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Interview of Jack Ling*

conducted by Herman Stein at WHO Headquarters, Geneva

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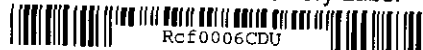
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Jack Ling started in UNICEF in October 1951 as regional information officer for Asia, stationed in Bangkok. He came to UNICEF headquarters in 1962 as Deputy Director of the Information Division and in 1972 became Director of the Information Division. He left this post in 1982 to become Director of Public Information and Health at WHO in Geneva. Prior to coming to UNICEF, Mr. Ling was a journalist in Asia.



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Bangkok Regional Office in the 1950s

Quantifying results in mass disease campaigns

Stein: Jack, you have had a career with UNICEF that has extended from 1951 until virtually the present day. As I understand it, you were recruited in Hong Kong to become a Public Relations Officer in Bangkok. When you came to Bangkok, what did you find the situation like?

Ling: I think the Regional Office at that time made most of the fundamental decisions. Keeny was a big man and a very good Regional Director. I think the Regional Offices were the points where most of the field decisions were made. He required monthly reports from the Field Offices. There was a lot of moaning and groaning, because there were too many reports, but at that time we were engaged in mass disease campaigns where counting heads meant something, and the beneficiaries were countable then and they could be matched with supplies. Sam Keeny was extraordinary as a man who could spot a report - say from India - and say "you have vaccinated x number of children, BCG, and how is it that your car mileage is only half of what it should be?". He really read those reports, he could check on you. Those reports meant something because we were engaged in disease campaigns - quantifiable in terms of beneficiaries.

In some ways, the UNICEF reputation was made because we were able to quantify the achievements of UNICEF, in fairly simplistic terms on hindsight, in the context of development, because you can count the number of BCG vaccinations, but these kids grow up and contract TB anyhow because they move into slums and are surrounded by others with the disease.

Stein: Your job then was to deliver responsibly what you could get?

Ling: At that time we were largely a supply organization because moving supplies - syringes, equipment for malaria control, spraying - all these things had numbers. When I left Bangkok in 1953, we were still very much in this field.

Broadening scope

I went back to Bangkok in 1956, after an interval during which I finished my higher education. We gradually moved more into training, although MCH was always in the training of village birth attendants - many of the things that you now see in primary health care had some roots then. We were still essentially engaged in the 50's in disease campaigns and MCH, gradually moving to broader areas of nutrition and education because the idea was that you could save children from disease but what kind of a job is he prepared for. I remember very well there was a Thai boy called Sam whom Danny Kaye made famous, in Assignment Children. He saw him in '54, "One shot of penicillin and you are cured". Beautiful 'before and after' treatment.

Then Danny Kaye came out to Tokyo to a reunion, and I had to locate that boy and I found him and his family, looking after three or four water buffalos. He was cured of yaws, he had been to school for three or four years, never read again, and became illiterate. He was underemployed, the family had broken up because of the number of children so the farm had become a very small and so he was taking care of three or four buffalos. We took him to Bangkok and he had to re-enrol at primary school, at that time he was thirteen or fourteen.

Stein: These were the kinds of situations that led to Bellagio, and Basic Services?

Ling: That's right. It was a very natural development, a very natural evolution for UNICEF.

Keeny

Stein: Let me play back a little bit. You were recruited by Sam Keeny. As I understand the history of the situation at that time, particularly in Asia, there was a great deal of loyalty inspired towards Sam Keeny by people not only in his office, but also in the field.

Ling: Yes, I think he is a teacher, basically. He is as tough as nails as a supervisor, but he will back you up and therefore he inspires a certain amount of loyalty, and he is also extremely credible with governments. I remember that after I came back - well I was still at Stanford at that time, in '55 - he wrote an article in LANCET called 'If I were a Minister of Health in Asia' and I asked him, "Do you want me to distribute this in Asia? What do you think the Asian governments will think of it?". He said "Well, this isn't the first time I have given some free advice!". But he was respected. Ministers of Health did not mind him writing that article in LANCET. Because he delivered the goods, his heart was with them, his motivation was with the people. So he was able to speak very bluntly on some of the things. Of course, he wasn't undiplomatic, he was straightforward but reasonably diplomatic. So governments trusted him.

Then, of course, UNICEF knows that if it deals in simple programmes, when we deliver the goods people begin to have confidence.

Stein: What was your own relationship with Sam Keeny, as Public Relations Officer?

Ling: He was tough. He was a very good writer himself, so he made my life difficult at the beginning, until I got used to him. I think he was a man of broad vision and yet he was good at details in terms of supply logistics. I told you about the BCG campaign - "You had ten thousand kids vaccinated, how come your jeep does not indicate the mileage you have travelled?". So you are pinpointed right there. I don't think he cared very much about the niceties in terms of people.

He himself worked very hard. For years in Bangkok we worked on Saturdays - it was an official working day. Other offices began to have air conditioning, but we didn't, he didn't think an international civil service would need to worry about privileges, things like that. He would say, "Well, we work fulltime what are we doing here?". And so he had that kind of spirit. I have seen him when the car didn't meet him at the airport because the telegram from Rangoon didn't come in on time and I looked out of the window and saw the Regional Director with his suitcase on a tricycle coming back, he walked up the stairs, he didn't make a fuss and say "nobody met me". The telegram was late, so he went back to work. He was not a pompous man. He was a simple man in his personal taste and his dedication to children was very obvious. His style inspired us.

Stein: So he had quite an impact on the way UNICEF was carried on, for quite a long time, because of that?

