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CRUSADER FOR
AMNESTY
THE QUIET RAGE OF JACK HEALEY



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THE MOST HUMBLING experience in Jack Healey's life came last year at the end of what was supposed to be a relaxing after-work dinner with the gang from the office. There was a window table at a small Washington, D.C., restaurant, glasses of good wine, delicious food and relaxing conversation with the top Washington staff of Amnesty International, the most powerful human rights organization in the world.

Healey, executive director of Amnesty's U.S. section, was tired. Most at the table had worked a long week testifying before Congress about torture in foreign prisons, jailings without formal charge or trial, disappearances in the middle of the night. Others had been lobbying State Department officials with other ugly reports of man's inhumanity to man.

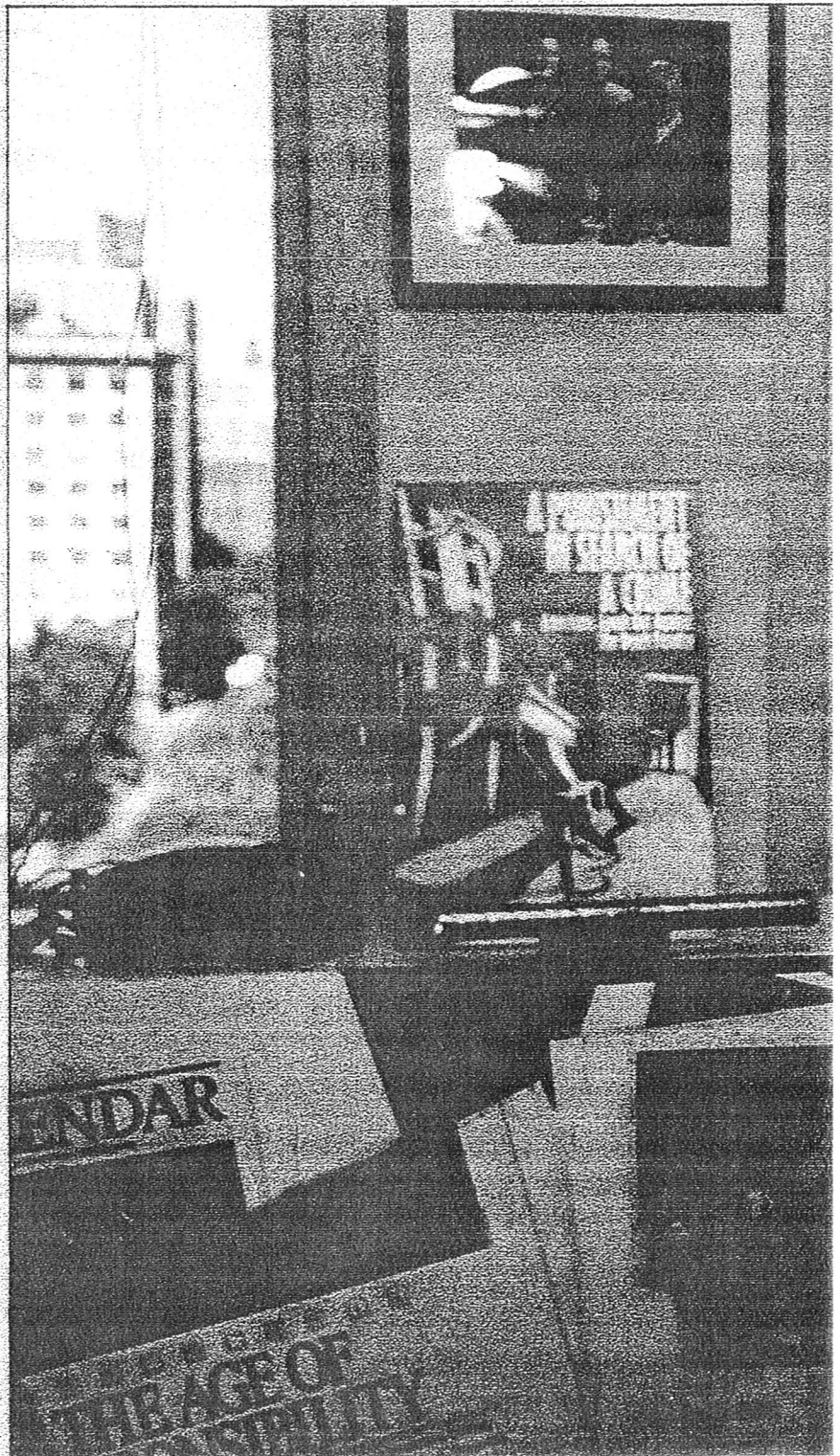
So the restaurant meal was a good opportunity to decompress; soothe some tired activist souls.

