

# Thoughtful Giving

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The Legacy of Thomas H. and Marjorie Lytle Lake

The Lake Institute  
on Faith & Giving

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University



*"You are never going to understand what giving really means until you experience it."*

—Thomas H. Lake (1919–1999)



It was a story Tom Lake would recount many times. It spoke both to his origins and to the values that would define his life: family, church, and community. As a boy growing up in the coal-mining town of Saltsburg in western Pennsylvania, he would observe his father, returning from the coal mine where he worked, handing his biweekly pay envelope to Tom's mother, who would first set aside a portion to be contributed to their church before allocating the remainder for food and other family necessities. No matter the scale or urgency of other expenditures, it was understood that a share of the family's earnings would support the activities of their church and its work within their community. "I don't know how much she put in there," Tom Lake mentioned in a conversation years later, "but that's the first thing she did. She would interrupt cooking dinner to do that. That always impressed me. She wanted to do that before other demands were placed on the funds." It was a lesson that Tom Lake would never forget.

As a young man, Tom knew that other members of his congregation, no matter their family circumstances, were similarly committed to helping others, whether through their church offerings or their personal, if less visible, philanthropy. "My [future] father-in-law, a physician," Tom recalled, "was a very strong and somewhat silent supporter of our church. There was not a 'big to-do' about [his giving]. There were all kinds of things done quietly. I guess that maybe back then I learned that you didn't give for show. You gave to help people. And you had that good feeling inside because you had done it without being urged to do it."

If family and church were shaping influences on the young Tom Lake, so too was the Depression. Coming of age during the Depression, Tom Lake understood that you didn't wait for the government to respond. You didn't wait for someone else to take action. "We were all in it together," he remembered. "You were looked upon as being somewhat unusual, if you weren't doing something to help." It was a lesson in civic and social responsibility that Tom Lake took to heart, and it would help guide his philanthropic practices and beliefs, both personally and professionally, throughout his life.



Intelligent, energetic, and disciplined, Tom Lake worked hard to earn success, whatever the challenge or opportunity. He worked his way through the Pharmacy School at Temple University, earning a degree in pharmacy and chemistry, and enlisted in the Army in 1941, several months before Pearl Harbor. During his four and one-half years of military service, he rose to the rank of major in the Medical Administrators Corps. Returning from the war, he went to work for Eli Lilly and Company in 1946, an association that would become a lifelong commitment.

It was during the war that Tom Lake married Marjorie Lytle. They grew up together in Saltsburg, attended the same church, and shared the same values. Marjorie enrolled at the College of William and Mary, earning a bachelor's degree in economics. After Marjorie completed her undergraduate studies, they were married in 1944. Their marriage would enrich and sustain their lives and endure for more than 55 years. As they were partners in life, they were partners in their philanthropic activities, whether through their personal giving, their support of their church, the Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, or their numerous volunteer commitments. Never one to assume a high public profile, Marjorie particularly enjoyed her volunteer work at the Crossroads Nursery School, which served the needs of severely handicapped children in Indianapolis. It was one of many volunteer activities that Marjorie quietly pursued throughout her life as a way to extend herself to those in need.

Tom Lake rose to become president of Eli Lilly and Company in 1973, and, at the Lilly Endowment, he served as a board member beginning in 1966 and as chairman from 1977 to 1992. While serving in these roles, his views on giving in philanthropy would come to be embodied in the life and legacy of Mr. Eli Lilly (1885–1977) with whom Tom worked closely over much of his career at the pharmaceutical company and while serving on the board of the Endowment. The good work the Lilly family did within and beyond their community, both in their personal philanthropy and through the establishment of the Lilly Endowment in 1937, as Tom Lake recognized, was “not because they were rich, but because they were good stewards.” This expanded sense of stewardship, Tom believed,

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sprang from Mr. Eli's religious faith. "Stewardship, sharing—Mr. Eli really understood what stewardship was," he said. It was another lesson that Tom Lake took to heart.

Throughout his life, in whatever capacity or endeavor, Tom Lake was not a man to forget where he came from or the lessons learned along the way. He was proud to be the son of a

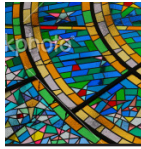
"No temptation was great enough to deter Tom Lake from his determination to adhere to a standard of absolute integrity. Equally important to Tom was his commitment to Christian stewardship. His was an exemplary life which each of us should emulate."

