

SHOOTING STRAIGHT

GUNS, GAYS, GOD, AND GEORGE CLOONEY



PIERS MORGAN

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About the Book

Despite many wanting him to fail, Piers Morgan took over from US TV legend Larry King at CNN in 2010 and went on to cover some of the most shocking news events in recent US history, such as the killing of Osama bin Laden, the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy and horrific shooting rampages including the Newtown school massacre.

In *Shooting Straight* Piers shares the diaries that he kept in this rollercoaster period of his life.

Thrown right into the maelstrom of the US media, Piers finds himself rubbing shoulders with everyone from Mel Gibson and Charlie Sheen to the US president himself. Not to mention Oprah, Rod Stewart, Meryl Streep, Woody Allen, Dustin Hoffman, Janet Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Barbra Streisand, Goldie Hawn, the Dalai Lama and Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

As Piers gets more and more drawn into commenting on American culture, one issue – gun control – provokes the most incredible and heart-rending response of all, dividing the country dramatically. And, as usual, Piers is in the thick of it.

About the Author

Piers Morgan worked as a gossip columnist for the *Sun* before going on to edit the *News of the World* and then the *Daily Mirror*, until he was sacked in 2004 when he published photos of British soldiers apparently abusing Iraqi prisoners of war. He has since presented a number of TV shows – including *The Dark Side of Fame*, *You Can't Fire Me, I'm Famous* for BBC1 and *Britain's Got Talent* for ITV – and written for *GQ*. He shot to fame in the US as a judge on the top-rated *America's Got Talent* and by winning Donald Trump's inaugural series of *Celebrity Apprentice*. He currently hosts a primetime talk show in America, *Piers Morgan Live*, and the UK chat show *Piers Morgan's Life Stories* on ITV, as well as writing a weekly column for the *Mail on Sunday's EVENT* magazine.

SHOOTING STRAIGHT

PIERS
MORGAN

Guns, Gays, God,
and George Clooney



EBURY
PRESS

For Spencer, Stanley, Bertie and Elise.

FOREWORD

On the Saturday morning of 8 January 2011, congresswoman Gabby Giffords was holding a meet-and-greet with her constituents in the car park of a supermarket in Tucson, Arizona. Without warning, one of the men standing in a queue to talk to her rushed forward, came up to the table where she was sitting, put a gun to her head, and pulled the trigger. Pleased with himself and the ease with which he was able to shoot a member of Congress, he decided, for good measure, to shoot another eighteen people, killing six of them, including a nine-year-old girl. Giffords, miraculously, lived.

In the days and weeks that followed, there was a lot of national mourning and hand-wringing and pronouncements about the ‘strength of the American spirit to rise above such tragedies’ and carry on. But there were no calls by political leaders to enact stricter gun laws and no such bills were proposed or introduced. Even President Obama remained silent about taking any measures, the kind of which might have prevented the bloodletting in Tucson.

It was in this environment, just one week later, that the British journalist and TV personality Piers Morgan debuted his new nightly chat show on CNN. Entitled *Piers Morgan Tonight*, he took over the 9 p.m. time slot from the legendary Larry King on the granddaddy of the cable news channels. Although he had served as the editor of numerous British tabloids and had written several books, the American public only knew Piers Morgan as the winner on Donald Trump’s *Celebrity Apprentice* and as a judge on *America’s Got Talent*. What no one saw coming was that the loudest, clearest, most passionate voice against the two other things Americans had talent for – gun violence and mass shootings – was about to unleash his rage against this senseless barbarity in a way that would make everyone sit up and take notice.

