

Season 2

Episode 206

October 12, 2001

Call Time: 9:30 am

Wrap Time: 6:45 pm

Set 1: Woody's Bar

Location 1: Dufferin Gate Studios, Etobicoke.

Set 2: Exterior of Liberty Diner

Location 2: The corner of Queen Street West and Crawford Streets, Toronto.



It's dark around me. I can hear noises from behind a wooden wall. It's somewhat warm where I am but it doesn't really bother me. At least that's not what I am thinking about at that moment. In fact, I'm almost numb, blocking out almost everything around me and contemplating the monumental event that is about to occur. I already know this will be the most lightning event that has ever occurred in my life.

I'm standing in a small alcove just outside a studio set with an unassuming unadorned door located in a far corner of Dufferin Gate Studios in Etobicoke, Ontario. With me are seven other guys just standing around, waiting and waiting and waiting. Behind the door, we can hear orders, comments, carpentry type noises, things that definitely would make you think there was a lot going on behind that door.

And here in the middle of this, I'm very quiet and reflecting. I'm excited and nervous, happy and scared, all at the same time. A million things are running through my mind but none of them are truly coming into focus. None of the eight of us are really saying anything to each other. But the others couldn't possibly know or understand what my feelings were at that moment. I was dressed in blue jeans, athletic shoes, a baseball shirt with a "Woody's" logo on it and my face was covered with that black stuff jocks use the cut down the glare when they play.

The seconds are ticking by into minutes. I have dreamt of this moment for over a year. And yet, unbelievable, I was about to experience the realization of possibly the

most important dream I've ever had in my life. For in the next few minutes, I was going to be on *Queer as Folk*.

Finally, the moment came. The door to the set swung open and the eight of us crossed over the threshold and into the world of QAF Pittsburgh, otherwise known as the Woody's set. *It was finally going to happen.* I thought of the dream I was about to realize and also of something that would accompany me throughout my four years with the series.

I remembered the thousands of QAF fans like me who would have given just about anything to be exactly where I was at that moment. I felt great for myself but I also felt the responsibility to make sure that someday my fellow fans could know what it was like to be a part of this amazing series we all watched and loved. It's something I never forgot whenever I worked on the QAF set and that's why I always made mental notes of what I saw and did.

As we entered the Woody's set, I looked around and gave it a long stare. I was struck by how accurately it resembled parts of the real Woody's Bar on Church Street in the Toronto gay village. There were lots of high tables and stools at the front of the set, a pool table in the back of the set and off to stage right was a mini-bar area. That's where the real action of this scene takes place. Debbie and Brian talking to each other and Debbie reminding Brian that although he won't say it, Brian really does love Justin. So, of course, the first two QAF cast members I got the honour of working with were Sharon Gless and Gale Harold.

But that's not where we were during the filming. The eight of us had been dressed as Woody's baseball players. That in itself was amazing since it wasn't what I had been expecting to do when I arrived at the studio for our 9:30 am cast call. I was simply to be a patron at the bar.

But shortly after I arrived and checked in, one of the assistant directors (often referred to as ADs) came around and asked if anyone wanted to be a baseball player. I thought what a stroke of luck and immediately raised my hand. And, unbelievably, they picked me as one of the eight they needed. So before I went to set, I was given the Woody's baseball shirt and went through hair and makeup clearance that included blackening my face a bit and dusting up my jeans and shirt.

So here I was with the other seven guys and were standing around the pool table at the back of the Woody's set waiting to be told what to do. It didn't take long before we were introduced to the third assistant director Lori Mather-Welsh. The third AD on a TV or movie set is always in charge of the background cast and tells us what exactly we should do during the filming of a scene.

She gathered us together and explained that we were going to be the Woody's Bar baseball team. We'd just won a game in our gay baseball league and we'd come back to the bar to celebrate by having some beers and shooting some pool together. She positioned us around the table and gave each of us a prop beer. I and another of the guys were given pool cues in order to shoot some shots while the scene played out. And, we were told the dialogue cues we should be listening for so that we would know exactly when to make our crosses around the table and for gathering into small groups.

Finally and most importantly, I learned my first major lesson of being a background actor...never actually speak during the filming of a scene. Every simulated conversation had to be mimed. That's because if any background actor speaks and it's used during an episode, that actor has to be paid more (it's called an "upgrade"). Since that's expensive it almost never happens.

Off to the left of the set were the two film cameras that the set crew was busily trying to get into position and prepare for the scene. This was all supervised by episode director Bruce McDonald, who I later learned was one of Canada's most prominent independent film directors.