Ling: I think with his particular talent, and logistical training, it was a very good time for UNICEF. He was basically a teacher and he took pride, for instance, in the fact that many of his staff in the Asia Regional Office, never had a degree. I had a couple of degrees, Wah Wong had a Ph.D. - we practically had to hide. People worked their way through, - Tony Meager, Brian Jones, Margaret Gaan and so on. He took pride in training people to do the things we were doing. In that sense he was a unique leader. Whether he would particularly fit into the current stage of UN development schemes, I am not too sure.

Stein: But he was certainly the man for the time?

Ling: Oh yes, he was.

Bangkok/Headquarters relations

Stein: What was the relationship between the Regional Office to New York, from your perspective?

Ling: At that time it was very clear that there was always a bit of good-natured combativeness on the part of the Regional Office. He used to go to New York twice a year - the Executive Board met twice a year. (In fact it was on one of those trips that he went through Hong Kong and interviewed me as a journalist, and later offered me a job). So he went to get a piece of the action. The Asia section in New York, in the person of Newton Bowles, was his representative, representing the Regional Director's interests, and so there was a slightly different kind of tension. At least, that was how I perceived it from Bangkok.

I had some difficulty with my own Director of Information, not himself but the office. I sent photographs there, knocked my brains out, rushed, then there was no action taken on the photographs. Some of the things, later on, I have seen my own colleagues in HQ doing it. So the tension, I thought, was a very creative antagonism. I think an organization like UNICEF should have a certain kind of tension between the field and headquarters. It represents reality. If you take your job seriously, you will get a special perspective. It's healthier.

Stein: There is a constructive tension between field and headquarters - in every good organization that has a centre and has a field. There is also destructive tension, too.

Ling: Of course.

Information Division evolution

Field/headquarters perspectives

Stein: We are talking about 1955 to the early 1960's. What was the nature of your job when you were in Bangkok? What did public relations mean? Who was your audience?

Ling: At that time it was schizophrenic. As an Asian journalist (in fact I got my Stanford Fellowship for Asian journalism) I saw myself as reporting UNICEF activities and the concerns of governments, in articles and pictures and films, within the region. But headquarters always perceived that the materials they got from the field were used to raise money. That dichotomy still exists, so I understand perfectly. In fact now in UNICEF, I think, the Country Offices and Regional Offices are finally speaking up and saying, "We must do this, to support our programmes". In those days I was a lone voice in a sense, because Headquarters' Information Division saw mine as a source of fundraising material to get more money, and it is still to some extent true. So you always have that and it hasn't changed in thirty years.

Stein: Except that it was newer then and so you found the division somewhat greater between these two purposes.

Ling: Well I'm not so sure. There were so few people - I was the only full-time regional information officer. Paris had one, Africa was run out of Paris, so was the Middle East. Delhi was part of Asia and Latin America had a part-time person. The pattern didn't exist until I came to HQ and became Director and each office then had an information officer.

Stein: Except that Paris at that time covered quite a lot of the field.

Ling: From Paris, yes. But there was only one person who, I think, - Monica de Facon - who was a columnist for the New York Daily News on fashion on the side.

Ling career

Stein: It's the first time I've heard of that! Well - you came to New York in 1962, first as Chief of Radio, Television and Film, then with other assignments as assistant for Planning and Budget, then Deputy Chief of Information and, about ten years later, as Director of the Information Division.

Ling: We didn't have all those big titles. There was no 'Chief', it was just the radio and television officer and that was it! The whole division had five or six professionals.

From journalism to information

Stein: I would like you to characterise the development of the Information Division over the twenty years during which you knew it so intimately in New York.

Ling: I think it was the evolution of a journalist to an information officer. In those early days I saw my loyalties as being almost with the public in terms of reporting to them what UNICEF did. Gradually I saw myself as an instrument for an organization and my journalist skills were to be put at the disposal of that organization. So, if you like, I had become a propagandist - that may have a bad connotation, but that was what it is. You have a purpose, but you try not to step beyond the journalist ethics.

Stein: So the institutional definition began to take precedence over the professional definition?

Ling: That's right. I didn't realize until I left Bangkok the need for fundraising because for the field offices this is just so far removed from what you are doing. To some extent this is still the case in some of the field offices.

Calder Mission

I had gone through one period, in 1962, when I was detached from UNICEF to be helping the whole UN system - I was travelling with Richie Calder. I was the other member of the second Calder mission for the UN. We travelled together for three or four months to twenty or thirty Asian countries and I managed that programme, and it was interesting - we sold all the articles, pictures, radio tapes and in fact at the end of the mission I was able to distribute money back to the agencies of the UN system. I felt that Calder was a big-name writer and I was a journalist and I took pictures (my pictures are

considered good enough for professional photography) so why should we give it all away - our material of a good professional standard? That's how I developed a basic feeling. Free material really gets you nowhere. If you have good material, you have to try to sell it, at least, put a price on it (you can waive the price if necessary) and you can get a better placement.

Beginning of co-production concept

From that I developed the concept of co-productions. The UN should not be producing films for the sake of producing, we are trying to reach the audience, so we co-produce with a television organization, so you get professional standards maintained through their art. So that three or four months with Calder was an extremely useful experience for me, and that was before I was transferred, during the period I was kind of on loan to help the UN information mission - WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, World Bank, were all party to that. In fact I still see pictures in UNESCO and FAO sometimes which were pictures I took during that time.

Pate emphasis

Stein: At UNICEF proper, at headquarters, you worked with Maurice Pate?

Ling: I worked with Maurice Pate and Dick Heyward before Mr. Labouisse came. Pate had a flare for fundraising - well, I would almost say that every American executive understands public relations. Because I think that is how American society is structured, business is like that, and he did have that understanding and need for it. He was the one who contacted Danny Kaye first - they were travelling on the same plane. And so he saw that kind of opportunity, although he was low-key basically, not a big-flare person. But he also realized an article in the NEW YORKER may mean something. And at that time Mrs. Hartwell was the Director of Information and was able to get some articles in the NEW YORKER.

