

THE ADVOCATE

The

Dan Allen
Center for
Social
Justice

March 2015

Saying Farewell to a Friend

Father Skeehan Fought for Social Justice

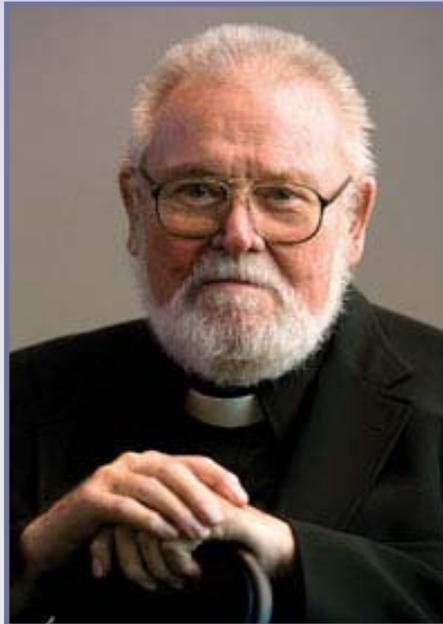
Father Bill Skeehan, president emeritus of the Dan Allen Center for Social Justice, lived a powerful life fighting for social justice and left a rich legacy.

Father Bill died on Nov. 29, 2014, just nine days before his 89th birthday.

Bill is perhaps best remembered as priest of parishes in and around the Tulsa area, including Tulsa's Church of the Resurrection and the Community of St. James in Bartlesville.

He was co-founder of Neighbor for Neighbor and was Dan Allen's closest co-worker and friend.

In April the Dan Allen Center honored Bill with the first Dan Allen Award for Social Justice.



His loss is keenly felt among all who knew him, but his life and legacy are being celebrated by his many friends.

On page 2, two long-time friends, Carol Falletti and Joe Williams -- who are members of the Dan Allen Center board -- share the following thoughts about their joy at knowing such an inspirational great man.

Mission Statement

To promote social justice through education, outreach, advocacy and demonstration of social justice and caritas.

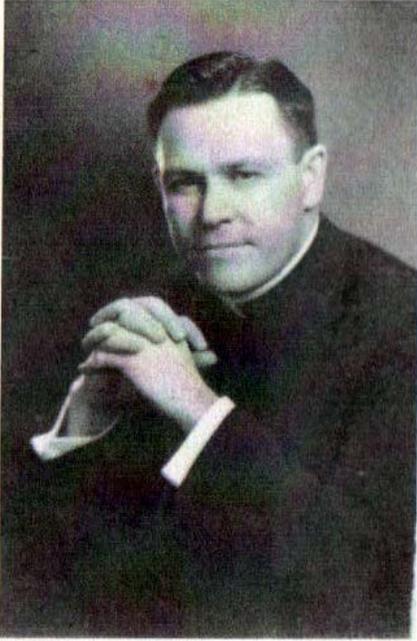


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A Singular Priest

By Joe Williams



The Lenten season reminds me of Bill Skeehan and how he came to be a priest.

Years ago, while he was a student studying commercial art at TU, he was at a party with several friends. During

the course of the evening, one of his classmates told him he was a self-absorbed individual, interested only in himself.

The next morning, Bill Skeehan woke up and realized she was right. That was the moment that caused him to change his life and to later enter the Seminary.

Therein lies the essence of Lent. Father Bill listened, looked within and let go...let go of his current self in order to become the self that was there all along, waiting to be filled.

He spent the rest of his life as a singular priest, giving, emptied, poured out for others. All who knew him felt the presence of Christ through his compassion for social justice, his humility, his warmth, his story telling, his great laugh and his love for all, especially the poor. His homilies at the Community of St. James in Bartlesville were never lectures, never commands, but rather stories, meditations and parables. When you sat on one of

those cold, hard metal folding chairs, you felt you were sitting on a rocky hillside by the Sea of Galilee in the presence of a true disciple of Christ on earth. That hour in Mass was a holy moment.