So here I was, on my first Queer as Folk shoot, realizing a dream of a lifetime and I was trying so hard to look and act professional while the inside of me was practically jumping for joy. I am sure I must have had a wide-eyed grin throughout the whole shoot. Of course, as a huge fan of the series, it was amazing to actually see some of the main cast in person. Set protocol prohibits background actors from talking to anyone in the main cast unless spoken to first, except for the third assistant director or one of his/her assistants.

After what seemed like an eternity, I heard the call "Picture's Up" which alerts everyone that the scene is about to be shot. Then, the shoot was on. With each call, my mind raced even faster. "Sound," "Speed," the call for the Camera A and B markers. And then, it came. "Background action ... and action."

And we did the scene. I did my crosses around the pool table...took a few pool shots and simulated talking to my "teammates". The whole thing probably lasted less than a couple of minutes but it seemed like an eternity. Finally, we heard the director call "Cut" and the scene ended.

A few seconds later, Lori the third AD called out "First positions" that told us to return to our starting points so that the scene could be shot again. After a few minutes so that the cast and crew could return to their positions, we went through a second take of the scene. As I recall, most of the action was the same as in the first take al-

though I remember doing more pool shots. Finally, once again, we heard "Cut". But this time, we also heard a different call "Checking the Gate". I later learned that this was the request for the camera operators to physically check the film gates in the cameras to ensure there was no dust or dirt or any mechanical problems that could have caused the film to be ruined.

After a few seconds, the camera operators confirmed that the gates were clear and that was it. The end of my first appearance on Queer as Folk. Our last instruction was to return to the background holding area and to wait for further instructions.

As I walked back to the holding area, so many thoughts were running through my mind. I had just realized a dream, knew there was a chance it might be in the episode and was totally in awe of the whole experience. I knew then and still know to this day that it was one of the most intense and rewarding experiences of my life.

But, as a huge fan of QAF yourself, I already know what you are thinking...I don't remember seeing any baseball players in that scene in episode 206. And, you would be correct. The scene we shot was not used in the final edit of the episode...only a close-up shot of Debbie and Brian was used.

Why? Well, as I learned much, much later, many scenes are shot with both primary and secondary footage. The primary footage consists of the shots the director and producers intend to use for that scene. The secondary footage, if any is shot, is held in reserve in case it's needed for use as filler, or to enhance a scene if the primary footage doesn't seem to be complete on its own. Once in a while this happens but most of the time, the secondary footage is not used. And, unfortunately, this was one of those cases where the entire shoot I was involved in ended up, as they say in the biz, on the cutting room floor. It wouldn't be the last time either but as a background actor you learn to deal with it...after all, even the main cast sometimes has good scenes cut out.

After we had been sent back to the holding area, I figured that was it and my first experience on QAF was over. Not at all. As I learned that day, most shooting days involved filming three scenes. The Woody's shoot was just the first scene of the day. Another scene had been scheduled to take place outside of Liberty Diner. And, as I found out, it was customary for some of the background cast to be "held over" to a second scene to augment additional background actors who had been hired for the later scene.

It's all because of the ACTRA (the Canadian actors' union) requirement that all background cast, whether union members or not, be paid for a minimum of eight hours of work, whether that actually happens or not.

That requirement makes it desirable for any production company to maximize its finances by making sure that some of the background cast does indeed work as close to eight hours as possible.

I mention this because I was one of the first to be asked if I could be held over to the next scene. Of course, with my head in the clouds from the Woody's shoot, I immediately said yes. Since the second scene was to be filmed on location in downtown Toronto, I was given a map of the location, where Background Holding was located (that's the actual term used "Background Holding") and where I could park my car.

At that time, QAF Productions did not regularly provide transportation for the background cast from one location to another (they did beginning with season 3) so they asked if I would help get a few of the other background cast members to the other site. So, I and three of my fellow actors made our way from Dufferin Gate Studios to where the exterior of Liberty Diner was at that time (the west end of Toronto at the corner of Queen Street West and Crawford Street).

It was an interesting ride. All of the guys who came with me had been doing the series for awhile, and were, of course, quite younger than me. I had to laugh a bit because one of the guys was quite surprised when I told him I was gay (he was gay too). He had me pegged for a straight man, married, with a couple of kids. Anyway, we got to the site, made our way to the Background Holding area in an adjacent community centre and waited again for the next scene to be set up.

Everyone knows the expression "hurry up and wait!" This is never truer than in the film and television industry. It is quite surprising how long a particular shoot takes to set up or "block" as the crew refers to the process. Everything has got to be very precise.

As just one example, QAF had a few "second team" crew members whose purpose was to stand in the exact spot each of the main actors would stand during the scene. Then, other members of the crew would determine the proper lighting, sound and camera focus using the second team. I saw members of the camera crew with tape measures to determine the exact distance between the cameras and where the actors were to be positioned during the scene. That's so that the cameras could maintain focus throughout the scene.

