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James Sutorius about The Andros Targets

James Sutorius '67
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Radio Interview with James Sutorius,
January 31st, 1977

Steve Vogel: Well, if you're watching television tonight, you might want to make a special note to watch a new show making its premiere on CBS tonight, because the star of that show- it's- it's a drama. The star of the show has some pretty firm McLean County roots. James Sutorius graduated from Illinois Wesleyan about ten years ago from Wesleyan's drama school, and I have a special interest in the program because Jim was my next door neighbor at what was then Franklin Hall on the Wesleyan campus for- for two years, and we've convinced Jim to- to take a few minutes out of his precious lunch hour on the set of CBS in New York this afternoon to talk about his program which- which debuts tonight on CBS. Jim, I think a lot of people who are regular drama goers at McPherson Theater on the Wesleyan campus will remember you very well for your portrayal of Hamlet about ten years ago.

James Sutorius: Yes, well, that was certainly very exciting. Seems like a long time ago now. I guess it was about ten years ago now, wasn't it?

Vogel: Did you graduate from Wesleyan in '67?

Sutorius: '67, yes.

Vogel: That's what I was thinking.

Sutorius: That would have been about ten years ago.

Vogel: Yeah.

Sutorius: That certainly would be a- sort of a beginning of the whole thing, and the Hamlet experience- some of you may know, but I played Hamlet again about two years ago, so it was great to have had that initial experience at Wesleyan doing Hamlet.

Vogel: Well, you were always identified here as kind of a Shakespearean type actor.

Sutorius: Yeah. Well, it's always been my love, Steve, and I've never stopped loving it and I've never stopped doing it, and I guess I was trained classically. After I left Wesleyan, I went onto a professional school for two years in Michigan, which was definitely sort of classical training, and so it's sort funny now to be doing TV, which I guess is as far away from classical.

Vogel: Well now, we saw you on the Bob Crane Show.

Sutorius: Yes. That's right. That was about two years ago, yeah. I had a running part on that. I was on for about four or five lines every week.

Vogel: I was...I was really kind of- it's kind of strange to see you in that role because I really don't know how to exactly describe it, but it was not unlike The Fonz really.

Sutorius: Yeah, some other people said that too. I never thought of that actually when I- when I did it. But some other people mentioned the similarity to it. I had never really consciously thought of that. I guess I- well, I played sort of a tough kid, so I guess that's where-

Vogel: Yeah.

Sutorius: -it came from.

Vogel: Well, tell us- first of all, I'm not sure we've even mentioned the name of your new show.

Sutorius: Of course, tonight, this is it, the premiere. Well, it's called *The Andros Targets* and I play Mike Andros, and he's an investigative reporter in New York, which one of the really exciting things about doing the whole series is shooting it in New York, which is great for me. I live here, and I love New York, and we get to show the elements of the weather. It gets so cold here now, you know, and we're outside in the streets freezing. It's wonderful from that aspect, plus all the people we get to use in New York, the talent we can tap-

Vogel: Sure.

Sutorius: Just- just tremendous, tremendous actors.

Vogel: Now, you say you portray an investigative reporter for I- a New York newspaper:

Sutorius: Yes, called *The New York Forum*.

Vogel: Which is I guess like *The New York Times*.

Sutorius: Yes, it is. Yeah, it's like *The New York Times*, and I just go after, you know, sort of the big- you know, the bigwigs in town, be it mob or political or religious, or whatever. I try and, you know, expose these people and the- and the corruption that they're involved with.

Vogel: Now, an investigative reporter's life isn't all that glamorous. I mean, you spend a lot of time- like cops start chasing people down with their cars and guns. You spend, or at least a real

investigative reporter spends a lot of time looking through newspaper clippings and court documents.

Sutorius: Yes, exactly. And we don't- we don't deal with that very much because on TV that would not be terribly exciting to have me looking through files for thirty minutes. [Vogel laughs] But they do do that actually. But they have me do out on the street because they have sources that they talk to, and these sources who are people who they go to and who they trust explicitly and the source trusts me and get information from them, and there's a lot of legwork I do in just putting the pieces together. And then- I mean, the thing with an investigative reporter is that all he does is get the ball rolling. All he does is write that first story.

Vogel: Right.

Sutorius: And from there- I mean, I don't put anybody in jail, you know. I don't put them behind bars, but I just simply expose them in print and then it's from there that- that they're indicted or whatever.