Perhaps Healey, a native Pittsburgher and a shameless hometown booster, would talk up Pirates baseball; anything but another depressing case of some upstart rotting away in a dungeon in a country where jackboots are still the cutting edge of fashion.

But with this group there is no such thing as small talk. Human rights work is not a job, it's a calling, an in-your-blood vocation. There is no time card to punch, no such thing as quitting time.

So before the main courses arrived, the group was deep into depressing news of the latest crop of human rights abuses in El Salvador.

The server, who had gone about his business without reacting to the discussion, suddenly interrupted: "If it wasn't an impos-



Jack Healey, who grew up in Dormont, wages a never-ending battle against injustice as executive director of Amnesty International's 385,000-member U.S. section.



Fine, said Healey, who had long since become immune to strange doings in Washington restaurants.

A few seconds later, three men wearing food-stained uniforms and the sweat of the kitchen appeared.

"Are you Amnesty International?" one of them asked in a heavy Spanish accent. "Yes," said Healey. "Where are you all from?"

"El Salvador. We heard you were here and we had to thank you."

"For what?"

"For keeping us alive. For saving our lives." The men wiped their hands on their aprons and shook hands all around. They cried as they returned to the kitchen. The dining room fell silent.

A YEAR LATER, it is mid-morning and the red-eye flight from Los Angeles to New York is running late. Healey will have to hustle directly to the office in Manhattan.

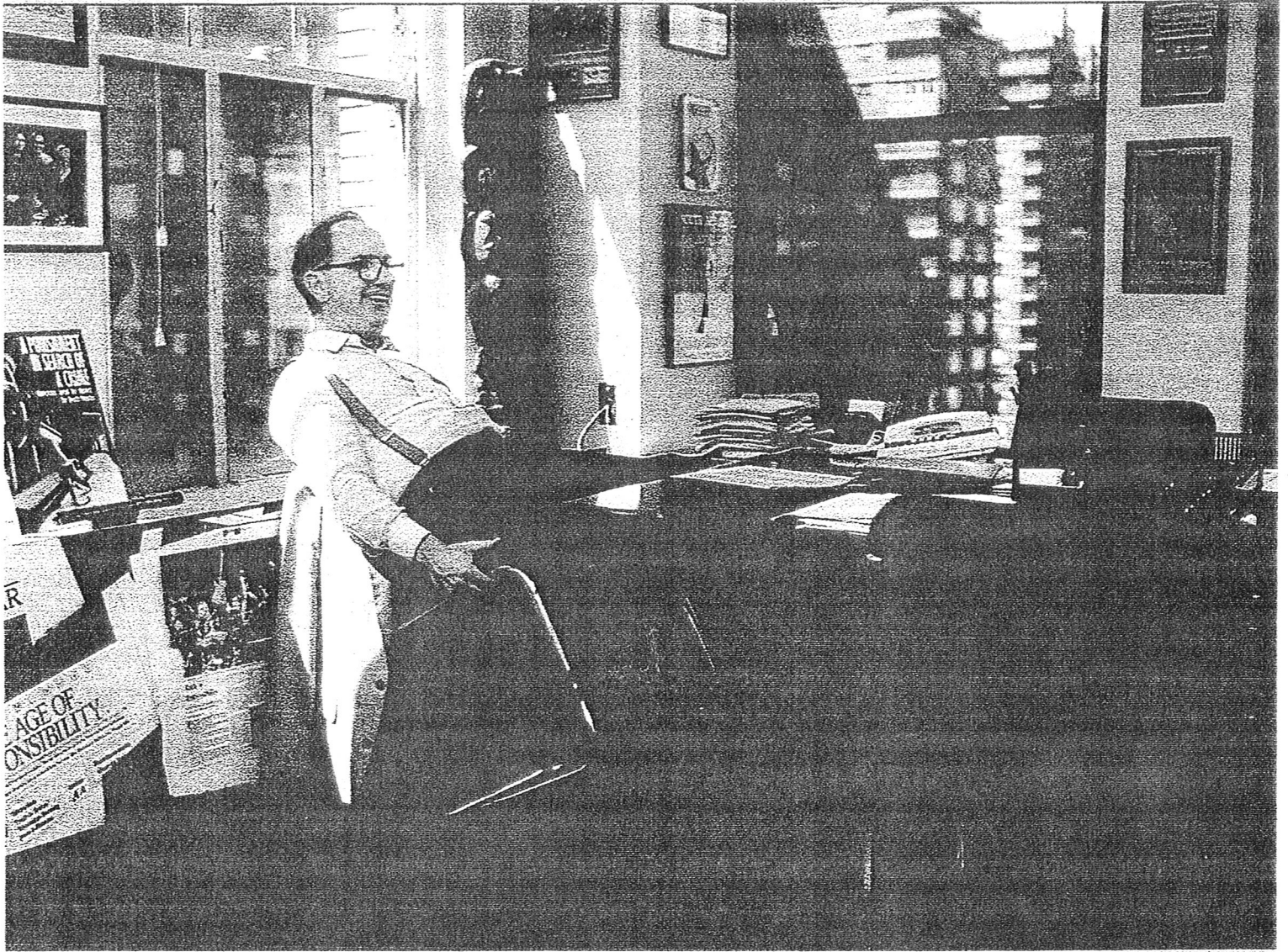
The next two days will be packed with overseas phone calls, staff meetings, reports on human rights campaigns across the United States. By week's end he'll have flown to Spain, Chile and Washington, D.C., to negotiate an Amnesty-sponsored human rights concert.

