

2/10/95
JAMES P. GRANT
MEMORIAL SERVICE

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

February 10, 1995

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR
JAMES P. GRANT

MRS. CLINTON: To the Grant family, to the Secretary General, to the distinguished members of UNICEF and the United Nations who are represented here, to all those who are friends of Jim Grant, and friends of children, I was very honored to be asked to speak here today because I consider Jim Grant to be one of the great Americans of our century. He came from a family of crusaders and he continued to crusade on behalf of a better world for all people, but particularly for children.

A recent editorial about his death summed it up I think well. It is probably safe to say that James Grant was responsible for saving more lives over the past fifteen years than any other person in the world. He did that by challenging all of us. He did that by setting goals for all of us to aspire to achieve. And he did that by creating low cost, low tech ways to intervene on behalf of children. To in his words, "outsmart poverty."

The first time I ever heard of Jim Grant was when he was engaged in the struggle to try to convince infant formula companies not to promote their products in countries where feeding children was often something very difficult to do safely. I next met him when we came to the White House and I was, as all of you were, struck immediately that upon meeting him he reached into his pocket and pulled out a packet that looked like this -- "Oral Rehydration Therapy." And he pointed it out, as he did I assume to dozens and dozens of us in this great cathedral, as one of the easiest and certainly cheapest ways to save childrens' lives. That was Jim Grant -- high aspirations for the human condition, challenges to all of us, but firmly planted here on this earth with ideas about what could be done practically every day. Whether it was mothers milk, or iodizing the salt, or providing vitamin A, he was constantly coming up with new ways that all of us could save children.

MORE

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Certainly one of his greatest hopes was that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child would serve as a statement of principle that would guide us into the next century. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that the United States will sign the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This morning the President instructed Secretary of State Christopher to take the necessary steps to that effect. Our Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeline Albright, will sign the Convention on behalf of the United States next week. Nobody fought harder than Jim Grant for this Convention and its noble cause to promote the well-being and protect the basic rights of children throughout the world.

That was the last thing he talked to me about when I spoke last with him shortly before his death. I know how happy and proud he would have been to see our country add its name to the Convention. We owe it to him and to the children to whom he dedicated his life.

Thank you Jim Grant for being our conscience, our example and our spur. And I hope all of us will continue to do our best to live up to your hopes for this world and its children.

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