

## Season 3

**Episode 301**

**October 16, 2002**

**Call Time: 1:30 pm**

**Wrap Time: 11:00 pm**

**Set: Woody's Bar**

**Location: Greystone Studios, Mississauga.**



A new season for Queer as Folk and I was quite excited about starting a new year with the series. Already things were changing on the show as it grew in popularity and this was immediately apparent to me beginning with this filming.

First of all was the change of studios. As Queer as Folk's story lines were getting more and more complex, and moving away from mostly gay lifestyle plots to focusing on the characters themselves, the production was using more standing sets than in previous seasons. The standing sets are those that are used continuously throughout the season and cannot simply be set up for a scene and then broken down.

Almost all of the standing sets during seasons one and two had been located at Temple Street Productions' home studio, Dufferin Gate Studios, in Etobicoke. By the end of the second season, there were so many of them that DGS no longer had enough space to hold them all, as well as host other productions at the same time. So the producers made the decision to relocate some of the standing sets to a second studio for season three.

Based on my own observations, what apparently was done was to move the sets that represented the "public" areas, like Babylon, Woody's Bar, Liberty Diner, the Red Cape Comics Store, etc, to Greystone Studios, a large facility in Mississauga about half way between Toronto and Hamilton. The "private" areas, like Brian's loft, Michael and Emmett's apartment, Ted's condo, Debbie's house, etc. remained at Dufferin Gate Studios.

Greystone was about a 45 minute drive from where I live in Toronto so it was a bit of a trek to make it out for the shoot. Although from this season onward the pro-

duction provided buses for the background cast to take to the studio, I always preferred to drive myself. I always figured I could get myself into the right mood and character for the shoot if I went by myself. I know that sounds rather intense for just being a background actor but as I'm sure you've realized by now, I took my part on Queer as Folk, no matter how small, very seriously.

Once I finally got to Greystone, I discovered that QAF was sharing the facility with another production, a science fiction series called Starhunter. They had the front part of the studio space while QAF was housed in the rear of the facility.

This day's shoot was only the second time QAF had filmed there so a lot of the facility was still being built. Particularly, the background holding area was still unfinished, missing ceiling tiles, doors, etc. You could tell they had just recently moved into the area and, of course, were concentrating on finishing the sets and production areas first.

Besides that, the routine was very much like the previous season. Sign in with background casting, have your wardrobe, hair and makeup checked, and then wait until being called to set. This was a 1:30 pm call time so I figured I would be there until evening.

About a half an hour before the first call to set, one of the assistant directors came up to holding and announced that 13 of us were to be picked for some unknown special reason and that these 13 would not initially go to set. I was picked to be part of the 13. None of us knew what was being planned and as it turned out none of us will ever know.

All of the other background cast went to set several times over the course of the next 6 hours. Each time we were told to remain except once when we were told to stand by. But even then after a few minutes, we were told that we weren't going to be needed after all. By now, it was after 10 pm and the 13 of us still had not yet been to set. I was beginning to think that I wasn't going to do any filming that night when around 10:30 pm we were finally summoned to the set for the very last scene they were going to film.

Despite the long, long wait, I was excited to be heading to set because of something special that the wardrobe people had allowed me to wear for the scene. After waiting a full season, I was finally going to be allowed to wear my CATCHER shirt, the one I described in this book's Prologue. I had offered to wear it during the Woody's shoot in episode 218 but the wardrobe people decided they wanted me to wear something else for that filming. But tonight, wardrobe said yes and I was proudly wearing my Catcher shirt when I stepped onto the new Woody's set at around 10:30 pm.

The scene in 301 is where Brian is alone at the bar and overhears a gay bear couple trying to decide their wedding pattern. My action was to simply cross behind Gale once during the filming...which I did. I remember we did four or five takes before we wrapped the scene and the shoot. So for all that waiting, I was actually on set for only about a half an hour before we finished.

When the episode finally aired, you can actually see me do the cross but because the focus of the camera is (rightly so) on Brian, I am somewhat out of focus when I make the cross. So you can't really tell what I am wearing. But no matter, I had gotten the shirt on the show and it was actually the first of many times I got to wear my *Catcher* shirt on QAF.

One last interesting thing about the scene. I know some of you are interested in tracking errors or mistakes in the filming of a scene, what are often referred to as continuity errors. Things looking one way, then another, then another again, all in the same scene.

Well, in this scene, I am the continuity error. It happened because my cross behind Brian was timed slightly different each time we shot it. It appears that in the finished edit of the scene, two different takes were used. So, you see me cross behind Brian during one of his lines, the camera then cuts to the bear couple and when it returns to Brian for his response, you see me cross again. It's in this second cross that the *Catcher* shirt can be more clearly seen (as captured in the above still frame from the scene) although it is still somewhat blurred.

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#### Episode 304

**November 15, 2002**

**Call Time: 9:30 am**

**Wrap Time: 9:00 pm**

**Set: Liberty Diner**

**Location: Greystone Studios, Mississauga.**



Two Liberty Diner scenes were shot this day at Greystone Studios and for the shoot, the background cast was divided into two parts. One group was used for the first scene and the other group went to set for the second

scene. I was in the first group and so the scene I was part of involved Brian bringing his nephew John to Liberty Diner.

Needless to say, John was not too terribly thrilled to be in the Liberty gay village with his gay uncle. If you remember, this was the episode where Brian flushes his nephew's head in the toilet after he catches John stealing.

The filming was routine and I was seated at one of the tables near the front of the set (street side) where I often was placed for Liberty Diner shoots. One thing I do remember about the shoot was that I got to talk to one of the principal actors for the first time. Ironically, it was the guest star who was playing Brian's nephew, a young actor named Gage Knox (you can see him in the still frame above).

Usually when a set was undergoing a reconfig, the background cast would be sent back to holding but since this involved only a small change, we all just waited outside the set. I happened to be standing next to Gage and he said hello so I said hello back. We briefly talked about the shoot and the comic he was reading between takes since I told him that my partner, like Michael, is a comic book fan. Though it was small talk, it was nice to finally talk to a "main" actor on the show, even if only a one-time guest star.