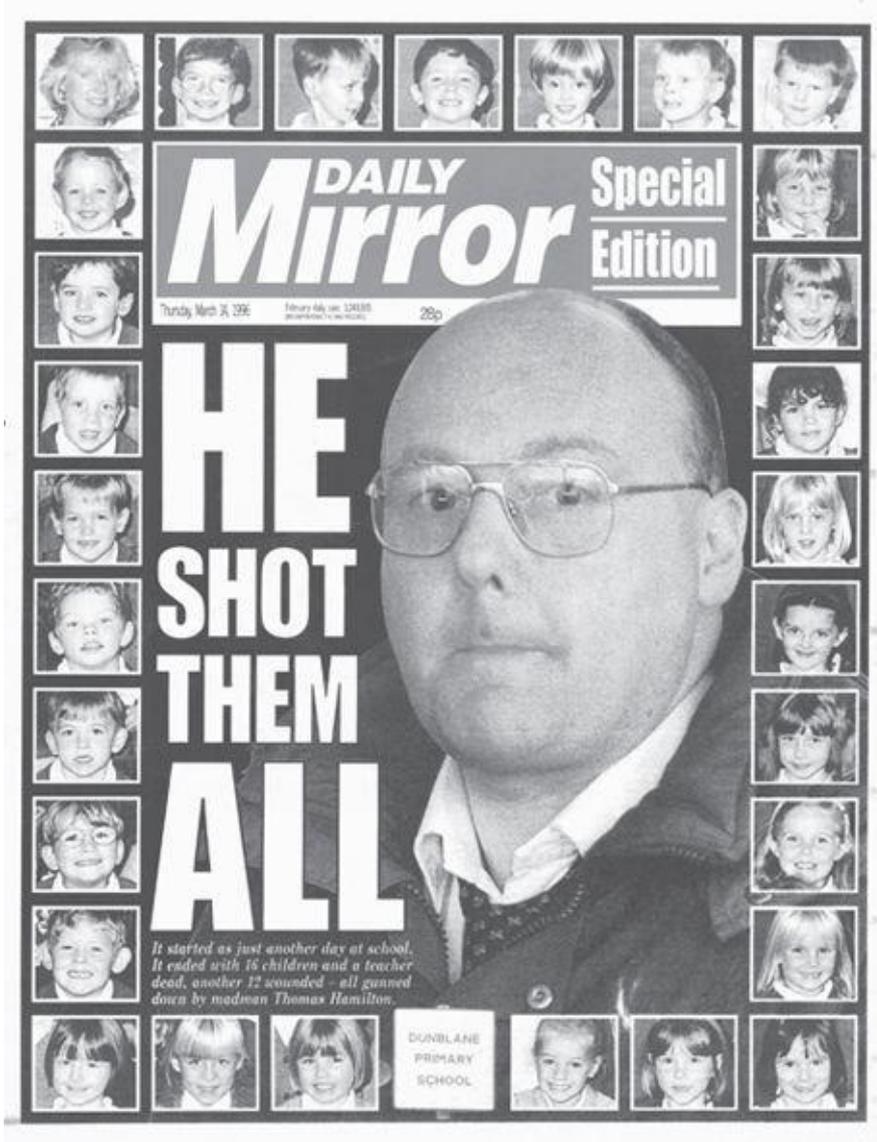
For the following two-plus years, Piers Morgan has, week after week (and sometimes night after night) taken on the National Rifle Association, the United States Congress and numerous gun lovers, gun nuts and gun evangelists. On one infamous show, he confronted – in his polite but unforgiving English way – the popular radio host and defender of the Second Amendment, Alex Jones. Jones, offended by the suggestion that perhaps America had a problem, began screaming at Morgan and looked as if he were about to pick up his stool and clobber this ‘foreigner’ with it (I assume he couldn’t have shot him, as Time Warner security won’t allow six-shooters or gunfights in their New York headquarters).

Angry gun owners, alarmed at the success Morgan was having in reaching millions of Americans (in part, by educating them on how his native Britain had significantly reduced gun violence and virtually eliminated mass shootings after a massacre that took place in 1996 in a school gymnasium in Dunblane, Scotland), began a campaign to remove Morgan – not just from the airwaves, but from the US itself. A petition was launched on the White House website to have Morgan ‘deported’. Over one hundred

thousand Americans pleaded with the President to put Piers Morgan on the next boat back to England. Obama was actually forced to respond to the outcry and did so by reminding the public that this alien, Mr. Morgan, enjoyed the same free speech rights as us gun-toting Americans.

Sadly, the gun violence and mass shootings continue. But after months of relentless badgering and rallying Americans to respond to this from our better side, public opinion has shifted (nearly 90 per cent are now in favour of some form of stricter gun laws) and the President sent a bill to Congress to require background checks at gun shows. It failed. But that hasn't stopped Piers Morgan from using his nightly bully pulpit to rail against this madness – and (thankfully) it doesn't look like he's going to give up and return home for tea any time soon.

