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Rhoda, America's favorite nice Jewish girl, steps up to the *chuppah*



But as series star Valerie Harper recalls, in true sitcom style the bride had to take the subway before she could walk down the aisle

In spinning Rhoda Morgenstern off from *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* to her own show set in New York, the *Rhoda* producers debated whether they should just pop her on the air, already married, or have the show open with her meeting her future husband, Joe. I think they ended up making the right choice, to allow the audience to watch me meet Joe, get engaged, decide to live together and to have a hilarious wedding shower episode. We took our time, to let the audience in on wanting these two to get married.

The wedding, which was a full hour, became the show's eighth and ninth episodes. I have to say they were my favorites, because the casts of both *Rhoda* and *Mary* were together. The story line was that Phyllis [Cloris Leachman] screws up and forgets to pick me up for the wedding. We shot it on location in New York, and as I ran around the city in a wedding dress, New Yorkers totally did not care.

But the weirdest thing that happened was when we were shooting in a subway station.

There was a tall man, in his mid-30s, really sharp-looking in a tie, white shirt and suit. I guess his briefcase had been stolen, because he was standing with a handkerchief and blood streaming down his face. When I saw him, I said, 'Oh, my God!' and started toward him to help—and the *Rhoda* wardrobe woman straight-armed me, hitting me right below my boobs with her arm, and screamed, 'Don't touch him! We only have the one gown!' Back then, it was just one of those moments that was too New York to be true.

When the episode aired, fans across the country dressed in tuxedos and gowns and had viewing parties. We got wedding gifts—several toasters came in the mail to Rhoda and Joe Girard. That night, even Howard Cosell, who hosted *Monday Night Football* on another network, kept referring to us live on-air, saying things like, 'I wonder how things are over at the wedding' and 'I think the chicken liver is getting rancid.' They were terrible jokes, but we thought it was so cool. I don't know if something like that would happen today."

— Valerie Harper

FULL EPISODES ONLINE

Watch episodes of *Rhoda* free at TV.com, and connect with other fans of classic comedies in the online forums.