

Columnist Tom Moroney discovers that Jerry isn't registered to vote in Massachusetts, originally in Chapter 10:

By the late 1980s, there were damn few old liberals in Massachusetts who still thought of Jerry with fondness. There **was** at least one: Tom Moroney, a columnist for the *Middlesex News*, a guy who'd logged a couple of appearances on the TV show and an occasional radio spot. He had the right attitude on the air – unsanctimonious, down-to-earth, accepting the entertainment factor, jousting good-naturedly with the Dean and even occasionally scoring a few points on him. Like everyone who had the chance to see Jerry's craft up close, Moroney came to appreciate the mastery of radio, the ability to control conversation, the drama that the guy brought to even the most mundane topic – and like Bill O'Reilly, he tried his hand at Talk for the first time on WRKO, only to learn first hand how hard a job it was and redouble his respect for someone who'd been doing it for more than thirty years.

The biggest point that Moroney scored on Jerry was done in print, and it was one of the first of the hypocrite stories that came to be part of the Jerry Williams legacy in the later years. Acting on a tip from someone who'd noticed that Jerry had Florida plates on his car, Moroney went down to Marshfield Town Hall in the spring of 1987 to see what he could find out. "I know voting records are public, and I'd like to see Jerry Williams's registration record."

The clerk knew of Jerry, of course. "The guy on the radio?" She pulled his card. "Oh, this is very interesting." Funny thing, he's not on the rolls. This was good, Moroney thought. Jerry Williams, the populist, the guy who called people to run to the ramparts and defend democracy, this guy isn't registered.

So he calls Jerry at WRKO, just a few minutes before show time. "Say, Jerry, I went down to the Town Hall and discovered you're not registered. How come?" Long pregnant pause. It's not everyone who scores a direct hit. "Who put you up to this? You're with Dukakis, aren't you?"

"No, just a hardworking newspaper guy." No ax to grind, just found it interesting. Jerry obfuscated and then said he had to go into the studio. Moroney had his story, and confirmation, sort of, so he wrote the column. He listened to Jerry's show the day it came out. Whenever a caller said something like, "Hey, Jerry, I was reading the *Middlesex News* today, and –" they would suddenly disappear from the air.

The point got picked up by *Time*'s Richard Zoglin for a big piece on Talk in May. He zinged Jerry with the Moroney column, and Jerry gave him a quote that virtually guaranteed national exposure for the suburban columnist: "Tom Moroney is evil incarnate."

After Moroney had seen the *Time* piece, he called Jerry at RKO again. He knew that he'd actually been given a backhanded compliment for his enterprise and a nice boost for his rep at the same time. "I just want to thank you."

Jerry growled, "You're welcome." Which is how Moroney became Not a Bad Guy and someone Jerry liked to have with him on the air.

*Tom Moroney told us this story in an interview on 11/15/05. The Time article where Jerry zings Moroney is Richard Zoglin, "Bugle Boys of the Airwaves: Talk-show hosts*

*stir up a storm of political action," Time, 5/15/87, captured from time.com archives 2/19/06.*