Michael Moore
August 2013



The front page of the *Daily Mirror* after the Dunblane school shooting massacre in 1996 that changed Britain's gun laws for ever.

PROLOGUE

It was a quiet morning at the offices of the *Daily Mirror* in East London on Wednesday, 13 March 1996.

I had been Editor-in-Chief of Britain's second biggest selling newspaper for four months.

Then, just after 10 a.m., the newsdesk alerted me to a shooting incident in a small town called Dunblane in Scotland.

I turned on the television to see anguished parents sprinting towards the gates of a local primary school, and it soon became apparent that this was a terrible atrocity.

An unemployed man named Thomas Hamilton had walked into Dunblane primary school armed with two 9mm Browning HP pistols, two Smith & Wesson M19 .357 Magnum revolver handguns, and 743 rounds of ammunition.

All legally purchased.

Hamilton opened fire on a class of twenty-nine five- and six-year-old children, killing sixteen of them, and their teacher, Gwen Mayor, and wounding all but one of the rest.

He then shot himself dead.

My eldest son Spencer was just three years old at the time, and the horror of what had happened to so many innocent kids just a little bit bigger than him moved me to tears and rage. A huge national debate about guns began in Britain in the aftermath of the shooting, and the *Daily Mirror* was at the centre of it. I was determined that something meaningful would be done to try and prevent anything like this from happening again. The *Mirror* campaigned vigorously, and relentlessly, for new gun control legislation.

Eighteen months later, the British government, under enormous pressure from both the media and an almost unanimously united public, passed a ban on the private ownership of all handguns, and all small-bore pistols – giving the British some of the toughest gun laws in the world. All fully automatic guns are banned too, as are all semi-automatic centrefire rifles. To even own a shotgun or rifle for hunting and sport shooting requires extensive background checks and paperwork.

Initially, the new laws made little impact. In fact, gun-related crime rose, peaking at 24,094 offences in 2003/4. So the government made them even tougher – introducing a minimum five-year prison sentence on anyone caught in possession of a handgun. And it introduced an amnesty allowing citizens to give their guns in to police.

Since then, the number has fallen each year. In 2010/11, there were 11,227 gun-related offences, 53 per cent below that peak number seven years previously.

The gun murder rate, meanwhile, has stayed between just thirty to fifty deaths a year, one of the lowest rates per capita of any industrialised country.

'What we have in the UK now are significantly lower levels of gun crime, levels

that continue to fall,' Andy Marsh, firearms director at Britain's Association of Chief Police Officers told the *Boston Globe* in February 2013. 'People say you can't unwind hundreds of years of gun history and culture [in America], but here in the UK, we've learned from our tragedies and taken steps to reduce the likelihood of them ever happening again.'

There hasn't been a single school shooting in Britain since Dunblane.

When I came to America, I had no intention of becoming a public advocate for gun control. I simply wanted to be a successful television personality and, later, a good news anchor. Yet my mission regarding guns would repeat itself here, as if inexorable, and despite the ludicrous additional obstacle of being a foreigner questioning American constitutional rights. This is the story of how it happened.



The King and I. My first meeting ever with Larry King, on the day I was announced as his replacement at CNN.

CHAPTER 1

TUESDAY, 15 JUNE 2010

This is the biggest moment of my career.

I ran two British national newspapers for eleven years, judged TV talent shows on both sides of the Atlantic, won Donald Trump's inaugural *Celebrity Apprentice*, and currently host Britain's most popular TV interview show. But right now, all of this seems like chicken feed compared to what I may be about to do – replace the great Larry King at CNN in America.

Larry's not just a television legend. He's arguably the most famous man in small-screen history.

For twenty-five years, he's anchored the eponymous *Larry King Live* 9 p.m. hour at Cable News Network – hosting more than seven thousand shows, and conducting tens of thousands of interviews.

But Larry's now seventy-seven, his ratings have been slipping for the last few years, and the critics have been gnawing viciously at his braces.

'It's time to think the unthinkable!' they cry. 'Larry should retire!'

But only I, and a very select number of people, know that decision has already been made.

Because I've been offered his job.

After a series of meetings and conversations with CNN executives since April, they've concluded I'm the right man to step into the King's shoes.

There's just one problem.