One quick piece of trivia. While many of the episodes of the first season of *Queer as Folk* paralleled the episodes of the original UK series, partly because of contractual obligations, the story of Stuart being blackmailed by his nephew, originally presented in the second series (season) of *Queer as Folk* UK, was not remade in the North American version of QAF in either season one or two. I personally figured that Ron Cowan and Daniel Lipman had simply decided not to use it. So it was a bit of a surprise when that story finally showed up in the third season, the very last plot the North American series took from the British series.

I once had the chance to ask one of the main writers of the series, Shawn Postoff, whether it had been the choice of the writers and producers to use the story for its own sake or were they required to use it as had been the case with the parallel stories in season one. His answer was that no, there had been no requirements to use the story...the writers and producers just thought it would fit well into the overall early third season story arc.

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#### Episode 305

**November 25, 2002**

**Call Time: 10:00 am**

**Wrap Time: 7:00 pm**

**Set: Liberty Avenue**

**Location: Church Street, Toronto.**



In a most important way, episode 305 was the peak of my participation on *Queer as Folk*, at least as far as appearing in a scene. That's primarily because this episode features the most visible performance I had on the show in the four years I worked for the production. And, even more remarkable, my being in the scene almost didn't happen at all.

Unlike principal actors who are represented by a single agent or agency, background actors are permitted to have multiple agents. The nature of the work is so transient and there are so many of us that it would be impossible for a single agent to get a typical background actor all the work he or she might want.

As I had only received five bookings on the show during season two, I decided that having a second agent might bring me some additional work. Episode 305 was to be the first booking from my new second agent. He had actually been a background actor himself on the series during seasons one and two and had started his agency just to handle QAF background talent.

So, everything was set up through him and the night before the shoot he gave me the call time of 11:30 am and told me it was going to be a location shoot on Church. I was very excited about this because I hadn't done a Church scene yet and for me, Church Street, as the focus of Toronto's gay village, is a very important part of Toronto for me. And, to be part of something to do with QAF's fictional Liberty Avenue was really going to be a high point for me. Little did I know.

The next morning I woke to find that the weather wasn't terribly good but I also knew that television productions carry out their shooting schedule, even outdoor shots, when the weather is bad. But, as I was preparing to get my wardrobe together, I got a call from my new agent around 8:30 am. He told me that because of the weather and the forecast, the production wanted to advance the call time to 9:30 am. I told him that I was getting ready but that I wasn't in the city itself (I live in the east end of Toronto) and couldn't get there for 9:30. He said the directors knew there might be a problem and so my agent just said to get there as quickly as I could.

So, I rushed to put my stuff together and got myself down to the village by TTC bus and subway by 10:15 am. When I got to the bar that was going to be our holding area, I quickly checked in. They were very nice about the situation as only about 20 others had made it by that point. They even back-timed my voucher to 10:00 am which I thought was really nice of them.

Within five minutes of settling in, the wardrobe people quickly came by, looked at what I was already wearing and said that would be fine for the day's shoot. A quick pass-by through the hair and make-up people and I was done in a record time of 10 minutes. And, five minutes later, I was heading to set which was going to be in the driveway between two restaurants on Church.

Almost immediately, third AD Lori set me up at a railing in front of the Cafe California restaurant together with two other guys. I was paired with one of them inside the rail and the other was to walk over to us. We were told to hold a brief mimed conversation, then he would leave. Then, my fellow actor and I were to continue a mimed conversation, then walk up and around the railing and down Church Street holding hands.

It was by all accounts a simple scene. I just didn't know how visible I was going to be in it until I saw it several months later when it aired. This scene is where Debbie and Vic are trying to get the Liberty Avenue guys to register to vote and is the first scene from the Pittsburgh mayor election story arc. The scene opens with two of the background cast kissing in a close-up with Debbie interrupting them and asking them to register which they decline.



Once they move away, Debbie and Vic (Sharon Gless and Jack Wetherall) move into the forefront of the scene. But, in the middle of the screen, behind them, I am very clearly on camera for more than 20 seconds. I didn't know it then but this would be the only time I would get to appear on camera for more than just a few seconds. You can see almost all of what I and my "partner" were doing, even after Gale as Brian walks into the scene.

You can imagine how thrilled I was when I saw the scene for the first time. It was an amazing experience and one of the most exciting moments of my life. And to think it almost didn't even happen.

Yet, the day wasn't even half over and two more scenes were yet to be filmed. The early afternoon scene involved moving to the other side of Church Street where Sherry Miller as Jennifer was also trying to get some of the guys on Liberty Avenue to register. Not unlike Debbie, she also wasn't having too much luck. This is the second scene that I appeared in that day.



Several of us were picked to walk past Sherry, backs to the camera, while she made her pitch. Most of the guys just walked past. I thought I would be a bit clever and used my right hand to wave off Jennifer's request. Unfortunately, you really can't see that since the take that was used in the finished scene was shot from an elevated camera looking down. The scene was also sped up for a few seconds during my cross through the shot. But, as the previous still frame shows, there was enough to identify that it's me.

The third scene involved a shot at the entrance to Woody's where Emmett and Ted walk up Liberty Avenue into Woody's. I was one of a few who did some crosses for the scene and actually got to walk up the stairs to Woody's right behind Emmett before the scene was cut.

It was really significant for me since one of the first QAF memories I have from season one was a shot of Brian and Justin at the Woody's staircase. More than anything else, walking up those Woody's stairs on camera really made me feel like I was truly a part of Queer as Folk. And it didn't change my feelings at all when I found out later that my walk-up to Woody's was not in the final version of the scene.

### Episode 307

**December 16, 2002**

**Call Time: 10:30 am**

**Wrap Time: 5:00 pm**

**Set: Liberty Avenue**

**Location: Church Street, Toronto.**



As much as Episode 305 stands out as the most important visible contribution I made to Queer as Folk, for me Episode 307 is personally the most memorable. It's not because of what you see of me since almost all of what I did was not used in the final edit. Instead, the reason 307 was so memorable was because of the personal significance of two of the three scenes I did for it.

This day's scene involved Brian, mayoral candidate Stockwell and his political handlers doing a brief tour of Liberty Avenue and talking strategy. There was nothing really special about the scene itself. But, it was the event of a life for me.

It began innocently enough. I was booked to be the usual Liberty Avenue streeter with a call time of 10:30 am. The usual sign-in, wardrobe, hair, and make-up went like clockwork as we waited for the crew to arrive from the day's first scene (this was to be the second shoot of the day). We were waiting in Background Holding when I noticed a couple of the wardrobe people and one of the ADs talking together. Suddenly, one of the wardrobe people made an announcement that they were looking for a guy who had a 34" waist. Well, that happens to be exactly my waist size so I put up my hand and they saw me.