—*Mr. Tom Lofton*  
*Director of the Lilly Endowment*

coal miner, not so others might note how far he had come in his life, but rather that they might understand the values that had helped forge his character. His work ethic, his sense of family and communal responsibility, and his concern for the welfare of others were values he learned as a young man. He learned, too, that one's deeds, not one's words, defined one's character. Values and beliefs, however strongly held, needed to be put into practice.

Tom Lake did not set out to be a philanthropist. The concept, as an abstraction, had little meaning for him before joining the board of the Lilly Endowment, whose values and mission had profound resonance for him. "There is a big

difference between being rich and giving some money away—and being a good steward willing to share your assets," he noted later in life. "When you share in the proper way, there is more to it than just giving; there is something else that goes along with that gift—even a part of yourself to a degree. You become attached in a supporting sense." It was a vision of philanthropy emanating from one's inner being. "People give away their resources not because they are rich," he once remarked. "I don't think in their heart they really do it because of taxes. The very effective philanthropists are the ones who do it from the heart."



Apart from their many volunteer activities, much of Tom and Marjorie Lake's personal philanthropy was directed toward educational, religious, and community service organizations, especially within greater Indianapolis. Giving was a natural by-product of their faith. "Faith keeps its eyes fixed on the future," Tom wrote, "in absolute certainty that it will be better than the present or the past." They had an abiding faith in the power of people working together to improve the quality of life for one's fellow citizens and one's local or extended community. Everyone could do something, Tom believed, and it was important that each person have the opportunity to participate in a meaningful way in the life of one's community. That might take the form of supporting the United Way, which Tom helped lead, assisting the elderly through in-home visits, working at one's local hospital or homeless shelter, or volunteering at one's church, synagogue, or local school. It was not important where or how one chose to lend a hand. What was important was to be involved. For Tom and Marjorie, the civic virtues that inspired their neighbors in Saltsburg to help one another during the Depression were equally relevant and essential in contemporary society.

Tom Lake believed that one should take time to reflect on one's giving, to think through what one hoped to accomplish and how best to do so. He was convinced that the more one thought about one's giving, the more generous one would become and the more personally satisfying and meaningful one's own philanthropy would be. It was important, however, that "givers" and "giving" be nurtured. "Generosity doesn't necessarily come down through the genes," he declared. "Generosity and sharing have to be taught." His life was a testament to that philosophy.

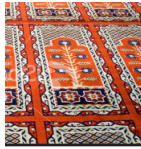
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**F**ollowing Tom Lake's death in October 1999, his family—his widow, Marjorie, their daughter, Karen Lake Buttrey, and Karen's husband, Don—considered how they might commemorate his life and legacy. Given that much of Tom's later life was devoted to philanthropy and civic involvement, and that much of his personal giving was directed toward educational, religious, and community service organizations, a number of possibilities suggested themselves.

But a key question remained. What would be an appropriate memorial for a man who had preferred to make his personal and family giving anonymously, and who had resisted being singled out for his philanthropy or having his name attached to a building or program he had helped support? Whatever would be done, the family decided, should be based in Indianapolis, Tom and Marjorie's home for more than half a century, although the impact of any proposed program should extend beyond Indiana.

Discussions were initiated with the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University. In 1987, the Lilly Endowment had helped to create the Center, which is located on the campus of Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). In little more than a decade, the Center became one of the leading academic institutions for the study of charitable giving and for the training of practitioners through its Fund Raising School. The Center had links with the IUPUI School of Liberal Arts, which included a Department of Religious Studies, as well as a Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture, a Center on Service and Learning, and the multidisciplinary Polis Center, which pursued partnerships between the university and the city of Indianapolis as well as other cities and towns across the state. This convergence of strengths and attributes made the Center on Philanthropy and IUPUI an appropriate home for a program to serve as a testament to Tom Lake's belief in the power of faith-inspired giving.

Discussions with the Lake family focused initially on an endowed chair that would have a teaching and research component, but soon encompassed a more substantial program



of activities. “We were eager to replicate the philanthropic mentoring role that my father played for so many people,” Karen Lake Buttrey recalled. “But we also wanted there to be time for conversation and reflection,” she added. “Dad was very thoughtful, but with a practical bent. He loved getting people together to talk and to look at things from different perspectives.”

It was during this period of deliberation that Marjorie Lake became ill. Her death in December 2001 shifted her daughter Karen’s thinking to embrace a more comprehensive program that would honor the shared legacy of Tom and Marjorie Lake. Dr. Robert Wood Lynn, the former senior vice president of religion at the Lilly Endowment and a scholar on American religion and philanthropy, had become close to the Lake family, having worked with Tom at the Endowment for 13 years. He participated in conversations with Karen

“I counted it an honor to have helped other people form an institution that would bear the name of Tom Lake, whom I worked with for two decades and admired so very much.”

