



Podcast Episode 235  
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## “The Wild Story of My Career: Touring with Joan Rivers and Cher (Pt. 2 of 2)”

**David Loy:** Hi and welcome to In The Loop with Andy Andrews, I’m your host David Loy. And with me once again is Andy Andrews.

**Andy Andrews:** Yes I am.

**David:** Andy we’re picking up where we left off last week which is talking about the many different parts of your career.

**Andy:** At what we laughingly refer to as my career.

**David:** We had a great question come in from Paul who saw you a long time ago, thirty years ago, he said, as a comedian. And then was recently given one of your books and he said, apparently you write and speak now as well. But he was looking for the details, filling the gap, what have you been doing for the last thirty years? So real quick.

**Andy:** Probably wasn’t looking for this many details.

**David:** He probably wasn’t expecting a multiple episodes of content. But briefly from last week, we covered your infamous pizza hut appearance, we covered your first paid gig where you were fired halfway through it. We covered cruise ships.

**Andy:** Not that I’m bitter.

**David:** Not that you're bitter 35-40 years later. We covered cruise ships briefly. We started to touch on colleges and then you gave us a couple of teasers for this week, some stories you want to tell about both Joan Rivers and Cher. But I think the big thing that I took away from last week and I hope our listeners are getting this as well but you touched on it briefly, the importance of being flexible and being willing and ready to, you said, being willing and ready to pivot.

**Andy:** To pivot, yeah. I mean, whatever it is that anybody sees me doing now or whatever they perceive about me or any value I have created in their life, which hopefully I have, you know I wasn't thirty years old thinking, ok, here's what I'm going after. I had no clue this was really kind of in the cards for me. But I was willing and able to endure some of the things that I just thought were useless or miserable. And I was willing to look at them in a different way and look for the blessing from them, look for what I was supposed to learn, even if it was endurance. And so, but all those things, and it's odd to me now that there are things that happened for me forty years ago, some of them bad, some of them funny, some of them seemingly random, that now I can help somebody because I can use that story to either make them laugh and then make a point. I can take that that happened to me and say, I had no clue what was happening at that point but this is how that turned out years later. So I think, I'm grateful that for whatever reason I did have some people saying, look you can, you know Jones did, Jones said, you can look at this, this way or that way, and this is all perspective. And so a lot of that really kind of, because even with Jones, I was thinking, I'd like to be a comedian but I never thought about writing a book. I never thought about, that living under a pier would be anything good. I was just trying to get out of there, to endure it.

**David:** And you talked about it last week, how you were willing to do all of those things on a cruise ship that nobody else was willing to do because you knew that if you didn't survive, you're going back to the pier.

**Andy:** Right, right. I mean, there are benefits, I see all the time in dealing with people, people that are just absolutely in distress about being under pressure or being in a situation that there's nowhere else to turn, that type of thing. But you know what? People don't want to be under pressure but over and over again, I can just show you, just over and over again evidence that people and their best work happens under pressure that breakthroughs happen under pressure. And you know, unbelievable businesses are created, unbelievable situations are created for families because people had to.

**David:** Right, there was no other choice.

**Andy:** There's no other choice. And if you would to have a choice, would you have done it? I mean, I look at my mom and dad having died, and this is maybe an extreme example but when I look at my mom and dad having died and I look at all the good that has come, all the things that I learned and all the good and the people I've been able to help because of that time under the pier. And one of the worst things to ever happen in my life was my mom and dad dying in that year. But I want to tell you something, I'm not saying I'm glad they died obviously, but I would tell you this, that if my parents had been alive, I wouldn't have been under that pier. I mean, my dad would've robbed a bank before he let me live that way.

**David:** And then you could play that out, if you hadn't been under the pier then several of the other things that you experienced would've never happened.

**Andy:** That's exactly right. So I'm just saying that the proper perspective trumps almost everything.

**David:** Wow, that's very powerful. So if you missed last week at all and you want to hear some great funny stories about Andy's very beginnings as a comedian, performer and really someone who did whatever it took to make friends, that was a huge part of what

you were doing. Go back and listen to last week's episode. But Andy let's pick up where we left off. We were talking about, I think we were really getting into the transition between the cruise ships and the colleges and then how the colleges then lead to opening for some stars.