New demands

Don't forget that in the 1950's, public information was closer to public relations. Then as the competition for public attention got keener from institutions - 'public information' was a better word because you really could no longer buy a drink for a journalist to get a piece in a publication. You had to have a good story, that could stand on its own. So I see an evolution during the late 1940's and early 1950's in the whole field - more professionalization.

I certainly did not realize the complexity of headquarters when I arrived there. And Information was in low esteem, for some reason. Very complex - a personality problem, too, between the head of

Information and some people. So I had to come to grips with the Information people who did not have a high profile, nor great credibility. It was a long, slow, build-up over a period of time and I didn't recognize the need for fundraising backup when I was in the field and I realized that to place an article in New York is certainly more difficult than placing an article in Bangkok, but then that was so far away that it was not my problem until I got to New York and realized the problem.

And then the National Committees began to come up at that time and it was Maurice Pate and Willy Meyer who built up the network of National Committees in Europe. Charles Egger, of course, played a pretty big role in that he was the Director.

Stein: There were new demands placed on

Ling: Yes. It was beginning.

Relations with Greeting Cards/Heyward

Greeting Cards were very much part of Information. The Director of Greeting Cards reported to me as Deputy Chief of Information because it was created by a kind of Information requirement - posters, cards, and so on and in fact until the 1960's, the Information budget came from the sale of the calendar. The UNICEF calendar provided basic resources for UNICEF information work. And then, finally, the Board said it was not very regular - it was still UNICEF money. That didn't happen until the early 60's, '63-'64 - after I got to New York. Dick Heyward was concerned with Greeting Cards, too. So essentially, we dealt with Heyward who was directly responsible, and Pate who was a bit of a reigning monarch (We used to kid that Dick Heyward was Prime Minister and Pate was constitutional monarch).

Relation to fund-raising

Stein: What was the relationship between the Information Division and fundraising generally?

Ling: There was no organized fundraising - only Maurice Pate and Willy Meyer. There was a general notion that you had got to have media support in order to pave the ground, and Maurice Pate always said "Oh, you guys do the dirty work and I just go pick up the nice things". A kind of vague relationship - we didn't have direct accountability, but a general vague notion that we had to have media support before we could talk about raising money.

Stein: Then it was actually organized and structured during the time of Harry Labouisse?

Ling: Yes, I would say when Harry Labouisse came. And Barney Fraser was the man who kept track of which government was giving what - Barney

Fraser was not a fundraiser but he certainly kept records. He may advance an argument, maybe write a letter to a government, but in fact, it was from Information, we felt, that we ought to have a focal point on fundraising.

I was of the belief that public information should not be too overtly tied with government fundraising because the government could turn round and say we were using the public media to blackmail them. That was one thing. The other was that we could lose credibility with the media: "All you care about is fundraising - your press releases don't deal with substantive subjects". So we said there ought to be a slight distance and we advocated some kind of separate focal point. Victor Beermann was the first person we hired. He was UNICEF Joint Representative in Sydney. He was a good fundraiser.

Stein: We are talking now about the late 1960's when fundraising became an official department?

Ling: That's right. Before that it was done by the Executive Director, Pate himself, with help from Information and Willy Meyer who was kind of general external relations in Europe. There was no counterpart at headquarters.

Effect of Bellagio

Stein: Do you recall the Bellagio period?

Ling: Yes.

Stein: Do you have any sense of whether there was something important for Information to do that was different from pre-Bellagio?

Ling: There was certainly a new dimension. Before Bellagio there was vertical programming, if you like, and WHO is now very fond of mentioning that period. MCH was supposed to consolidate some of those services, but essentially they were with children's health, nutrition, schooling. I think Bellagio provided the basis for the planning; we said we couldn't do it piece-meal, you have to have the totality. And, of course, what emerged from that exercise, I remember very well, was a broadened vision of information altogether and the first Asian Planning Conference for Children. Basic statistics emerged: 'How many children?' and 'What is the percentage?' I remember very well that I wanted to do a flowchart on how many children were born, how many had midwifery delivery services, how many went through the schoolhouse, how many dropped dead?

PSC

I wanted to do a visual flowchart of that because it would have been extremely telling and that gave me an impetus in the Programme Support Communication area.

PSC had emerged earlier, in fact when I was still in Bangkok, PSC began. I visited some programmes south of Thailand and I was to write articles, but I found some of the health centres were empty, the equipment locked in cabinets. In theory, one centre served x number of people, and there should have been people in them. I realized that people didn't know the centres existed. People were not involved. I remember writing a report to Sam Keeny saying that we ought to prepare a leaflet for distribution to the public, not through the health ministry but through another channel to get to the people directly - probably schools because Thailand had pretty extensive schools at that time - to make the people understand that there is a centre they can use. Then I ran into terrible conflict with the then-Representative for Thailand, Simon Polack, he said, "This young punk from the Regional Office lording it over me - what does he know?". I said, "Well, I'm trying to support programmes". Sam Keeny said, "Well, you're talking about programme-supporting information, aren't you?". And the term stuck - 'Programme-Supporting Information'. But I didn't have a chance, at policy-level certainly, in Bangkok.