Eventually around 3 pm, we were finally called to set. It was a really cloudy and rainy day so the crew had taken some extra precaution in setting up a canopy over the entrance to the diner (a real place called the *XXX Diner*, which had been used for both the exterior and interior shots of Liberty Diner during the show's pilot episodes, and which sadly no longer exists).

I was amazed at the lengths to which the crew had gone to really make the corner look like it was in Pittsburgh. We had a newsstand prop as part of the corner and when I looked at the magazines, many were in fact from Pittsburgh. We also had a U.S. Postal Service mailbox there and a newspaper vending machine. When I looked into it, to my amazement, there was a real Pittsburgh paper not more than 2 weeks old.

Once again third AD Lori was there to give us direction. I was really in awe of her as a director because she had to basically design a series of background actions that we were to perform on the fly. People had to be arranged in the scene in a realistic manner so that when the scene played out, it would look natural. And, at the same time, by setting a realistic background scene, it would help the main cast to remain in character.

What I didn't know is that because everything had to be designed on the fly, we background were constantly being rearranged from rehearsal takes and even after the first few live takes. Originally, when the actor who normally manned the newsstand couldn't be found, I was asked to do that. That lasted all of one rehearsal take. After that, the main director, Bruce McDonald, decided he didn't want the newsstand in the scene at all. So, it was removed and there went my original role.

Fortunately, I was given another role before the next take took place. This time Lori gave me a "cross". A cross is when you literally cross the set, by walking or running or whatever the director wants you to do. Sometimes, it's one single cross, as it was this time, or it's a cross back and forth, which I was called upon to do in many later shoots.

For this scene, I was to start on the sidewalk in front of Liberty Diner, and walk across the street in front of Michael and Justin as they were talking to the other side. Simple enough. The big trick for me, as a newbie, was to make sure that I began my cross on a queue and somehow not run into one of the main actors or any of the other background cast also doing street crosses.

By the time Lori had set us up for a second rehearsal, it began to pour. This delayed the shoot while the crew compensated for the rain and set up the lighting appropriate to the conditions. Meanwhile, I was in my first position which was standing out in the rain on the sidewalk waiting to go. Yeah, I was getting soaked but after all this was *Queer as Folk* and I was ready to do anything they asked me to do.

While we waited, I got my first chance to see some of the main cast close-up, specifically both Hal Sparks and Randy Harrison. Randy was very quiet while waiting for the scene and didn't talk to too many people except for a few crew members and the directors.

Hal on the other hand was as happy as can be. As a comedian, Hal naturally has an outgoing happy personality that he projects when he works. But, as I would notice over the years, Hal is really a very happy self-assured man in real life. If I had half his energy and good spirit I would be doing very, very well. To this day, when I am asked about what it was like to work with the QAF cast, I always say that, to me, Hal was the happiest man on the planet.

Things were getting late and the rain wasn't letting up. And it was after 4 pm. This turned out to be a critical event. The various union rules require that "lunch" take place after five hours on set unless a small snack called a substantial or "sub" is made available during those five hours. Then, lunch can be delayed until six hours have passed. And QAF almost always supplied the subs (which weren't submarine sandwiches at all but usually soups or stews or pasta for the union actors and crew, and hot dogs for the non-union background cast).

However, 4 pm meant the six hour mark was at hand. So, because it was raining and also to avoid financial penalties for not having the lunch break, it was decided to take the one hour lunch break. Now by the time we finished lunch, it had stopped raining and was later in the day, so the crew had to dismantle the canopy and reconfigure the lighting further delaying the filming.

Finally, at around 5:30, we were brought back to set and told to take our first positions. The cameras were actually set up across the street on the southwest side of Crawford looking back towards the diner doorway. You may remember the scene from the episode where Michael and Justin have words just after leaving Liberty Diner. My recollection is that we did at least 10 takes of the scene using various camera angles. It's amazing that so much effort and film are needed to get the raw material to allow the director and editor to choose the most appropriate footage for the final edit of a scene.

For the most part, I managed to hit my queues most of the time and make it across the street without incident. I did almost run into Randy during one of the takes though when I left my first position very slightly late and had to duck around him to make sure I didn't bump into him. As a new member of the background cast, it just wouldn't have been good to accidentally run into one of the stars on my first day of work (quick note - I did accidentally bump into Bob Gant during the filming of a scene in the final season of the series, but I will leave that story until later).

Finally, at around 6:30, we all heard the words we were waiting for, "Checking the gate." With the film gate clear, the crew began to break down the set and we were told to go back to holding. Once back in holding, about five minutes later, we got the message that we were

"wrapped" which most of you know is the signal that we were officially finished with the shoot and released. All that was left was to get my contract voucher signed and that was it. By 6:45, I was in my car and on the way home after finishing one of the most important days of my life.