**Andy:** Yeah, one of the, really the biggest star at the time, was Joan Rivers. She had turned it into only guest host for the Tonight Show. So when Johnny Carson was not there, Joan was the guest host. And she was the heir apparent to Johnny's throne at that time. And she was one of the biggest stars in the world. And so I got booked when I was doing colleges, right. And I got booked to be her opening act for homecoming, you know, this monster homecoming event at this college. And most times people carry around their own opening acts but at this point for whatever reason this college booked me as an opening act and booked her as the headliner. And I never will forget, I was really, really nervous because I'm a comedian and she's like the biggest comedian there is at the point. And she stood on the side of the stage and watched me the entire time, you know, from behind the curtain.

**David:** You knew she was there?

**Andy:** Yeah, oh, I looked at my right, she's fifteen feet away. So the whole time I'm talking, she's right there, standing with some guy, who I didn't know who he was. It turned out his name was Billy Sammeth. Billy was her manager at the time and so I did my deal. And when I got through, if I could have walked the other way, I would have. But it was blocked by big equipment stuff so that was the way everybody came on the stage. So I went that way and she was right there. And Joan was the little bitty woman. You know, I'm 6'1 and Joan, I always teased, she kind of came out to my chin. And that's really about right. But when I walked out of stage, I smiled and I waved to the crowd and so she like held her arms way out and she had a big smile. And as I got close to her, she

held her hands out, so I put my hand, she took my hand and she said, kid you were marvelous. And I thought, thank you so much. She said, I loved what you did. And I said, thank you, thank you. And she said, we'll talk soon. And then of course I didn't see her, I didn't see her the rest of the night. She did her thing and then she was awesome and got out of there.

But a week later, they called and offered me a tour to be her opening act. And I did that tour and I'll tell you something very interesting, I really, really liked Joan a lot. She taught me a lot about how to treat people. Now that may sound odd because if you remember Joan, her whole act was destroying celebrities. I mean, that was her all act. And she would get on somebody in the audience and just like, just tear him apart. But everybody would be laughing and so would that person. But I traveled around with her, I was everywhere Joan went on tour, for two years, I was with her. And so I saw everything back stage. Her road manager was Dorothy, Dorothy was just awesome. I just, I loved Dorothy. And so, but I would watch Joan and when people would come up to her, she never was rude or she never was, she never quickly got away or anything like that. She was always so nice and so funny. And she had her tricks she would do with the people come up. If a husband and wife come up, Joan would say, let me see the ring. I can't believe he gave you this cheap, little ring. You get her something bigger right now. And then she would turn and said, absolutely gorgeous, I'm trying to get you a bigger one. I mean, she was just great. And at the end of that very first tour, the very last day was at Westbury Music Fair on Long Island. And I remember that for three different reasons.

One reason, and it was a big, beautiful place in and around, I remember for one reason because for whatever reason I always remember they had unbelievable food. They catered backstage, it was unbelievable food. Now, that was just in our dressing rooms. We always did two shows because remember she was like hot as could be. And it was, this were like two, four, five thousand seat shows a night. And between shows for two years, between