I'm contracted to NBC for *America's Got Talent* for two more years, and the network's President, Jeff Zucker, is refusing to let me go.

Hardly surprising, really, given that AGT is one of NBC's biggest hits, and CNN is a direct rival to its cable channel, MSNBC.

In an effort to try and persuade him, I sat down two days ago and wrote him this email:

Dear Jeff,

When we sat together chatting in the *Today Show* makeup room back in January, I felt we were kindred spirits. Further investigation confirms this:

Jeff Zucker – Born April 9, 1965.

Piers Morgan – Born March 30, 1965.

JZ Captain of North Miami Senior High School tennis team.

PM Captain of Cumnor House Preparatory School cricket team.

JZ Reporter for *Miami Herald* (Florida).

PM Reporter for *Sutton Herald* (Surrey).

JZ President of senior class, ran with slogan: 'The little man with the big ideas.'

- PM Campaigned for student union, with slogan: ‘Ambition knows no bounds.’
- JZ Made executive producer of *Today Show* at twenty-six – the most watched morning TV programme in America.
- PM Made editor of *News of the World* at twenty-eight – the most read newspaper in the UK.
- JZ Made president of NBC Entertainment.
- PM Made editor-in-chief of the *Daily Mirror*.
- JZ One marriage, three sons and a daughter.
- PM One marriage (soon to be two), three sons, hoping to add a daughter.
- JZ Signed Donald Trump to host *The Apprentice*.
- PM Signed by Donald Trump to win *The Celebrity Apprentice*.
- JZ Survived colon cancer.
- PM Survived falling off a Segway. (OK, you win here, though I did break five ribs and collapse a lung, and it’s ten times more embarrassing.)

After beating cancer, you said: ‘It put my life into perspective. I want to win and win honourably. But heck, it’s only television. I still want to win, but I don’t want to kill somebody.’

You’re now doing your dream job.

I now want to do mine.

Please don’t kill me, please win honourably by letting me pursue the career move I have spent my entire life striving to reach, and know that you were the man that made it happen.

I’m a journalist at heart, not a judge of piano-playing pigs – however fun and mutually prosperous that has been.

He emailed straight back. ‘Come and see me to discuss your future.’

So I boarded a flight from London yesterday morning, landed at 8 p.m. in New York, and had a fitful night’s sleep.

At midday today, I stumbled down to gulp oceans of wake-up coffee at the London hotel with my manager, John Ferriter.

He was bullish about the meeting with Zucker in two hours.

‘I don’t think he’d fly you over here just to say no. But he’s going to want you to dance for your dinner. How are you feeling?’

‘Nervous, but excited.’

‘That’s the right frame of mind. This meeting will change your life.’

We looked at each other, and both chuckled at the sheer absurdity of what was happening.

Then John’s phone vibrated, and he took the call.

‘Yes ... OK ... I’m very sorry to hear that ...’

His face looked suddenly intense and very serious.

‘No, I understand ... OK ... got it ... Thank you for letting me know.’

Oh no. It sounded like Zucker had cancelled the meeting.

‘What was that?’

‘It’s nothing, don’t worry about it.’

‘The meeting’s still on?’

‘It’s still on.’

I could tell something was wrong.

‘Is everything OK?’

John stared at me for a few seconds, considering whether to tell me.

‘No. It’s not. Your father’s had a stroke.’

‘WHAT?’

‘That was Tracey [my UK personal assistant] and she just took a call from your mother. Your father’s in hospital, but he’s OK. Your mother didn’t want you to know until after the meeting. But I think you should know now, and if you want to go straight to the airport, then that’s what you should do. This meeting is not as important as your father’s health.’

I called Mum, who was calm but firm.

‘Dad’s OK. It was a scary few hours, but he’s stable, and the doctors are happy with his condition. I want you to go to the meeting. There’s nothing you can do.’

It was now 1 p.m., the meeting was at 2 p.m., and my flight home was around 7 p.m.

‘Mum, forget the meeting. I’m going to try and get an earlier flight and come home now.’

‘No. You’re not to do that! An hour isn’t going to make any difference. Dad would want you to go to the meeting. And I want you to go to the meeting.’

This was a typical reaction from a woman who has always, without a single exception, put the interests of her children before her own.

I hung up and sat back in the chair, my head now swirling with shock and adrenaline.