Then when I came to New York I re-dug up this problem. People would come to me and ask if we could not make a slide set on nutrition. The programme needed money - they had films, they had bought equipment for showing them. I thought these should be properly planned and shouldn't be so ad hoc. And when the Asian Conference for Children came, with a broader vision, I said the media could support programmes and that's how the Erskine Childers unit in Bangkok was created. In fact, the first contract Erskine Childers had with the UN was with UNICEF and I was his reporting officer. And the PSC of UNDP and UNICEF came into being. We then split with UNDP because I did not want UNICEF to get involved with an inter-agency fight with UNESCO, whose jurisdiction included communication. The UNDP considered it part of development, the UNESCO part of the culture and communication sector, so I said "UNICEF - very simple. We want to support programmes for children". And so we decided not to use even the word 'programme' - because UNDP is a programme - but to use the word 'project', to help small and big projects, we deliberately used the words 'Project Support Communication'. Not to make a big deal of it, but to make practical, immediate use of communication support of ongoing projects.

Stein: You were the father of PSC?

Ling: Well, in UNICEF, definitely. There is no doubt about that. I did not want to make a big deal of it because I was afraid the Programme Division would turn round and say, "What is this guy doing?". "What does Information have to do with us?". I wanted to keep it low-key. Charles Egger and Dick Heyward understood and Harry Labouisse certainly understood and I went to the Board Programme Committee two or three times to explain PSC. The Programme Division didn't quite understand, "Yes, sounds right, but, you know...". It took a long time. Some good Programme Officers without one telling them were already doing it

Stein: Charles was head of the Programme Division, wasn't he?

Ling: He understood it but many programme officers didn't. Some did, some didn't. Some did it without anyone telling them. That is why there was a difference between my approach and UNDP because it was not a new discipline, it is just a simple systematic way of using communication for development.

Stein: As I understand it initially there was a programme jointly with UNDP but UNDP was in conflict with UNESCO, so that if you stayed with UNDP you would also have been in conflict with UNESCO.

Ling: So we used another term.

Stein: So we used project instead of programme and related solely to project support communication for children.

Ling: There was also a difference ultimately, as the Erskine unit, after three years reporting to me in Headquarters, began reporting to UNDP, because they wanted to expand the unit and UNDP said they would underwrite the expenditure. I didn't mind and didn't want to stand in the way of anyone having a bigger office and the basic concept was to use greater advocacy of which Erskine was quite capable. After a few years that unit no longer belonged to us. We had another concept, slightly different. I didn't believe in having a centre, I wanted project level support so we had at first a regional PSC office but more important at the project level. As a result now in the UN system, UNICEF has more of this than any other agency. At UNDP the unit in Bangkok became a training unit and there is no such focal point anymore. They have it conceptually, that is, UNDP can undertake communication as part of their project programme. They have got a few programmes involved in development communication media which UNESCO also has. FAO has a DSC unit but its staff is in Rome, and not like UNICEF which is regionalized. In looking back, I think that was the right path we took. We were very low-key.

Stein: You would say that it was a very important instrument in the evolution of UNICEF. I suppose at the time you left the office you still found some people who understood and some who didn't.

Ling: New people didn't understand, old people had a fixed idea. Basically people kept asking for a long detailed definition. I said nothing doing, I want only one sentence, "the systematic use of communication, both traditional and modern, in support of development projects." I didn't want a straight jacket, how you do it, each situation was different. Communication can be modern, it can be traditional.

Stein: You were emphasising the principles, not the procedures.

Ling: Yes. Each country should develop its own.

Pate/Labouisse differences

Stein: Did you find much of a difference between Mr. Pate and Mr. Labouisse in relationship to the information function?

Ling: I think that Pate almost acted on faith. He kind of had a spiritual quality. The way he looked with his white hair we used to say he almost had a halo and he had this tremendous sincerity. With that approach he was the founder of it. I think Mr. Labouisse had a more professional approach to running of the Organization and certainly much more management. With Mr. Pate, it was small, more like a family, his argument was that if Mary pays \$65 a week we ought to do it no more than \$66, it was that kind of basic thinking. A bit of missionary, do-good humanitarian approach. Mr. Labouisse had a much more professional, developed co-operation approach. So there was the distinct stylist difference but the motives were the same.

Stein: How did it affect information?

Ling: I think that Mr. Labouisse was basically a shy person but Mr. Pate had more of a natural instinct for publicity in a sense. Mr. Labouisse argued himself into having to do it, so you see the difference. If he doesn't have to do it, he doesn't, although he knows it is good for UNICEF. It did not come spontaneously but you could see the evolution. So I think that Labouisse was in that position.

But I think also there was one event when his relation with Information may have changed and so set the pace, because shortly after he came we won the Nobel Peace Prize. That same morning Labouisse, Paul Edwards and I had breakfast with Danny Kaye to see him off on one of these cross United States trip promoting Halloween. Paul went with Danny and when I came back to the office there was the cable on the Nobel Peace Prize, so I handled the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony. I think that was so new in Labouisse's tenure in UNICEF, it may have given him an insight of the strength and weaknesses of the Division and the people he dealt with and also the opportunity for publicity. I remember very well the networks had talked about UNICEF winning the Noble Peace Prize. The NEW YORKER was doing a piece.

Stein: When you say network, do you mean television network?

Ling: Yes. The New Yorker assigned Cramer to spend two days with us resulting in a Talk of the Town article. Then Channel 13 wanted an interview and Labouisse said, "Jack, we have done it, that is enough". I said that is another channel with a different kind of audience, it is not always easy to get that kind of programme, this is going to be a substantive interview. He said let me think about

it. The next day he still did not want to do it. I said, " Mr. Labouisse if you don't want to do it, shall we ask Mr. Heyward to do it?". He then turned around and did it. He was very good but he argued with me and said he could do it later on when we came back with the Prize. I said, "News is news - today they are interested, when you come back, there is another piece of news and you would be shoved into a corner". I remember very well after the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony, he said, "Jack, you remember you asked me and I was resistant? You were right". He was not afraid to argue and would come back and say you were right. I thought that was very nice. We had some interesting moments in those days.