They came over to me and asked me to stand up. They took me over to George Assimakopolous, who was the 3rd AD assigned to background holding that day. He and the wardrobe people looked at me, asked me to turn around once or twice and then asked me if I would like to be a policeman in the shoot. I couldn't believe my ears. I calmly said "sure" while inside my emotions were exploding. I knew that sometimes background cast members are lucky enough to be given a designated

role. It's still background work but you get to at least have a real role. I could only imagine what might happen next. But I was quickly going to find out.

The first thing I knew, George and I were off down the back stairs of the holding building and onto the curb of Church Street. He then called for a van on his walkie-talkie so that I could be driven to "base camp". The base camp was located in a large parking lot in the south end of the Church area where the production had set up its trucks and vans for the three scenes that were to be shot that day. Since all three were location shoots, this lot was likely chosen because it was centrally located to all of the planned filming.

A few minutes after George called for the van, I was in the passenger seat making small talk to the driver while he drove me down to the base camp to meet with the wardrobe people. Once I got there, I was shown which trailer to go to and soon met with one of the wardrobe crew. She asked me for some of my measurements and took some others while she tried to find a police uniform that would best fit me.

In 15 minutes I had been transformed for a simple street to a Pittsburgh police sergeant, complete with badge, boots, billy-club and a realistic-looking but made of plastic gun. As soon as I was ready, the van brought me back up to the Church set location.

At this point, my head was in the clouds. It was as if I was being handled like one of the guest stars. When I got to the set, I was allowed to remain with the production crew which is not something the background cast is normally allowed to do. It was actually the only time it happened to me while I was working for the series.

My initial direction came as usual from third ADs Lori and George and consisted of being the typical constable on patrol. I was to walk slowly up the street from below Church and Maitland, surveying the street and trying to ensure nothing lewd was going on. I was told to look superior and cautionary and they said I should look like I owned the street which is what I tried to do.

Before the rehearsal takes, I was lucky enough to be able to talk to a couple of real Toronto policemen who had been assigned to guard our shoot that day. They were very friendly and were quite willing to give me advice about how to walk and act for the role I was going to play on camera. I guess I looked so real that several people just passing through the area stopped to ask me directions, not noticing that my ID badge and uniform patch said "Pittsburgh" not Toronto. I was nice to them, told them that I wasn't a real cop but was a background actor on a TV series and that we were shooting in the area. I did try to give some directions though when I was sure of exactly where the person wanted to go.

We made several takes of the primary scene which you see in the episode when Brian, Stockwell and his entourage cross the street and talk. All of the action I described as the cop was part of the background of the scene. As you can see, I am deep in the background and almost not visible. But if you look close, you will see me in full uniform.

Once those takes were done, it was time for our one hour lunch. Before I left the set, I was asked to give back the replica gun although they said I could keep the billy-club. I guess that since I looked so much like a real policeman they didn't want the possibility of someone confusing the toy guy for a real one. It did look quite real and from even a short distance it would have been hard to see that it wasn't real.

It was both fun and a nuisance to have to eat lunch in full costume. I was mentally six feet off the ground for being given such extra treatment and was only too glad to explain what I had been doing when any of my fellow background actors asked me about it. Yet, a policeman's uniform is quite bulky and because it was a cold day, I was also wearing a police jacket. That I could take off but I couldn't undo the belt I was also wearing so that restricted my movements somewhat. But thankfully I made it through lunch without serious trouble.

Just before we went back to set, I realized that because I had been dressed at base camp, I had missed the usual continuity Polaroid photos that were always taken of the background cast, usually four people to a picture. I found the crew member who had done the pics while I was at base camp and told him I hadn't done the continuity photo yet. I asked him if he still wanted me to take the pic. He said yes, so I got to pose for it alone, another unique event in my QAF career. Then, just before returning to set, I ducked into the bathroom to try and catch a glimpse of what I looked like in the mirror. I have to admit, I looked pretty good and convincing as a cop.

Once we were back on set, I was taken aside and told I could wait with the crew. It was really cold and although most times the background actors are on their own, I guess because I had this special role, they wanted me to be comfortable so I was allowed to stand around the crew heaters and keep warm.

About a half an hour later, I was approached by two of the directors. George was one of them but it was the other director who, by his presence, told me this was going to be something special. The other director was Tom Willey, who had often served as the first assistant director on the show. Today, he was going to give me my primary direction.

I was told that they wanted to film a close-up shot of me surveying Liberty Avenue from the street corner where

Brian, Stockwell and his people had crossed to street. I was to survey the street slowly and make sure everything was in order. I was to look like I wasn't going to let anything strange happen and to always project an image that this was my street.

It took about five minutes to explain it to me and they asked if I understood what they wanted. I said I did and then George brought me across the street to a specific spot on the corner of Church and Maitland Streets. Next to me, they had set up a prop sign post with the familiar Liberty Avenue street sign. On the sidewalk, they positioned me while the camera across the street moved around. Once they were satisfied where they had me positioned, they marked the spot with chalk.

Next, as is often done with the main cast and guest stars, a tape measure was pulled forward from the camera to measure the exact distance between me and the camera. This I'm sure was done to ensure the camera was properly focused. Next, more Polaroids were taken of me which although trivial was another sign of my special role. While on set, continuity Polaroids are often taken of the main cast and guest stars in their first positions but are almost never taken of the background cast. Having these Polaroids taken of me meant the role was important enough for continuity shots to be made.

Now everything was set and we did one take. I tried as best I could to look tough and to own the corner, as I had been told to do. After the take, George came up to me to say that Tom Willey had felt that I had been looking down too much and didn't look as authoritative as I should have. A second take was arranged and I tried again. And again, I got the impression that unfortunately I just didn't give them exactly what they wanted. However, when George asked if they wanted a third take, Tom Willey said no and that what they had filmed would be sufficient. A few minutes later, we were sent back to holding.

Several more minutes later, we were wrapped. I changed back into my regular clothes, gave wardrobe back the police clothes, they signed my voucher and it was over. I practically flew home on my own wings I was so high. I couldn't believe that for at least one day, I was treated like a guest star on my most favourite TV show. I probably talked my mouth off all night to my patient partner Brian about all the things that had happened during the day.

