

Skaneateles ham radio operator aids journalist in Africa



ABC journalist Edward P. Morgan from an interview he conducted with Eleanor Roosevelt in 1953. (Youtube)

Edward Paddock Morgan was a prominent journalist who reported for newspapers and television and radio services like PBS, ABC and CBS. He co-anchored ABC's television coverage of John F. Kennedy's assassination and presidential nominating conventions. He also sat on the press panel at the second debate between Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960.



U.S. Navy Chief Petty Officer Audrey Garret uses a ham radio at

Williams Air Operating Facility during the winter of 1956. *Courtesy of Wikipedia*

He might be most famous for his coverage of the collision of the ocean liners S.S. Andrea Doria and S.S. Stockholm off the coast of Massachusetts for ABC Radio. His 14-year-old daughter had been aboard the Andrea Doria and was presumed dead, but Morgan continued to cover the event, never telling listeners about his own personal tragedy. The next day the girl was discovered aboard the Stockholm; the impact catapulting her from her cabin to the other ship's deck. She suffered only a broken arm, and was dubbed "miracle girl" by the media. Morgan would win many honors throughout his career, including the DuPont and the Peabody. His New York Times [obituary](#) in 1993 said his personal credo was "to be as fair as possible but as critical as possible."

While covering Vice President [Richard Nixon's](#) goodwill tour of Africa in March of 1957, Morgan would have to rely on a ham radio operator in Skaneateles to get his report to his listeners. Every day during the tour, Morgan would contact the ABC home station in New York City at a certain time to record his broadcast, which would air nationwide at 7 p.m. It aired locally on WFBL. The time came and went on March 7, 1957 with no word from Morgan. He was, according to the Post-Standard, "battling 40 miles of narrow jungle road from an airport to Monrovia, Liberia." Arriving late, he discovered ABC had given up on him and cut off the line. Morgan rushed to an amateur radio set and called "CQ" in New York, a signal for any amateur station to answer. The call was not heard in New York, but was picked up by Fred Harder, of East Lake Road, Skaneateles. Harder offered to contact New York for the "despairing" Morgan. He put out the message that Morgan would be ready to record in four minutes. The monitor was switched on and Morgan dictated his report. The broadcast was heard by the nation as scheduled. Harder, who had been a ham radio enthusiast for 35 years, told the Post-Standard that his "exchange with Morgan was among the most exciting events he's handled."