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Interview with Mr. Jack Ling
Conducted by Judith Spiegelman at UNICEF HQ
on 5 June 1984

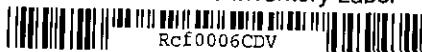
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*Biography - See Ling interview with Stein, 12 September 1983



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Interview with Mr. Jack Ling
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Danny Kaye and the Nobel Prize

- Spiegelman: Tell me, were you there when Danny Kaye did his victory ballet the year UNICEF won the Nobel Prize?
- Ling: He wasn't our story. He was a guest of ...
- Spiegelman: No, no. In the United States, were you flying around with him?
- Ling: Oh, that was Paul Edwards with him. He was flying on the jet. They were on the jet, you see.
- Spiegelman: And supposedly the account said that he did a victory ballet and those who saw it will never forget it.
- Ling: I don't even remember hearing about it.
- Spiegelman: Did you see him when he did his benefit in Oslo?
- Ling: Yes, I was there. It was a show of a number of stars, and he was the key performer. It was a little Nobel show to match the Nobel Prize money, that's what happened. He was so publicized, he was all over the place. In fact, publicity about Kaye almost overshadowed the Nobel Prize for UNICEF.
- Spiegelman: Oh, really!
- Ling: Not almost, but kind of. Because after all, every year you have the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, and at that time Danny Kaye's visit was a kind of unusual event. But I am sure his press agent made good use of that - of Danny Kaye's role in the Nobel Prize.
- Spiegelman: Were there other international stars, or was he the only international star?
- Ling: No, he was the only international star. The others, as far as I remember, were all Norwegian performers.
- Spiegelman: Was there something about a little boy who lost his voice, who got stage fright?
- Ling: I don't remember.

Spiegelman: Did you ever hear that Danny Kaye got a scroll? I found a picture of when Maurice Pate and Dag Hammarskjöld met him; he got a scroll as Goodwill Ambassador.

Ling: Yes, I think so.

Spiegelman: He did? Yes. Are there chances of retrieving a scroll?

Ling: Well, it's with him, if that's the case. He was probably given some kind of a letter, some kind of parchment, I would think.

Spiegelman: I have a picture of him holding something all rolled up.

What stands out to you among the Beatles concerts, all these special events that UNICEF had? You were not under such stress for all of them as you were for the first "Music for UNICEF" concert, were you?.

Osaka gala raises Japanese contribution

Ling: There were quite a few stresses, too. The one in Osaka was very big.

Spiegelman: Danny Kaye was there also?

Ling: Danny Kaye was not there. Danny Kaye went earlier, but Danny Kaye was not in the major event with Marlon Brando, Dinah Shore, Eddie Albert, Peter Ustinov, Sasha Distel, Yves St. Marie such as these are big stars. UNICEF Japan really turned its corner because it was collecting for children - through school for fifteen years and we wanted to expand it through television appeal, with street collection, etc.

Spiegelman: This was a fund raising gala?

Ling: That was a fund raising gala at EXPO in 1970, I think, and we had the biggest show we or NHK (Japan Broadcasting) ever had.

Spiegelman: You mean before then they were just giving a little bit of Yen, like Trick or Treat, yes?

Ling: No, not Trick or Treat, but just sent it to the schools through the school system. Some schools accepted and distributed to the kids and they put one ten-yen piece in little envelopes. There was very little income, not that much information content, and very limited fund raising. So that really lifted the fund-raising potential of the Japanese Association from fifty, sixty thousand to two hundred thousand a year.

Spiegelman: They raised two hundred thousand Yen?

Ling: Dollars. So 1970 sort of broadened their methods of work. That's a very big ...

- Spiegelman: Because UNICEF has never been involved in a telethon except after US Committee world-wide
- Ling: That was a television appeal from Osaka throughout Japan with all those big stars, and that was a terrific strain to produce a show like that.

George Harrison "Bangladesh" concert record

Of course, the Beatle George Harrison was a very big strain, not so much physical arrangement as all was done by Alan Klein ...