Months later, when I finally saw the finished episode, I was a bit disappointed that the baseball team scene was not used, but then disappointment turned into elation when for a brief couple of seconds, I was visible crossing in front of Michael and Justin. I knew it would only be a quick cross and as it turned out I was slightly out of focus, but it was still me, on Queer as Folk.

It was truly a dream realized. And while I eagerly hoped other appearances would be forthcoming, I could never have imagined that by the time it was all over four years later, I was going to have many more trips to Queer as Folk's Pittsburgh.

Episode 207

November 1, 2001

Call Time: 8:00 pm

Wrap Time: 12:15 am

Set: Liberty Diner

Location: Dufferin Gate Studios, Etobicoke.



One of the most interesting things about being a background actor is that you never know what you will be doing from one shoot to the next. That was especially true for me since, unlike most of my fellow QAF background actors, I was really intensely interested to know something about the scene I was going to be a part of.

For most of the background cast, it was just another day on the job, earning a paycheck, maybe even trying to use the experience to eventually become a principal actor. They were there do what they were told to do and then leave. It was something of a surprise to me that many if not most of the background cast I was working with had little or no idea of what Queer as Folk was about. Many had never seen the series at all and if they did know something about it, in their minds QAF was that "gay show."

It was always different for me. I was a fan first before I was able to appear on the show. I knew everything about the cast, the characters, some of the more prominent crew members and some of the story lines. So, whenever my agent was able to give me the “gift” of appearing on the show, I immediately began to try and guess what was going to happen.

For my second day of work on QAF, my agent had informed me that the shoot was to be at the Liberty Diner set. So I kind of figured that at least Debbie would be there and maybe some of the other Liberty Avenue gang. I also knew that Robert Gant had just joined the cast and had begun working beginning in the previous episode.

Knowing that Dr. David was gone after actor Chris Potter had left the series, I figured that Robert’s character was intended to become Michael’s new boyfriend. And I guessed that today’s scene probably had something to do with this new relationship. However, I wasn’t prepared for what I was going to learn during this shoot. It was the first of many pivotal moments that I witnessed during Liberty Diner shoots over the years.

Unlike my first day on the QAF set, where my call time had been 9:30 am, this shoot’s call time was 8:00 pm. Back in those days, I had no idea that a television series like QAF could shoot scenes at just about any time of day or night. It was a couple of hours before we were brought to the Liberty Diner set and as I had done three weeks earlier with Woody’s, I made sure to look around as I walked onto the set.

The first thing I was struck by was how much smaller in real life the set was compared to how it appeared on TV. Yet, there was still that same attention to detail I had seen on the Woody’s set. There were real printed menus. Both the main and background casts that were supposed to have food at their tables were given real food. Of course, those of us in the background weren’t actually supposed to eat anything, just simulate eating. There were actual gay magazines and journals from Pittsburgh scattered throughout the set and there were the requisite posters announcing gay events, some of which appeared to have been made up and some appeared to be actual posters of gay-Toronto events, cleverly altered to keep up the illusion that this was Pittsburgh.

As usual, the background cast was not informed what the scene was all about. I’m sure most of them couldn’t have cared less. However, for me, it was something I really wanted to know. So I began to guess the plot. Sharon Gless was there so of course the scene involved Debbie. Then, from the back of the set, on cue from the director (who called out for the “first team” meaning the real actors), out came Gale Harold, Peter Paige, Scott Lowell, Hal Sparks and Randy Harrison. That’s when I

knew the scene was going to be big since the entire main cast was present.

As had been the case the first time I was on set, I was struck by how familiar and yet different each of the actors was. This was to be the first time I had worked with Peter and Scott and close enough to Gale and Sharon to really hear what they were saying. I noticed, for example, how Costume Designer Patrick Antosh had somewhat changed the look of the main characters from season one, which at that point I was still faithfully watching every Monday night on Showcase. In each case, the actors looked slightly more adult than in season one.

Most of the main cast members took their places at one of the centre booths, except for Randy who apparently was going to be just a busboy for the scene and not have any lines. While this was going on, third assistant director Lori Mather-Welsh was assigning the background cast different crosses and first positions.

After a bit, she came over to me and gave me the task of starting the scene near the kitchen, walking through the set and sitting down at one of the street-side booths. I would be with three other backgrounders. Debbie was to come over, silently take our orders, offer us some coffee and then go over to where the other main cast members were to complete the scene.