every show, we had prime rib. And the reason we had prime rib was because Joan said, it's the only thing someone can't screw up. And so, but to this day I don't eat prime ribs, I had enough of it for two years. But I remember Westbury Music Fair because the catering in the dressing room was great, great sandwiches, it was just great. I remember that also because Howard Stern was there. And so I remember seeing him standing outside, in the hallway, standing outside of the dressing rooms. And Dorothy told me, Howard's here tonight, he and Joan are friends. And I remember thinking, he is going to hate me. He is going to hate my gut. And then he's going to talk about me on the radio tomorrow. I remember thinking that. And I had already, well really not then, that was the first tour but I remember later asking Joan, because you know, she, Joan cuss a lot then but she did cuss on stage. And her stuff was kind of rude, you know. And she would just get all over these celebrities. But I remember asking her one time, I said, why me, why does this work out well for you do you think, why is this? And she said, you are like the boy next door, and I am the old witch, she didn't use witch. I'm the old witch, leaning over the back fence talking about her neighbors. And she said, we are great contrast. And we work well together. And so, in any case, for whatever reason, Howard Stern liked me that night and talked about me the next day on the radio. And like, five years later, I'm walking to the Chicago airport and some guy stops and says, hey are you Andy Andrews? I said, yes. He said, I'm a friend of Howard Stern, he really likes you a lot. Really, I've never met, I still have never met him, ever. But I just thought that was bizarre. But the other reason I remember that, end of that very first tour, Westbury Music Fair, is because Joan, and I didn't know this at the time, ok, but she was, she had been stiffed several times in her career. Doing her show and then producers like not pay her or something like that, for whatever reason. And Joan, I've told you that I learned from her a lot about how to treat people, and I especially learned how to treat an opening act. I learned how to treat somebody who is not in as maybe as good position as you are in that same profession. And not just an opening act, but you know, I always, I meet speakers now, I meet people who want to be speakers. And I also see some of my, I don't know if I'd call them my

peers, they're big people, these are big speakers. And some of them I think, what's up with you man, why, were you never struggling, did you never wish that somebody would talk to you? What's your problem? But a lot of that I learned from Joan, because she was always, I mean, if you're an opening act, one of the things people don't know about opening acts. Polly always, if we go to a concert, Polly knows a lot of what, obviously we've talked and she knows a lot of what I understand is going on, up there on stage. And when I started years ago, I said when I started, when I was touring with a lot of these people, now I toured for two years with Joan, for five years with Kenny Rogers. You know, off and on with Randy Travis, some with Garth, with Cher. But there were probably 50 other stars that I did stuff with, that I didn't tour regularly with but did stuff occasionally. One of the big things that you could see back then, is you could tell how the star viewed the opening act by what microphone the opening act got because back then, cordless mics were brand new. And so a lot of times the opening act would have to use the cords but the star got the cordless. And so you could see a lot of that, ok. You could see times that, well, see in the opening act gig, that is something that was really developed to develop careers. It wasn't that the star needed that, ok. I mean, everybody is there to see the star and so the star didn't need somebody to play, this was developed by record companies and by agencies to give their younger acts a leg up, to give them exposure to a larger audience, that would hopefully say, hey I like them too, I'll buy their record, let me follow them. And so occasionally, and let me tell you something, everybody knows that, in the industry, if you have ever done anything at all and come up through, there is nobody that was just automatically, they said, I want to go into this business and then they were headliner, ok.

And so everybody knows this. And so the opening acts get paid very little. I mean, if you hear about a headliner and I'm not kidding you, I mean today you hear about a headliner getting a 100 000 dollars or 200 000 dollars for that performance, you know, the band that went before them, got 2500. So it barely pays the expenses. I mean I had comedian

friends that, you know, and me, I was getting more than I'd ever got in my life from Joan, but it's still a fraction from what she got, ok. But that wasn't the deal anyway. The deal was the exposure. She took me to Las Vegas for the first time. She put me on a national television show for the first time. And so she was helping me, giving me exposure. And so I guess the point that I'm coming to is, still crawls all over me when I go to a concert and I see no opening act. Because it's like, really?

**David:** You're so good and so big that...

**Andy:** Really? You don't even want to give somebody the benefit of the, you know you've gotten to this point and you can't share that with somebody who's trying like you were trying a little while ago? Do you not remember what this feels like? Do you not remember when they called you and said, hey you're going to get to open for so and so. You're kidding, I get to, oh my gosh. But you can't provide that for somebody else? It really drives me crazy. And so in anyway Joan was so generous with that. And at that first night or that night at the end of that first tour, we've done nine dates. And so I was going to get a check for my fee that they were paying me, was more than I've ever gotten, times nine. And so at some point I remember being in that dressing room at Westbury Music Festival at Long Island and knock at the door and it was Billy Sammeth. As far as I knew that was it, I wasn't doing any more, I wasn't booked for any more. That was the last of the tour. And so Billy came in to the door and he shook my hand and said, you've been great, thank you so much, we've had a great time with you and appreciate everything. And here's a check, are you set for any more and go on and on. And I said, yeah, yeah, thank you so much. And you know, I put it in my pocket and then when he closed the door, I almost tore my pants off getting to the check, to get it of my pocket, to look at it. And I looked at it and my heart just sank, I was like, oh no because the number was wrong. But it was wrong in my favor, dramatically. It was twice as much as I was supposed to be paid. And I thought, is this a mistake, is it a test? Are they waiting to see if I'm honest, if