Heyward

Stein: How was your relationship with Mr. Heyward?

Ling: I think it was a very good one basically. He was also a teacher, so I had two teachers in UNICEF. They may not realise it but they were basically teachers. Both Keeny and Heyward were teachers. Heyward was constantly trying to educate his staff with a deliberate effort, giving me books to read. Some people capitalised on that. I think that he brought the awareness of planning. You know journalists are not planners because if you are assigned to report events that is the opposite of planning. You are not suppose to plan your events, you just cover the events. That is one of the problems of the information staff. If you have only your creative journalist background you cannot understand what information officers are supposed to be. The direct opposite of a Planner is a basic daily journalist. If something happens, he covers it, thats it. What kind of planning can there be. Even though I was aware of it, it was emotional sometimes to go in that direction. Heyward helped when he first asked me to tackle the budget. I resented that but then you realised that it set the framework for your work. I did it, not that I liked it.

Stein: The budget for information?

Ling: Yes. For years I dealt with it and as soon as I had a Deputy, John Williams, I said, "John, you do it". It was a good thing Heyward was basically a teacher. He had a much more European approach to information than an American, which meant you hit the elite press rather than the mass press. He may recognise that his readers were influential but his natural inclination is to LE MONDE. I think that he provided a good leadership for Information Division as well.

Grant

Stein: You carried on right through the transition from Harry Labouisse to Jim Grant.

Ling: Yes, two and a half years with Jim.

Stein: And the Information Division's general orientation went the same?

Ling: Oh I think it continued. In a sense, Jim is even more public relations-minded than Labouisse. In fact he is so active that I once teased Jim and said, "You don't need a Director of Information, you don't even need a Director of External Relations, you are all of them in one". And once he complained to the CBS producer of 60 Minutes himself and he got scolded by the producer, and I said "That's my job, you should be protected". Well, you know, he is a very active man, he wanted to do things. So I think information now apparently plays quite an essential role in UNICEF and it started with Jim.

Celebrities

Kaye and others

Stein: You had a very rich association with quite a number of the celebrities who worked with UNICEF. You mentioned Danny Kaye, what are some of your key recollections?

Ling: That is a subject for a book. I would say this, if I can be modest: in looking back at my work with UNICEF PSC, I had a hand in it. The utilization of public personnel, I standardized it. Danny Kaye was just one person who helped us. We decided to have more - Peter Ustinov, Liv Ullmann, Pelé, Mohammed Ali - all these at one time were dealing with us. Then we went in for music, the Beatles, the Bee Gees and so on. We spread out, and I would say I was very deeply associated with all that development.

Stein: Was Danny Kaye the first? How did he get into it?

Ling: Yes, he was the first. He was sitting next to Maurice Pate on a plane and they got into conversation and then that was what happened. Paul Edwards revived Danny Kaye's interest in promoting Trick or Treat and after we expanded on a systematic basis. That is how we have our Special Events Office.

Special events/Volunteers

I might add that all the goodwill UNICEF has had, a great part of it has been because of these public personalities. There is a thick layer of goodwill for UNICEF. People don't know exactly what UNICEF does but it is a damn good outfit because so and so says so. So that is how you draw your volunteers. How in the world did they hear of UNICEF? So if UNICEF stops special events I think you would dry up the volunteer flow. I use to draw a funnel - with special events on one end and finally National Committees at the other. You have to spread the word for it to come down. I more or less institutionalized it. Special events - Marlon Brando - any number of stars. I think I learned to deal with them. Here is a Chinese from Hong Kong, a newspaper man who has nothing to do with me now, but it seemed to me a sensible thing to do in terms of reaching large numbers of people.

In a sense it goes back to the basic principles of co-production. Anything successful UNICEF does in the information field involves the basic principles of co-production, that is an outside media takes direct involvement in what you do. UNICEF provides the nobility, the name to get the star, the stars have the money, the reputation but needs the nobility to make it go, TV stations cannot hire the star so the tripartite arrangement works very well. In the sense it is a formula that works well.

We first started the gala idea with Danny Kaye, as a result of the handicapped group in Paris and the children, who had access to television. They wanted to have a gala to raise money, Danny Kaye came along and we split the income, I remember, in '67, '77 and then Paul Edwards tried to repeat it two or three years later. Sometime later we decided that would be a formula that we would go at, not to limit it to Danny Kaye we would go to music, and so on.

Then Leon Davico comes along, picks up the idea and does much more in Europe. He was Chief of Information for UNICEF in Europe for about six or seven years, subsequently becoming Chief of Information for UNESCO - now he is Information Chief for UNHCR. He was Yugoslav, I hired him. I thought I finally got a serious East European journalist for UNICEF because at that time we were looking for an information officer, it turned out to be a great Madison Avenuetype from Belgrade. He is highly promotional, he loves Liv Ulmann. In the end some of the top UNICEF people thought that he was doing too many galas, but during that period UNICEF goodwill spread even more. Just about everybody knows about UNICEF and in Europe today, I think, UNICEF is even better known than it is in the United States.

Stein: What is the reaction in Europe to these public personalities? Is there a similiar impact as there is in North America?

Ling: It depends on countries, in the bigger countries it works very well. In Scandinavian countries, strangely enough, some work well. I think they all work well although each National Committee might have a different perception of this. Some are resentful and think that this is muddling their waters and not purist enough. My basic principle is UNICEF should never be an exclusive organization but an inclusive organization. How dare we say someone else should not help UNICEF, what makes you think that? You are paid, they are unpaid, they are holier than you. So some people criticise Danny Kaye and I say this guy never gets paid. He has a temperment, but we lived with it.