Facing the week's thankless schedule from his window seat, Healey remembers the message of three nobody kitchen workers from El Salvador. He has found himself doing that lately, pulling out the memory like a treasured wallet photo. "Thinking about it humbles me and energizes me at the same time," he says.

Finally released from the plane, the leader of a 385,000-member organization operating on an annual budget of \$22 million walks briskly to a public phone. He looks like a maverick professor in his thick glasses, rumpled dress shirt, Levis and little black Reeboks.

At Amnesty's U.S. headquarters, two cramped upper floors of a 15-story office building in mid-town Manhattan, Healey's secretary takes the call from her boss. She gives the damage report on his morning schedule and scribbles down messages to his staff. Waiting for him when he arrives will be a stack, most of them marked urgent.

There are a lot of people out there craving attention from this 52-year-old ex-priest. And



Jack Healey dreamed up around-the-world rock concert to spread Amnesty's human rights mess

How does a quiet, forceful Irish-American from Dormont move people around the world of such extremes and contradictions — from rock stars to political stars; from former flower children to State Department bureaucrats?

John G. Healey is described by his top aides as an organizational genius rivaling anyone in the Bush administration, but his family says he carries the soul of a lunch-bucket Democrat. Throughout his life he has preferred leading the charge up mountains of injustice even if no clear-cut victory awaits at the top.

In all of these quests, he is driven by a subtle ego, a desire to live up to his mother's expectations and a struggle to live up to the peace-maker commandment imbedded in the Franciscan Prayer. By all accounts, the mix is a powerful fuel.

It was Healey who dreamed up an around-the-world rock concert that brought Amnesty International's message of human rights to

credited with inventing the walk-a-thon to raise millions to fight world hunger; Healey, who used a quiet Peace Corps post in Lesotho, to assist the anti-apartheid movement in neighboring South Africa.

He maneuvers almost daily through ego-maniacal minefields — the music business, movies, television. Yet, by most accounts, he manages not to get too full of himself.

In the workplace, Healey has redesigned the nearly all-white, all-male office clique he inherited 10 years ago so that a picture of his 92-member staff today is an exotic garden of gender, color and life experience. He paired them with smooth professionals — young accountants and attorneys. The result, says Healey's deputy director, Kurt Goering, is "that he doesn't get stuck with ideas that can't get done and he isn't faced with a bunch of nodding heads."

In the nearly 10 years Healey has headed Amnesty U.S.A., the section has been transformed from what one former board member

movement; from near obscurity in the 1970s to household name status by 1990.

In the United States alone, Healey is credited with raising Amnesty's membership exponentially, from 75,000 in 1981 to 1.5 million by the middle of this year. Shooting up with it is its budget — from \$3 million to \$21 million last year.

But even those numbers don't satisfy him. "You know what \$21 million is?" he pounds the table. "That's half of the budget for Mothers Against Drunk Driving."

It's the kind of blunt talk that comes with impressive success. Even his toughest critics can't discount it. He has achieved it, he says, by no-holds-barred dreaming, "no matter how wild or impossible, as long as it's within the bounds of legality and non-violence."

As the international organization prepares to celebrate its 30th anniversary year, Healey is jeered a bit and cheered inside Amnesty for pushing rock concert tours to spread the message of human rights.

does so, he says, intent on remaining the precepts on which Amnesty International was founded. He admires its style of letter-writing, reporting, recording in the names of individuals who have suffered at the hands of governments that torture and oppress. The quiet methodology has been non-political and effective enough to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977.