Throughout the remainder of the winter and spring, I eagerly waited for the episode to air. I was sure I would get to see myself in full police uniform, even if only for a few seconds. But, when the episode finally aired, I was somewhat deflated to see that none of the footage had been used. I can only surmise that either the quality of my acting was not of a sufficient standard for them to let

the footage on the air or like other scenes I have done, it was always intended to be secondary footage to the scene and likely it wouldn't have made the final edit in any case.

While I will never know exactly why my "scene" remained on the cutting room floor, I will always have my memories of the day I got to be treated like a guest star and that wonderful experience that will remain with me forever.

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#### Episode 307

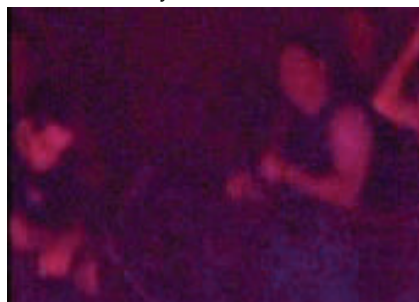
**December 18, 2002**

**Call Time: 9:30 am**

**Wrap Time: 11:30 pm**

**Set: Liberty Diner**

**Location: Greystone Studios, Mississauga.**



As this still frame was greatly enlarged from the original, it is hard to see but I am the one on the right side of the frame.

As you can well imagine, my head was still in the clouds after the exciting events of December 16. And at this point in time, I was usually getting booked on QAF every 3-5 weeks. So it was a complete surprise that just a day after shooting the scene as a Pittsburgh police sergeant, I got another call from my agent asking if I could do a Babylon scene on the 18th. I couldn't believe the luck. Once again, I said yes without hesitation.

Any fan of Queer as Folk knows that Babylon is the mecca of the show. It was established from the first scene in the pilot episode as the place around which everything in the series revolved (including, as we all know, the final scene of the series). Babylon was the place that all they guys on the show wanted to be seen. And that was not only for the series characters, but by many of us real-life gay guys in the background cast.

From the first time I saw it on TV, through my first work with the show, I wanted to do a Babylon scene at least once. It was really almost an obsession. Mind you, in real life, I am not nor have I ever been what is referred to in gay culture as a "club kid". In fact, I've only been to a few real-life gay dance clubs in my life. When I was in my twenties, I was very deep in the closet and didn't live in any areas where there were gay clubs.

But now, it was 2002 and I was not exactly what the QAF producers were normally looking for when they went casting for Babylon shoots. For one, I was at least

20 years older than the typical gay club kid. For another, the typical Babylon "type" is what we call in the gay world a "twink", a guy who is physically tall and thin, with a supple dancer's build. There is a whole twink subculture within the gay community and this is what you would expect to find at any real gay dance club, and, of course, at Babylon.

So, I wasn't surprised that I was not asked to be part of a Babylon shoot during the show's second season. That actually made me want to get into a Babylon scene even more. Hoping to get into Babylon was one of the reasons I added a second agent for season three. I figured I might have a chance because this second agent was only working with Queer as Folk and most of his agency talent consisted of the kind of guys who the producers would want for Babylon. And, without trying to sound conceited, one of my best assets is the fact that I really don't look my age. I have always been able to pass for a younger man. Even today, at age 50, I am often mistaken for a man of 35.

So, with this in mind, I waited over the weeks patiently until the call came through. It was pure luck that it happened just a day after my most memorable experience working on the show. Now, in the same week, I was finally going to do Babylon.

In many ways, it was an eye-opening experience. Even though I had been to Greystone Studios twice before, this was first time I was going to actually see the Babylon set. When I first arrived for our call time 9:30 am, I discovered that the show had hired a lot of guys to do Babylon. There was going to be quite a crowd which was new for me.

Because of the size of the group, there was an important difference in the way we were prepared for the scene. Normally, the wardrobe and make-up people came to our holding area and inspected us there. However, because of the size of our group, it would have been time consuming and very impractical for them to come to us. So instead, we were divided into smaller groups and taken into the studio area rooms where wardrobe and make-up had their offices.

This was where the fun started. Remember that I am definitely not a twink (at 5-9, 210 pounds I am built more like a small, somewhat out of shape, football player) and was 46 at the time. But, as I had hoped, no one knew my real age and everyone assumed I was in my early thirties. And, I must have caught the eye of some of the wardrobe and make-up people because before I knew it, they were asking me if they could give me something of a make-over. I wasn't quite sure what they had in mind but this was Queer as Folk and Babylon and you know I was ready to do anything they asked of me.

As usual, wardrobe was the first to examine me. Rather than accepting the clothes I had brought for the shoot, they asked if I wouldn't mind wearing a powder blue tank top to go with the pair of light cargo pants I was already wearing. They had me try on the tank top and seemed to be quite pleased that it fit very tightly (which to be honest, so was I).

I thought that was going to be cool enough when the second part of the make-over kicked in. While waiting in line to see hair and make-up, a couple of the make-up people came by and gave us a quick visual scan. They made eye contact with me and came over. Amazingly, they told me that they wanted a few more "outrageous" types for the shoot and asked if I wouldn't mind being made up this way. I thought for less than a second and, even though I had a vague idea of what they had in mind, I quickly agreed. Anything for the show.

So, I was taken directly into make-up and got my make-over. First, they curled my eye-lashes. Then they accentuated my eye-brows with eye liner. They also applied pinkish coloured rouge to my cheeks. They gelled my hair and also spiked it. Finally, the *pièce de résistance*...they put pink lipstick on me. I looked at myself in the mirror and I couldn't believe. They had very much feminized me. It was a side of myself I had never seen before.

Now one thing you have to understand is that even the most macho gay man has a bit of a queen inside him waiting to get out. Most of the time, we only show it to each other in some very specific ways, mostly just joking around and sort of being queenish more than being a queen. But here I was, not exactly a queen but definitely getting in touch with my feminine side while, potentially, a million and a half people watched.

I remember one of the makeup people asking me if I was sure I wanted to do this and if I was OK with it. I remember exactly what I said to her too. I said, "Sure this is going to be amazing and if Hal Sparks can put on a dress and make-up for the show, then I certainly could" -- remembering episode 204 when Hal was made up in "drag" for his Pride Parade march.

