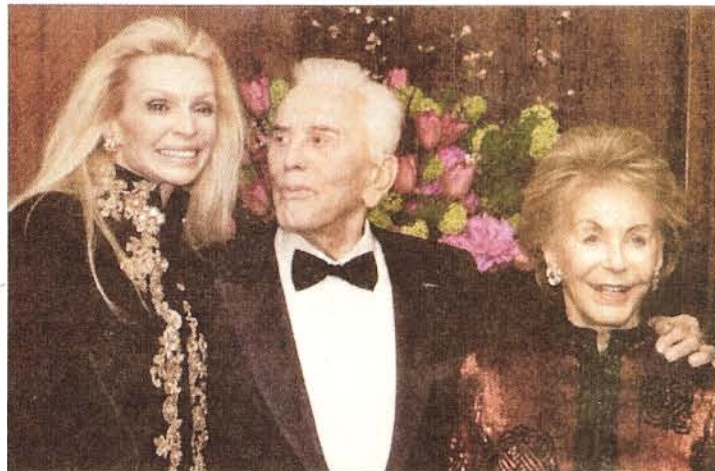


Party Lines: *people, places and politics*

Hollywood glitz, political power at Kuwait fete

Rima Al-Sabah, wife of the Kuwaiti Ambassador, greeted actor Kirk Douglas and his wife, Anne, at the Kuwait-America Foundation dinner Wednesday night. First lady Laura Bush (right) spoke to guests after being honored by the foundation for her outspoken support of education for women in Afghanistan.



Photographs by James R. Brantley/The Washington Times

BY KEVIN CHAFFEE
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

THE EVENT: The Kuwait-America Foundation's dinner celebrating International Women's Day and UNICEF's project to rebuild schools in Afghanistan.

THREE-STAR AFFAIR: Having **Laura Bush** as the guest of honor Wednesday night was a major coup for the hosts, Kuwaiti Ambassador **Salem Al-Sabah** and his wife, **Rima**, inasmuch as the first lady rarely attends black-tie affairs on Embassy Row. With Secretary of State **Condoleezza Rice** and Oscar-winning actor-producer **Michael Douglas** present as co-honorees, the event sizzled from the start. **WHO WAS THERE:** Mrs. Bush and Miss Rice arrived late and left early, hardly speaking to most of the other guests, but that hardly dimmed the party lights with two Supreme Court justices, eight members of the Cabinet, presidential guru **Karl Rove**, ABC News commentator **George Stephanopoulos** and Hollywood legend **Kirk Douglas** on hand to mix it up with

top corporate brass from Chevron, Dow Chemical, Exxon Mobil, Shell and Conoco Phillips (among others) who had kicked in \$1 million for the cause.

SOCIAL DEBUTS: For Saudi Arabian Ambassador **Prince Turki Al-Faisal** and Justice **Samuel A. Alito**, the latter stating that he and wife **Martha-Ann** had come out of respect for Mrs. Bush, "who has been very kind to us." Justice **Anthony Kennedy** joked later that he hoped his junior colleague's first foray into the Washington social scene wouldn't be his last. "Does he complain about being overworked?" Mr. Kennedy asked with a laugh. **LATE ARRIVALS:** Attorney General **Alberto Gonzales**, National Intelligence Director **John Negroponte** and Homeland Security Secretary **Michael Chertoff**. Had they been jawboning with President Bush about nuke problems in Iran and North Korea? **THE PROGRAM:** Scheduled to the minute to include a multitude of introductions, awards presentations,

Actor Michael Douglas (right, with Jack Valenti) was honored by the foundation along with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Presidential adviser Karl Rove (far right, with Kuwaiti Ambassador Salem Al-Sabah) was among the many Bush administration officials who attended the dinner.



ovations and mercifully brief but heartfelt remarks about the schools of Afghanistan, which, according to Afghan Ambassador **Said Jawad**, were 80 percent destroyed over the many years of violence that have plagued that country.

After being praised by Mr. Al-Sabah for speaking passionately about the plight of education-deprived women in Afghanistan as recently as her last visit there a week ago, Mrs. Bush told the crowd she would remain “a steadfast partner” in the cause to help ensure that each girl there “has a chance to realize dreams that were once thought impossible.”

Entertainment was nonstop throughout dinner (lobster and caviar, by the way, plus mushroom risotto, roast lamb and chocolate fallen souffle), with **Marvin Hamlisch** serving as maestro for performances by 12-year-old singing phenom **Vanessa Campagna** (who honored Mrs. Bush with “The Yellow Rose of Texas” and “Deep in the Heart of Texas”) and seven-time Grammy winner **Roberta Flack**, belting out “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?” Democrats (Rep. **John Dingell**) and Republicans (Sen. **Ted Stevens**) tepidly joined in.

SURPRISE SHOWSTOPPER: “I’ve invited a friend of mine to play tonight, and God willing, I won’t make a mistake,” Mr. Hamlisch teased before inviting a “surprised” Miss Rice to join him for a Gershwin piano duet. The result

was all very accomplished on the part of the concert-trained Secretary of State, of course, who proved particularly adept switching from bass to treble and back again for three selections, including “Summertime” from “Porgy and Bess.”

RIMA’S NIGHT OF NIGHTS:

The diplomatic corps’ most indefatigable hostess didn’t rest for months while putting the event together. “The hardest part was, orchestrating the logistics, and I was the whole orchestra,” the glamorously gowned sheikha said after planning the event down to the last flower, fork and musical note, to say nothing of the intense advance fundraising for a worthy cause.

“Rima is a relentless driving force,” her husband noted. “I am blessed to have a wife who can carry it all through, because these issues are close to my heart.”