The Amnesty idea was first proposed in an article in a London newspaper by Peter Healey, a British lawyer. He was angered by a report of two Portuguese teenagers who had been given seven-year jail sentences for protesting a toast to "freedom and democ-

cracy." His letter told the stories of seven prisoners of conscience around the world and called for a one-year international "fast for amnesty" for prisoners of conscience who did not advocate violence.

By the year was out, permanent Amnesty organizations had started in seven countries and members had taken up 210 cases.

In the year, with more than 4,190 volunteers in 70 countries, the organization has managed to keep true to its roots while being flexible enough to react quickly to events. All research into alleged abuses is coordinated by Amnesty International's office in London, which makes the decision on which cases get the organization's attention.

Volunteers and paid staff are not allowed to work on human rights cases in their home countries. And each Amnesty chapter that takes a prisoner of conscience also must coordinate the release of a similar prisoner in a different country to avoid competing ideology.

"We have to be sure of our facts and be as honest as hell. We have to stay in their shoes. We have to do it politely," says Healey. "It's not easy and it's a lot of work. Once in a while, someone gets put on the street and, you know, this is a really something."

It may be his Irish-American roots that help Healey to celebrate little victories in the face of huge insoluble wars — wars on racism; wars on government at torture and maim and kill as a policy.

Like his mother, a schoolteacher raised in a coal-mining community around the coal mines of West Virginia, he says, who instilled in him the courage to stand in the face of adversity.

Jack Healey (named for the most famous Healey, as the 11th and last child born to William and Martin Healey, years after the dramatic storybook rise from the coal mines to a prominent job in Pittsburgh. Even before

"We have to try anything that might seem to work . . . because the number of people being killed and tortured and disappeared is growing."

— Jack Healey

prospect of a life in the mines and moved his young family to Pittsburgh where he took a job as a security guard at a U.S. Steel Corp. mill. A chance encounter with the mill's manager changed his life. He asked why the company was going to the expense of piping water from the city system, rather than drawing it directly from the river.

Impressed with the observation, the executive offered Healey an inside job where he learned valuable metallurgy skills.

In 1940 at age 43, Healey was killed in a South Side car accident. Mary was left with a house full of children, ending with 2-year-old Jack. Her two oldest sons were then in combat overseas.

The fourth-oldest, Elaine Manning of Mt. Lebanon, remembers some of the fire going out of her mother as she dealt with grief and financial problems but she still pinned high hopes on Jack.

An older sister, Evelyn "Naomi" Healey, now deceased, became a day-to-day mother but Mary stepped in to take charge at important moments.

"Oh, my, his mother was a force in that family — in the whole community really," remembers Ed Schroth, a high school buddy of Healey. "Sitting in their house on a Sunday morning there would be this absolute chaos. The girls would be fighting over who was going to wear what clothes; somebody would be chasing somebody else through the house; the phone would be ringing." Oblivious to it all, he remembers, would be Mrs. Healey, sitting ramrod straight in a living-room chair, hat and coat on, hands folded over purse in her lap.

"Boy, you never saw a crew come together so fast as when it came time for her to go to church. She didn't have to shout. She would just say something like 'It's time,' and that whole crowd would jump."

It was especially true with Jack, who credits her with setting his moral compass early. "There were three heroes in my moth-

remembers, for instance, his mother passing out Social Security checks to her older children so they wouldn't forget that it was Roosevelt who started Social Security. Then she'd collect them all and take them to the bank.

"He was the child, I think, that she actually had time to mold," remembers Elaine. "She wanted him to be a hero, to go out and fight for the underdog. She had such high expectations."

Healey likes to tell the story of how, at age 14, he ran up against his first case of injustice and his mother's high expectations.

One of his older brothers had his front teeth knocked out by a gang of young toughs from Beechview. His mother was outraged, and there was the practical matter of who was going to pay for the dental work.

To seek justice, she picked the runt of the family. Jack was so small and scrawny that the football team had nicknamed him "Bugs" for appearing squashed under even the smallest shoulder pads and helmet.

The creeps who had beaten up his brother were mixed up in local organized crime. At the Downtown police station, no one would touch the case. Finally, a sympathetic desk sergeant took him aside and explained the rules. "He told me that the only way I'd beat these guys is to get the best criminal attorney in town. He probably expected I'd understand and go away." Healey returned, he says, with one of the best in town, Charlie Maloney, a smoothie defender of mobsters and murderers.