Father Bill, through his close friendship with Dan Allen, spent his life focused on others. He forgot about the God of the Church and instead became the very manifestation of Christ by living a life of service to others.

But it was a life that didn't come easy. In his impromptu comments at Father Bill's funeral service, Bishop Slattery said, "Father Bill faced many challenges... and many of those challenges came from the Church itself."

Those in attendance broke out in a long and rousing applause.

I like to think that Father Bill heard that.

Father Bill's Legacy

By Carol Falletti

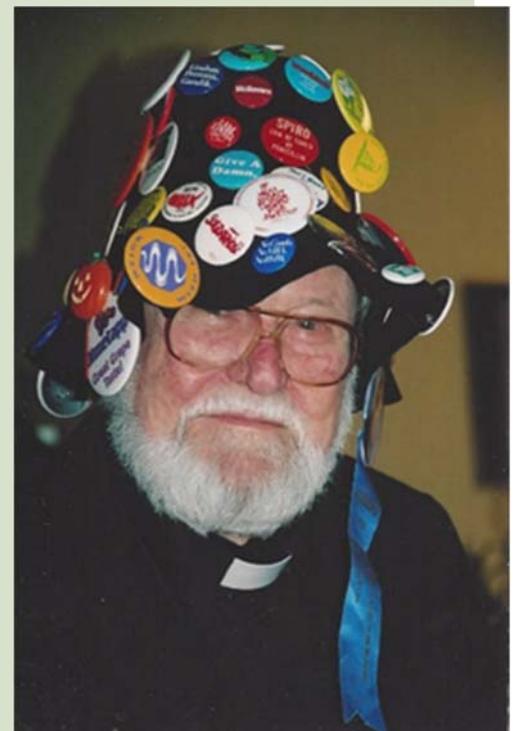
"The Word Man." That is how I would joke with Father Bill when he was especially "on" with a sermon or a poem or one of his parables. He had the Gift. He could select words that would simplify, open our hearts, and drive home the point he was trying to make. He could instruct us on the Gospels in a way that made sense in today's world.

He made an indelible impression on people's hearts and minds through his books, "To Dance with a Cross on our Backs" and "At this Time." His understanding and ability to communicate Christ's message to us will last forever through his poetry.

Fr. Bill knew and remembered everyone he ever met. He knew your family and your children and participated in the special events of your lives. Everyone developed a special relationship with him.

To the end, he would say he still had the two most important things in his life, his faith and his sense of humor. He once posed in this hat crowded with campaign buttons with emblems such as "Give a Damn," "Don't Tread on Me," and "I am Loved."

We will miss him because we are human. We loved him as a pastor and friend. "To love is to be fully alive."



Changing of the Board

A new year is bringing changes to the board of directors for the Dan Allen Center, as members welcomed two new board members and bid a sad farewell to two others.

The two new members are Dr. Jocelyn Lee Payne, executive director of the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Center, and Joe Williams, CEO of Joe Williams Communications Company in Bartlesville.

Both have provided extensive volunteer help and expertise to the Dan Allen Center over the past several years, and both accepted two-year terms beginning in February.

With a background in civic engagement, research and education, Dr. Payne brings to the Center her lifetime of advocacy regarding race and reconciliation. She served on the Center educational curriculum committee and was a panelist in last year's Center forum on re-segregation.

Mr. Williams provides strategic thinking, marketing, and communications services to an international client base and has won more than 125 national awards for his work. He served as designer and book coach for the Center's first book project, "Dan's War on Poverty."