So, at the call to first position, I made my way across set to the small doorway in the back of the set next to the kitchen. I didn’t know it immediately but that was also the exit from the set to the area where the director, his staff and the main cast went between takes. Over the course of the shoot, I was nearly bumped into, first by Scott Lowell, then by Randy Harrison and finally by the episode’s main director Michael DeCarlo as they made their way back and forth from their private off-set area to the set. I dutifully apologized to each for being in their way and none seemed very upset that I had been blocking the way.

Then it came time for the first rehearsal which we did and that’s when I learned that this was going to be a very important scene. Close enough to hear the dialogue, I learned this was the scene where Michael was going to tell his friends, and later his mother, that his new boyfriend, Ben, was HIV-positive.

Now, this was truly a bombshell. Nothing like this had ever been done on TV before. True there had been HIV-positive characters before in other productions but these were always tragic figures who you knew were already very ill and were destined to expire before the end of the show or film.

QAF had already broken new ground by portraying Debbie’s brother Vic (as wonderfully played by Jack

Wetherall) as a gay man coping with the aftermath of almost dying from AIDS. But even Vic was not at that time involved in a relationship nor did he have a career. Now, QAF was about to present a no-apologies character, with a career and a relatively normal life, as the boyfriend to one of the show's major characters. It just blew me away and although I myself was and still am negative, I knew how important this was going to be for the gay community at large and for the many who were coping with trying to make as normal a life as possible while living with this terribly cursed disease.

Knowing now what was about to happen, I promised myself that I would make sure I did everything the way the directors wanted me to do it, even as small a role as I had. I remember asking Lori about exactly when my cue was a couple of times after changes had been made during rehearsal to be sure I knew what I was supposed to do and when.

And so it went off. We shot the scene in about five or six takes and then we paused while the set was reconfigured so that close-ups of the main cast could be done. Normally, the background cast is asked to return to holding during these set reconfigs but this was one of the few times we were allowed to remain on set.

While this was going on, I ended up standing next to Sharon for a little while. I remembered the set protocol about background actors not approaching main cast members, so while I didn't get to talk to Sharon, we did make eye contact a few times and I remember her smiling at me. A small gesture to be sure but remembering that she was a two-time Emmy award winner and that I had been watching her on TV since 1974, I was completely awe-struck that she would even acknowledge me (I actually did get to chat with her briefly during the third season but I'll mention that later on).

More close-ups and various takes were made and it was getting past midnight. Finally, director Michael DeCarlo asked for one final take. He wanted simply to capture the background noise of the set for a few minutes. Although he didn't explain why he wanted this done, I assumed from my knowledge of audio editing that this ambient noise might be used to mask out unwanted sounds during the production of the scene's audio track.

On his instructions, he wanted everyone on set to remain in first position throughout the entire take and that no one, not even the main cast, was to make any noise. So here I was, at my first position standing in the doorway next to the kitchen, focused on the table with Gale and Peter facing towards me and with Hal's and Scott's backs to me. The usual "sound", "speed" and "marker" commands were given, the scene was marked and then..."action".

Now I had just simply expected that we would all be standing there for a minute or two and that would be it. I was looking over at Gale and Peter and to my amazement, Gale began to make faces at Peter, nudging him and generally trying anything he could think of to make Peter laugh. I had read that Gale liked to play practical jokes on his fellow cast members in season one (including an incident where he glued shut a cell phone) but this was now playing out in real time.

And it was all Peter could do not to make any noise and spoil the take. I remember him looking at me and me at him trying myself not to make any kind of facial expression that would worsen the situation. Mercifully, the take came to an end, Peter did not laugh or make any noise, and the take was approved. At that point, Peter let out a bit of a gasp and laugh and gave Gale a mock punch. I could see that everything I had read about this production was true. Everyone involved felt like it was a family. And this little joke was something you might expect from a couple of brothers. It was very cool to see and showed how close everyone was even after only being together for only a season and a half.

Well, it was now 12:30 am and after checking the camera gates, everything was in order and we were wrapped. You can imagine the smile on my face as I drove home after it was all over. And, to have been a part of what I knew was going to be a ground breaking event on the series made it even more exciting. It was hard keeping the secret for several months until the episode actually aired the following March (February in the U.S.). And happily, when it was aired, I discovered that once again I was briefly visible in the scene for a second or two during each of Gale's close-up shots.

Episode 212

December 17, 2001

Call Time: 6:00 am

Wrap Time: 5:30 pm

Set: Rain Bar

Location: Rain Bar and Restaurant, Toronto.



My third and fourth days of filming with *Queer as Folk* were in many ways the most atypical of anything I ever did for the series. I mention both days together because the producers specifically told us that if we were going to work on December 17, we also had to be available to work almost a month later on January 12. We didn't know why they insisted on this and since we ended up filming different scenes on each day, I still don't know why this "continuity" was needed to this day.