He doesn't remember whether Maloney was touched or temporarily knocked off balance by the brassy 14-year-old with taped eyeglasses showing up in his office demanding justice over a \$300 dentist bill. But he took the case, won agreement from the goon's family to pay damages, and never charged the Healeys a dime.

NOW, Healey's fight for the underdog continues, sometimes in foreign courtrooms where the air is thick with political corruption. If he loses — and Amnesty loses a lot — Healey is not afraid to appeal to the court of public opinion.

He did so last month, supporting the case of Veronica De-Negri, a Chilean activist who lost her unprecedented civil suit charging the Chilean government in the death of her 18-year-old son at the hands of soldiers in the regime of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

In 1973 De-Negri was "disappeared" by secret police. She was jailed, tortured, shocked, raped repeatedly and dunked in barrels of excrement. Finally she was released

to Chile with a friend, Carmen Gloria Quintana, to work as a free-lance photographer and activist in the anti-Pinochet movement. Rojas was taking pictures at a demonstration in Santiago when they were pulled from their van by military police.

According to pictures and witnesses cited in Amnesty records, the two were beaten for hours, then doused with gasoline, even forced to drink some of it, and set on fire. They were covered by blankets and dumped in a ditch outside the city. De-Negri's son died three days later as she tried futilely to have him transferred to a U.S. hospital. But Quintana, with burns over 80 percent of her body, survived.

Healey describes De-Negri as "a fearless woman with an innate sense of dignity." She is one of the ordinary people made extraordinary by her triumph over her torturers. It is Amnesty International that records her story and reports it to the world.

At age 16, Healey had his own conversion from ordinary neighborhood brat-pack teenager to the extraordinary life of a Catholic seminarian.

At the time, he was on the fast track to serious juvenile delinquency. He remembers graduating from pranks like midnight scampers across roofs to more dangerous pursuits — "brawls with other kids, some stealing, taking cars for joy rides.

"I think the last straw was when I ended up in juvenile court because I was hanging out when something got damaged or stolen," says Healey. "That was it for my mother."

He was yanked out of public high school and sent to the prep school at St. Fidelis, a seminary in rural Butler County run by the Capuchin order, a stricter branch of the Franciscans. The school's mission was to foster vocations to the priesthood and prepare students for the seminary.

The Rev. James Hannon who recruited Jack to St. Fidelis, says Healey's mother thought the priesthood would be a magnificent life for her son. "She never came right out and said 'you should dedicate your life to this,' but she was such a stick-out. She gave plenty of signals ... and Jack was fired up about the church. He saw so many possibilities."

He graduated from the college seminary — an average student with a noticeable talent for public speaking — and went on to four years of graduate work in theology in Washington, D.C.

That period — his first time outside Western Pennsylvania — was a baptism by fire. Washington was becoming a magnet for social justice issues. Lyndon Johnson's White House had declared war on poverty; Martin Luther King Jr. was marching for civil rights

"Jack Healey and I were friends when that tour started and I don't think I could stand to look at the man now."

**— Bill Graham,
concert promoter**

ed by loud protests and demands for sweeping changes, Healey was ordained a priest in a church that measures change in terms of centuries, not the this-time-next-year yardstick embraced by its newest apostle.

"We'd all seen such tremendous forces coming down on the country and the church was going through it as well," says the Rev. Miles Schmitt, Healey's spiritual adviser in Washington. "There was Vatican II and the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (in which the church reinforced its ban on contraception). There were a lot of young men like Jack who were caught in the middle — a loosening up and questioning of authority on the outside and a conservative, ordered way at home. I lost a lot of good friends."

Healey was assigned to the Newman Center at Frostburg State College near Cumberland, Md., a campus with its share of anti-war demonstrations. He became involved with the Rev. James Groppi's marches to desegregate public housing in Milwaukee and made frequent trips to Washington for anti-war demonstrations with priests like Daniel and Philip Berrigan and the Rev. Charles Curran.

And for all the social justice issues tugging at him there were more personal forces to reconcile. "Working at the college was his first exposure to the opposite sex in any real sense," remembers former Capuchin and classmate Fred Just. "He was totally unprepared for all the attraction ... how much these students idolized him."

Healey left the priesthood just before Christmas 1968 and he did it quietly, informing only a few. "He was very honest about it," says Schmitt. "He told me he was more politician than priest and there wasn't a thing I could say." His mother had died two years before, stricken with what Healey believes now was a form of Alzheimer's disease. She had begun to lose touch at the time of his ordination.

The anguish in leaving was nothing, Healey says, in comparison to the fear of

part of a year, sharing a house with other ex-priests.

His connections in volunteer work paid off and he finally landed the American Freedom From Hunger Foundation, the training ground for skills in raising and image-building that he learned from him so well.