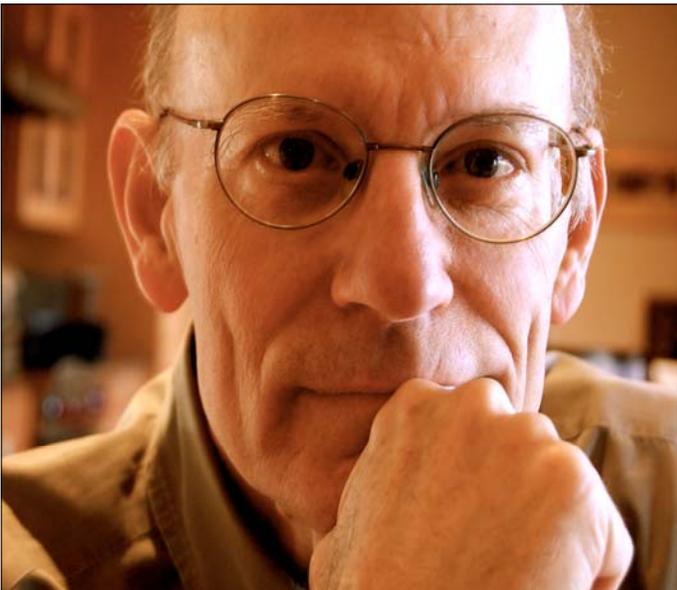


Dr. Jocelyn Lee Payne

Both accepted two-year terms beginning in February.

The board wishes to thank two retiring board members for their exceptional and long-time service: Tom Long and Jerri Lesikar. Both have been working with the Center since its inception. And, although circumstances require both to end their formal board service now, both promise they will continue with volunteer service and support to the Dan Allen Center.

Thank you for your service



Mr. Joe Williams

16 and 1: Social Justice and Taxes -- The poor pay more

Oklahoma ranks **16th** nationwide in terms of having an unfair state and local tax system, according to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy.

There are many ways social injustice plays out -- taxes are often the overlooked arena in which the poor pay more than others.

As shown on this graphic, in Oklahoma the poorest 20 percent pay more than twice as much of their incomes in taxes as the top 1 percent. The lowest 20 percent income group of non-elderly families (income range of less \$18,000 in income per year) pay 10.5 percent of their incomes for state and local taxes. This compares to the top 1 percent income group who pays 4.3 percent of their incomes for such taxes.

If one looks at sales taxes, the ratio is 8 to 1. The lowest 20 percent income group pays 8.0 percent of their incomes for state and local sales and excise taxes, compared to the top 1 percent income group paying 1 percent of their income for such taxes.

In states with regressive tax structure, such as Oklahoma, taxes make incomes even less equal. Seeking fairness in tax structure is particularly problematic for Oklahoma cities where a sizable portion of government revenue is based on sales taxes. Changing tax policy, including making sale tax exemptions for food or medicine, potentially threatens the life blood of city operations.

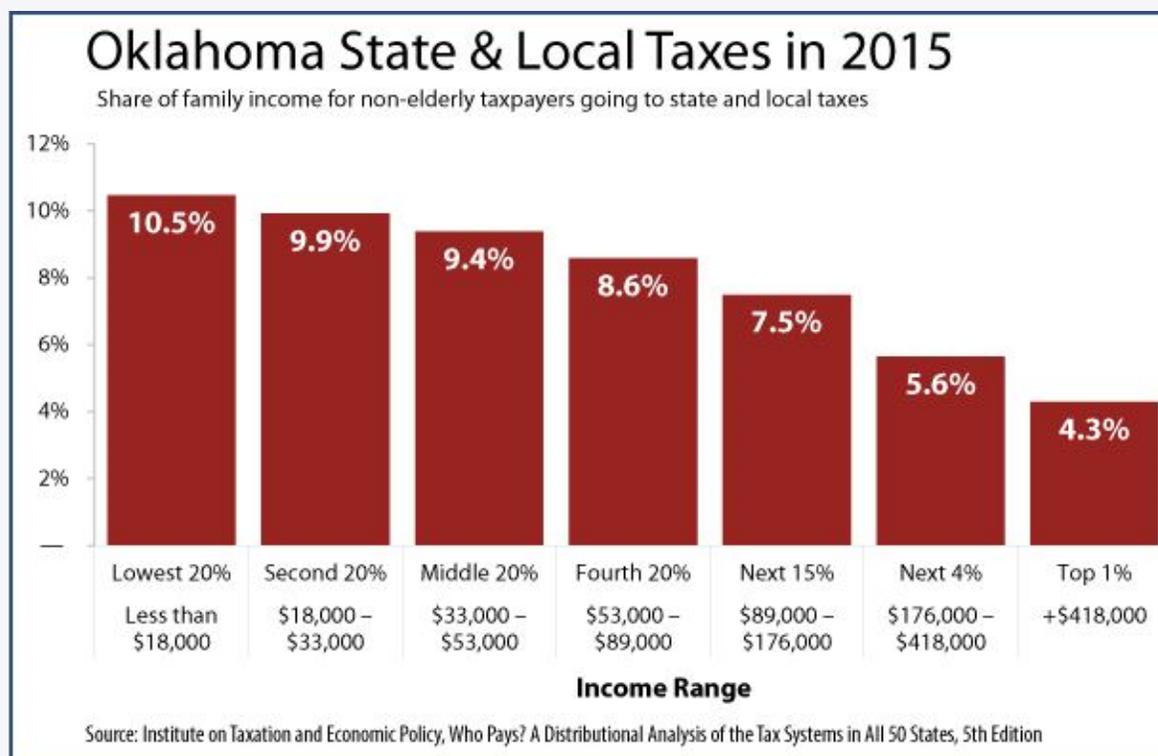
The situation illustrates the structural nature of social justice where policies have, perhaps, unintended consequences, at the same time making changes difficult for leaders to embrace.