A few hours later, and the crew was ready for us to travel to set and another QAF dream realized. I remember as I walked into the Babylon studio just looking around the set, very slowly, taking it all in. The walls, the catwalks, the glitter on the floor, the bar areas, the spinning disco ball, the whole thing. I had seen it so many times on TV for two seasons. Now, here I was, at the place itself.

Once we all were on set, third AD George explained what we were going to film and then began placing us. Eventually, I was positioned in one corner of the upper level of the catwalk next to one of the glitter cannons. Then, after

we were all set, George went over the ground rules for the shoot to remind the veterans and to instruct newbies like me what was going to happen.

Initially, the Babylon DJ was going play about 10 to 15 seconds of music which we were all to start dancing to (yes, there was a real DJ booth with a real DJ and working equipment on the set). We weren't told what to dance, just that it needed to look high energy and that we were having a great time doing it.

After the first 10 to 15 seconds of music, the DJ would turn the music off. This was done so that when the main cast ran through the scene, their lines could be properly recorded. Once all the lines were spoken, the DJ would turn the music back on until the take was cut. (By the way, the music you actually hear in any Babylon scene is added during post-production of the episode.)

The biggest problem for all of us, veterans and newbies alike, was that even though the music was turned off, we had to continue to dance without any reaction to the music disappearing and to keep dancing at the same tempo until the take was cut. That proved to be very difficult for me to do, at least during the first rehearsal. I figured out after one take that the only way I could keep on tempo was to silently establish a dance beat count while the music was playing and keep running it in my head once the music was gone. That way, I was able to maintain the illusion that the music was still there.

We made quite a few takes of the scene in which Michael tells Brian he is going to be the father (or sperm donor, depending on which character was discussing it) of Melanie's baby. I remember that George our AD thought our area was showing more intensity than the guys that were on the actual dance floor.

But, unfortunately, there was a problem. The catwalk area of the set was not permanently attached to anything solid, but rather suspended inside the set. So, while we were dancing with a lot of intensity, the catwalk was moving and causing the cameras to jiggle during filming which, of course, spoiled the shot. It took several takes before we were able to dance with intensity without causing the cameras to jitter.

Mid-way through the scene, several glitter cannons were fired to spray silver confetti all over the dance floor. As I was standing right next to one, it gave me a start when it went off during the first take. I eventually got used to it but it was quite loud.

After we finished the main shots, a small number of us were asked to stay on set to do crosses behind Hal and Gale while they redid their lines. So, in my drag get-up, I got to do several of these crosses (though none made it into the final version of the scene).

I also had the rather embarrassing experience of accidentally stepping on Gale's foot between one of these takes. The catwalk was very narrow and with 15 or so background guys, as many cast and crew and a couple of cameras there, it was a very tight space. Between one of the takes, I had to move from one side of the catwalk to another to get back into my first position.

Gale was coming back from his first position for something and when I went by him, I accidentally stepped on his foot. It wasn't a hard step and since there were other people in the immediate area, I'm sure he never knew exactly who had stepped on him. I knew it though and felt bad for doing it but it was purely an accident and I didn't break protocol and say anything to him about it. Finally, that shoot came to an end and we were led back to holding.

The next scene we shot that day, at Liberty Diner, was almost anti-climactic. It was a simple scene that we ran through involving Brian, Justin, Ted and Debbie. As often happened, I was seated in a corner booth in the front of Diner. Between filming Babylon and the Diner, I had quickly changed into more masculine clothing and tried to wipe off the lipstick and eyeliner. By now, my previously spiked hair had flattened out under the heat of the studio lights. It had been quite a day for me and a long one when we were wrapped at about 11:30 pm that night. Like two days earlier, I sailed home with tons of memories about my first Babylon experience.

Throughout the period between the shoot and the day episode 307 aired in Canada, I was wondering how I might react to seeing myself in such an unusual situation and look on TV. It turned out that I didn't need to worry since most of what I did in both scenes wasn't used.

As you can see from the still frames, you can just barely make me out deep in the back of Babylon and the Diner. I was always a little disappointed when I filmed something that didn't make it to the final version of a scene but this time, I think there was also a bit of a relief. I think I would have liked to have seen me in more of a feminine role which is definitely not something I am used to. But, then again, who wants to see a 46 year old club kid. Maybe for once it was better that all you can see of me is a tiny dark figure in the background.



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### Episode 311

February 20, 2003

Call Time: 11:30 am

Wrap Time: 11:30 pm

Set 1: Downtown Pittsburgh Street

Location 1: Lakeshore Boulevard, Etobicoke.

Set 2: Gay Community Center

Location 2: Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Toronto.



It had been a couple of months since I had done a QAF shoot so today's filming was a welcome day for me. My agent called the day before, as usual, and told me that I was going to be a part of two different scenes, both to be shot on location. This was the second time (and as it turned out the last time) that I would be filming in two different locations on the same day.

The day was sunny but rather cold and windy when I arrived at Background Holding for the first scene. This first shoot was to take place on Lakeshore Boulevard, a major Toronto street located on the waterfront of Lake Ontario. It was to be a simple scene involving Ted and Emmett, just walking down the street and talking. Most of the background cast was there to support the street scene. My part was to stand at the corner bus stop and look like I was waiting for a bus to come. Since there wasn't going to be an actual bus, I waited a long time for that bus to come.

Rain or shine, hot or cold, we always filmed no matter what the conditions were so it was very challenging to be standing out in the rather brisk wind and below freezing temperatures. Where I was positioned, I was standing in the shadow of a building so it was hard to keep warm. About the only welcome relief came about halfway through the filming when everyone took a 15 minute break for our substantials ("subs") and could get as much warmth from the sun as we could.

Along around 4 pm, we wrapped the scene and the 3rd ADs informed us that the second shoot was to take place at the Ukrainian Cultural Centre which was located several miles west of where we were for the first scene. It took about 20 minutes to get there by car and after I parked, I proceeded to the second holding area in the Centre.

Several hours passed and then at around 7:30 pm, we were all called to set. The ADs led us from the holding room to a large auditorium in the Centre. Unlike most times, the lead 3rd AD George told us to find a seat in the auditorium and sit down. His only instruction was that we were not to sit in any of the chairs that had tape marks below them.

