she had polio at all. I was on a charitable board with her and we were discussing these things, all of a sudden she said "Well, you know I had polio." She was from Louisiana. I said "I didn't know that." She was like me, you couldn't tell when she walked. She said "Yeah." she remembers in Louisiana one day her mother called her to come in and she couldn't stand up. "Come on in the house!" "I can't stand up!" That was how she did it. You'd never know it.

### Rose

You told me this over the years, that you have to sit and teach in different ways as post polio's affected you? It's a changing body?

### Saxe

Yeah, it does. I stand up now and I hold on to the podium and talk. I sit down and talk now. I tell my students this pretty frankly. Sometimes I sit down and talk now which is a lot easier for me to do. When I stand up, I teach a big class of 250 students, I taught a class of 450 students at one time here on campus, the biggest class I ever taught. I had to stand up, and I'm holding on the podium. They don't know what I'm holding on for, microphone in one hand, holding on the podium with the other hand. I'm afraid I could fall down.

One day two years ago I did in room 108. My right leg, I don't know what happened. It just gave away, flipped out from under me. I didn't fall down but I grabbed hold of the desk that was sitting there. I said to everybody, "I'm okay!" Of course all the students gasp and say "Are you okay?" "I'm fine!" One nice lady said "I'll get you some water!" She got me some water and I made it through the class. My leg just folded, I don't know what it was. I think I was putting too much pressure on my leg or something and it just buckled. That's what happened. I have another story about disability!

**Rose**

Do you want to pause and get some water or are you good?

**Saxe**

Oh no, I'm fine, I'm a big talker.

I was actually in the Army for a little while, a brief period of time, Fort Hood, Texas. A person may ask "How could you be in the Army if you had polio?" Well this is a story. I was in ROTC, I was going through it and it didn't bother me. I was ready to go into the Army, I went to Fort Hood, Texas, made it through my physical and I remember there was a bird colonel. There is a medical doctor at Fort Hood, Texas, they give you another physical down there and he's looking through my medical records... "Well Saxe, I see where you've had polio." I said "Yeah?" He said "Yeah, you can walk!" I didn't want to not walk. He says "You can walk!" These were different days than today, that wasn't voluntary they wanted as many people as they could. I said "Yeah I can walk, I'm okay!" Then I remember I came home on furlough or something like that for a couple of weeks and I get a notice in the mail, "You've now been reclassified because of polio." I'd gone through basic training, I'd gone through all the tough stuff. The basic training, how I made it there? I don't know either, but I made it through! It wasn't easy for me, I couldn't keep up with them but I made it through! Then I get a reclassification in the mail and I didn't want to! I've gone through everything! I wanted to go to the Army as an officer! I said "Is there any appeal to this?" "No, there's no appeal." That was my military history.

**Rose**

Was it 4F?

**Saxe**

No, it was a different classification. I think it was called 4Y, 1Y, something like that. It was a new classification at that time, I don't think they have it today. It's where "We're not going use you now but in an emergency we can pull you up."

I wish they would've looked over my files better before I went through basic training, that, and then they reclassify it. I was so awkward in the Army, it was incredible. But I made it through, I made it through basic training, I made it through ROTC for two or three years, at the University of Oklahoma. Another story but I wish they would've found it out better. This bird colonel, called him bird colonel at Fort Hood he had it in front of him. He said "You can walk!" Later on they found out well maybe it wasn't a good idea to have me there after all. Such is life.

**Rose**

Did Sam Provence talk about what some of his projects were? How he envisioned it all?

**Saxe**

He really didn't. He just said "I'm going to do things." He never detailed it for me or anything like that. All the students liked him, nobody looked at him in a strange way. He would come in to class and sit off to the side where he could get in and out of the door well in small classes. Some right here in the basement of University Hall. He would come in and go to the side and that made sense. Students would look at him throughout the whole class, but nobody made a big....