Of course, taxes are critical to our community, state and nation. Equally as critical is seeking social justice in our public policy. And it only takes **1** to start making our policy makers aware of all injustices and specifically taxes injustice.

For more information, check out: Oklahoma Policy Institute -- <http://okpolicy.org/category/blog/taxes>

Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy -- <http://www.itep.org/whopays/states/oklahoma.php>

Thank you to the Oklahoma Policy Institute for sharing the following graphic.



Save the Date: Gay Pride Parade Set for June 6

Tulsa's Gay Pride Parade is scheduled for June 6 this year.

The Dan Allen Center supported the parade last year, in concert with churches, said the Rev. Twila Gibbens, Center board member and pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church.

"Several mainline churches made a good show of support at the Gay Pride Parade last June," Gibbens said, "including St. Paul's, Bethany Christian, First Lutheran, University United Methodist, and Boston Avenue United Methodist.

"We all built a float showing the United States and color-coded the states that had already legalized gay marriage. The theme was 'and the walls came a-tumblin' down.' They marched and drummed and sang 'Jericho' over and over during the parade. Then they also hosted a table focused on 'Faith Groups for LGBTQ' at the downtown festival site."

The Dan Allen Center contributed \$200 to this faith group project. The cost of marching, making a banner, and reserving a table was covered by this support and the contributions of those who marched.

Looking back...

March 2015 will mark the 50th anniversary of the freedom march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was a turning point in the life of a young Tulsa priest named Dan Allen.

Ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1957, Dan and four other local priests were moved to go to Selma in March of 1965 after protest marchers were assaulted there on what became known as "Bloody Sunday." Their experience at Selma was "like nothing else in our lives, before or since," recalled Father James McGlinchey. "It was a conversion – a conversion to justice."

Dan Allen was destined to spend the rest of his life fighting for social justice.

Source: "Dan's War on Poverty: A Grassroots Crusade for Social Justice"



Martin Luther King, third from right, leads marchers across the Alabama River on the first day of the Selma-to-Montgomery march in mid-March 1965.

Contact Us

Let us hear from you!

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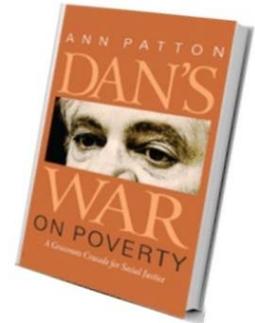
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Photography: Randy Kindy

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No amount is too small to
help. And remember to get
copies of *Dan's War on
Poverty*. For details, or to
purchase a copy of *Dan's
War*, see



www.DanAllenCenter.org.



Dan Allen, shown
here with his
parents, Arthur and
Mary Ellen Allen, was
ordained a Roman
Catholic
priest in 1957.
He died in 1995.

April 19, 2015,
will be his 85th
birthday.

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