‘If you want to go to the airport, I’ll postpone the meeting right now,’ John said. ‘Jeff will understand, better than most. He’s survived cancer; nobody has to tell him about priorities in life.’

‘My mother wants me to take the meeting,’ I said. ‘She’s adamant.’

‘Then take the meeting, if you think you’ll be OK.’

‘Let’s go.’

John and I walked the six blocks down to NBC’s headquarters at 30 Rock Center in midtown Manhattan.

It was a warm, sunny day, and the streets were teeming with shoppers, tourists and businesspeople grabbing lunch.

The nerves and excitement I’d felt earlier in the day were now replaced by a sickening, fearful jolt in my stomach.

But the one thing I’d always been able to do as a newspaper editor was divorce my personal emotions from work – whatever was going on.

I had the same kind of ‘show-must-go-on’ mentality that I guess actors use.

As we walked, I reflected on my parents.

My natural father, an Irish dentist from Galway called Eamon Vincent O’Meara, died when I was eleven months old of an ulcer-related condition.

It would be easily treatable today, but in the sixties it could be a killer.

He was just thirty-two, and my mother was twenty-one and five months pregnant with my brother Jeremy.

Glynne Pughe-Morgan, a Welshman, met and married Mum a few years later, when Jeremy and I were still small boys.

He was in his mid-twenties, and the magnitude of what he took on back then has grown with me ever since I’ve had my own children.

He’s always been Dad to me. And, like my mother, he has selflessly devoted his life to working ridiculously hard so his large family can prosper.

He's now sixty-nine, and this is the first time in his life he's been seriously ill. And I'm five thousand miles away in New York, on my way to a bloody business meeting.

Every part of me is screaming, 'Go to the airport, try and get an earlier flight.' But at the same time, I know I'm flying anyway in five hours, and I also know that Mum's right – Dad would want me to go to this meeting.

We arrived at NBC and were directed up to Jeff Zucker's palatial office.

John could tell I was in a strange place emotionally.

'You sure you want to do this?'

'I'll be fine in there, don't worry,' I replied.

The meeting began with Zucker asking a perfectly reasonable question: 'Give me one good reason why I should let one of my prime-time stars work for a rival network, and in particular one that we've just overtaken in the ratings.'

MSNBC has indeed recently surpassed CNN to become number two in cable news.

To which I argued, with what I thought was reasonable logic, that it could only enhance my credibility as a talent show judge if I was hosting a nightly news show at CNN.

The meeting ended half an hour later with Zucker shaking my hand and saying he would let me go to CNN.

But only on the condition I continued to do *America's Got Talent* as well. And only after he'd also negotiated a hefty price tag for my services.

(I was later told by an NBC executive that I was traded for the rights to buy seven seasons of *Law and Order*, something NBC had been trying to wrestle off Turner Broadcasting – CNN's parent company – for some time.)

'Thank you,' I said as I left.

'I'm not in the business of preventing people from living their dreams,' he said, smiling.

John and I walked back outside. What should have been a moment of wild celebration was replaced instead with two relieved grins and a firm handshake.

'Great meeting,' said John. 'Now go see your dad.'

I called Mum again, and she said he was sleeping and comfortable.

'I land at 6.30 a.m.,' I said, 'and I'll go straight from Heathrow to the hospital.'

I got to JFK, boarded the plane, drank a large whisky, took a sleeping pill, and looked out of the window – my head still swirling.

WEDNESDAY, 16 JUNE 2010

Got to the hospital around 9 a.m. and went to find Dad.

He looks very frail and exhausted. His condition deteriorated slightly overnight.

He's lost the use of his right arm and is slurring his words. But the doctors are still confident he'll make a good recovery if he does all the rehab they've laid down for him.

I can tell it's been a terrifying experience, and I know he'll be worrying himself sick about his one-man, successful food distribution business.

'How did your meeting go?' he asked.

I was amazed he even remembered.

'It was good. They're going to let me do the CNN job.'

'Good, good.'

Dad tried to smile, but I told him not to waste energy talking about work stuff.

‘Just focus on getting better.’

He nodded. Dad’s a very strong guy, physically and mentally. He’ll come through this. I’ve got no doubt about that.

But I’m getting married in two weeks, and I don’t think there’s any chance of him attending the wedding now.