I got to praise the students for that. I've never had any problems with students making fun of people like they did of me many many years ago. They've never done it. I've had sign interpreters in my class, a lot. I'm amazed at them. They're wonderful with students that are profoundly deaf, they're terrific. In fact I teach one class tonight at Tarrant County College on Friday night and there's a profoundly deaf woman in class and they have two sign readers for her, sometimes three. They're wonderful! Nobody in the class thinks a thing about it. Once in a while this woman who can barely hear will say something very loud and I make fun of her, and she makes fun of me. We're good friends. The environment is so different today on college campuses than it ever used to be and it's great. It's really good.

**Rose**

Did you see any other staff, faculty, or administrators and how they dealt with disabled students?

**Saxe**

I didn't, but I think everybody did a good job. I don't think there was any problems that I remember.

**Rose**

What about Wayne Duke? We spoke with him about a month and a half ago.

**Saxe**

He must've been very supportive. I never remember talking to him about these issues, but he must've been very supportive.

**Rose**

He sees it as his legacy, the most important part of his legacy.

**Saxe**

Really? That's wonderful.



**Rose**

Yeah, he's very emotional about it.

**Saxe**

That's great that he did that. That's wonderful. He was good, he was head of student affairs for a while. I can see now where it was very very important. My stuff was not at the administrative level, but with the students and Jim Hayes. That's wonderful that Wayne Duke was very much like that.

**Rose**

<topic>UTA's impact on accessibility and disability</topic>

Speaking of students, we found you on this document. This is from student congress records, 1975 Minority Affairs Committee. What's really interesting is that this is after Sam Provence had left the campus, Jim Hayes was here. The Minority Affairs Committee that was gonna be created by student congress, there's a resolution on the previous page, but that they said there were problems directly related to the status of being handicapped as well as sexual or ethnic.

**Saxe**

Some of these were students of mine.

**Rose**

Oh really? If you can identify them.

**Saxe**

Bob Livingston, B.C. Cornish, Brenda Cornish, Leon Haley. Oh yeah I knew some of these names pretty well. Rebe (?) Kerry I knew, I saw him the other day. He's in his 90s and he's good, I want his genes. Ruby Kerry I know he's still around pretty.

**Rose**

Were any of these other students with disabilities?

**Saxe**

No, that's the interesting thing about it. They were not as far as I now. Sometimes again you don't know who had a disability. Felicia Forehand, I knew these people. Joyce Williams. I knew maybe about a quarter. James Hawkins, Michael Glover.

**Rose**

Resolution 7929. We thought it was so interesting that they mention handicapped in 1975.

**Saxe**

Yeah, it went back that far.

**Rose**

We didn't know if you remembered anything about it.

**Saxe**

I don't know that in particular. But it wouldn't surprise me.

**Rose**

How come?

**Saxe**

Because of people like Sam Provence, Jim Hayes that were already working their magic. This school was attracting some really interesting students on civil rights issues.

A gentleman sent me an email about three or four years ago, lives in Fort Worth, came here to school. He knew me and he was a very strong civil rights person, very militant at one time. Had him speak in my class, he wanted to know some stuff I remembered too. He spoke to my class one time and I said "You know Eddie, there were a lot of students here that were pretty militant in those days." And there were! "How come they came to UTA?" He said "They came because of you! Didn't you know that?" I said, "I drew them here?" He says "Absolutely!" It never occurred to me!

It was the stuff I was saying in my classrooms, what I was doing on the campus. Now I take great pride in it. This is before UT Dallas, or UT Dallas had might've been just at its infancy. It was only for graduate students at one time, and then it blossomed out. We drew a lot of students from Dallas in those days. That's where a lot of these students came from. Some became very militant, these were the days of the civil rights movement, Vietnam, civil rights, pretty tough days in those days. It's not too surprising, all this is meshing about the same time.

**Rose**

We've been trying to figure out why.

