



## The Washington Exit: Saxbe's Farewells

*"Dolly said to me only today that if she had known how much fun it was to leave, we'd have done it long ago."*

William B. Saxbe, U.S. ambassador to India, at a farewell party on Jan. 27

By Donnie Radcliffe

Getting out of town honorably isn't always easy in Washington, a city of pitfalls and pratfalls at almost every turn. But Bill Saxbe, the Ohio farmer-lawyer who always had a thing about not overstaying his welcome, has managed to get out gloriously.

"People hang around this town too long," said Saxbe who prided himself on going through it "in a helluva hurry."

Only towards the last was there in a way the sobering thought among some friends that they might not make it unimpaired through the party-loving Saxbes' farewell round.

Sen. Ernest F. Hollings (D-S.C.) jokingly complained at a farewell party Korean millionaire Tongsun Park gave in his members-only George Town Club, "How many times do I have to say goodbye? If he doesn't leave soon, I'll be an alcoholic."

Of Saxbe's last 20 nights as the 70th Attorney General in United States history, he and his wife Dolly spent 17 at farewell parties in their honor.

Most were black-tie, what Saxbe called Washington's "uniform of the day without light bulbs." Some were

informal, unstructured to the point of letting the living-room rug substitute for place cards and pre-designated dinner partners. Most were fertile with good natured ribbing, the 59-year-old Ohioan with a flare for the faux-pas usually the butt of all jokes.

And one was solemn, a dinner given by a group of Ohioans. Two of the hosts were posthumous, Columbus Dispatch publisher Edgar T. Wolfe Jr., and a former Saxbe law partner, Carlton Dargusch Jr., who were killed the day before in a plane crash at American University.

Washingtonians, who probably say goodbye oftener and sometimes more artfully than most species, can hardly remember a more intensive departure.

Expressing the hope that Indian Ambassador Triloki Nath Kaul's party for the Saxbes would be "the last in this series" (it wasn't), Sen. Gaylord A. Nelson (D-Wis.) quipped that if he had to go to another "we'll have to rent an ambulance."

Dolly Saxbe managed to survive only by retreating to what she called a "Florida fat farm" for a few days at the outset.

"You've been feted, have you?" former Ambassador to India Daniel "Patt" Moynihan politely inquired at the Kaul party.

"Yes," moaned Mrs. Saxbe, "I'm the fatted calf."

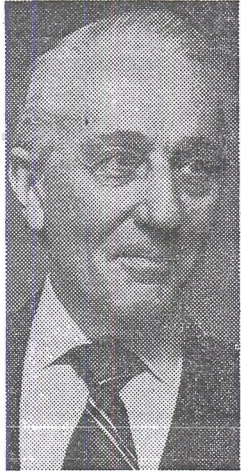
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U.S. Ambassador to India William B. Saxbe surrounded by his friends. From top left: Secretary of State Henry Kissinger; Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.); Nancy Kissinger; New York Times Washington Bureau Chief Clifton Daniel; Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.), and Margaret Truman Daniel. From top right: Sen. Vance Hartke (D-Ind.); Indian Ambassador Triloki Nath Kaul; Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker; Egyptian Ambassador Ashraf Ghorbal, and Sen. Robert Taft Jr. (R-Ohio).

Photos by Joe Heiberger and Douglas Chevalier—The Washington Post

The Washington Post **STYLE**

THURSDAY,



The Beef Wellingtons, *noix de veau roties*, baked Alaskas and mousses in spun sugar left in the Saxbes' wake reminded some along the party circuit of how a popular diplomatic couple left Washington secretly some years back because, as the wife later confided to friends, "We didn't want to leave on our stomachs."

Throughout the Saxbe farewells, there were those who could not help comparing the Ohioans' "elevation" on the shoulders of Washington to departures of other Nixon administration appointees.

One who slid out of official sight quietly and attended a Saxbe party was a predecessor as Attorney General. Richard Kleindienst talked there of eventually returning to Arizona because "elephants always go back to their burial grounds" but vowed that in the meantime "they're not going to run me out of town." He now practices law here.

With the sardonicism of one who received a suspended sentence after pleading guilty to lying under oath to a congressional hearing, Kleindienst's observation of Washington is that "They give you a party when you leave, but they kick you in the ass in mid-passage."

"The *clever* and the elite," what Saxbe was further moved to describe as "the cream of Washington society," had finished their *quenelles de brochet a la Florentine*, their *noix de veau rotie* and their *salade Aida*. Spent goblets of Chantefleur Blanc and Chateau La Grange, 1969, had been pushed aside to make way for the Korbel, brut.

"There hasn't been this much sadness in Washington since Millard Fillmore left town," jokes stand-up satirist/comedian Mark Russell, whom host Tongsun Park has invited to provide the laughs.

Russell is deliciously irreverent, spewing one-liners no one takes too seriously but which, at moments zing like steel on bone.

Of Saxbe to India—"We didn't need that country anyway."

Of Saxbe, the public official—"Saxbe says what he thinks—is many cases thinking is optional."

Of problem-solving in the Middle East—"We're sending phantom jets to Israel and real ones to Arabs."

Then it is Hubert Humphrey's turn, leading off toasts from senators and congressmen of both parties with whom Saxbe, during his five years in the Senate, became friends.

Despite the year he was Attorney General, Saxbe seems to have remained a member in good standing of America's most exclusive club, the Senate, an institution he liked to castigate by describing his presence there with "I'm the one who lost the election—I'm the one they sent to Washington."

(Those buddies, in fact, gave their advice and consent to Saxbe's nomination as Attorney General at a time when almost anyone else Richard Nixon might have proposed would have encountered serious roadblocks.)