Once George had said that, I immediately knew what he meant. The tape marks were placed under specific chairs in the auditorium because that was where members of the main cast were going to sit during the filming. Since we had been given almost free rein where to sit, I immediately went to the front of the auditorium, looked for a chair with a tape mark and sat one row immediately behind and to the left of it. At the time, I had no idea who was going to be sitting there...just that it would be one of the main cast.

Sure enough, once all the background cast had been seated, in came the "first team." This time, it was Randy, Gale, David Gionopoulos (guest starring as mayoral candidate Stockwell), Thea, Michelle, Sherry Miller, Makyla Smith and Sharon. Each took their position in the auditorium. Gale remained in the back while David moved up front to the podium. The others took their seats around the auditorium and to my pleasure, it was Sharon who came up front and sat down in front of me.

Like most of the other cast members who were seated, Sharon was given large photo placards which I assumed were to be used during the scene. Once everyone was in place, rehearsals began. By the time the first rehearsal was over, I was stunned. I immediately realized this was going to be a powerful and pivotal scene in the episode.

As you can see from the still frame, this is the scene where mayoral candidate Stockwell is confronted by the Liberty Avenue community about why several gay-bashings and deaths had seemingly gone unpunished. Each of the main cast in turn held up his or her placard with the picture of a gay bashed victim who had been either badly injured or killed (including the placard of Justin, held up by his mother). Stockwell, had a stock answer for each one.

Then, it was Debbie's turn. And Sharon, as Debbie, delivered a tour-de-force performance that only she can, calling Stockwell to answer for the failure of the Pittsburgh Police department to find and punish the perpetrator of the death of Jason Kemp, the young gay boy who had been brutally killed and left in a dumpster behind Liberty Diner during season three. It was amazing to see her so deeply into her character, you could truly hear anger in her voice and she delivered the dialogue.

If you've seen the episode, then you know how powerful the scene is and how intense it was. It was just as intense

throughout the several takes we made of the scene, even after hearing the dialogue repeated several times.

The day was made more special because I was able to talk to not one but two members of the cast in between takes of this scene. First, I was able to talk briefly with Thea Gill for the first time while working for QAF. Thea, as you know by now, was one of the major reasons I was able to become a part of the extended QAF family. I had met her very briefly at the only Queer as Folk book signing event held in Toronto in January 2002. Now, I was able to spend about 5 minutes chatting with her about what she was doing and what I was doing.

That experience alone would have made my night. Then, something even more amazing occurred. In between another set of takes, Sharon Gless struck up a conversation with some of us in the background cast. This is something the main cast normally never does. But Sharon is such a genuine person I really believed she enjoyed making small talk with those of us around her.

Several of the other background cast gave her the usual accolades for Cagney and Lacey, something I know she has heard thousands of times before. It didn't matter though because she genuinely replied that she was very humbled by their compliments and very thankful that they enjoyed her performances.

Then, she and I made eye contact and I just had to say something. I said to her, "Miss Gless I also enjoyed Cagney and Lacey very much but I also enjoyed your performances in another series that goes back farther than Cagney and Lacey. I remember you when you were on 'Switch'." Now, Switch was Sharon's first major television role. It was broadcast on CBS-TV in 1974 and starred Eddie Albert and Robert Wagner as partners in a detective agency. Sharon played their secretary.

Well, Sharon was quite taken aback by this. She said that no one had mentioned Switch to her in years and, as with other compliments, she said she was very pleased that I had remembered the series and enjoyed her performances. Then she said to me, "But you don't look like you are old enough to remember Switch." I was not expecting her to think that but, as anyone who knows me is aware, I look far younger than I really am, especially without my glasses which was always the way I appeared when I was on QAF. So I answered her, "You may not believe this Miss Gless but I am actually 46" (which I was at the time). Well, she just couldn't believe it and said I looked much younger than 46. I thanked her very much and then she excused herself to look for a pair of glasses she needed before we resumed filming.



We finally finished the scene and wrapped about 11:30 pm. Another day's work done on QAF. Months later when the scene aired, I initially couldn't find myself in this scene. So I assumed that I had been off camera the whole time. Only later on when the wide-screen version came out on DVD did I discover that I am visible in a few of the opening shots that were taken from behind the stage looking out into the audience. The original Showcase full-screen broadcast had cropped me out of the scene because I am in the extreme right side of the shot. But, looking at the wide-screen version, you can clearly see where I am if you know where to look.

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### Episode 313

March 13, 2003

Call Time: 8:00 pm

Wrap Time: 2:30 am

Set: Woody's Diner

Location: Greystone Studios, Mississauga.



This was a late shoot with a call time of 8:00 pm. We were going to film just one scene at Woody's Bar. This is the closing scene of the episode where Justin and Brian are having a drink at the bar and lamenting to each other about Justin being tossed out of art school for not apologizing for orchestrating the anti-Stockwell campaign and Brian lamenting about being jobless.

Again another simple scene. The thing I most remember about the scene was that as it was originally shot, I was placed at the bar right next to Randy Harrison. I was literally standing beside him for the first half of the scene before I did a cross through the shot and disappeared.

Because that was the way it was originally filmed, I ended up being one of the few people around both Gale and Randy during most of the filming. Another example of the many times I ended up in Randy's personal space during the shooting of a scene. I do remember he looked exceptionally handsome that night and confess to giving him a look up and down a few times.

That aside, both Gale and Randy were known for not talking to the background cast unless the background actor had a regular role on the show and was known to them. Such was the case on this night as the actor who played the Woody's bartender was someone both actors knew and they did talk to him. I just stood there and watched and listened. In this business you don't want to violate protocol and since they never spoke to me directly, I wasn't about to say anything to them.

Some of the things I heard that night included a comment from Randy that he liked to go up north when he wasn't shooting and ski a bit. But it was Gale who really put on quite a performance. Somehow, and I don't really remember the reason why, during one of the breaks between takes the subject of Spanish novellas came up. For those of you who don't know what novellas are, they are essentially steamy soap opera television shows broadcast in many Latin American countries. Many of them are extremely popular in their countries in the way *Dallas* used to be in North America.