- Spiegelman: Alan Klein?
- Ling: Alan Klein was the Beatles' agent. But that was organised by Alan Klein, but it was Apple Company or something like that - the Beatles Company. But the strain was on the UN side because Bangladesh was not a nation. Then Bangladesh was at that time called East Pakistan.
- Spiegelman: It was East Pakistan in rebellion?
- Ling: That's right. So the UN could not be openly associated with an effort ... In fact, the programme of that concert did not have the song "Bangladesh" as part of the programme. "Bangladesh" was sung as an encore.
- Spiegelman: He had a song called "Bangladesh" that he made up?
- Ling: That's right. In fact, the album is called "Bangladesh".
- And that concert put the name Bangladesh on the map in a sense in many people's minds.
- Spiegelman: You mean, before there was a nation called Bangladesh, there was a record album called Bangladesh?
- Ling: They were already fighting to call themselves Bangladesh, but it was not yet a recognized nation at the UN.
- Spiegelman: And what about world-wide? Do you know was there any recognition?
- Ling: At that time I am not so sure. You can look it up fairly easily. That must be 1971 or 72, something like that. You can look up the Bangladesh membership at the UN. I remember Robert Müller was in the Secretary-General's office, and I suggested that UNICEF be associated with the concert to get the money, and I was told that the UN cannot officially be associated with it because Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan. So I said, "Look, how can we turn down money for children?"

- Spiegelman: This was after the concert?

Ling: No, before the concert.

Spiegelman: When they came with the proposal?

Ling: Yes. So basically, you have this problem of the UN official position, so I was told that a few million dollars was nothing compared to creating a new country.

Spiegelman: They told you that?

Ling: Something like that. They didn't want UNICEF to be officially associated with the concert, and we wanted to be associated for the money. But in order to get association, the UN itself may be embarrassed over that issue.

Spiegelman: You mean, it was a question of getting official clearance?

Ling: No, we had to inform these officials about UNICEF's involvement in this whole thing because politically it could be sensitive. In the end, the US Committee played the role of the sponsor.

Spiegelman: That was the way out?

Ling: Yes.

Spiegelman: Were you like a bull fighter in a ring? I mean it's like ...

Ling: Oh, I tell you, oh yes! I remember very well there was quite a bit of strain. As I said, the song, "Bangladesh" was not sung until the encore. It was not an official part of the programme.

Spiegelman: It was not sung until ...?

Ling: Until when the concert was supposed to be over, after the last number, then tremendous thunderous ovation - you know those rock concerts. They came out and then they played the "Bangladesh" song for the first time.

Spiegelman: Do you think that the concert and the publicity and the record - what part do you think it played in the garnering of world opinion behind the people of Bangladesh, for the independence of Bangladesh?

Ling: It is hard to say. But you know these things. You can romanticize and exaggerate, but certainly nobody or very few people had heard of the name Bangladesh before that song - it became a "single" as a record, you see. And, of course, the album was later marketed and sold a million copies, and the film was also shown in many theatres. So the word Bangladesh became much better known thanks to that concert, at a time when Bangladesh was not fully established as a nation as yet.

Spiegelman: That was quite a break for Bangladesh.

Ling: Oh, yes.

Spiegelman: What led George Harrison ... have you any idea?

Ling: It was Ravi Shankar. Ravi Shankar is Bengali. He's Indian, from West Bengal.

Spiegelman: And it was through his ... Was Shankar already ...

Ling: I think he went to his friend, George Harrison and said look, my people, the Bengalis are suffering, something like that. George Harrison is very "into" this Indian music. He is a very good friend of Ravi Shankar, and so the two of them developed this concert. And they got Bob Dylan, who had not appeared for a long time - he made a surprise appearance. Many of the big stars came, and it was quite well arranged ... Alan Klein was very extraordinary, very good at organising these things. I think UNICEF couldn't do anything like that, run the business. We would more stay out of the way, if you like, but also try to get the official relationships so that the money can be had. So the US Committee played a role there.

Spiegelman: But on the back of the album the cheque for a million dollars is made out to UNICEF. And thereby hangs a tale. Right?

Ling: Obviously, we played ... At the time of the concert it was problematic, but by the time the record comes out, it's a little later, it's not so uptight about it.

Spiegelman: The UN was no longer, the 38th Floor was no longer ...

Ling: Well, you see, you write the cheque to US Committee or you can write to UNICEF, which will refer you to the US Committee. So US Committee is the official channel to receive the money.

Spiegelman: But there was a fracas and a lot of entanglement over US tax laws for many years.