(And it was then-Sen. J. William Fulbright, lame-duck but still influential chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who bestowed his blessings and endorsement on his friend Saxbe's nomination by President Ford to become U.S. Ambassador to India.)

"We need people to go to these countries who understand the American people, and India is getting two for one—a wonderful ambassador and a wonderful ambassador," Humphrey is saying in a toast.

Saxbe's reply suggests none of the disillusionment from his early days in Washington. Instead, as is the tradition among successful politicians here, there is some self-deprecation. Ac-

ording to Saxbe, "Pat" Moynihan "said our relations with India are thin and getting thinner—he made that remark after my appointment."

And with a trace of his occasional foot-and-mouth disease which he later would hope aloud was "kind of" off-the-record, he says, "If the U. S. goes through with the arms deal to Pakistan, it's like being a bastard at a family reunion."

Later, over liqueurs, and before he and Dolly Saxbe take over the microphone to serenade everyone with their by-now well-rehearsed rendition of "Tattooed Lady," Saxbe makes no attempt to disguise his pleasure over the party.

But who, someone asks, really is Tongsun Park, his host for the evening?

"Hell," booms back Saxbe, "I don't know."

Fundamental as it might seem, it isn't essential that the guest of honor at a farewell party (or any Washington party, for that matter) knows all the guests. Or that he even know much about the host.

Saxbe, like others who frequent The George Town Club, subsequently described Park as a "wealthy Korean with shipping interests."

A few nights earlier at another party, a guest said of Saxbe, "I really don't know him—it's just I'm terribly interested in India and I know the host."

Argentine Ambassador Alejandro Orfila, who gave the absolutely last farewell party for the Saxbes Tuesday night, said 80 per cent of his guests know each other and the other 20 per cent may be visitors from out-of-town.

Orfila drew to his four tables of 10, men and their wives who have been intimates of the Saxbes—former Johnson administration Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford, Gen. Elwood Quesada, Hollings and Nelson from the Senate and Fulbright from the Senate "alumni."

"This group right here I will look to as my good and close friends," said Saxbe winding up his response to Orfila's toast.

"He's getting pretty good at it," Hollings whispered to Dolly Saxbe. "He never could talk like that when he was in the Senate."

"Hell," exploded Saxbe later when informed of Hollings' "praise." "There never was anything to talk to—except a bunch of secretaries."

Talk was what excited Saxbe, throughout his Washington career. And parties were often the best purveyors. He had his preferences and among them were not the "institutional" parties in hotels or country clubs ("Deadly," he pronounced), the big receptions or "belly rubbers" ("Disasters."), the Gridiron and Alfalfa Club dinners ("Bores."), the cocktail parties ("Abominations.")

Even White House parties were "pretty dreary," though during most of the Nixon administration the Saxbes were not invited to those because "we weren't in."

Small dinner parties sometimes provided the beginnings of valued friend-

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ships and Saxber, who claims he never attended a party here ruined by "booze," collected friends.

"We've gone out looking for people in Washington," said Saxbe, "and we've found them—fine people."

Farewell parties were important to Bill Saxbe, he confided during one nocturnal party pause. "There are a lot of people I hope to see again."

And, apparently, a lot of

people who would like to see him again.

"I like him," said another host, Jank Ganju, Indian public relations consultant about town whose principal account is the Indian Embassy. "He went to India five times, and there are some congressmen who can't even find India on the map."

Saxbe thinks it's time his pals in Congress get better acquainted with India and though his wife invited every-

one to "bring your own hot dogs," Saxbe urged them to visit on counterpart funds.

"The alternative is to give the rupee back to India," he said, unconcerned what public reaction might be to his plan of educating Congress. "We just canceled out a billion dollars worth, and we've still got a billion" left there to spend.

Unofficial would-be visitors might include envious fellow members in The Safari Club, who honored him

at a stag going-away dinner at Chez Camille.

"In India, he'll be shooting a bird similar to our American dove, something like a quail," said a shooting crony from California. "If there wasn't any shooting in India, I doubt seriously you'd find our friend going there as ambassador."

If parties such as Ganju's for Saxbe were informal, with guests like Margaret Truman Daniel, columnist Tom Braden, Rep. Jonathan Bingham (D-N.Y.) and Sen. Robert Taft (R-Ohio) sitting cross-legged on the floor and drinking ice water between bites of fiery Indian cuisine, the Indian ambassador's was more an official occasion.

Poised with pen midway down the damask-covered table where Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, two

former ambassadors to India, an assistant secretary of State, two senators and three members of Congress sat, was an embassy official taking notes on what was said about U.S. policy to India.

"The United States is committed to easing of tensions on the subcontinent," Kissinger said following Ambassador Kaul's toast. "And we will do nothing to encourage rivalries, or to play off countries of the subcontinent against each other. We recognize India as a major power—we will not play power politics."

Bill Saxbe, formerly of Mechanicsburg, Ohio, lately of Washington, D.C., and soon-to-be of New Delhi, India, a plain-spoken guy whom the pedagogic and elegant "Pat" Moynihan cryptically described the other

night as "sort of a farmer," invited hundreds to his swearing-in as Ambassador to India.

"My advice (to newcomers) is that this town is full of interesting and exciting people and to take every opportunity you can to meet them," Saxbe said recently.

For a while, Monday, it began to look as if most of them were crowded into the State Department's Benjamin Franklin Room where little more than coffee awaited the celebration.

"I think this is about the 10th time Bill's taken the oath for the United States," remarked former State Department official Loy Henderson.

Dolly Saxbe nodded, then began to giggle.

"He swears very well now," she said.