THURSDAY, 17 JUNE 2010

Newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic have been running rumours about me joining CNN.

Toby Young, author of a very funny book, *The Sound of No Hands Clapping*, about his own failed exploits as a screenwriter in Hollywood, emailed: ‘In case you haven’t heard this already, I pass on Larry King’s own formula for success on television [originally imparted by him to Tucker Carlson]: “The trick is to care, but not too much. Give a shit – but not really.”’

THURSDAY, 24 JUNE 2010

Celia and I were married today.

We’ve been together for four and a half years.

I knew she was the one for me when I made a speech at a big magazine dinner in London soon after we first met. I tanked spectacularly and saw that she was the only one in the room laughing at my terrible jokes.

‘I didn’t find you funny,’ she explained afterwards. ‘I found the fact you were being booed funny.’

My youngest brother Rupert was my best man, and we shared a room together last night.

‘Just wake me up on time, and don’t forget the rings,’ I commanded.

I didn’t get to sleep until 2 a.m.

At 3 a.m., Rupert’s mobile exploded into full, noisy alarm mode.

‘Damn, must have set it to the wrong time,’ he mumbled. ‘Sorry.’

I didn’t get back to sleep.

But hey, it was a beautiful, hot day, and I was marrying a beautiful, hot woman.

And at least he remembered the rings.

We tried everything in our power to keep it all a complete secret – choosing a tiny chapel in the middle of a large remote field in the Oxfordshire countryside, only inviting fifty-six of our closest friends and family, and employing a small team of Jeremy’s former army colleagues, all recently retired from covert ops in the army, to patrol the perimeter.

He himself sadly couldn’t make it as he’s still on active service in Afghanistan with his Regiment, The Royal Welsh.

At 12.45 p.m., I was standing outside the chapel with the Vicar (he was a Church of England minister, but permitted us to have a Catholic blessing) and a helicopter buzzed overhead.

When it came around for the third time, I laughed.

‘Look up and wave, Reverend,’ I said.

‘Oh? Why?’

‘Because you’re probably live on American TV right now ...’

He looked horrified, and instantly began to apologise for something that obviously had nothing to do with him.

But I enjoyed the irony: the former tabloid editor utterly incapable of keeping even his own wedding from the intrusive glare of the media lens.

After a beautiful service, we drove the mile to a charming local village pub for the reception, and were met in almost every single hedgerow along the route by photographers leaping out of bushes and trees.

I even recognised one of them as a guy I used to employ in my tabloid days.

‘For old times’ sake, Piers?’ he yelled.

After that, they pretty much left us alone, which was good of them.

I probably wouldn’t have been so generous in my ‘old times’.

There were many special moments during a very special day.

Not least was having the boys – Spencer, sixteen, Stanley, thirteen, and Bertie, ten – as my ushers. Their mother, Marion, and I were finally divorced last year, though we actually separated nearly a decade ago. Despite all that upheaval, they’ve remained my best friends.

Dad made it, miraculously. His right arm was in a sling, and he was barely able to walk or speak properly, but he made it. Pretty extraordinary given the state he was in twelve days ago.

SUNDAY, 27 JUNE 2010

We’ve been on our honeymoon for three days now, and I’ve spent much of it on the phone with John, who’s now trying to close the very complicated contractual negotiations.

Celia’s been remarkably patient – she knows what a big deal this CNN thing is – but even her reservoirs of tolerance burst this afternoon.

‘Tell Celia I said hi,’ said John, at the end of our fourth call of the day.

‘John says hi,’ I repeated.

‘I’d rather he said goodbye,’ she replied.

‘John, only call again if you have definitive news,’ I pleaded, ‘or I’ll be divorced before I start at CNN.’

TUESDAY, 29 JUNE 2010

John called at 4 p.m.

‘Larry’s quit.’

I raced to my laptop to Google the news. And it was true.

‘I talked to the guys here at CNN and I told them I would like to end *Larry King Live* this fall,’ Larry wrote on his blog. ‘And CNN has graciously accepted, giving me more time for my wife and I to get to the kids’ Little League games.’

He continued: ‘I’ll still be a part of the CNN family, hosting several Larry King specials on major national and international subjects. With this chapter closing, I’m looking forward to the future and what my next chapter will bring, but for now it’s time to hang up my nightly suspenders.’