I'm going to go tell them that it's wrong? I just felt awful. I didn't know what to do. But I knew I was going to go tell them. I wasn't going to just take it. And so Joan was always, that's the other thing, she took that opening act fear out of somebody's mind because every other opening act in the world, they know what it feels like. You're on a show and you think, do I go say hello to the start, are they going to be mad if I don't, are they going to be mad if I do?

**David:** What's the right protocol?

**Andy:** Yeah, there's no protocol for it, you just don't know. But Joan would come to my dressing room, at first, until she had made it clear, you are welcome in my dressing room any time. She would come to my dressing room, knock on a door, I want to make sure you have everything you need in here, have you got, did they give you enough soft drinks? What did they got for you to eat? Don't you order those hamburgers from a hotel, did you see how much they were, they were 9 dollars. Don't you do that, you come over, we've got plenty of stuff in my dressing room, take it and go back, you don't spend your money on that right now. I mean, she was great.

So I went to her dressing room, I walk in and she says, hey, how are you doing? And I said, I'm great. She says, we have really enjoyed having you. And I said, thanks Joan, this has been an awesome, and everybody's been great. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. And she said, well good. Did you get your check? And I would find out later that because she had been stiffed before, she was always concerned. Did you get your check? She would say later, don't you ever leave a place without your check? And so she said, got your check? I said, yes ma'am, I do. She said, everything ok? And I said, no, ma'am, it's not. And she was getting her hair done. She was over across the room and getting her hair done and she said, yes it is. And I said, well no, it's actually, Joan it's actually for the wrong amount, it's too much. And she said, no, that's what it should be.

And I said, well, I know what the contract said and this is for like too much. And Joan turned around and she said, let me tell you something. She said, I'm doing really good right now, and I haven't always been doing really good. But right now I'm doing really good. And that money will mean more to you and your family than that money will mean added to what they're paying me here. And so you take that and you use it and know that I appreciate you and the only thing that I ask is, that one day, when you have the opportunity too because you will, I ask that you do that for somebody else. I'm telling you she was awesome. And none of that stuff ever comes out about anybody.

**David:** That's amazing.

**Andy:** I mean, we could do a bunch of shows about Joan. I had a check one time, we ended up one tour at the World's Fair, in Vancouver. And it was last night of the tour and it was one of those things again, I'm in the dressing room with her, and she said to the agent, or she asked me, she said, have you got your check? And I said, oh, no, ma'am, I'm fine, because I'm seeing those guys, Billy Sammeth and some of these other guys, so I said, oh no, I'm fine. She turned and she said, Ed where's Andy's check? He said, well, it's actually at the hotel. And she said, well go get it. He said, Joan, I've got to settle up with these people between the shows. And she said, Billy hand me my purse please. And so Sammeth handed her her purse and she, I don't know what she's doing. And she pulls something out, writes and then she rips off the check. And she wrote a personal check for the entire amount to me, the entire amount of the tour. And it was on Joan Rosenberg. Of course I wish I had kept a copy of that or something. Then she said, how are you getting to the airport in the morning? I said, just a cab. And she said, no, no, what time's your flight. And I told her. She said, take my limo. And I said, no, I'm fine. She said, look, they gave me a limo, it's for 24 hours, I'm not using it at all, take the limo. I said, ok. I mean, but trust me, I can not tell you, even in the past year, how many people that I have been around who had the means to just share something with somebody that they would

be absolutely, I mean, they own a plane and their plane is already going where this person is going. They have extra seats on the plane they own and they know this person's going there. And would not even say, hey, just come with us. I mean, I see it over and over again. So I always remember Joan and how she treated people and I always want to follow that example.