Vogel: There have been other TV shows about crusading newspeople which have not been real successful, but I guess *All The President's Men* may have started the ball rolling.

Sutorius: Well, that's what I'm hoping, with all the hoopla with the Academy Awards coming up, and I'm sure *All the President's Men* will- will be nominated of course, maybe win. Hopefully this will generate interest in that again, and- and help our series, and that would be so exciting to have- have a show and it would be a hit and go on for a year or so.

Vogel: Well, we're talking with James Sutorius, Illinois Wesleyan University graduate of about ten years ago who's the star of a new CBS series that opening tonight on the tube, *The Andros Targets*. Jim, how did you- how did you get this role?

Sutorius: Well, it was just sheer auditioning. I was doing an off-Broadway show, Steve, and they happened to see me and I went in there and I auditioned for six days. I tested twice, and they put me through, you know, the total- through the mill, through the grind with this thing. But- but the thing that I'm so happy about is that they went with an unknown. They could have gone with a- an established television name for the series, but the network- and I really admire this, went with somebody who is really not known to the general public, and I think that's a step in the right direction. But it was the normal auditioning process of- I guess they saw hundreds of people, and decided on me.

Vogel: That's terrific.

Sutorius: Yeah. Again, it's the first- I've never done anything like it before and it's brand new to me. I mean- I mean, I've done some TV shows before. I've done some *Kojak* and some *Cannon* and I should say *The Bob Crane Show*, but it's the first sort of major in terms of TV. I mean, to have your own series is-

Vogel: Terrific.

Sutorius: -hard to comprehend, at moments, when I'm at home...

Vogel: How did you get into the role? Have you spent some time with newsmen and all that?

Sutorius: I did. Yeah, I did. It's based on a reporter named Nick- Nicholas Gage. Nick Gage is an investigative reporter for *The New York Times*, and the whole series is loosely based on him.

Vogel: Uh-huh.

Sutorius: So I spent a lot of time with him and I did some research in the library and I just spent time at *The Times* and that sort of thing.

Vogel: Now, the newsrooms we'll see in *The Andros Targets*, is that a set or is it an actual newsroom?

Sutorius: It's a set, but an exact replica of *The New York Times*.

Vogel: Uh-huh.

Sutorius: Yeah. It is a set, but we have a studio here in New York and- and we use that.

Vogel: How many- how many actual shows have you filmed by now?

Sutorius: We've done- counting the pilot, which the pilot was done in September, we've now done five. We're finishing up the fifth one today and tomorrow morning.

Vogel: And what will- what will their premiere deal with?

Sutorius: The premiere deals with pornography. It deals with me exposing a corporation that is a front for pornography, and they're using all the stockholder's money to run this pornographic ring, and so I expose them for that in the initial one. We deal with subjects that are sort of topical, a Jimmy Hoffa type story where a labor leader disappears, a religious one, sort of a take

off on the Reverend Moon- that's a two-parter actually, where the kids are following this Reverend, and he's leading them way astray.

Vogel: Sounds like the scripts are pretty timely then.

Sutorius: Well, we are trying to do that, yes. We are trying to get them timely. There's one that dealt with the investigative reporter Don Bolles, who was killed in Arizona.

Vogel: Yeah.

Sutorius: His car was blown up, and he was, you know. And we're doing one- I mean, you can't get right in and do the exact story, just something around close to that, and so we're trying to stay timely and topical, yeah. I think it's very important that we do that.

Vogel: Eight o'clock tonight, *The Andros Targets* I guess on channels 3 and 31 here in central Illinois, and James Sutorius, an Illinois Wesleyan graduate. Jim, you're from the- from the Wheaton area, is that right?

Sutorius: I am, yes. Wheaton, Illinois, right north of Bloomington, yeah.

Vogel: Well, you can be sure that I'll be watching, and you can expect people like Marie Robinson and John Thicke on the Wesleyan campus-

Sutorius: Well, I hope they are, and I'd love to see those people again, and please tell them hello for me, or if they're listening hello right now, 'cause they're- I've never been back to the campus, and I'd love to get back and see my friends. It's been so long. I might again someday.

Vogel: Well, I'm sure you'll be welcomed, and also if you do have some time, you can stop by my program. I'd love to chat in person, perhaps answer some questions from the listeners.

Sutorius: I'd love to Steve.

Vogel: Okay. James Sutorius, good luck. I hope the series runs as long as you want it to.

Sutorius: Well, I hope that too.

Vogel: Thanks a lot. Buh-bye.

Sutorius: Bye.