—*Dr. Robert Wood Lynn, Former Senior Vice President of Religion at the Lilly Endowment and first Director of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving*

and her husband, Don, and joined in discussions with administrators at the Center on Philanthropy and IUPUI. Key participants were Gerald Bepko, then chancellor of IUPUI; Eugene Tempel, then executive director of the Center on Philanthropy; William Plater, who served as dean of the faculty and executive vice chancellor of IUPUI; Dr. William Enright, then senior pastor at Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis; and Thomas

M. Lofton, chairman of Lilly Endowment Inc. Working with the Lake family, they helped put together the academic and administrative components of what would become the Lake Institute. An expressed hope for the Institute was that it would legitimize the study of faith and giving as a serious academic inquiry, and help attract talented scholars and



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researchers to the field. Establishing the Institute within the Center on Philanthropy, with strategic partnerships with the School of Liberal Arts and the Department of Religious Studies at IUPUI, would enhance its educational mission.

Funding for the Institute was in place. The Lilly Endowment had earlier made a \$500,000 gift in memory of its one-time board member and chairman to be applied toward a purpose in accord with the family's wishes. An estate gift totaling \$3.5 million combined with gifts from Karen and Don brought the funding for the new Institute to \$5 million. Knowing her father's modesty, Karen was reluctant to have the Institute named in his honor, but agreed to having it named the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, in keeping with its focus and her desire to honor her parents' memory and legacy. The word "faith" (as opposed to "religion") underscored the nondenominational and interfaith mission of the Institute, as "giving" suggested a broader focus to its inquiries and activities. Karen agreed, at the urging of Center on Philanthropy and IUPUI administrators, to name the Institute's annual lecture in memory of her father.

In November 2002, Karen Lake Buttrey formally presented a \$5 million total gift, which included the Lilly Endowment's memorial contribution, to Indiana University President Myles Brand to endow the Lake Institute. "Indiana University is honored to carry forward Tom and Marjorie Lake's commitment to philanthropy and learning," President Brand declared. "The Center's national leadership in the philanthropic sector makes it the ideal home for the new Institute." This sentiment was echoed by the Center's executive director, Eugene Temple, who predicted that the "Institute will build a lasting scholarly foundation for exploring the connections between faith and philanthropy." "As scholars and donors learn more about these links," he added, "this Institute will celebrate the faith values that guided the philanthropy of Tom and Marjorie Lake." Having the Institute based on the IUPUI campus in Indianapolis, "the city that the Lake family had done so much to advance, and at a campus where strong bonds between the community and the university will enhance its work," noted Chancellor Gerald Bepko, was especially fitting and fortuitous.



Dr. Robert Wood Lynn was appointed the Institute's inaugural director, a position he accepted with the understanding that he not be asked to serve beyond December 2003. Dr. William Enright, who had recently retired as senior pastor of Second Presbyterian Church and had lectured on topics of faith and giving both nationally and abroad, was named to succeed Dr. Lynn, becoming the first full-time director of the Institute in January 2004.

To help guide the Institute's work, an advisory board of religious scholars and practitioners was created. Karen Lake Buttrey agreed to serve as honorary chair. Donald B. Johnson, an advisor to nonprofit organizations who has worked with charitable organizations in the United States and in Europe, including the Lilly Endowment, was elected as the board's first chair. David H. Smith, bioethicist-in-residence at Yale University and noted religious scholar, became vice chair of the board.

Since its inception, the Lake Institute has expanded the study and understanding of the many connections between faith and giving. It has also served as catalyst for further reflection and exploration of the power of philanthropy to bring about beneficial change. In encouraging conversation and reflection on individual giving, the Institute serves as a fitting memorial to the legacy and values of Thomas and Marjorie Lake. It continues their shared effort to encourage purposeful participation in the life of one's community, whether inspired by one's faith or motivated by the same values that shaped their early lives in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania.

Karen Lake Buttrey says: "My parents would be extraordinarily pleased with the work of the Institute that bears our family name. That recognition would mean little to them, and Dad, no doubt, would be uneasy having his name featured so prominently. Don and I are convinced, however, that they would be gratified to know that the values they exemplified in their lives are being perpetuated and put into practice in the city that was their much loved and spiritual home."