**David:** That's an amazing story. Alright we told people that we would, so I've got to put the pressure on you, I need the Cher story quickly. And then next week we will get into everything else.

**Andy:** Ok, Cher story is very quick. I guess this is kind of funny. But Billy Sammeth also managed Cher. And so Cher and Joan were buddies. Well it turns out at some point that Cher, her tour was going out and to her credit, she wanted to have somebody that she could help. And so Billy said, hey this great kid that Joan is using right now, and his name's Andy Andrews. And she said, great, bring him out. And so my very first date on this tour was in Tucson. So I flew into Tucson, the flight was late and man, I took my taxi straight to the arena. One of those ten thousand seat arenas and the taxi takes me around the back of arena, up the ramp. So I walk up to that ramp, into the arena and it's still probably hour and a half before the show time but as I walk up the ramp, and I hadn't met anybody, I know Billy there but I didn't see him yet. But I walk up the ramp and there is Cher, sitting on a crate, in a long black dress, reading the paper. And I'm like, what in a world? So I walk up and she looks up and she says, hi. And I said, hey, how are you doing, I'm Andy Andrews. She said, oh you're the comedian. And I said, yeah. She said, we heard all about you, we're so excited that you're here. And I said, well thank you very much. And I said, hey, I know everybody's kind of hustling, where are the dressing rooms? She said, right down there, yours got your name on the door. Ok, great thank you. And it's great to be here. Oh glad to have you, Billy has told us all about you. Thank you.

So I walk away thinking, well that was odd. And I go to my dressing room, put my stuff down. I'm not there five minutes, a knock on the door, it's Billy Sammeth. Hey how are you doing. Hey Billy how are you? He says, come with me really quick. And I said, ok. So I'm just walking down the backstage in that arena with him to another place and I don't know where we're going. And he says, hey how are you doing? Oh good, good, sorry I was late. Have you seen Joan lately? No, I haven't seen her lately. And we walk right into this room and there's probably, I don't know 8 to 10 people in this big dressing room. And before I could say anything, before anybody says anything, here comes Cher, at of the back. And she's wearing jeans and a white t-shirt. And Billy says, Cher, this is Andy Andrews. She said, oh my God, the comedian. How are you? And I'm like, what is going on? And she says, Billy has told us all about you, we're so glad you're here. And I said, thank you, I'm so glad to be here too. And it was just very odd. And anyway we talked a minute and went back to dressing room. And later as I watched the show and Cher had like 50 costume changes in the show, they had this awesome thing where Cher, she would walk into this one place and she would come out the other side of it two seconds later wearing something else. It was, and the crowd would go insane. And then she would couple of minutes later, she would walk pass that thing again and when she came pass the other end, she'd be wearing something else and the crowd would go insane.

Well I found out that there were two Chers. There was the real Cher and they had found this guy on a Phil Donahue Show, men who dress as stars. And he looked just like her. I mean, looked just like her. And so they had this guy and he would lip sync for about 2 minutes while she's really changing clothes. And she would go to this thing, he would come out the other side in a different outfit and everybody thought it was Cher. I mean, I'm two feet from her and I thought it was Cher. So it's just a crazy story but I took an 8 by 10 of this guy and I would take it home and my friends go, she's really pretty good looking. Oh my God. Yeah, that's a guy. I just want you to know that's a guy.

**David:** That is fantastic, oh my goodness. That's terrific. Well we're gonna turn this into a three part series apparently, talking about Andy's career, the journey he's taking and his willingness to pivot from one thing to another, the flexibility that it takes. So join us next week when, and Andy we have to get to you as an author.

**Andy:** Yeah, we'll get serious next week. We'll cry and everything.

**David:** Alright, well join us again next week as we continue to dive into this. And please, again, if you want to jump into this conversation, send us an email to [intheloop@andyandrews.com](mailto:intheloop@andyandrews.com) or call and leave a voicemail, 1800 726 2639, tell us your name and where you're calling from and your question. And we'll get to those in a future episode. Alright Andy we will talk to you next week.

**Andy:** Thank you buddy, see you then.

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