Well, quicker than you could say "Hola", Gale launched into a one man rendition of a Spanish novella. I don't have a clue what he actually said since I don't speak Spanish but it was interesting to learn that Gale is fluent in the language, probably because he lived in Los Angeles briefly before QAF (and where he returned to film his new 2006 series, *Vanished*, for Fox TV). I also remember he delivered some of this mock Spanish dialogue playing it as if he were drunk. You have to remember this was around 1 am and everyone, cast and crew, was quite tired and wanted to finish the scene. So it was quite a pleasant surprise that Gale was the one to keep things loose and humorous between takes.

I was also originally asked to do a few extra crosses for some secondary shots that were done just before we wrapped the shoot. Unfortunately, my running shoes seemed to be squeaking too much and after three takes, George, the 3rd AD, asked me to step off stage and he had someone else do the cross.

Ironically, it was one of these squeaky crosses that ended up being used in the scene while all of the footage that was shot with me at the bar was not used at all. The director and editor decided to use close-up shots of Gale and Randy during the early part of the scene and by the time they cut to a longer shot of the bar, I had already walked out of the scene. The cross you do see of me is

more of a silhouette shot of me walking through the set. I know it was me because I can just make out a piece of clothing I know I was wearing and also I have a certain unique gait when I walk and I recognized that.

The final part to the story of this shoot is that I got to go home with the Woody's Bartender... well, sort of. The actor playing the bartender and I had struck up several conversations during the shoot and when we wrapped at 2:30 am the next day, he didn't have a ride back to his place. So, since I had my car, I offered to drive him home. He was a very nice guy but unfortunately for me, quite straight. But I enjoyed his company and he appreciated that I went out of my way to bring him home. Now if only he had been really gay and this had been another QAF scene...I might really have had quite a night to remember. *C'est la vie.*

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### Episode 314

**March 17, 2003**

**Call Time: 7:00 am**

**Wrap Time: 10:30 am**

**Set: Voting Station, off Liberty Avenue.**

**Location: Dundonald Street, Toronto.**



Today's shoot was one of the shortest I ever experienced with the series. The call time was 7:00 am, we started filming at 8:30 am and were wrapped for the day by 10:30 am.

It was also by far the easiest scene I had been involved with up to that time. All that most of the background cast, including me, were required to do was to stand in line along the corner of a building on Dundonald Street which is just off Church Street. This was the "voting" scene in the episode where Michael and Brian are walking down Liberty Avenue and get in line to cast their votes for the Pittsburgh mayoral election.

I was up in the front of the line so you almost can't even see me in the still frame of the scene. The simplicity of the scene alleviated the need for the usual wardrobe, hair and make-up niceties that we usually went through before filming a scene. The wardrobe folks basically just ensured we were wearing proper looking outdoor clothing and jackets. Most of us, myself included, were so far

away from the actual filming that often we couldn't tell when we were rolling or were between takes.

After about a couple of hours of takes, the scene was finished and the entire morning cast was wrapped for the day.

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#### Episode 314

March 24, 2003

Call Time: 6:00 pm

Wrap Time: 6:30 am

Set: Liberty Avenue Post-Election Celebration.

Location: Church Street, Toronto.



It was a quite a party, one for the ages. Or, as when Lindsay said, "Come on let's Dance" and Debbie replied so appropriately, "Damn Right we'll dance.....In the street!" It was the night Police Chief and homophobe Stockwell was defeated for Mayor of Pittsburgh. And the party carried on all night, figuratively and literally. This was the shoot that ended the third season of Queer as Folk and in many ways was one of the two most unique filming experience I had with the show.

During the five seasons QAF was in production, most of the episodes took about 7 or 8 days to complete. However, even though this episode was of standard broadcast length, it was entirely shot in 6 days. And the primary reason it was put together in such a short time was because on this night, March 24, we shot what amounted to the entire last 10 minutes of the episode including three extended scenes and several secondary shots. In fact, there was so much to shoot, we barely got through it all before the sun came up the next day.

The shoot was huge. The show had hired over 350 background actors and had the city of Toronto close down an entire block of Church Street from Maitland to Alexander streets. There were high rise cranes where cameras and high intensity spot lights were bolted. Some of the background cast had been asked to bring their cars so that the street was arranged with several of them in rows of two.

When my agent called on the weekend for this shoot, I had no idea of what exactly was going to happen. I was

just told that the call time was at 6:00 pm on the Monday and that I was to report to the Wilde Oscar restaurant (which was on the corner of Church and Maitland and is now known as O'Grady's). From my work the previous Monday, I was aware that this was going to be the final shoot of season three. But I had no idea of what we were going to do until I actually got to the area at around 5:45 pm and saw that Church had been closed. That was when I knew it was going to be a very involved filming and that we would most likely be here all night.

One of the things I always regretted was not being a part of the Pride Parade shoot way back in season two. I was actually called to be in that scene and, had I accepted, it would have been my first QAF filming. But, I had not told my boss at my regular job about my intension to work on the show and felt it wasn't appropriate to ask at that time. So I declined to work on that shoot.

Then, when I actually read some accounts of that shooting day and later saw the episode, I could have kicked myself because I could see it must have been a magic night. From that time onward, I kept hoping that I would get the chance, at least once, to have a similar kind of night. As I entered the closed area, something told me on this night I would get my chance. I was right.

Because there were so many people involved with the shoot, several background holding areas had been set up. I was in the group being held at Wilde Oscars (O'Grady's). Others were held at Woody's Bar (the real one on Church), Cruise/Tango Bar and other locations.

Preparation for filming took a long, long time. This was understandable since it was a night shoot, lighting had to be set and all the cameras needed to be put in place. There were also several additional 3rd assistant directors than normal although George was still the main 3rd AD on set for the shoot. With over 350 of us in the background cast, the ADs had to make sure the wardrobe, hair and make-up folks got the extended time they needed to go from holding area to holding area to make sure we were all cleared for the evening.

Finally, after about three and a half hours, a first group of us was brought outside to film. I was one of the lucky





ones to be picked for this first shoot. It was a quick shot where we were filmed running and dancing outside on the sidewalks, celebrating Dinkins' victory as Pittsburgh's mayor. It took less than an hour to do the shot and you can see me running along the sidewalk along with the rest of the background cast.