By 1969, Healey was directing a foundation, having raised more than a million through schemes like the annual walk-a-thon, which has since become a major component in charity fund raising.

In 1974, Healey took over as director of the hunger and development project of the National Center for Community Development. Later the same year, he married Susan Weiss, an accountant. He says that after a year marriage, three-year separation, and a reunion was a futile attempt for friends to make it as lovers."

In 1977 he joined with comedian Dick Gregory to produce the event *Hunger Run*, a Los Angeles to New York event that won international public attention in the White House. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter named him to direct the Peace Corps project in Lesotho, the tiny democratic country surrounded by South Africa.

There Healey first saw refugee political death squads, victims of torture and imprisonment without trial.

Healey says he adjusted almost immediately to the Third World life. From a village outside the capital, he traveled to the South African border across the

Healey was separated from his family during most of his Africa tour and he put himself in his work, which often had to do with Peace Corps responsibilities: his position to travel throughout the continent and learn as much as he could about politics and South Africa.

On several of these trips he met and delegates from Amnesty International were interviewing Basotho (Lesotho) and refugees from South Africa. Healey was impressed with the courage of the men and the tenacity of the human rights activists. Healey made an effort to learn more about the group. While reading an Amnesty report one evening, he caught a notice of applications for the executive director

Healey applied immediately, even though the \$34,000 salary would mean a \$20,000 cut. Out of 200 applicants, he made the final three in large measure because of the U.S.A.'s energy level was suffering from blahs, says Vincent McGee, board member during the selection process. The 1977 Peace Prize was history; accounts in order; files were neat and tidy and

AMNESTY

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NEARLY A decade after taking control of Amnesty's U.S. section, Healey has cleaned out the dead wood, hired people who share his wide vision of human rights and established control without stifling creativity. "I think we got exactly what we hired," says McGee.

While Healey may have freed the activists from their Barcaloungers, he remains steadfast to Amnesty's first commandment: Thou shalt not exhibit any political, religious, ideological or geographical bias in any Amnesty-sponsored activity. It flows into a simple Healey corollary: "There is no lesser person in this world." He has worked relentlessly to get this one message out — even to governments that cover their ears.

What he keeps constantly reminding himself is that Amnesty loses more than it wins.

"We have to try anything that might seem to work," he says, "evaluate every policy very carefully because the number of people being killed and tortured and disappeared is growing."

When Healey dreamed up the idea that Amnesty could get its human rights message heard through a cross-country rock concert, many in the movement's international hierarchy recoiled. But he prevailed by signing volunteers named Sting, U2, Joan Baez and Peter Gabriel among others. The Conspiracy of Hope Tour raised consciousness, 100,000 immediate new members and more than \$2.6 million.

Then in 1986, Healey dreamed up a tour that would play five continents, including the Third World countries and Eastern Europe. Everyone told him it was fantasy. The logistics alone would be impossible.

Less than a year later, Healey was sitting in Bruce Springsteen's dressing room after his concert in Madison Square Garden, explaining Amnesty International's credo to a sweaty, bathrobed "Boss." A half-hour later, the rock superstar had committed to the entire tour, joining British singers Sting and Peter Gabriel, American Tracy Chapman and Senegalese pop singer Youssou N'Dour.

The Human Rights Now world tour, Sept. 2 through Oct. 15, 1988, distributed 1 million pocket copies of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. In concerts and TV broadcasts Amnesty's message was delivered to an estimated 1 billion people in 60 countries.

How to contact Amnesty groups

There are three Amnesty Action volunteer groups in the Pittsburgh area:

- Group 39 in the city and East suburbs.
- Group 345 in the South Hills.
- Group 524 in Sewickley.

For information on these groups and other Amnesty International-sponsored activities, contact:

Group 39, care of its coordinator, Geraldine Malmberg, 130 Gordon St., Pittsburgh, 15218. Or call 731-3608.

"Springsteen's a grunter," he says of the singer he now considers a friend. "Now if you get beyond all that stage stuff, then I think he can be a thinking man's grunter." Healey doesn't really care how the rock stars sing as long as their images and messages don't conflict with Amnesty's goals. What he really wants is what rock stars attract so effortlessly — youth.

When Healey toured Immigration and Naturalization Service Camps on the Mexican border as part of the U.S. section's political refugee campaign, he was followed by a pack of high school and college interns. "They were all mesmerized by Jack," says action program director Hans Wahl. "There were fights to see who would get to ride with him in the front seat."