But that wasn't the reason I consider the shoot to have been atypical. Right from the start, I knew this was going to be a different kind of shoot. First, my agent called me the night before to tell me that my call time was going to be at 6:00 am. That's right six in the morning. So I had less than six hours to get my wardrobe together and get a bit of sleep before I had to get up and get ready.

The shoot was on location in an area of Toronto I had never been to before. We were going to film at a restaurant called Rain which was located in the entertainment district just behind Wayne Gretzky's Bar (the sports bar owned by the former NHL great and current head coach and co-owner of the NHL's Phoenix Coyotes). Even more interesting, the background holding area was located at what was then the famed Second City Theatre (Second City has since moved to another location).

Now, at six in the morning, you're not quite all there. I remember frantically trying to find a place to park in the area once I arrived and then finding the Second City Theatre. I was trying to stay awake and keep up the usual level of enthusiasm I had for being able to work on the show. I'm not a coffee person so I didn't have the benefit of caffeine to get me going. Fortunately, the adrenaline rush took over once the shoot got going.

Now, once I got inside Second City, that's when I knew this was going to be an unusual shoot. Most of time, I was one of the oldest members of the background cast because the standard type of guy the show used was usually in his mid-to-late twenties or early thirties. In 2001, I was 45. Yet, the first thing I noticed was that I was actually one of the *youngest* guys there. That caused me some thought. Then, the other tip-off was that the wardrobe we were asked to bring was a couple of full suits with ties and dress shirts. Something I never remember ever seeing during the first season of the series.

Once we were called to set at around 8:30 am, I began to realize why we had such an early call time and why we shooting at such a fancy restaurant with an older than usual cast. The restaurant itself was quite up-scale looking. I would guess this place was selected because of the unusual faux-waterfall (hence the restaurant's name, Rain) that adorned one end of the restaurant (you can see it in the first of the three scenes we shot near the beginning of the episode).

After a little explanation from third AD Lori, we learned that we were at an after-hours party being held for Pittsburgh's "A-gay" business crowd. The kind of people that new entrepreneur Ted wanted to become associated with. Many of you may remember the scene that starts off with Ted and Emmett in front of the faux-waterfall discussing why Ted was even there in the first place. It was now obvious why the background cast was older than usual. Since we were supposed to be the cream of Pittsburgh's gay business community, naturally we would be an older crowd.

The scene played out with Ted mentioning to Emmett about wanting to meet the "doyen" of Pittsburgh's A-gay business crowd, Garth Racine. Of course, when Ted does meet Garth, he is totally ignored. To properly simulate a business gathering, Lori set up a lot of crosses so that we could mingle, say quick hellos to business friends, make introductions and give out business cards. The stuff you would do at a real such party.

Initially I was paired with a fellow actor and we were supposed to be talking to each other. Later on in the scene, I was to make a brief cross through the main action, give a business card to another actor and then return to the other side of the set before Garth and his snooty friends encounter Ted. We did this in about six or seven takes. By most standards it was a fairly easy scene to do and I remember how fabulously out-of-place Emmett was in his gay-dressed best (as only Emmett could be).



Once that scene was done, we were sent back to holding at Second City while the crew reconfigured the restaurant for the second scene we were going to shoot that day. This scene, which takes place later in the episode, is when Ted and Emmett are having dinner with Melanie and Lindsay (featuring that great Emmett line, "Waiter, steak to go"). The foursome was celebrating the Lesbians' recent marriage ceremony when who but Garth shows up and this time, he eagerly wants to meet Ted and proceeds to invite Ted to his next private party.

For this scene, I had a bird's eye view of everything that was going on. I was seated at a table right behind Emmett and was able to hear and see the entire scene play

out. Although rather simple a scene, I was excited because it was the first time I got to be in a scene with Michelle Clunie and especially Thea Gill. As I explained in the Prologue, Thea is one of the main reasons I wanted to find a way to work on *Queer as Folk*. I would have loved to be able to have thanked her but because I didn't want to break set protocol, I didn't approach her and thus didn't get to talk to her.

The final scene we shot that day was used late in the episode when Ted realizes that the only reason Garth wanted anything to do with Ted was to get him a date with Rex, one of Ted's **Jerk at Work** models. I was seated at a table far from the scene and off camera this time and did not get to hear the dialogue until the episode aired.

By this time, things were running behind schedule so there was some urgency in getting this last scene done. I had overheard one of the crew mentioning that the shoot was supposed to wrap by 5:00 pm so that the Rain staff could begin their preparations to open that night for business. However, by 4:30, it was obvious we wouldn't be done by 5:00. Fortunately, the owner was nice enough to let us continue filming for another half an hour. The Rain staff was definitely interested in what was going on because I saw several of them popping their heads out of the kitchen area almost every time we were between takes. After a few final takes, we wrapped at about 5:30 pm and were reminded that we would be called back again in about a month.