**Saxe**

One thing led to another. It was the civil rights movement on the campus, then the women's movement on the campus, Vietnam movement on the campus, and then the disability movement. Some of the same people, it's easy to see how one thing led to another. The women's movement grew out of the civil rights movement, a lot of the women's movement...you probably disagree with me on that, but that's where it's

inspiration came from. The black civil rights movement, that gave way to other things. One thing led to another that all these disadvantaged individuals would get a hearing. That's exactly what has happened.

**Rose**

There were certainly resolutions here very much of thing.

**Saxe**

I knew some of them, I've seen them or talked to them. I know those names.

**Rose**

Do you remember David Brock or Rena Williamson? They were both presidents of the Handicapped Students Association in the early 70s.

**Saxe**

Those names don't ring a bell. David Brock a little bit, and maybe Miss Williamson. I can't visualize them. So many students have come and gone here on the campus. A lot of people have come through which is wonderful.

**Rose**

Did you get a sense of Jim Hayes's approach of working with administrators and faculty here?

**Saxe**

He was tough. He was the kind of person you want on your side, he was tough-minded. I can easily see him going right at those people and saying "We want this!" He got it. He was very well respected, just the way he handled himself, the way he talked. He was tough in the best sense of the word.

**Rose**

Did you go to the FreeWheeler's games early on?

**Saxe**

A few, but not a lot. Jim would ask me to go and I'd go occasionally. I have to admit not a lot, same thing now. I don't know why. I don't go to any games very much on the campus. I'm lazy, once I go home I sit and look at politics. That's all I do. I ought to but I don't. I don't even go to the regular games very much at all.

The sports stadiums named after me and I don't go to the games that are played there! I love it, I enjoy it! It goes back to the very first of the interview, I can't sit still! It's very difficult for me. I can do it if I

talking, but I can't sit still and look at something. I can't sit still and hear somebody talk, or even sing. The 11<sup>th</sup> Pavilion in Arlington if you know that, it's excellent, the music of all sorts, it's wonderful! I've been a big contributor to it frankly, and it's very difficult for me to sit and listen to a whole musical show. I'll go for fifteen-twenty minutes and I'm out of there. It's not because it's bad, it's good. I can't sit still, this neurological junk going on in my brain, I gotta get out there. It's a joke. I have a friend of mine and I go to these things and she'll say, "I know you're gonna want to leave early," and she's right. Most the time I gotta leave early. Crowds make me very nervous. I'm not the first person they make nervous about. I can talk to a crowd but I can't be in a crowd for long periods of time, it's difficult.

## **Rose**

Do you know much about Texas university politics? The reason I'm asking is by Texas law and federal law other campuses in the UT system and the other systems had to make their campuses accessible and UTA does. As far as we can tell, we know that Sam Provence and Jim Hayes asked to meet with the Regents and the chancellor of the UT system wrote Wayne Duke and said "Very happy to do this. What is UTA going to do it? We'd like to have a list of what UTA would help with." This is all very very early on. We're not sure if the Regents just weren't aware of the law?

## **Saxe**

I don't know. I do know that UTA may be on its own. They began to build ramps for wheelchairs long time ago, we were the forerunner of that. The first ones were built near the library, it's still there, an old ramp. It was one of the first things, later on came parking, then sidewalks, all that. I think we did it on our own, but I don't know.

## **Rose**

It was a mandate, but we've heard that other schools were not accessible and UTA was. We want to know why, was it just people? At a certain point the Regents started saying "If you are going to build new construction you have to have it be accessible" but that's several years after. UTA's already way down.

## **Saxe**

It was really making headway many years before it became the thing to do or under law. I take credit, Jim Hayes, and Sam Provence led the way in this. They really did, there's no other way around it.

## **Rose**

Are there other questions you think we should've asked or things that you think about disability?

## **Saxe**

I think what this school has done has made me so much more appreciative of other students with disabilities. I can't remember any faculty with disabilities, I keep thinking about that. We've had staff members who have disabilities, but I can't remember any visible disabilities of students, of faculty. There may be, I'm sure there were some with disabilities.