But the Healey charisma is not without its critics. Some staff in the European sections believe his mega-ideas disrupt Amnesty's basic mission, but none would say it for the record. The criticism hangs on the fear that Amnesty will become, like an overexposed rock star, yesterday's hot look, a burned-out fad.

And there is criticism from outside the organization. Bill Graham, known as the dean of concert promoters, producer of concerts for virtually every major recording artist, producer of world tours for the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan, says his experience co-producing the Amnesty world tour with Healey was the worst of his career.

"Jack Healey and I were friends when that tour started and I don't think I could stand to look at the man now. It's simple really. He sold his soul and he became a groupie. . . . to all those . . . stars. There was a degree of political maneuvering there that I never want to have to see again."

awkward position on the tour, ga trust of the artists, band members and being asked to mediate disputes felt shut out, says Healey, and it er friendship.

"Bill was an important part of He made it possible for us to get i World countries we never would b able to otherwise. But I've learned tl project like a world tour, by the finish, you've made a decision ag everybody."

Musician-singer Gabriel says may not have received the acknowl he deserved for developing the conc world tour and seeing it through. someone who is driven from the hea passions . . . and that can very of people feeling a little agrieved. I de Jack's personality is suited for l Solomon or the organization man. swashbuckling qualities and he wan independent. That's good for some s bad for others."

Iranian-born Feryal Gharahi, girlfriend for all but one of his eigh Amnesty, laughs at the suggestion been swept away by his work with and recording artists. "There are important people who look at Amne chic organization, the secular religio the head of their little church. He's to get caught up in that."

Healey refers to 33-year-old G his fiancée but she resists the idea of — for now. "I don't think he realizes we have it right now and how much really is in his work."

Indeed, Healey has been running to Chile and back for the past fe Another spectacular Healey dream v uled to turn into reality this weeken going to take up all his swash energy.

In the same stadium where for tary dictator Pinochet allowed his s execute and torture political dissid nesty International will offer the that were denied to the Chilean peop Amnesty's world tour.

But already there's a crisis. S Sinead O'Connor and Jackson Bro Wynton Marsalis and Ruben Bl scheduled to play. Chile promoters v Kids on the Block and Healey has the teen-pop singers. But some of the aren't happy to share the stage w babes in human rights land.

Healey's going to have to fly to soothe some miffed activist souls. sage will be the same as it's alwa "Let's get over the small problems a and tell the world there ain't nobody

"Conspiracy Of Hope"

There was nothing clandestine about Amnesty USA's "Conspiracy of Hope." The rock concert tour crossed the United States in June, stopping in six cities to proclaim loudly and clearly that the pressure of public opinion can stop human rights abuses and save lives.

Musicians, organizers, and crews "adopted" six prisoners of conscience shortly before the tour began. Throughout the series, they spoke on stage, at press conferences, and during conversations with Amnesty members and the public about these prisoners and the thousands of others who share their plight. Donning Amnesty T-shirts and waving sets of postcards addressed to government officials, the musicians brought the human rights message to a new generation of Americans.

The tour began in San Francisco on June 4, then traveled to Los Angeles, Denver, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York. Concert audiences totalled 138,000, while the publicity accompanying the tour reached many times that number. By the end of the ten-day series, nearly 5,000 press stories had featured the 25th Anniversary celebration given to Amnesty by its long-term supporters in the music industry.

"Conspiracy of Hope" raised a voice which spoke to rock fans, and through the fans to countless others, about what they can do to help "forgotten" prisoners. More than 30,000 new Amnesty USA members are now helping the international human rights movement raise a voice to which governments everywhere must listen.

