

Danny Kaye to Lead RPO Fund Benefit

By John Dash

The same pleasure that comes from watching a master craftsman develops the moment that Danny Kaye walks into a room.

Last week, the world-acclaimed entertainer stepped into a room in Rochester at the precise moment he said he would. He strode to a table beladen with microphones, squinted at the ranks of television lights, and said, "Welcome to Kennedy Space Center."

After five minutes of fielding gossip questions from awe-struck reporters, Kaye cajoled the television crews into removing their lights, drew up a chair and settled down into an hour of patter and performance with a dash of philosophy: show biz at its highest grade.

Kaye was in Rochester to promote his upcoming benefit performance with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra Oct. 15. He will conduct the RPO in a program for which "the management takes no

responsibility," to aid the orchestra's pension fund.

It promises to be comic entertainment of the first order — and musical performance of the first order as well. Although Kaye claims he can't read a note of music, he will have rehearsed three times with the orchestra before the performance, and he knows his music very well indeed.

And he says, "If what I'm doing with the orchestra isn't good, neither will be the other part of the act when I'm turned to the audience."

Kaye is not only an unusual entertainer, he's an unusual man as well. He has a reputation for philanthropy and humanitarian causes, an ambassador on behalf of UNICEF, an accomplished chef specializing in Chinese cuisine, a jet pilot and a baseball booster.

Kaye will receive no fee for his Oct. 15 performance here. Since 1954, he has raised nearly \$6 million for orchestra pension funds around the world.



Danny Kaye, dressed up in conductor's tails, mugs for the camera.

'Fast Times' Crass and Nasty

By Michael Gallagher

New York (NC) — "Fast Times at Ridgemont High" (Universal) has a heritage somewhat more respectable than the usual high school exploitation movie. It's based upon the book of the same title by Cameron Crowe, which he wrote about his experiences as a 22-year-old college graduate enrolled in a high school in the guise of a transfer student.

Crowe also did the screenplay, but the finished product,

though it does offer some fresh insights and retains some traces of relatively serious intent, settles for so much less that it is only a bit more substantial than the likes of such trash as "The Cheerleaders," "The Pom Pom Girls" and the more recent "Zapped."

The most revealing of the fresh insights is that the neighborhood shopping mall has become more of a center of activity for teenagers than their high school. Most of the young people the movie

focuses upon work there — one an usher in a movie theater, the others in fast food places. Nor do drugs figure very prominently in the lives of these youngsters. The only one who gets stoned, a perpetually spaced-out surfer played by Sean Penn, is a figure of ridicule to the others.

The promise of this approach, however, and the talent of a likeable young cast come to little in the face of the movie's lack of any sort of perspective, moral or otherwise.

And so the problems of a 15-year-old (Jennifer Jason Leigh) who plunges into promiscuity in a bid for affection are conveyed in a crude, insensitive fashion with hardly a trace of compassion but with an incredible degree of nudity. And this with a woman director, Amy Heckerling. (You can only wonder about the uncut original version which earned an X rating from the Code and Rating Administration.) The girl eventually has an abortion, not depicted, and, again, there is nothing in the

way of even the most rudimentary sense that something is not quite right or even a stray bit of ordinary human emotion.

Obviously, the unfortunate girl's family situation can't be all that it should be — her brother has his problems — but since we never see her father and her mother has a single line ("Good night, Sweetheart") it's impossible to make any sort of judgment.

"Fast Times at Ridgemont High," despite being on target

once in a while, is a crass little movie with an unsettling nastiness lurking just beneath its pleasant surface. Because of its nudity and because of a casual discussion in the cafeteria between two girls on oral sex, "Ridgemont" may well develop into a "must see" movie for teenagers. Parents are therefore warned to be on their guard.

The U.S. Catholic Conference has classified it O (morally offensive) and the industry rating is R (restricted).

Books in Review

Clergy in Politics: A View from the Right

"The Pope and Revolution: John Paul II Confronts Liberation Theology," Quentin L. Quade, editor; Ethics and Public Policy Center, Washington, D.C.

By Msgr. George G. Higgins

A growing number of Catholic and non-Catholic neo-conservatives in the United States think that today's clergy, especially in Latin America but also in the United States, are dangerously involved in political affairs.

Several neo-conservative scholars and publicists who feel strongly about this matter have collaborated in a book-length symposium titled, "The Pope and Revolution: John Paul II Confronts Liberation Theology." Quentin L. Quade, executive vice president of Marquette University, served as editor.

Quade summarizes the essays as follows: "How may the Catholic Church rightly influence particular political and economic issues? That is the essential question addressed in this volume. And the answer offered is: Through believers acting as citizens. The church may not be a direct political actor. Priests and other church leaders in their ecclesiastical capacity may not rightly act as politicians or political prophets. To do so is an unwarranted transfer of authority."

Quade has a point. History books are full of unwarranted involvement by priests, bishops and popes in the political arena.

In my opinion, however, Quade pushes the point too far and defines the political role of the clergy too rigidly. It is one thing to say the clergy should not act as politicians, but quite another to say that they may not act as political prophets.

I find Quade's rigid position all the more confusing because he and his fellow contributors to the volume frequently hold

up Pope John Paul II as the model to follow in defining the clergy's political role.

But on numerous occasions, Pope John Paul has acted as a political prophet. Moreover, many of his public statements on political matters have been quite specific.

For example, the pope has spoken out repeatedly and forcefully in support of the Polish labor movement, Solidarity. Are we to think that his statements on this had no political overtones?

(Msgr. Higgins' article was written before it was revealed that the pontiff, in 1980, threatened the Kremlin with abdicating the papacy to defend the Polish people, and that more than \$1.5 million in Vatican funds have supported Solidarity.)

The Polish bishops have also defended Solidarity. As recently as Aug. 27, the primate of Poland, Archbishop Jozef Glemp, made specific demands on the Polish government which that government regarded as political demands.

The pope and bishops of many countries, including the United States, have publicly and quite specifically addressed issues of a controversial nature in the political realm (abortion, human rights, nuclear warfare). It would appear that neither the pope nor the world's bishops fully subscribe to Quade's restrictive definition of their role in the political arena.

I am afraid the volume Quade edited will play, into the hands of the authoritarian governments in Latin America and other regions, undermining the pastoral work of socially minded priests and bishops. Church leaders like Cardinal Paolo Arns in Brazil or Cardinal Jaime Sin in the Philippines, and their counterparts and clerical associates in other countries are being falsely accused by their govern-

ments of acting as politicians when, in fact, they are simply doing their clear pastoral duty by speaking out for human rights.

These good men have enough trouble at home without being accused by U.S. Catholics of engaging in the wrong kind of political action.

I find it distressing that one essay in the Quade symposium denigrates the work of

Archbishop Helder Camara of Olinda and Recife, Brazil. He is cited as an unambiguous Marxist. It is clear that Pope John Paul II thinks otherwise.

During the pope's pastoral visit to Brazil, he went out of his way to publicly embrace the archbishop, knowing full well that the dramatic symbolism would not be lost on the archbishop's enemies in the Brazilian government.

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