Coping with Hollywood/public personalities

One of the problems was that I was working to bring UNICEF as a UN organization to deal with Hollywood. It is a terrible job because they have a different style. They don't go to a hotel without a

suite, limousine service, first class travel and here was UNICEF which is a missionary-type outfit. I have to steer between the two. Sometimes I think that some people gives the respect you show them in how much trouble you go to and how much money you spend. I had to convert that kind of thinking to say that UNICEF was a different kind of organization. We can only go this far, as it was, we were already doing a lot. They sometimes appreciated that you did not go all out, because otherwise you become another Hollywood group.

Stein: You actually lost status.

Ling: Yes, but at the same time you cannot give them a YMCA single room. You need really a decent double room or something like that, a good hotel and so. I think that we maintained a reasonable standard in dealing with them. So UNICEF acquired a very good credibility in the performing arts field.

Stein: I always had the impression that you coped with these public personalities in a remarkably debonair stye, at least on the surface. There must have been quite a lot of tension and problems.

Ling: There were tensions, but I would say that most of the public personalities were highly intelligent, highly committed.

Cat Stevens pulled out of his pocket \$150,000 to UNICEF and asked me not to put out a release. I sent him earlier on a trip to Ethiopia gambling 5,000 UNICEF dollars and he came back with a crumpled cheque, saying, "Sorry, it is a little late". People are very very committed. At first I tried to explain one philosophy and urge them to see UNICEF work and tell them not to commit themselves until they see it. We don't want an ordinary kind of relationship. A lot of stars put their name on any kind of cause. You either do it properly or you don't do it. Liv Ulmann is a perfect example.

Stein: She has been remarkable.

Ling: Yes. She is here now making a film.

Stein: In Geneva.

Ling: Yes. I would say that if I was Jim Grant, that part needs looking after and needs a little more creativeness with maybe the ties done a little differently. Special events are important because you need coverage. You have events for media to cover or your reporter is not going to get anything. If you want coverage you have to stage your press coverage. Events generate coverage, it is a publicist's basic tool. UNICEF has done very well over the years, I must say this, even with the heartache and the pain, especially with the musical concerts. The day before The Gift of Song Concert, I had such a violent argument over Rod Stewart's song, my heartbeat went up to

125. David Frost the day before had his rehearsal and Rod Stewart sang a song, "Do You Think I'm Sexy?". Originally it was another song about a prostitute, but at least this was a love song. We agreed to it and at the last minute he switched the song. I said we could not have that song because the Secretary General had entrusted me to protect the dignity of the hall. He had even asked whether the audience could wear neckties for a rock concert. We took away the walk plank because it was not dignified, but it was still a sexy song about "you come and touch my body". It is a sexy song. So I said, "take it off", David said, "I can't". I tried to persuade him and he said, "Jack, you have signed a decree giving control to me". I said, "True, David, but you know David the electricians work for me, I can pull the plug". You know we went on like that the day before and that same night Robert Stigwood came to the UN and said, "Who is this high UN official who doesn't want this song sung?". I said, "What's your problem?". He said, "This is a hall of tolerance, how can you not allow the song?. I am going to tell the Press that for your dignity, you have deprived children of a half of million dollars". I said that in that case we would have to face it. That night I called Labouisse, we listened to the song and decided we could take a chance because the words were so loud, you could never hear any word. So there was a compromise: number one, the song would not be introduced by name, just "Rod Stewart's latest hit", because if you started signalling the name "Do you think I'm sexy?" everybody would prick up their ears. Secondly, he was making gestures, so the camera was only to focus waist up. On those two conditions - and also, if the Secretary-General saw it live and objected to it, we would cut it out of the tape, because it was a delayed broadcast.

National Committees and Information

Stein: I would like to go back to another theme you had just touched, and that is the relationship of the Information Division in New York to Europe and to National Committees, since that's a story in its own right. I think your reflections and interpretation of those relationships would be very important.

Ling: Well, I think when the National Committee was originally created, it was almost a kind of - some of them anyhow - a ladies afternoon tea kind of thing. At that time UNICEF itself portrayed an image of that lady bountiful, to some extent, making money and helping some poor little children and had not yet a development context.

I think you have to trace back the origin of the national committees - going back to the '50s. They had annual reunions and it was kind of nice May reunions, nice weather, when people get together to have a social function. I attended one or two of them in the mid-60s and I still felt that's what they were. I remember the first reunion I attended in Montreux, with the Swiss playing host. I talked about

producing slide sets on children, say, children in the desert, children in the rain forest, children at sea and so on, a series which I could produce with the National Film Board of Canada. If you wanted to put educational work through the media for adults you have got to start from children so the school use felt very important and that is really the beginning of the development education. It was a bit beyond their interest they didn't see why UNICEF was spending money producing a slide set in which UNICEF had only a little credit line and there was not a big fuss about what UNICEF was doing, what a shining white knight UNICEF was. That kind of thing. So at that time I think they were not ready to understand that, and most of their work was selling cards. Selling cards was their main preoccupation. And they had annual reunions but they didn't have very much where they could work together so they talked about nice things, a little policy, a little politics, little social functions.

But I think beginning in the late '60s they began to develop muscles. I always said that as soon as you have a committee that quarrelled with the executive then you were beginning to get the ingredients of a good committee, again the field/headquarters type of tension, because they would have to see things in their national context. It was bound to be different from New York or Geneva. So the new committees always say "Yes, you're wonderful, we give you everything you want" but really until they start complaining they are not that good. So it is my philosophy anyhow. In shaping the information policy in '75, there was an information debate which set the information policy. I actually brought the national committees together as a advisory committee and I had another advisory committee of media people and then the two groups reviewed my draft and I rewrote the draft to submit to the Board. And so in the '60s I worked very closely with the National Committees. People like Nils Thedin, Konzett, Jan Eggink, and so on. Not all of them are easy to deal with at certain time in their work but they were all committed people.