**Rose**

We have a lot of people teaching in the minor disabilities in core courses. Abu Yilla in kinesiology. He had polio and ended up going to school in Britain at a school for crippled children. Then college in a special ed program. Then he wound up becoming a Paralympian in Britain and coming here he was on the Movin' Mavs and help set up Quad rugby. He's been here since early 90s.

**Saxe**

Wow, that's interesting. I think it's remarkable they have the Special Olympics here on campus. It's terrific. We draw from all over the place. It's wonderful when it goes on.

**Rose**

You said otherwise the faculty you don't remember?

**Saxe**

I can't remember any faculty members with visible disabilities, I'm sure there were some.

**Rose**

But then the library had people? Anywhere else on campus?

**Saxe**

The library comes to mind but I can't think of...

**Rose**

John Dycus?

**[Recording breaks]**

**Saxe**

Nobody knew about me. Only recently have I begun to tell people about it because I hurt so badly sometime and I'm reminded of it. I never mentioned it to anybody. I thought if I did mention it to somebody it would work against me. That's why I never mentioned it. It was hard enough for me to be accepted as a teacher in my own mind and if I told people I had that it may work against me and I didn't want go down that line. I had enough stuff to overcome and I didn't want to have another one out there.

Now I recognize today that would be ridiculous but in my early days "Don't tell anybody about it, just don't tell anybody about anything." I think that was part of it, and "Do the best you can, don't tell anybody." Also I think it was viewed in my family as sort of a weakness if you were weak, even though polio,, but it was a weakness. For all those reasons I just never wanted to say much. I think that was part of it. Maybe the past five or ten years have I told people about it at opportune times.... This interview with Mia Farrow was in the newspaper and it was brought up it. Wasn't a part of her speech last night or anything, but she brought it up herself. She's younger than I am, I think she's seventy.

**Rose**

Anyone else you think we should talk to?

**Saxe**

I think Sam Provence's family would be terrific.

**Rose**

Yeah, we're going to go see his siblings.

**Saxe**

Have you talked to John Dycus or not?

**Rose**

We have a couple interviews with John Dycus, we may need to go back.

**Saxe**

Is he doing okay? I haven't seen him in a long time.

**[Recording breaks]**

**Saxe**

I've had some international students in my class. I remember one in particular and he asked me as if I could help him...a long time ago, he says "After my student visas gone I'm gonna have to go back to my home country. They're going to deport me. Can you help me maybe stay here?" I said "Well, I don't know what I can do, go to a congressman's office. I'd be glad to write you a letter telling that you're good student and all that." Then we began to talk and I said "How come you want to stay here so badly?" And this has made me appreciate America a lot, he said "If I go back home with my disability, I'll be a complete outcast."

**Rose**

What did he have?

**Saxe**

I don't know, but it was a very big disability. He had a big crutch under his arm. He says "I'll be a complete outcast. I will be shunned; I'll be put up on." Other words if you're disabled, not only are you neglected, you are put up on, you are harangued, you end up being a street person or worse.

I began to understand how interesting this country is and a few others.... That we treat our disabled people here not only with respect today, not always, but with more respect today and in other countries you are other you are put upon, an outcast, you are maligned, even relegated to a subpar of society. I never understood that. Now I understand it. How important it is in this country, how we recognize people with disabilities as opposed to what is recognized in other countries and how they regard people. You become a street person! You're pilloried, they throw things at you, you're kicked! He didn't want to go back for that reason.

**Rose**

Do you know what happened to him?

**Saxe**

I don't know what happened to him, isn't that a shame? But it really hit me for the first time. I know that's true. You see these people in other countries and you say "Oh my God, what a world." Here in America it's not easy, ten times worse in many other countries in the world. I appreciate this a lot.

**Rose**

So do we!

**Saxe**

Thank you!