When I eventually saw the finished episode several months later during its broadcast on Showcase, I didn't really see myself in any of the scenes. I figured whatever footage I might have appeared in didn't make it to the final edit, by now something I was coming to terms with. And I continued to believe that no footage of me was used in the episode for more than three years until one day in early 2005 I got a very pleasant surprise.

I was reviewing my DVD copies of the second season as part of the research for this book and while viewing episode 212 I came across the initial scene we filmed at Rain. Low and behold, I discovered that I was quite visible in the early part of the scene (as you can see in the initial episode picture above). I couldn't believe I had not known about this all these years. But, after thinking about it for a bit, I finally realized why I had missed it back in 2002.

In those days, Showcase broadcast *Queer as Folk* in full-frame, cropping off the left and right portions of the original wide-screen footage. I am at the left edge of the frame in the scene and when it was cropped for the full-frame version, all you could see was part of my shoulder. That's why I missed it. In the wide-screen version, you can see all of me for several seconds.

I was amazed but it definitely brought a huge smile to my face. And then I kicked myself for not having looked at the footage earlier. I never connected the fact that the wide-screen version might be significantly different from what I had viewed in full-frame. So I guess the morale is never be sure you know everything about something you've done or been a part of...a surprise may just be lurking around the corner.

Episode 212

January 14, 2002

Call Time: 1:30 pm

Wrap Time: 9:30 pm

Set: Garth's Mansion

Location: Rented private residence in North York.



Almost a month after our shoot at the Rain Restaurant/Bar, those of us who worked on the scene were called back to do this shoot. Back in December when we were told about this second shoot, I had assumed it would be in the same place. So it was a bit of surprise when my agent told me that we would be going to a mansion in North York which is just north of downtown Toronto.

Our call time was 1:30 pm this day and as I recall it was cloudy and snowy. All of the 50 or so background actors assigned to the shoot were originally told to report to the mansion itself but it soon became apparent that the mansion was to be used for filming only. The crew directed us to a church about a couple of kilometres (about a mile and a quarter) down the road where Background Holding was set up.

I thought it was so ironic that we would be prepared for the scene at a church considering the subject matter of *Queer as Folk* but then some of the denominations here in Toronto are gay friendly.

Since this was a carry-over from the scene at Rain in December, it was once again an older compliment of actors than the usual age group. I remember it took until about 4 pm before the set was ready for us. Since the church was not within walking distance, a few vans were sent to pick us up and take us to set.

It was quite an impressive site when we arrived at the mansion a few minutes later. By then, it was snowing lightly and getting dark. The mansion was a beautiful home in one of the wealthier areas of North York. I guessed the owners were probably away in the south vacationing or living during the winter period and had rented out the mansion to the production company.

The mansion itself was lit up with spot lights, both in the front circular driveway and in the back. Crew trucks and cables were everywhere as was the craft truck ("craft" is the term used to describe the food service for a shoot....at the studios there are several craft tables for the crew and main cast as well as one for background actors...on location, this truck provided our food).

Once we were led inside, we saw how beautiful the interior of the mansion was. Very ornate and quite appropriate to the scene we were going to film which was the private party Garth invited Ted to in the second scene we had shot at Rain in December. The shoot was to take place in the dining/living room area on the first floor. There were spiral staircases to both upper and lower floors. We were not allowed to go to the upstairs rooms but we were asked initially to go downstairs until we were needed.

The downstairs had a bar recreation room and also some rooms where it was obvious the owner's children would play (some of their toys were still in the rooms). We waited about another half an hour before 3rd AD Lori and her assistants summoned us. While the crew was setting up, she began placing us within the set and also giving us our crosses.

One really interesting thing about this scene was that it was going to be the first one I was involved in that required what is known as a "ramp shot." You've seen many of these over the years on *Queer as Folk*. Ramp shots look like really sped up motion centering around a central character or some special sped up action the character does before everything returns to normal. It's quite fascinating how a ramp shot is done.

First, everyone is set in first position. On action, we begin our performances until the director tells us to freeze. At that moment the cameras are sped up and moved in a programmed manner to catch the ramp effect. During this period, no one must move at all or the shot will be spoiled (and I remember having to redo several ramp shots over my four years with QAF because someone moved during the shot). Once the ramping sequence is finished, the director will tell us to return to action and complete the scene.

In the finished scene as it appears in episode 212, it begins with Ted coming up the lower area staircase. As he comes up the stairs, you can see me talking to another

older background actor in the far left corner of the shot. I'm sort of facing away from the camera and was wearing a grey suite as I recall.