But I think now they (the committees) are very efficient, some of them, some of them have information capacity resources more than some of the offices we have. I think the German committee or the French committee have information resources even bigger than the European office. So, we helped start them, they get a cut of the television campaign every year from France which we started. Germany too, one time had an annual TV campaign, I think we may have dropped it now.

Greeting Cards

At first they were fearful of the effects on greeting cards, people said you are going to get money directly from the public you are going to cut into greeting card sales. But the contrary. Every time UNICEF was mentioned sales went up. You know, the marketing sense was not there, because they were committed amateurs, if you like.

But they could do the job and so in the end convinced that all these information activities support greeting cards. In fact, I regret that the information and greeting cards are not more integrated because why is UNICEF manufacturing anything but for educational and fundraising purposes? But if it is only fundraising and only manufacturing cards, why not automobiles? So you've got to have the rationale for that and I think sometimes we get carried away.

Stein: There was periodic discussion about the utilization of the whole greeting card operation for genuinely educational purposes, including more than educating about UNICEF, but about development education as well. I don't know how far that has really been pursued.

Ling: I think they are trying to do a calendar on breastfeeding or something. If possible, why not? Calendars are always educational. Cards are more difficult.

New York/European Office information relations

Stein: What about the relationship of New York to the Geneva office per se in Information? That seemed to have its ups and downs.

Ling: Boy, it had its ups and downs! I have always been a believer of strengthening the European office because I felt that from New York you are bound to get a different perspective, even from Europe you have a lot of different countries to deal with. That is why the tension existed also between the European office and National Committees.

When I was first made Director of Information, there were only one or two professionals in the European office, by the time I left there were eight, so my record speaks for itself. But there was a period in which there was tension even when I was there. The feeling that if Headquarters people come to Europe it is somewhat diminishing the European office. That's crazy. I mean there is so much to be done in Europe. There are so many countries, the more resources you can call from New York to help you, the totality of the performance is much bigger. So you should welcome it. But I think it is a question of people's vision and perception. I think in the end we all recognized this. They should call on Headquarters resources to help them do a job.

Stein: Sometimes it was a function of the head of the European office too.

Ling: Sometimes, there is still that definition of the European office. My view is that the European office, it can never be a Headquarters, because you don't have programme divisions. Your programme divisions are in New York so your resources are there. The stories are there. Unless you are willing to create a duplicate office, it is forever going to depend on New York. So the head of the office must first

acknowledge that. You cannot be a partner, you are bound to be a subsidiary to Headquarters, that is what it should be. You shouldn't have two Headquarters. So I think there is that clear understanding and therefore many of the people who come from the field and are running the Geneva office feel cut off, because where is the source of information? Then because they are cut off they feel more insecure, they demand more and then that becomes a problem. Given the kind of communication that one has, I wonder whether it is necessary to have separate offices. You can deal with it from New York by telephone.

Stein: With all the European countries?

Ling: Well you probably need some office in Europe. My old thinking was to strengthen this but having seen the personalities at work, I begin to lose faith in it. So if this is the case why do we have two offices. But if there is good, open minded cooperation with the understanding that this is a branch of Headquarters, you take orders from Headquarters but you have a clear-cut responsibility in this region and not fighting about who does what and so on, it might work. Of course, maybe human nature would not allow you to have two such offices for UNICEF.

Stein: Do you think that the fact that the European office, after all, at one time did have programmes may have created that kind of momentum and continued that relationship?

Ling: That's right. Don't forget that at one time the Paris office had more programmes than some of the other regional offices and certainly Headquarters didn't have any programmes directly.

Stein: Paris had Africa and more?

Ling: Africa, Middle East and Europe. So I think it has an historical background.

Stein: Your own relationship to the respective Directors of the Office for Europe also must have had its ups and downs.

Ling: Oh yes. There was Dr. Sicault who presided over here, and a bit of a territorial imperative, I think he may have inherited from the tradition of historical development. Then there was Mr. Twigt who was basically responsible for moving the office from Paris to Geneva. Gordon Carter, who thought of himself as a Regional Director in the traditional sense. All of them have very good points. The question is framework. If you have the right framework these points can be taken care of without any difficulty. If you don't have the right framework, then half a glass is half empty/half full - depends on how you look at it.

Information/PFO relations

Stein: The relationship of Information to the Programme Funding Office - PFO - gradually became clarified over the years.

Ling: In fact, originally Mr. Beerman worked well with us and that was very good. We talked every day, we were in the same corner. When we took on the reports on adopted projects, we found it impossible to manage it because they need these dry official documents but our people are journalistic and write features. So gradually Beerman took back that responsibility and in the end PFO has their own reports office. So maybe that is the way they should be anyhow. At the beginning it was no problem, because both of us were small and we advocated establishment of that office anyhow because we thought they ought to be treated as such. And now I think PFO is quite big one. Extra budgetary funding is quite a big thing now, maybe more systematic, more organized. But also with much more resources. I think they had 2 or 3 people, now they are about 10 people.

Importance of cross-divisional transfers

Stein: You referred earlier about the question of coordination between information and GOD. What observations or reflections do you have about coordination in general among the divisions at Headquarters during the many years you were there?

Ling: I think there was for a long time a feeling that Programme Division was somehow the mainstream, and that the other divisions were some kind of periphery. This may have persisted until now, maybe information has now moved into mainstream I don't know.

