

Jerry sniffs out an anti-Semitic caller, originally in Chapter 7:

His masterful control of the telephone just got better and better. One otherwise ordinary night in March 1973, when Jerry was filling time after a Celtics game, a caller threw in a quick parting shot before he hung up, something so offhand that you wouldn't even notice it, a remark about "people like you." Jerry brought him up short with a startling urgency in his voice.

"And what's that supposed to mean, sir?"

"What?"

"What does that **mean**, what you just said?"

"I dunno, whaddya talkin' about?"

"You said [Jerry introduced one of his trademark pauses] 'people like you.' And when someone says [pause] 'people like you,' sometimes they mean [another pause, then Jerry spoke darkly, as if to imply a sinister secret] something more than that."

A long silence followed.

"Are you there, sir?"

"Yeah, sure."

"So what does that mean, [pause] 'people like you?' Is there something **special** about [pause] 'people like me?'"

"Well, you know, people like you, people from New York –"

"No, that's not it, sir. You meant something [pause, then slowly] **very specific**. So come on, let's get it out where everyone can hear it."

A pause, then the caller said:

"Ah, people like you, you change your names so people don't know."

"We change our names? What does that mean, we change our names?"

"Well, that's not your real name, is it?"

"What, Jerry Williams is not my **real** name, is that it?"

"Yeah, that's it."

Jerry took a satisfied breath. He had hooked the caller. Now he could reel him in.

"I see. It's that I'm hiding something. I'm not being honest."

"Yeah."

"Well, I wouldn't want you to think that. I wouldn't want **anyone** to think that I'm not being honest."

Jerry took another pause, letting "honest" hang in the air.

"Would you like to know my real name? I'll bet you'd like to know my real name, **wouldn't** you, sir?"

"No, I don't care."

Jerry suddenly softened his tone. He was unctuous. "Oh, come on, I know you do. I'll tell you. I have nothing to hide. You'd like to know."

"Yeah, I guess."

He spoke kindly, as if to a child. "Well, now, I want you to listen carefully. I don't want you to miss it."

A long pause.

Making his tone a little harder: "Are you listening, sir?"

"Yeah."

Letting some anger into his voice: "**Really** listening?"

“Yeah.”

Cold and sharp: “Okay. Here it comes.”

A long pause.

“My [pause] real [pause] name [pause] is –”

Then a sudden disgusted shout: “**CHAIM** [this, enriched by a juicy guttural CH, followed by another pause] **RABINOWITZ!** And thanks for your call.”

Another long pause, as the engineer deep-sixed the call. Jerry smiled and shook his head, watching Elman for his reaction. Elman shook his head in sympathetic reply.

Jerry’s look said a lot. There was only one way to deal with these anti-Semitic cranks. You had to smoke them out, get them to admit their biases, get the issues into high contrast. And he wasn’t going to duck them. If they wanted a Jewish name, he’d give them a Jewish name. What was the most Jewish-sounding name Jerry could think of? Chaim Rabinowitz, with a capital Chai.

“They’re out there **tonight!** Back in a minute.”

As the commercial rolled, Jerry hit the intercom button. “I can smell ’em!”

This is one of Steve Elman’s most vivid recollections from his years producing the Williams show.