Ling: Yes, because we were told at that time we sent ... we were told that there would be a George Harrison foundation that would be officially created to deal with the concert, but apparently that step was never taken. I don't know all the details, but that step was not taken; so that's why the Internal Revenue Service questioned the appropriateness of the whole thing and fortunately the tickets of the concert had UNICEF Committee or something in the pale background. And Lloyd Bailey and I had been with numerous meetings over this. You know how it was handled and so on. And so it took many years. In the meantime, a large chunk of the money in the bank accumulated interest. By the time it was finally released, the total income from that concert had escalated to ten million dollars. Originally, it was only four or five million, I think. We got a million and something, and three or four million were locked up because of

the Internal Revenue. Because if they ruled it was not a charity effort, then they have to pay tax, and that would all go to tax. So that was locked up, and then the US Committee in the meantime called through its lawyers. In the meantime, that money gained so much interest, the totality of the whole thing is something close to ten million dollars.

Spiegelman: Between you and me, in the meantime it didn't go to the children for whom it was originally given?

Ling: Oh, it did, though.

Spiegelman: It did?

Ling: Oh yes.

Spiegelman: How could it, if it was tied up?

Ling: Tied up in that it first got a million or so for sure, definitely, immediately. Then when they released the money, it did go to Bangladesh, of course.

Spiegelman: Who contested the "charity" status of the US Committee? Why was it up for question that it was charitable?

Ling: I don't think it was. It was simply questioned. IRS did not pry into the matter. They were looking into this matter, something like that. It was not contested, it was simply a matter of checking, and so on. But I don't know whether the US Committee could have taken a few more steps to get it released quickly because we kept on asking the Committee because it had to be them, not us to follow through on this.

Spiegelman: Because of the political sensitivity?

Ling: No, but because it was ..., in fact, UNICEF itself is not "tax-deductible." U.S. Committee for UNICEF, a U.S. non-profit organization, is "tax-deductible."

Spiegelman: And were the Harrisons concerned over that, or were the unique individual people concerned?

Ling: Oh, all of them were concerned about it.

"Music for UNICEF"

Spiegelman: Were any lessons to be learned from this that were put to good use when "Music for UNICEF" was born?

Ling: Oh yes, we knew for sure that UNICEF had no business in organizing things like this, because we couldn't do it. We have no skill; we have no manpower; our methods of work are totally different. I became therefore the person who dealt with the

outside group that deal with these things, and that was the way with all successful concerts whether it was "The Gift of Song" or it was the concert we had in London by Paul McCartney at the end of the Year of the Child. It was all done by professionals.

Spiegelman: Who came up with "Music for UNICEF," the idea of copyrighting?

Ling: I think the BeeGees and David Frost.

Spiegelman: Do you feel that's been all the success it could be? Is it an ongoing thing now?

Ling: Well, I think the US Committee is trying to do another one.

Spiegelman: Was the Bangladesh concert and the record publicized, disseminated all over the world?

Ling: Yes, but at one time we didn't want to talk too much about it (Bangladesh) because of the money being held up. But the initial success was very widely published.

Spiegelman: I mean was the record promoted around the world? Was the film seen around the world?

Ling: Oh yes, definitely. It was sold. The record became a musical historical event, historical event. NY Times' Rockwell (music critic) recognized it as a historical event.

Spiegelman: I've got to get a clipping about that.

Ling: Yes, because you see Bob Dylan, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, many of these big stars. I mean I can't remember - you have to look at the jacket of the record. These are superstars.

Because of the quality of music. Bob Dylan had not appeared for some time, I guess. Neither had George Harrison, Ravi Shankar.

Spiegelman: Were you there when Peter Ustinov barked like a dog for some Thai children in order to get them to for a television show?

Ling: I saw the film, but I wasn't there. I think it was in Thailand.

About Liv Ullman

Spiegelman: What about Liv Ullmann? Have you travelled with her? Marlon? Liz?

Ling: Marlon is another story. Liv, we deliberately went after her because we thought we need a woman ambassador. She had gone to Bangkok over the refugee issues. She was quoted in the newspapers saying that her visit to Asia changed her outlook on life, that she felt there was something she needed to do. So we felt she was the right person. Elfie came up with the

suggestion. So we contacted her, and I had lunch with Liv myself, just the two of us, and I made this presentation of UNICEF's philosophy explaining that we would want her to see our work, we don't want just her name. We want her to develop a relationship with UNICEF. UNICEF works with such people on a relationship basis, that is, secured mutual trust. It's long-lasting, not just to put a name on a letterhead or something like that. So she went to Sri Lanka and I went with her and she has been doing wonderful things since.

