

Murphy James  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
April 9, 1983<sup>25</sup>

Dear Mr. James:

My nightclub appearance in Las Vegas 1954 was a one-time thing. The experience was a typical show business story. In that period Las Vegas had just burst out in its search for well-known names and of course Hollywood was a natural source.

At the same time Hollywood was in the doldrums. The government consent decree forcing studios to divest themselves of theatre ownership had slowed production down to a minimum. I had finally freed myself from a studio contract after 13 years and was freelancing. My agent (MCA) was pressing me to do a nightclub show even though I do not sing or dance. I kept on saying no.

Then one day they asked me to at least meet with them and talk about it. In the meeting that followed I made my usual case that I didn't sing or dance and asked what could I do in a nightclub? Their response was, "you do a lot of benefits don't you?" Well the answer to that was of course yes, because it was true of everyone in pictures. They pointed out that my "benefit routine" was usually as MC; that I would do a humorous monologue and then introduce others.

This was what they had in mind with a slight variation. My act would be "Ronald Reagan Presents." We would pick a couple of good acts and then material would be written calling for me to wind up the show in a routine with the feature act—in this case the Continentals. I was amazed at the kind of money they said could be earned in this setup.

We were booked for two weeks at the New Frontier and the show was a great success with a sellout every night. We had really selected top acts.

I learned that success is treated differently in Las Vegas. Opening night we received such an ovation that we responded with several encores. The next morning I was ushered into a management meeting where I was told to shorten the show and no more encores. I was told how much it cost the casino for every minute we kept the customers away from the gaming tables.

I did enjoy the experience and we did receive offers from top spots across the country but I didn't think it was what I wanted to do so my nightclub career was wrapped up in that two-week booking.

I hope this is of some use to you.

Sincerely,  
Ronald Reagan

*Later, in 1954, Reagan signed up with General Electric to be the "program supervisor" of their new Sunday-night television series, called the General Electric Theater. The initial program was thirteen half-hour dramas. When Reagan was not producing shows he made personal appearances at GE factories across the United States. The television shows began on September 26, 1954.*

## Personal letter of

President Ronald Reagan to

Murphy James

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In:

Santonio Sunday Express News, Dallas  
Times Herald, St. Petersburg Times,

The letter was handwritten on Air Force One  
as the President Traveled from California to  
Washington, DC