Photos ©Ken Regan

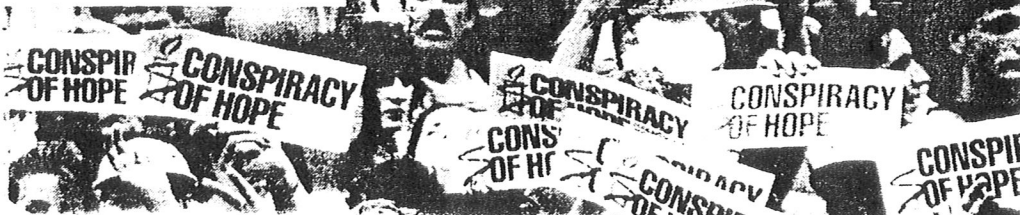
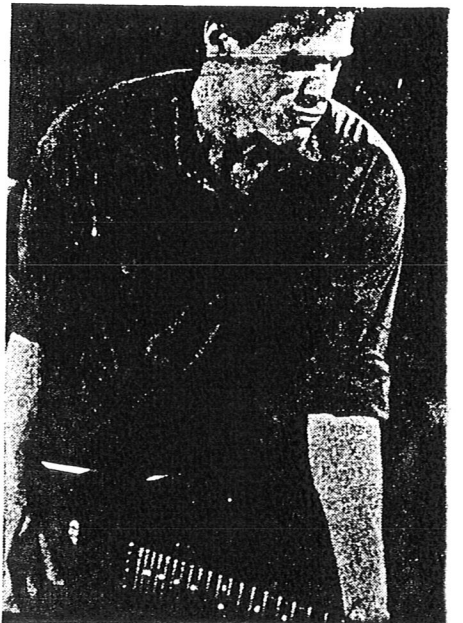
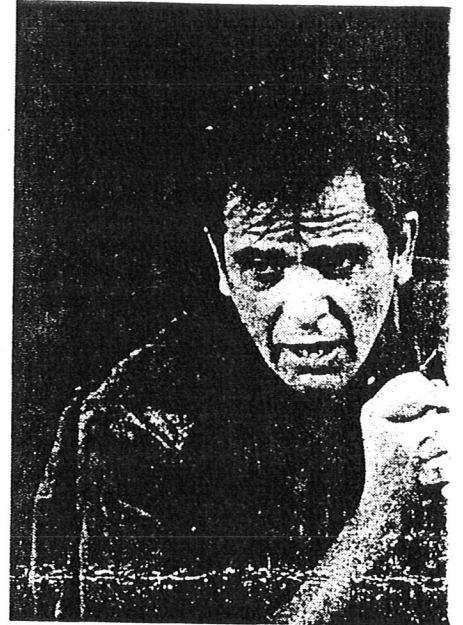
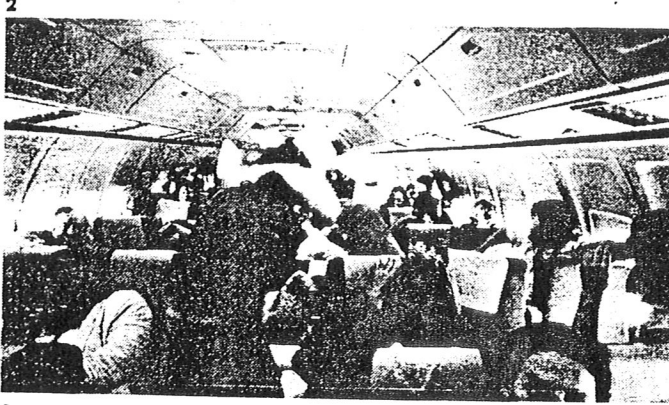
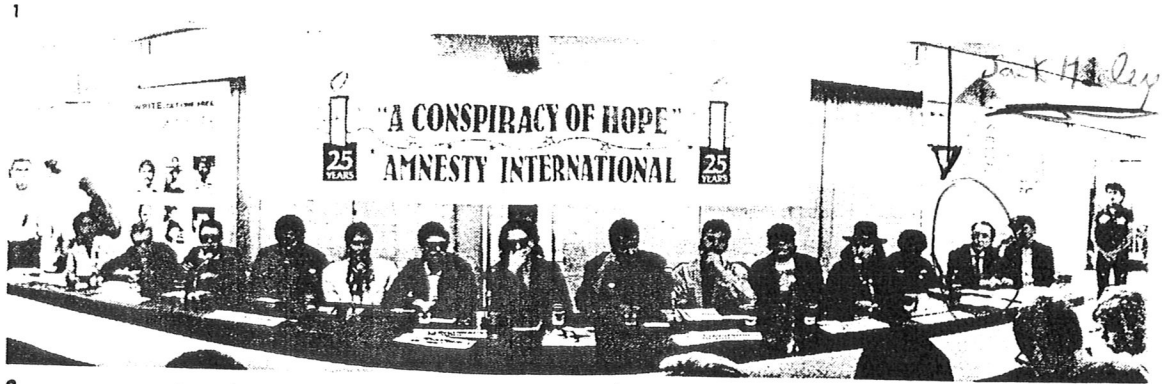


Photo by Ken Regan c. 1980



Bruce Springsteen, with Amnesty International U.S.A. Section Executive Director Jack Healey, and Sting. Amnesty Tour. The upcoming benefit—'Artists For Amnesty'—centers around the exhibition and sale of donated works at Blum Helman at 80 Greene Street, and Germans van Eck at 420 West Broadway. The Gala Preview and Dinner is on Tuesday, June 5th, and the work is on display from June 6 to June 16.