Spiegelman: Originally she was concerned over the "Boat People"?

Ling: No. She was originally interested in the Kampuchean refugees. She and Joan Baez were involved in this march towards the border.

Spiegelman: And Jane Fonda.

Ling: I don't know whether Jane Fonda was involved, but Joan Baez was. And I think by the time we approached her, we were talking about children in general.

Spiegelman: She is an inspiration you know. She really knocked everybody else out of the box.

Ling: Yes. And when the new US administration came into office they had gotten word to cut Development Aid, and we sent her down for Senate and House hearings and to talk to State Department people.

Spiegelman: Were you there when she appeared?

Ling: I was with her.

Spiegelman: Yes. What would make her - Danny Kaye never appeared, no one else, not even Ustinov with all his intellect ...?

Ling: No, I think Danny Kaye did appear once or twice; may have at least met Congressional people.

Spiegelman: When he came back from his trip?

Ling: Well on one occasion at least certainly, I think he was involved. But Peter, Peter has done not quite the way Liv did.

Spiegelman: My question really is, what gave her the credibility or the ability, in other words she's not just the Hollywood film star, that they would listen to her ... that she is not exaggerating or hyperemotional. What gave her credibility? What was the reaction that you felt from these people, these hard-nosed people protecting the American aid dollar?

Ling: Listen, she is a serious actress, and she is a very sincere person. I think both Peter Ustinov and Danny Kaye are both extremely sincere and very effective. We simply have not used

them that much, as much as Liv. And perhaps she is a European, a woman.

Spiegelman: She also went to the West German Parliament? Did she go to all the parliaments in Europe?

Ling: I think many. I don't know, you'd better check.

Spiegelman: Yes, yes I will. Jack, any anecdotes stand out to you?

Ling: Oh, my voice is hurting. I shouldn't talk so much.

Spiegelman: Okay. We love to get the anecdotes, and we are going to publish anecdotes separately. I don't want to make you sicker. Anyway, the kind of background that you are giving is invaluable.

Ling: I can say that UNICEF's got a thick layer of goodwill around the world, in large measure because of special events, because your booklets and pamphlets and documentaries do not match with television programmes that reach hundreds of millions of people with expert communicators like Kaye, Ustinov, and a whole lot, presenting UNICEF's case to the public. They may not be presenting it in great depth, but in terms of goodwill and credibility and a large, huge number of people who cannot otherwise be reached.

Working with Marlon

Spiegelman: Tell me just a little about Marlon Brando. You said he was "a case apart."

Ling: Well, Brando is an extremely intelligent fellow. He never sees himself as an actor, but as a communicator. He sees himself primarily communicating, and he sees himself, his own celebrity, as a tool for good causes. He took up Indian rights. He took up children with us. He worked with us for a few years consistently. The first year or two, I worked with him quite closely and then sort of sporadically because he is unpredictable. His plans are so ad hoc. He is difficult to work with, unless I spend a great deal of my time, and I couldn't do that and the other information and communication responsibilities. He had opened the eyes of many people in terms of the power of the communicator in a professional sense, and he sees his role as an expert communicator yet he feels a sense of responsibility to use that notoriety, if you like, for the purpose.

Spiegelman: In the pictorial history, if we want it to stick to the story line that it's not just UNICEF's pictorial history, in the special events and ambassadors section we would need to mention other organizations that have used special events successfully.

- Ling: Well, that's going to be difficult. I think if you have, you have to think about it, it depends on how you present it. I think the best thing is to talk to the publisher ... because I can see the complications. If you want to get into this area with other organizations, it would be endless.
- Spiegelman: Yes, which other organizations have used goodwill ambassadors?
- Otherwise we will be full of UNICEF, you see. Then they will say, you know everybody with a mind will say, "This ain't no Children Above ...
- Ling: Politics". You could use it, successfully use it as an example.
- Spiegelman: That these stars came to UNICEF because of their concern for children. Why did they choose UNICEF over others, in other words the rising consciousness ...

