



Mandel's Air Debut Becomes a Media Event

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ANNAPOLIS, Jan. 30—Along with the traffic team report, weather predictions and a tune by Neil Sedaka, listeners to radio station WNAV-AM this morning were served up what the station billed as an "exciting new addition"—former Maryland governor Marvin Mandel.

Mandel, for years the newsmaker with everything from his love-triangle divorce to his conviction and prison sentence for political corruption, changed roles today to become the news interviewer, as host of a morning radio talk show. The former governor took on the task with relish, but then, he'd had some advice from his wife before he went on the air.

"I said, 'Marvin, just act like you're being governor,'" Jeanne Mandel recalled as the show was about to start. "You know how you love press conferences. Well, this is just a press conference, only you're on the other side."

Mandel, however, wasn't totally on the other side. By 7:30 a.m., the station's cramped offices were swarming with television news crews. Cameramen jockeyed for position to capture Mandel's every

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Former Maryland governor Marvin Mandel and his wife, Jeanne, in the WNAV-AM broadcast booth on his first day as a talk show host.

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movement, and reporters scribbled in notebooks to record his every word.

Mandel was in his element, answering questions in the masterfully vague style that had turned his two terms as governor into a never-ending saga of political intrigue.

Would he start reading ratings books to see how popular he was, the reporters wanted to know.

"I don't know anything about that," Mandel said. "But I'll tell you one thing. I can read polls all right."

Was this his way of getting back into politics, they asked.

"I am in politics," Mandel answered. "I'm still a registered voter."

And so it went. Just before 8 a.m., a slightly nervous Mandel entered the booth with his guest, Annapolis Mayor Richard L. Hillman, and Jeanne Mandel, who said she wanted to be near him to critique his work. "I need to sit where he can see me," she told a technician. "We have these signals we send each other."

At 8:08 a.m., announcer Sue Serio said, "And now, here's Marvin Mandel." With that, Mandel opened the show, inviting listeners to call in. Then he talked with Hillman about the city's tourism industry, business climate and politics. A few listeners called with questions for Hillman, but others were far more interested in the host.

"I'd like to speak to Gov. Mandel," one caller said. "You can't keep a good man down," the woman went on, apparently referring to Mandel's 1977 federal conviction. "After seven years, justice pays off."

After the show, Mandel acknowledged that he thought "someone might call to say they resent my being on the air. But we didn't have any of those."

Mandel said he will continue working for Cirelli and Sons Inc., a Severna Park development firm that hired him to analyze business deals after he got out of federal prison. Mandel had served 19 months when his sentence was commuted in December 1981 by President Reagan.

As for his radio career, Mandel was willing to talk at length about future shows, on the breakup of AT&T, the federal deficit and Reagan's presidency, and his plan to snare Baltimore Mayor William Donald Schaefer as a guest.

On other subjects, though, he was the old mysterious Mandel.

Would he reveal his salary? "One, we're still negotiating . . .," Mandel answered. "And two, I wouldn't tell you anyway."

And would he try to influence Maryland politics from his new position?

"No," Mandel said puffing on his trademark pipe. "I really wouldn't be getting into anything like that . . . yet."