Asked in a subsequent interview to explain the secret of his success, he said: ‘I left my ego at the door. I never learned a thing while I was talking. That would be my

motto.’

As for whom he’d like to replace him, Larry – who had obviously heard all the rumours about me, and almost certainly knew I’d now been offered his job – replied, ‘If it was up to me, Ryan Seacrest.’

There can be only one reason that Larry’s put out this announcement – CNN must have told him that I’m coming in. And that means their negotiations with NBC must be near to conclusion.

But I’ve learned to never take anything for granted in the American TV business.

Until the ink is on that contract, there will be considerable reason for uncertainty. And even then, I’d want it tested by forensic scientists. I emailed John. ‘If you were a betting man, would you say this means I’ve got the gig?’

He replied: ‘Let me tell you a story about betting. President Calvin Coolidge, a man of few words, was at a Washington, D.C. party. Five prominent businessmen approached a rather buxom young lady and bet her that she couldn’t get the president to say more than two words.

‘She approached him and said, “Mr President, those men have bet me twenty dollars that I can’t get you to say more than two words.” Coolidge stared at her breasts, then looked up, smiled and said: “You lose.”’

I had no idea what this meant with regard to my chances of replacing Larry King, but it did make me laugh.

TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2010

NBC asked me to interview Susan Boyle for their *Today Show*, as we’re both in London.

I was a judge on *Britain’s Got Talent*, alongside Simon Cowell, when we discovered Susan during a long, grimly unproductive audition day in Glasgow, last winter.

The forty-seven-year-old walked out to a cacophony of sneers and jeers, and mocking eye rolls from us prejudging fools on the panel – before raising the roof with a sensational rendition of ‘I Dreamed a Dream’ from *Les Misérables*.

Since then, she’s sold ten million albums – beating Lady Gaga and Rihanna in the last year.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked her if I could audition for a competition she’s running to promote her album.

Entrants just have to record themselves singing ‘Silent Night’.

‘Go on then,’ she urged, ‘let’s hear yer.’

I began to slowly murder the great festive hymn when, after just a few seconds, Susan leaped out of her chair and began frantically shouting, ‘Buzz! Buzz!’ – mimicking the sound of the talent show judges’ buzzers.

I tried again, but this time she shrieked it even louder.

‘Honestly,’ I said, ‘after all I’ve done for you, this is how you treat me?’

‘Piers, you cannae sing,’ she exclaimed.

MONDAY, 26 JULY 2010

One of my favourite speeches in history is Theodore Roosevelt’s address at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1910, which included this passage:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

Roosevelt made that speech on 23 April 1910.

I had my first meeting with CNN on 23 April 2010.

When I told him, John said, ‘That’s the good news. The not so good news is that Richard Nixon then quoted it in his resignation speech.’

FRIDAY, 30 JULY 2010

The news is out.

Jeff Gaspin, NBC’s entertainment chairman – and Zucker’s right-hand man – was asked at the Television Critics Association summer press day this afternoon if NBC would be sharing me with CNN.

‘Yes,’ was his one-word answer.

That’s the first on-the-record confirmation from any of the parties involved.

MONDAY, 9 AUGUST 2010

‘You’re going to need a good personal publicist,’ John announced a week ago.

I’ve never had one before, preferring to use the PR departments on whatever shows I work on. And, of course, relying on my own experience in the media.

But John’s right: this CNN gig is going to be a whole new ball game.

We’ve talked to a few heavyweights in the business, but I’m concerned that they won’t make me their priority.

John, who agrees, suggested a young woman called Meghan McPartland.

She works for Rogers and Cowan, whose offices are in his building.

We met for a drink last night, and I instantly liked her.

She’s smart, quick and hungry.

‘It’s bad news,’ I told her today. ‘You’re hired.’

TUESDAY, 24 AUGUST 2010

Celia’s gone to Saint-Tropez to join her family on an annual trip they make there every August.

Yesterday, she was ‘flashed’ by a revolting pervert as she walked down to our favourite little beach. He was fully naked, and performing what British tabloids like to cryptically refer to as ‘a sex act’ on himself.

I told her she had to report it to the police, but she was reluctant.

‘Knowing French gendarmes, they’ll just shrug and say, “But you were in ze bikini, yes?”’