But I think the only way to solve the problem is really to have younger recruits who are broadly educated, who have some professional experience, then move from one division to another. I don't see why Programme Officers cannot be Information Officers. My feeling is that no person should be made a representative without having served in Information. Because there is an external relation function as representative, the representative shouldn't only come from programme, shouldn't only come from administration, should be an all-round one. People work in different divisions.

Recruitment/career path policy

But you can only do that if you have a cohesive, well thought-out recruitment policy, at what ages, what kind of people, how many years in this division, that division. And I don't think UNICEF has ever gotten that far. But we talked about it. I mean we certainly advocated it. And no cross-divisional transfers at all, I mean, by and large very little.

Inter-divisional co-ordination

Stein: There is very little that we didn't at one time talk about. The matter of co-ordination, though, goes beyond the recruitment and career paths of individuals, although what you are saying is quite important in its own right. I'm referring more to whether you could see the relationship of what you were trying to do in Information to what Programme or the Special Advisers were trying to do. That's whether you could have a good enough grasp so that you felt that more or less you were moving along the same general path, with the same general objectives, as against never knowing what was going on in Supply and so on. Was there enough transfer of information, enough communication among the Directors and particularly between the Directors and Executives during the period that you were there?

Ling: You know there is never a perfect situation, and in looking back it was a cohesive management team. Yes, there were a lot of unnecessary meetings, a lot of talk, sometimes at the whole Executive Staff Meeting we spent two hours deciding when the Board should take place, instead of by three people. But, by-and-large UNICEF is fairly cohesive because of the relatively small number of Divisions. Some Directors don't communicate too well with other Directors - but there is a weekly forum and I thought the Friday meetings were very good.

Stein: What we had set up as Executive Staff Meetings?

Ling: Yes, I thought so in looking back. Though there is never a perfect solution, and the way it was conducted could be improved, I think the structure was there and I thought, especially looking from WHO - a much bigger organization where it is much more difficult to bring this about - I thought UNICEF is more cohesive than probably most other UN organizations and probably most international organizations of similar size. So I thought in looking back, not bad, you gripe, policy-makers gripe and then you improve. People who gripe basically want to do better.

Of course, I never took a narrow view of Information. That's why I got involved in PSC because I'm a UNICEF person first and Information person second. And fundraiser, and I was thinking of fundraising. So it didn't bother me too much when there were sometimes differences with given individual personalities. I felt quite a bit was done in terms of co-ordination in looking back, anyhow.

SIAR/External Relations

Stein: One last question before I ask you whether there is anything you would really like to say, on a subject I haven't asked you about. Was there anything in the SIAR study that had a bearing on Information?

Ling: They didn't come around to study Information in depth. They just talked to me briefly. I was a member of the Latin American group which advocated cutting down regional offices which Roberto has never forgiven me for, I guess. I was the only non-Programme person and since it was a consensus I asked them to let me speak because I had nothing to lose. Anyhow, I think SIAR only just looked at Information very generally, but I did prepare a paper, a table in which I marked all the boxes that engage in spending money and the boxes that raise the money. The red was spending money and the blue was raising money and so you see the tremendous preponderance of red boxes, spending money. And so it really graphically showed in one piece of paper, using the existing manning table, or organizational chart, that an organization operating on voluntary funds was paying too little attention to fundraising. And I think that awakened a lot of interest and I also advocated for an External Relations grouping.

Stein: You did?

Ling: Oh yes. In fact, I advocated that and then I think then in the end very shortly I went back to Labouisse and I wrote him a memo, because he was about to appoint someone to be the number two, Deputy for External Relations. And Victor and I thought that it wouldn't necessarily help the situation. So I went back, I wrote a memo and I suggested the creation of an External Relations Committee to Labouisse and I said I did advocate with SIAR for a separate Deputy Executive Director, that is based on whether the Executive Director had himself interest in fundraising or not. If he has interest in fundraising, that function should be Executive Director because fundraising could not be relegated to a second person. Because now the Ministers fly around to raise money and here comes the number two person.

Stein: Is it not right that some of us thought that External Relations was more than fundraising?

Ling: Much more. But what I was thinking of was essentially a fundraising function in the External Relations. So I think that should be always essential. In the end the group was created with Labouisse himself as chairman. And I think that was the original idea, both Victor Beerman and I advocated a separate group. There is no doubt about that.

Stein: Yes, well in post-SIAR we created three groups including the External Relations Group, but it was decided that the Executive Director would chair it. How did you feel about the development of the External Relations Deputy, Executive Director for External Relations?

Ling: I think it is probably justified because given the kind of structure, except that Jim Grant is so external relations oriented himself. If he was Labouisse I think that would be almost necessary. But I think Jim is also interested in programme programmes so I think it is

justified. If you look at the organization as a whole, it is an organization that needs to mobilize non-governmental sectors, an organization that needs fundraising, information, and so on. So I think it is justified.

Stein: Principally because there is a need very frequently for coordination activities towards particular kinds of objectives. So that fundraising and the PR go together when they are necessary.

Before we conclude, Jack, are there any question you think I should be asking? That is any kind that we haven't really touched? Any issues that you really would like to comment on?

Need for continuous self-criticism

Ling: I think maybe UNICEF tends to be a little too self-complacent. Tend to be a little more self-centered than it should be, in the long run, because of its successes and so on, and because of its fairly large good public impact. I think we need to constantly watch out for that because there is never enough success to say you should be complacent. I think there is a bit of that - one should be continuously self-critical and I hope this will continue. I don't know what is the purpose of this whole project, so it is hard for me to say but I am sure these thoughts occurred to others too.

Stein: Thanks very much Jack. It was extremely useful. I think what you have been talking about is very significant and of great interest.

End of interview

