

Jerry has to juggle a live broadcast of the Republican Convention and an off-air interview of Henry Morgan at the same time, originally in Chapter 7:

General Manager Jim Lightfoot and Jim Pluntze, the news director, decided to carry the 1968 Republican National Convention live from Miami Beach, and they sent WBZ newsman Gary LaPierre down there to do the local angle, since there was a chance Massachusetts Governor John Volpe might be nominated for VP. Jerry hated to be pre-empted, and he fumed about this idea. Speeches from pols were going to consume big chunks of his time. Instead of the sparkling two hours he had planned with Henry Morgan, listeners would find the first night of the convention.

When Morgan arrived a little before 10 PM on Monday August 5, he was surprised to hear the convention on the PA system in the BZ lobby. Wishnow came out and broke the news. He said that Jerry would still like to see him, and that maybe they could record some evergreen stuff, more of their interplay, for future use. He walked Morgan down the long hall again, and parked him in the talk studio.

Jerry came into the building frowning. He had been listening to the coverage in his car on his way in, and it was as dull as he had imagined. He figured he'd be stuck in the studio reading newspapers while the pols jawed and WBZ's newsman Gary LaPierre filled the gaps with play-by-play and quick conversations with notables on the convention floor. He might not even get on the air.

As Jerry rounded the corner into the control room, Wishnow told him that Morgan was already in the studio. He also surprised Jerry with the news that the station expected him to do more than just wait to get on the air. LaPierre was buttonholing people on the convention floor for Jerry to interview while the speeches were carried live. At the very least, the conversations Jerry had would give the station a stockpile of material that would be useful to fill dead spots in the coverage. If something really newsworthy came out, Jerry's interviews might even provide a cut or two for newscast use. Jerry was game, provided that the people LaPierre found were interesting, and that he could get into political issues with them. But what were they going to do with Morgan? Wishnow said they'd try to keep him happy and he'd set up some time where Jerry and Morgan could get some give-and-take recorded for future use.

Jerry breezed into the studio, greeted Morgan, and said they were in a holding pattern while the convention coverage was on. He said he'd do a few interviews, and when things calmed down a bit the two of them could pick up where they left off last week. If the convention wrapped up promptly, they'd do it on the air. If not, they'd do it on tape, and the conversation could be replayed some night in the weeks ahead. Morgan said that was all right with him, and he'd be back in a while. He disappeared, presumably returning to the Ramada Inn next door where he had prepared for the previous week's show.

Jerry talked to David Buckson, the Attorney General of Delaware, about Buckson's proposal to scrap the Electoral College system. Then LaPierre corralled Wilt Chamberlain to talk with Jerry; Chamberlain handled some pointed questions about why he was supporting Nixon, and dodged Jerry's requests for comment about Muhammad Ali's stand on the war.

Morgan came back about an hour later, as Governor Daniel Evans of Washington was beginning the convention's keynote speech. Morgan was well-oiled and jovial ("I

must say, we're even with him because the people on the floor are drinking – or the people who are drinking are on the floor”), but he noted Jerry’s annoyance at the dwindling time available for his show that night. “You’re sulky,” he laughed.

Wishnow figured that they would have at least a half hour of quiet time for Jerry and Morgan to record, and he got both men into the studio as quickly as possible. When Jerry found out who was giving the speech, he assured Morgan that they had plenty of time to talk: “Since he’s not well-known, this will go on forever.”

Wishnow told the engineer to roll tape, and Jerry introduced Morgan with the four words that had led into the great monologues he remembered from the 1940s: “And now, here’s Morgan.”

Even though he had prepared nothing, Morgan immediately launched into the conversational, ironic style that so captivated Jerry in his high school days, setting the scene, throwing barbs at the convention process (“a sort of little national applause for people we like – or some of us like”), putting listeners in the studio (“We’ve been sitting around, Jerry and I, saying ‘Why don’t we make a tape, for goodness sake?’”) and noting that no one knew when this conversation would actually be heard on the air. “So I want to wish you a merry Christmas, if that’s when it is, a nice Easter, a happy Fourth of July, and a cool August. We never know. But one nice thing about tape is that you’re reasonably immortal. They always have it somewhere in a box. And I think by the time they play this, I will be.”

Jerry joined in. He reminisced about Morgan’s classic monologues, and then asked him, “Don’t you ever get offers to do radio programs anymore?”

Morgan kept a smile in his voice, but he suddenly turned bitter: “No. That kind of radio doesn’t exist. Radio today, as you know, is dictated by *Billboard* or *Cash Box* or whatever, and it’s music for the young. Now, I happen to be particularly fond of the young, but they’re not particularly fond of listening to talk on radio anymore. They walk along the street – if you see coming toward you a transistor radio on the end of an arm, you know you’ve got an imbecile on the other end of that same arm. They need constant, quote, ‘entertainment,’ end quote. New York City particularly is filled with these dummies. They can’t walk on a sidewalk without listening to the Good Guys [as the DJs on WMCA were known at the time], or you know, somebody yelling at them and playing loud beats.”

Jerry was surprised. What was supposed to be a light moment had done a ninety-degree turn. “I don’t know that’s particularly so. That is, across the board, I think radio’s gone into sort of a magazine concept. Each station has its thing, yes, but people do listen for two or three or four hours at a time at a crack to people talking, and I think that you, Henry, in your earlier days, were one of the first people who utilized even talk at that time. I think that’s why I was attracted in those days to listen to you because there was somebody talking, other than H. V. Kaltenborn, and Boake Carter and those people. You were the ones who were talking. Look at how rapidly, in less, I guess in a quarter of a century, things have changed in terms of talk, because –”

Morgan interrupted in a tone of mock offense: “A quarter of a century, sir?”

Jerry gave it back, with mock hauteur: “A quarter of a century is right, Henry.” Then, quickly evoking the opening of “The Lone Ranger” (“Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear . . .”), Jerry said, “Come back now to – WOR, was it?”

Morgan felt the barb about his age and shot back, “I don’t think it’s enough to dye my hair now. I’d better dye my voice.”

“Your voice sounds much the same. But in a quarter of a century – those days, when you were ribbing commercials, and doing things that were excitingly new and different, (wow! what a different concept to rib Adler Elevator Shoes!) – I guess it was about ten years ago here in Boston, you really couldn’t talk about birth control, and now, all you hear is Catholics calling call-in programs saying, [Jerry adopted a character voice] ‘The Pope doesn’t know what he’s talking about!’ Really, things have changed.”

As they loosened up, Jerry began to feel the conversation falling into a rhythm. Then Wishnow broke in. Governor John Volpe was suddenly available for an interview and they would have to talk to him. Wishnow motioned that the taping with Morgan would have to be interrupted. Jerry tried to wave him off and keep the conversation going, but Wishnow broke in on the intercom. “We’ll have to truncate this.”

“Now, *that* you shouldn’t have done,” Jerry said to Wishnow darkly. Morgan saw a tense moment coming between host and producer as Jerry glared through the glass.

“Leave me out. I have no place in this. You understand,” Morgan said, as he pushed the mic stand away and stood up to leave. “You know, you’re not going to hurt my feelings. I have nothing to do with this. Do good with this. This, you can use.”

Morgan walked through the studio door. Jerry did his interview with Volpe, who didn’t get the nomination. He never spoke with Morgan on the air again.

*This story is re-created from tapes of the 8/5/68 show and the off-air interview Jerry recorded on that day with Henry Morgan, both provided to us by Jerry Wishnow. We got a few more details about the incident from a conversation with Wishnow on 6/3/04.*