The next shoot took a bit more time to set up and this time all the background cast was asked to come into the street. We were told more or less to find a spot and stay there. During the shoot, we were simply to dance and celebrate and look like we were having a good time. In my case, ever mindful of wherever the cameras were going to be, I noticed the primary camera was on a high crane and that it was going to swoop down into the crowd until it came to focus on Sharon and Peter for the first of the three major scenes. This was the scene where Debbie consoles Emmett, after Emmett has broken up with Ted, telling him that we should mourn the losses because they are many but to also celebrate the victories because they are few.

I positioned myself between two of the cars on the street very close to where that crane camera was going to swoop down so that I could be sure to be in the shot. Sure enough, when the scene was filmed, you can definitely see me between the cars dancing and shaking my hand in the air celebrating. The shot was actually used twice in the episode, once at the beginning of this scene and again towards the end of the episode just before Brian and Justin walk off into the celebrating crowd.

We made about 7 or 8 takes of this scene primarily because the director, Kelly Makin, wanted to try different ways of having the camera swoop down and stop right in front of Sharon and Peter. Eventually he found exactly the way he wanted and we completed the scene.

Once this first primary scene was done, we moved on to the second primary scene. This was where Melanie and Lindsay are talking on their cell phones, not realizing they were in the same crowd. Lindsay was excited to tell Melanie that Stockwell had lost but Melanie had even better news. If you remember, Melanie's news was that unlike many of her female relatives, she had made it through the first trimester of her pregnancy in good

health and that their and Michael's baby was doing fine. Eventually they find each other in the crowd and celebrate together with a big hug and kiss.

While this was going on, other cameras were filming some of us celebrating around them. One of the cameras caught me dancing around the area in a line of about five or so of us. After that, I circled around after my little dance and assumed a position in an opening just behind the main cameras doing the shooting so I could get a close up look at the scene as it was being recorded.

While I was there, lo and behold, who wanders over but none other than Sharon Gless who must have wanted to get a close up look as well. Thea and Michelle had turned in a very realistic loving performance during this take. After it had been completed, Sharon, who was standing beside me, turned to me as said, "Wasn't that just beautiful." A bit shocked she had made the comment to me, but totally in agreement, I replied, "Yes is definitely was" with a big grin on my face.



We did one more take of the scene and then time ran out and we had to break for "lunch" which for this shoot was at midnight. Since the various background holding areas were too small to host our lunch, we were told to walk over to a local school where we would find our meal. We were also told that since this was partially a residential area, we had to be very quiet coming and going so as not to wake up the neighbourhood. For the most part, we were silent and I would guess no one was bothered.

We returned to set about an hour and a half later to finish the remaining takes of the Lindsay/Melanie scene. We all ended up in different positions for the remaining takes and I was placed quite far away from the main action so I did not see the remaining takes of this scene. Because we had been placed in different locations, I figured I wouldn't end up being seen and yet, with remarkable good luck, the dance through that had been filmed before lunch did make it into the final edit of the scene so you can see me just before the camera focuses on Lindsay.

During this second part of filming, the production also had to deal with one of those unexpected things that

sometimes happen during a TV or movie shoot. It was about two in the morning when we started hearing a dog barking. Most of the businesses on Church Street have private apartments above their businesses and from one of the apartments we started hearing an obviously distraught dog.

The dog kept barking and barking. It appeared its owner was not home and since the window had been left open, the barking was loud. Naturally, there was no way we could film while the dog was doing his thing so some of the crew attempted to get a hold of the building manager or landlord to see what could be done. Although I don't know exactly what took place, it took about thirty minutes before the dog stopped barking and we were able to resume filming. Fortunately, the dog didn't bother us again.

After we completed this second key scene, all of us were sent back to holding because the crew needed to reconfigure the set to film the final major scene. About an hour later, though, I was again asked to come out into the street to film a secondary shot that actually appears in the episode just immediately after Debbie and the Woody's crowd spills out into the street to begin celebrating. I was paired with another background actor and positioned in front of one of the stores to the left of the real Woody's. On action, the crowd from that store comes spilling out into the street while me and my partner dance and jump up and down. Although we only did two takes of this shot, it too made it into the episode, in glorious black and white.

A little while later, we were summoned for one last shooting, the final scene of the final episode of the season where Brian and Justin survey the crowd from the steps of Woody's and contemplate their future. This time, I was positioned just to the left of the Woody's stairs and although off camera during most of the scene I was able to hear most of the dialogue and see the action. Not knowing at the time exactly what had been happening in the story line, I was rather intrigued about Brian's seemingly change of heart and actually helping the anti-Stockwell cause when he had originally been part of it. But then, a true surprise occurred.

Part of the way through the scene, Hal Sparks and this kid actor I had never seen before come running through the crowd and informed Brian and Justin that the police and "Hunter's" mother were looking for them and were going to take Hunter away. Hunter? Who was Hunter?

At the time, I had no clue who Hunter was and how he came to be part of the story since this was the first time he had appeared in any scene I had done for season 3.

As we progressed, I learned the actor's first name was Harris but not much more. It was only months later when I saw the episodes he appeared in did I learn Hunter's story and that he was being played by the very talented Harris Allan. I also didn't know that a year later, I would get the chance to meet Harris in person and enjoy an extended conversation with him.

This final scene was the longest of the night and by this point, it was getting to be about 4:30 am, then 5, then 5:30. And soon enough, the sky began to get light and it was getting close to sun-up. Obviously this would have ruined the shot so director Kelly Makin began hurrying us up to ensure there would be enough darkness when the shots were made so that, if needed, they could be darkened enough in post-production to look believable.

Finally, the main shots were done and the cameras were repositioned for the final shot of the evening. This is the shot where Brian and Justin walk arm in arm out into the celebrating crowd to the tune of True Faith. We filmed this at around 5:45 am and if you notice, the sky is just getting light (actually it's a darkish blue which may have been colour corrected in post production).

During the filming, both Gale and Randy walked by me during each take so I was hopeful I would make it into the last scene. I wasn't disappointed. If you look closely during the first half of the scene, you will see me jumping up and down at the bottom of the shot on the left side of the screen close to Justin before I disappear behind another actor for the remainder of the shot.

And then, at 6:15 am, it was all over. We were officially wrapped for season three and by 6:30 I had signed out and was on my way back to my regular job for what turned out to be a 40 hour day (I had been at my regular job the day before, when to the shoot and then completed a second full business day, hence the 40 hours without sleep). That night to remember I had always hoped for since seeing the Pride Parade episode had finally been realized.

