

Jerry tries to host “Ask President Carter,” originally in Chapter 8

When the news broke that President Jimmy Carter wanted to do a series of talk shows, taking calls and answering questions from ordinary Americans, Jerry immediately fantasized himself as Carter’s second banana. Could there be anyone better qualified than Jerry Williams to guide the new president into the world of talk radio? Not as far as Jerry was concerned.

But it wouldn’t do to go knocking on the door at CBS himself, hat in hand. He called Ken Meyer, who was still producing at WBZ.

Hey, Ken, how wouldja like to do me a favor?

What’s that, Jerry?

Call CBS and tell them I’m available to host “Ask President Carter.”

Meyer – no fool about the realities of the business – diplomatically said he’d give it a try. And, because WBZ commanded a lot of respect even in New York, he actually got through to Richard Salant in the upper echelons of CBS management.

Ken began pitching: Jerry Williams, big talent, created talk radio, on MCA on Sundays, perfect for the show with the President, very interested, would keep it moving, make it exciting.

Salant, very cool, cut Meyer off: “Ken, we’ve got Cronkite.”

“Good talking with you, Dick.”

*Ken Meyer told us this story in our interview with him on 7/29/05.*