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Remarks by Mr. James P. Grant
Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
at the dedication of
The Danny Kaye Visitors Center at UNICEF House

New York
5 May 1988

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Chairman Taniguchi,
Mrs. Kaye:

Over three and one-half decades ago, the early euphoria surrounding the United Nations began to subside, and this important institution settled into the everyday business of trying to make the world work for everyone.

A young entertainer who was known primarily for making everyone laugh, and rarely showed a serious face, had the far-sighted understanding to recognize that this United Nations would need the on-going support and understanding of the world's public to ensure that the world's governments remained serious about working through the U.N.

Danny and Sylvia Kaye decided that he could help. They offered their help to Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, and he enthusiastically welcomed it. Knowing that the political side of the United Nations would inevitably grow ever-more controversial, they wanted to make sure that people knew about and remembered the other side of the United Nations: the people side. So they decided that Danny would help turn the world's spotlight onto the little known "people face" of the United Nations - the Children's Fund.

And what a spotlight he turned!

The story of his 34 years as Ambassador at-large for the World's Children is well-known to almost everyone. I'd like to invite three of his friends and colleagues who are here today - Isaac Stern, Kitty Carlisle Hart, and Liv Ullmann - to briefly share with us the Danny Kaye whom they knew.

<Mr. Grant will invite Mr. Stern, Ms. Hart and Ms. Ullmann to speak;
Mr. Grant will then resume his own comments.>

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Liv, as everyone knows, has followed in the footsteps pioneered by Danny - as a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, along with Peter Ustinov, Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, Harry Belafonte and Sir Richard Attenborough and our Special Ambassador, Audrey Hepburn.

When we opened UNICEF House last year, I expressed our satisfaction over the first phase of our move to our new Headquarters building - a building which we can call our own and to which we can welcome our working friends and colleagues. Today the second phase of that move has been completed. We can now invite UNICEF supporters and the general public to share with us, in a very visual and colorful way, some of the work and hopes and dreams we have for the children of the world.

Almost exactly two years ago today, and several thousand miles away, I stood on a platform similar to this one, next to our dear friend and Ambassador-at-large to the World's Children. Danny and I were attending the celebration of International Children's Day at the U.N. pavilion at the 1986 World's Fair in Vancouver, Canada. Danny was the star at that opening, as he always was at every event he attended - entertaining a huge crowd of adults and children.

It was on that very day that the idea of creating a mini-pavilion at UNICEF House was born, and that we first began to think seriously of replicating or transferring this highly-acclaimed exhibit to New York, so that people from around the world could see it when they came to visit the United Nations.

It took two years to accomplish the job. Difficult though it was at times to arrange for the adaptation and transfer of the exhibit to this new environment, we ultimately succeeded, but not without the tremendous help and support of UNICEF's National Committees and our many friends from all sectors of the community. We learned again that, with a little help from our friends, "It can be done".

In the Press Kits today, you'll find a listing - along with our very great thanks - to those organizations and private companies who have contributed to make this exhibit possible. Foremost among these are the Japan Committee for UNICEF (which was helped by the Skylark Hotels of Japan); UNICEF Canada, which helped create the exhibit originally, and the United States Committee for UNICEF, which has contributed not only major financial support, but invaluable people support as well. All of the contributors are also acknowledged in the final segment of the exhibit.

I would also like to make special mention of our gratitude for the gift of the delightful statuary in our lobby here at UNICEF House - "The First Step" by the famous Dutch sculptor, Mr. Kees Verkade - which was donated by the AMRO Bank of The Netherlands, which is a very strong supporter and ally of our Netherlands Committee for UNICEF. We are very happy to have here with us today Mr. Robert Pronk, Deputy General Manager of AMRO, and Mr. Sjoerd Leenstra, First Secretary of the Mission of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Also here from the AMRO Bank is Ms. Lony Fried (Executive Assistant), who is also a Board Member of the New York Metropolitan Committee for UNICEF.

I think that Danny would have enjoyed and approved of this living testimonial of our gratitude to his unique services to the world's children. The Visitors Center and exhibit that we have been able to create here is just a small reflection of that gratitude.

We shall be extremely fortunate if our center, over the years to come, will be able to speak in a voice as powerful, as captivating and as persuasive as that of our friend, Danny Kaye.

Now, to formally dedicate this facility, I would like to introduce the Acting Chairman of the UNICEF Executive Board, Ambassador Makoto Taniguchi of Japan, who will speak in behalf of our Board, and then will invite the Secretary-General of the United Nations to dedicate this Visitors Center to the living memory of Danny Kaye.