

NAFUSA 2015 - Scottsdale, AZ - 17 October 2015

Remarks by John Clark (Western District of Texas 1975-1977) preceding the traditional toast at the conclusion of the meeting:

“At the risk of repeating history that’s well known to long-time members, I will take a minute for the benefit of our new members, and some of our sponsors and guests, and perhaps our distinguished dinner speaker, to shed some light on why – and how – NAFUSA came to exist.

“Thirty-six years ago, In 1979, after a couple of years of telephone conversations and letters back and forth (email didn’t exist back then), 13 former U.S. Attorneys and a former Assistant AG (Tax Division) met in New Orleans to discuss creating an organization dedicated to the office of United States Attorney – a venerable office that was created by the Judiciary Act of 1789, eighty-one years before Congress created the Department of Justice.

“All of the founders had served in the Nixon and Ford administrations through the terrible days of Watergate, when a great, dark cloud had hung over the Department of Justice. During those difficult times the nation’s U.S. Attorneys had continued to carry the flag into federal courtrooms all over the country, every day, to ensure that the legal business of the United States got done.

“All heard the objectionable jury argument in criminal cases: ‘*The U.S. Attorney says my client is a crook. Well, the U.S. Attorney works for the biggest crook in the country.*’

“The U.S. Attorneys had all been in the foxhole together, and strong bonds had formed between them. The founders were determined to do something to preserve and defend the integrity and independence of the important office they had all held. The result was the creation of NAFUSA.

“It was designed to be an organization *of, by, and for* the office of United States Attorney. And it was to be scrupulously non-partisan. It was the hope of the founders that as each succeeding presidential administration left office, a new class of United States Attorneys would have the same, strong feeling about the office and would join their predecessors as members of NAFUSA.

“Looking around the room tonight, I can see that it has happened. I see Dick Eagleton, who served in the Johnson administration. I see Victor Ortega, another of the founders. And I see members from every administration since, including new members from the current administration. So what we hoped for has happened; and for the founders, it’s gratifying to see.

“For many years, this annual conference has closed with a very simple toast that’s particularly appropriate for this organization and its guests. It’s just seven words, but it says it all for this group. So raise a glass with me, for the traditional NAFUSA toast:

“HERE’S TO US: GOOD PEOPLE ARE SCARCE.”