Then, as Ted is thinking about whether he brought the right kind of wine or not, that's when the ramp shot takes place. Once that is done, Ted is greeted by Garth and the scene progresses. I am also visible in a few other parts of the scene until Garth, Ted and his entourage move into the dining area. That's where Garth asks Ted about Rex, one of Ted's **Jerk At Work** models. I was not needed for that part of the shoot and spent most of it down in the basement holding area. Pretty much the only breaks during the shooting were camera changes and the mandatory hour for "lunch".

We wrapped the shoot at 9:30 pm, signed out and were conveyed back to holding at the church. This was the closest QAF shoot I ever did to where I live in Toronto (it was just a 15 minute drive) so as soon as we got back to the church, I jumped in my car and raced home so I could watch that night's QAF season one rerun on TV. It was something I always tried to do whenever I was involved in a Monday filming. It was such a rush to have been filming the show and then go home and watch an episode from the series' previous season.

Episode 218

March 8, 2002

Call Time: 7:00 pm

Wrap Time: 11:00 pm

Set: Woody's Bar

Location: Dufferin Gate Studios, Etobicoke.



Another visit to Woody's Bar and to celebrate Emmett's potential million dollar settlement from the estate of his late lover, George Schickel. It turned out to be a quick scene with just a few takes and one of the shortest shoots I was ever involved with. The call time was at 7:00 pm, we were on set by 9:00 pm and were wrapped by 11:00 pm.

It was really a very simple shoot, involving Ted, Emmett and Melanie. You'll remember them celebrating after Melaine tells Emmett of the Schickel estate's offer to give

Emmett a million dollars if he will sign a statement renouncing that he and George ever had a relationship. In this scene Emmett was still seriously thinking about taking the offer although we all know he eventually turned it down.

I have included a frame from the scene above to give you a visual reminder of the shoot but you won't find me in it. This was the first scene I did for Queer as Folk that was used in an episode but in which I don't appear on camera (my very first QAF shoot in October 2001 was not included in the episode at all).

During the entire filming I was positioned just slightly off camera to the right of the screen hanging around the edge of the patron area. Although there are some shots of the general area where I was placed and I did do two crosses during the filming, any footage that might have included me was not used.

Of course it's always disappointing if what you filmed doesn't make it into the final edit of a scene. In this case, I was a bit more disappointed because during the scene I was actually kissed by one of the other background actors. Just a quick kiss on the cheek mind you, not the

kind of kiss that was considered "carnal" and paid extra for. But it was still a thrill to have been briefly kissed while the scene was being filmed and I had hoped to see it in the scene. But you never know what will be included in a scene until you see the final version of it. Yet, I can tell you I never felt more proud to be gay than I did that night when I got that kiss....the only time it ever happened during the years I spent with the show.

And, finally, a bit of a sad note for me. I didn't know it at the time, but this turned out to be the last time I got to film a scene at the main Dufferin Gate Studios complex in Etobicoke. It was the last scene I did for season two and between the end of this season and the beginning of season three, the producers made the decision to set up a second studio for all of the "public" area sets (like Woody's, Babylon, Liberty Diner, etc.).

Starting in season three, there was no further filming of any scenes requiring major background participation at the Etobicoke studios. So, since that day in March 2002, I have not been back to that complex...to the studios that, before I joined the show, I considered to be a shrine because that was where Queer as Folk was made and because QAF had changed my life forever.



**TIME REPORT SUMMARY
(CAST)**



NAME: ANDREW FINNIE **EMPLOYEE NO:** T00027730 **PERIOD ENDING:** 2003/12/20 1
SHOW: QUEER AS FOLK: SEA IV:CAST/EX/WTR (T3Q043M) **UNION:** NUC **CATEGORY:** NUE

DATE	GL	TRV	MU	WRD	CALL	ON	1ST	MEAL	2ND	MEAL	OFF	TRV	ST	1.5	2	2.5	OTH	MP	T/A	TOTAL	
DAYMMDD	LV.	IN	OUT	SET	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	SET	ARRV								HOURS	
Sun1214																					
Mon1215																					
Tue1216																					
Wed1217																					
Thu1218	2102																				
Fril1219																					
Sat1220																					
TOTAL HOURS																					

TIME WORKED				OTHER PAYMENTS			DEDUCTIONS		
DESC.	QUANTITY	RATE	EXTENSION	DESC.	QUANTITY	AMOUNT	DESC.	CURRENT	YEAR TO DATE
ACT	8.00								
EST	8.00								

	AMOUNT	YEAR TO DATE
Gross Labour		
Other Payment		
SUB TOTAL		
GROSS PAY		

SUMMARY

GROSS PAY	
TOTAL DEDUCTIONS	
NET PAY	

CHEQUE DATE	22 Dec. 03
CHEQUE NO.	186769