How Pate met Danny Kaye

- Ling: Probably because UNICEF went to them, cause we deliberately went to them. We started with Danny Kaye. So, I think UNICEF has ...
- Spiegelman: Pate went to Danny Kaye?
- Ling: Well, they were on the same aeroplane.
- Spiegelman: But when Kaye told that story, I don't know if you read the interview but Kaye said that they did not meet. They met when the plane went back to Shannon and they got on another plane. And that it was Pate who called him out ...
- Ling: Later on.
- Spiegelman: Later on, that they didn't really speak.
- Ling: They did speak on the plane, they met briefly on the plane. But Pate then later called up, but the first contact was on an aeroplane but it may not have occurred to Pate at that time to warn
- Spiegelman: Martha Pate wrote a note that she said they were both the heroes of the day. Danny Kaye was entertaining the passengers and Maurice was giving out life jackets. Danny Kaye in his story, and he really reminisced quite a bit to me - I didn't see him right after his operation but - he [looked] very weak to me. He got better as the morning went on, and you know he is a bit touchy, so I didn't want to press him. You never know when he is finished because he is so slow in speech, so you never when he has something ... Anyway what he said was that they woke him up - he was in a sleeping berth - and they said "We are going to crash land." And Kaye went up and down the aisle telling people to take off their shoes for the crash landing. I can imagine there was chaos, and apparently there was very little ...

Now Paul Edwards tells a story that Kaye wasn't interested in UNICEF until UNICEF got interested in someone else, almost like "hard to get" - you know what I mean, I am going to switch my attention from you to some other.

Ling: No, I don't think so. I think Paul was thinking of the second round. You see, Paul revived Kaye's interest in the early sixties, and there is no doubt about that. But Paul was not familiar with that phase of Danny Kaye. The person who might know is Pat Hartwell she might.

Spiegelman: Yes. Had you heard that Maurice Pate had been offered the Nobel Prize by the Nobel Committee, and that he said "not for me, for UNICEF?"

Ling: No, I don't.

Spiegelman: ... Because Martha Pate had another note saying that they offered him the prize many times, and from what I have been researching - that the Norwegian Committee wanted to put him in for the prize, and that he had refused. That's what the New Yorker article said.

Ling: That's correct.

Spiegelman: ... that he said "Not for me, for UNICEF." Did you know that the year that UNICEF won the Nobel Prize was the year that Eleanor Roosevelt had died, and her admirers put her up for a posthumous prize, saying that because of her extraordinary contribution, that the Nobel Institute should waive their rules of not giving posthumously? But that was the year UNICEF got it, because Pate was already dead. Is that incredible? Did you hear anything that Mrs. Roosevelt (the US) was the only government that voted against UNICEF in the General Assembly?

Ling: That's right. I think that was the 1950 session.

Spiegelman: And she cast the vote as the ambassador with the message, right? But nobody knows how she personally felt about UNICEF felt when she had to ...

Ling: I suspect she's for it, I suppose.

Spiegelman: Right, because there is nothing in her book about UNICEF, in none of her books.

I just want to ask you a little more about the breakdown between - you say that UNICEF solicited, went to the stars vis-à-vis/versus the number of people who have come to UNICEF.

Spiegelman: At the beginning we went to the stars, and as we accumulated so much credit, when people thought of helping children, they'd think of UNICEF. So it came easier later on. Still, with people like Liv Ulmann and so on, we had to go out and get them.

Ling: Weren't there some pretty incredible suggestions that people made? Like Muhammed Ali was going to go around the world in a helicopte and this one in a boat. You must have quite a list of ...

Ling: I don't even remember some of these more outlandish ideas, but there was one guy who was absolutely crooked. This was during the Year of the Child. He was finally arrested. He wanted to go and create a IYC Commission himself for the Year of the Child. I warned the US Committee against it, and they went quite far down the line and then ultimately he was exposed on "20/20".

Spiegelman: I missed it.

Ling: Oh yes, my God. People come - they all want to help children, and they turn around, and ask for a fifty thousand dollar fee.

Spiegelman: Was there outlandish, incredible thing? You always at least gave everyone a hearing, right? You never know which one is going "to fly." Was there one or two that you thought would never "fly" and you let's say played it along, played along, and it "flew" against all normal predictions?

