

Investigator Makes Living Locating Unsuspecting Heirs to Lost Estates

Hollywood — If a man named Herb Saxton comes walking up to your house, don't slam the door in his face. He may simply want to give you \$50,000.

That's the way Saxton makes his living, and a good living it is—just telling unsuspecting persons they have had a large piece of money dropped into their laps and all they have to do is reach down and pick it up.

Saxton, who has spent 40 years in the investigation business, began his full-time career of searching out persons who were heirs to unclaimed estates in 1938.

"I do a lot of traveling," said Saxton. "At every place I stop I go to the court house and check on unclaimed estates. There are always many, but I never touch one less than \$10,000."

He said that in many cases where a person dies without a will and his estate is handled by the public administrator,

this administrator does not have the funds available or is too overworked to run an extensive search for heirs. Once he has closed the case and it has been approved by the court, Saxton can step in.

"There always is a time element to find heirs to an estate," he said. "This varies in different states. For example, in California it is five years, in New York seven, and in Washington State 15. Then the estate goes to the state."

Saxton said he always works alone.

"Once in awhile I hire an investigator to check out some point in a case," he said, "but I make sure he does not know too much about what the case is."

Saxton, although he lives in an apartment overlooking the center of Hollywood, maintains an office in Chicago.

"All my mail regarding estates comes and goes through Chicago," he said. "No matter where I am all my telephone

calls are routed through that office so no one knows where I am talking from. That way no one can cut in on an estate after I've spent months or years working on it."

Saxton said he tries to keep about 500 cases working at all times. Of these he solves an average of 10 a year.

The veteran investigator, who served in naval intelligence during World War I and as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Corps during World War II, said he always has a case almost completed before he contacts the heir.

"Then I explain what my business is and ask a few simple questions. If these answers match what I already know, I've found my heir."

How does Saxton make his money?

"Once I've established an heir," he said, "I tell him how much the estate is worth. Then I ask him to sign an agreement giving me his power of attorney in the case and

between a third and 50 per cent as my fee.

Some Balk

"Once in awhile they balk at first and demand to know why I should be cut in. Usually after I explain the work and expense I've put in, they see it my way. If not, I walk away. I know they could never find the estate. They generally call me."

Saxton said one of the most interesting estate cases he has solved was that of a man who shipped out of Los Angeles Sept. 11, 1941, with a construction crew bound for Wake Island. His work application showed only that he was married. When Wake fell to the Japanese he was taken prisoner.

After he spent 44 months in a prison camp U.S. troops liberated the camp. All of the prisoners rushed for trucks loaded with food as they entered the camp and a case of canned peas fell on the luckless man's head, killing him.

"Many branches of the government, including the FBI, searched for his heirs," Saxton said. "They were not successful. I was asked to step into the case by a survivors' organization in Boise, Idaho.

Divorced Wife

"I was able to find that his wife had divorced him in Detroit. This led me to the divorced wife in Kentucky. She in turn, knew the names and addresses of some of his family.

"On Nov. 10, 1960, I telegraphed that I had located a sister in Mexico City, who spoke no English, and two sisters in Jacksonville, Fla."

Saxton says there are some persons who use possible heirs as a racket. He said these are the persons who contact men and women and tell them it is believed they are heirs to a vast estate. Then they want a fee to help them prove it.

"I never take a fee in ad-

vance and only collect mine at the same time the heir gets his."

General's Papers

Now on Microfilm

Boston — A microfilm edition of the papers of Gen. Henry Knox, one of George Washington's generals, has been announced by the Massachusetts Historical Society. The earliest entry is dated 1791 and the latest 1825.

East German Reds Using Double Talk

Frankfurt, Germany — There have grown different meanings, while the official double-talk of East German Communist Party officials has turned the language into what East Germans sarcastically call "party Chinese."

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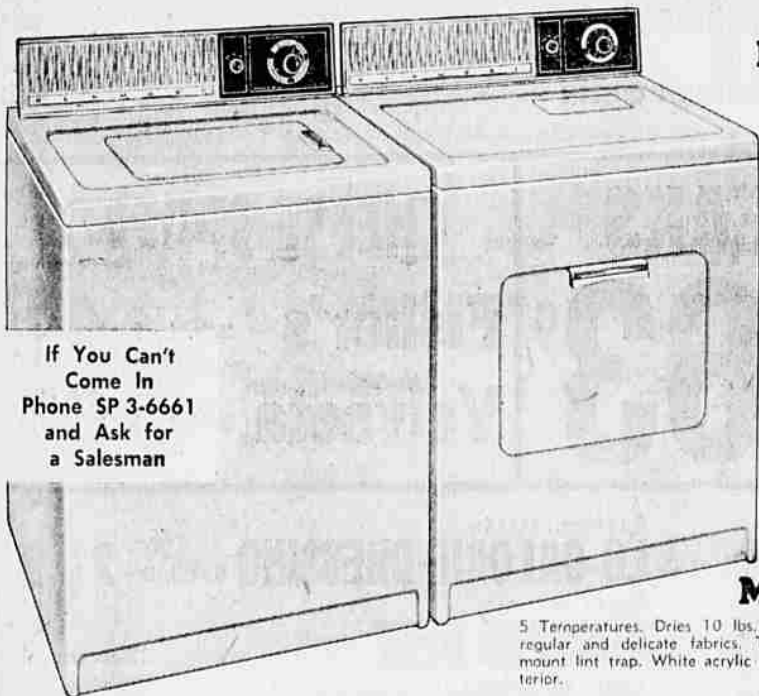
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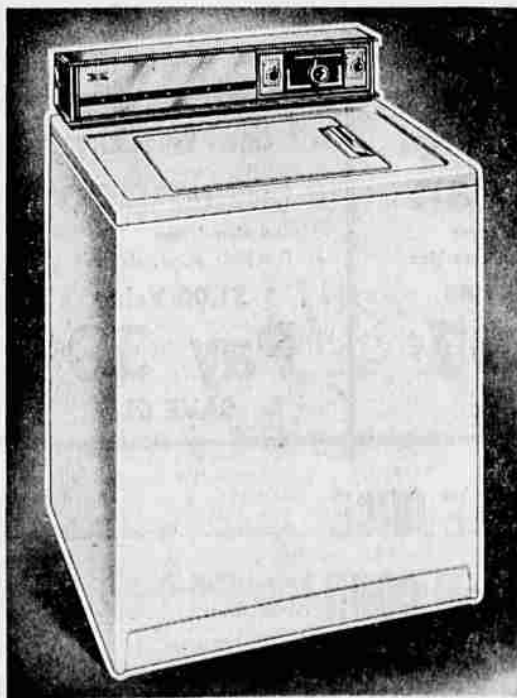
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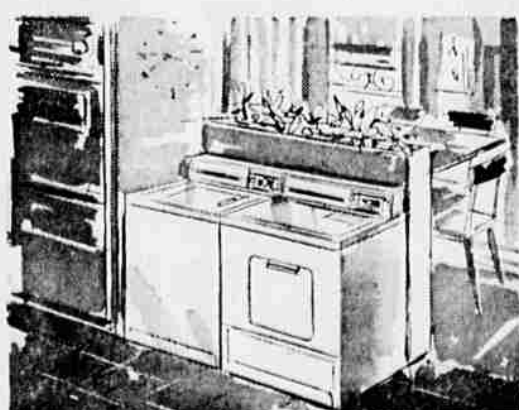
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