Ling: No, I can't think of anything. I had some skepticism about selling plates for instance, and yet it netted us seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Spiegelman: These are these porcelain ...?

Records vs concerts: dollar value

Ling: Yes, I never thought these kind of things would have that kind of appeal, I really didn't. For that matter when we first got into the music business, the concert was never itself as fund raising, it was always the record that makes the money.

Spiegelman: You had, the impression was that the record made the money?

Ling: When we started, we thought that the concert was the thing. Then we realized quickly that the concert itself was not the money making element - it was the record. But that means you have to obtain "rights." Every star has different rights in different countries, a very complex network of negotiations. The concert, the record, the Paul McCartney series of records took over six months to negotiate.

Spiegelman: Which record?

Ling: The one that Paul McCartney ... that was 1979, end of '79, the series of concerts in London.

European galas

Spiegelman: Who has all the information about the European special events?
Is it all over there?

Ling: Davico.

Spiegelman: Davico has them? He has the files?

Ling: I don't know if he has the files, but he certainly ... The first two or three were not his. The first one was the French Handicap Association - Danny Kaye, French Television, the Handicap Association, UNICEF Office, that's it.

There was another one with Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, and so on. In fact the contact with Brando, the Beatles - the second or third line in Europe then Davico came only in 1969, I think. Davico then took the gala idea and spread it all over Europe. Instead of one major, two major, which I would have liked, he did many and he has his own way of doing things. Except that in terms of raising money, the accountability for each event is not very clear. So we were interested in raising money so that each project counts.

A tale of two competing cities

Leon has another way of doing it, which is quite remarkable. He has got a lot of things going, and he seems to be able to deal with it. So, that went on a few years and UNICEF got very big, and he started a television competition between two cities on television raising money. So you can't say UNICEF is not involved in telethons.

Spiegelman: Two cities?

Ling: Yes, through television.

Spiegelman: I never heard of that.

Ling: Oh yes. I believe at one time Sammy Davis Jr. went for us. In fact I was negotiating with Sammy Davis Jr. to go to the field, and he went with ten people.

Spiegelman: Would Horst know about that?

Ling: Oh yes. I believe at one time Sammy Davis Jr. went for us. In fact, I was negotiating with Sammy Davis Jr. to go and he went with ten people.

Spiegelman: Would Horst know about that?

Ling: Horst would not know.

Spiegelman: Which cities were those?

Ling: One was Essen, I think, the other Dusseldorf. We use the celebrity for more than just entertainment and fund raising. We used the World Child Emergency Declaration in 1974 with Billy Graham, Mrs. Marcus, a big show - we had a colloquium of children in Geneva. That was Davico's too.

Spiegelman: But it was also entertainment

Ling: No entertainment, all serious things.

Spiegelman: Has satellite ever been used? Yes, Danny Kaye was in something in the GA.

20th anniversary world satellite gala

Ling: That was the 20th anniversary of UNICEF, 1966 or '67. ITU and UNICEF had a linking together, a major television show produced by Nobel Wilson of the BBC. That one programme reached something like three or four hundred million people around the world. I think it was done with ITU.

Ling: Danny Kaye with a group of children, talking to children from five continents.

Spiegelman: And that went around to two hundred and thirty million people?

"Gift of Song" and "World of Love" specials

Ling: I don't know. There was a General Assembly "Gift of Song". The first one was CBS - "A World of Love", Alexander Cohen produced in the General Assembly hall with Florence Harrison, Bill Cosby, Barbara Striesand

Spiegelman: These are two different things? Danny Kaye was not at the second show?

Ling: Danny Kaye was in the World Satellite show, satellite programme.

Spiegelman: Well, I'm surprised that Jim Grant has done everything else. I mean I'm sure he's going to do something with the Children Survival Revolution. He will get on international ... we could find a satellite.

Ling: But you have to have somebody in UNICEF interested to develop this. With the current administration, I don't know who is interested in operating this.

Spiegelman: They are interested in spreading the word; they are interested in going to scale; they are interested in using communications to its hilt. Everyone gives the same message from here to here and ...

Ling: But if this kind of show is especially immense, we've got to put more resources than what is now done.

Pelé, Ali and "Sports for UNICEF"

Spiegelman: Was there anything else - and the sports personalities, and those two ...

Ling: Pelé, we got Pelé, we got Muhammed Ali. We had the biggest sports world - who is bigger than these two?

Spiegelman: Yes, and the Olympics, and the FIFA, the soccer, and Liv Ulmann was over at the Olympics in Yugoslavia to open some kind of a thing. And remember those two fellows that walked around the world for UNICEF?

Ling: Oh yes, two brothers. One got killed in Afghanistan - the Kunst brothers.

Spiegelman: Yes, but UNICEF disallowed it. I mean, UNICEF didn't say ...

Ling: Because we didn't want to take the responsibility. The US Committee did.

Spiegelman: Do you know about the crossing of the Alps - the re-enactment of Hannibal with the other things?

Ling: Oh, that was Richard Jolly's idea.

Spiegelman: It happened though, right?

Ling: It didn't.

Spiegelman: It didn't take place? They told me it did.

Ling: Not for UNICEF.

Spiegelman: Spanish and Italian committees. The Italian committee floated a big balloon that said UNICEF and has done other outlandish ...

Ling: Then it may have happened after my departure. We talked about it with Richard Jolly.

Spiegelman: Well, it would have to be the Italians. I remember Williams was talking about it.

Opening the Bosphorus Bridge

Ling: We talked about it. I don't remember whether we did it. You should check them. We had Danny Kaye opening the bridge,

Spiegelman: Yes, in Turkey.

Ling: ... and Josephine Baker. They were stealing each other's show.

Spiegelman: They did? They were upstaging each other?

Ling: Josephine Baker was not about to be upstaged by anybody nor was Danny Kaye. I wasn't there.

Spiegelman: This was a new bridge uniting...

Ling: Asia and Europe, the Bosphorus Bridge.

Spiegelman: Yes, I remember, I was in Istanbul. Do you remember any other terrific things that national committees have done from the .

Italian parachute jumps

Ling: The Italians have parachutes, parachuting season. They have things parachuted down. You have to ask the European office. You know the Italian Committee is wild, very good.

Spiegelman: Have you seen pictures of this parachuting?

Ling: No, I've heard about it.

Spiegelman: Anything else, cause you have a mind for that kind of thing?

Ling: I'm really tired.

Spiegelman: If you think of any things, because the job of pulling together all of this stuff and finding pictures and getting from all sides is quite ... I love it, but it's ...

Burton's gift

Ling: Elizabeth Taylor's birthday, Richard Burton gave a gift to UNICEF.

Spiegelman: Was that her 40th birthday or something?

Ling: Something like that. Davico has that. The money did come in at some point.

Cat Stevens

Cat Stevens walked into the office in sneakers, and said that he wanted "to do something for children". We wanted a deeper commitment. It was a bit of a gamble, but it paid off. He was a sincere fellow. We sent him to Ethiopia to see programmes there, but didn't hear further from him. We wondered what happened. Many months later, he turned up, and took a crumpled check for \$250,000 out of his pocket, and said "I am sorry it's so late, but here it is". He didn't want us to publicize his gift because he didn't want the impression that he did this for the publicity.

Rod Stewart crisis during "Music for UNICEF" concert

Rod Stewart was going to contribute one of his hits, "Maggie Mae" a song about a prostitute, but at the last minute, he just changed his mind. In the end, he contributed, "Do You Think I'm Sexy?" and we had eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation with Robert Stigwood and David Frost, the producer, over Stewart's choice of this song and about the vulgar way he was performing it during the dress rehearsal. He was dressed in crimson-coloured tights and his movements were obscene. The Secretary-General had entrusted the protection of the dignity of the General Assembly during this telecast to me. After conferring with Mr. Labouisse, we agreed to go on with the show only if the television directors agreed to focus the camera on Stewart from the waist up only. That would eliminate the body movements and gestures as far as the TV audiences at home were concerned. (Those in the GA Hall certainly would see them.) Mr. Labouisse and I listened to the rehearsal together, and we realized that if the Master of Ceremonies would announce, "Now Rod Stewart will sing his new song" without giving the song's name, nobody would pay attention to the lyrics at all. They would be drowned out by the background noise. So given those two compromises, the "Music for UNICEF concert actually took place.

I know I was right about the lack of good taste in Stewart's performance. But I was a bad judge of good music in terms of profitability. "Do you think I'm Sexy?" was one of the all-time hits!
