

The Gay Byrne show was taped on Saturday for broadcast on Monday evening. The Communications Department, at the request of Dr. Nolan, President of the University, hosted a dinner preceeding the broadcast. Invited were faculty members, Unmiversity Board Members, and key political and religous leaders.

The Television Show is Aired

It seemed as if the next day and a half went so slowly. Katie had two classes to teach. Usually busy days fly by, but not this one. Shane went back to Rosseville to work on replenishing the stock at the Lantern, his regular Monday assignment. It was a busy weekend and their stock was depleted. They expected a big crowd tonight for their own viewing party of the Gay Byrne show.

Shane apologized profusely that he could not be at the Lantern because he had to commit to the party at the University. After all it was Dr. McDermott's recommendation that they go on the show in the first place and Sean Hurley and his staff had prepared them very well. His partners, Chris and Liam, of course, knew that and accepted it, but they were not going to let the moment pass without ragging him unmercifully. "Big deal television star has to hob nob with academics and royalty and forget the people who got him there." And there was more like that, anything to lay a guilt trip on Shane. It was great sport for his partners and the staff.

When he finished his work and ordered enough food and drink to get them through the rest of the week, they fessed up to say how proud they were of him and what great sport it was to make him so uncomfortable. They all laughed together, "You are so easy to torture," said Liam. "Get along with ya, and have a good time. Give our love to Katie."

The show wasn't going to air until 10:00 PM and there was still a lot of time to fill. Sean and his staff arranged for dinner at the Faculty Dining Room and Shane was expected at six. He went to his cottage to take a nap after which he would shower and dress for dinner. He thought he would dress like a television personality with a blue blazer and a white dress shirt with open collar, with no tie. As things turned out, it was the perfect attire for the evening.

He left the Lantern at about 5:00 and set out for the University at Galway City. On the way, he was passed by a sports car travelling at a high rate of speed. The sports car pulled in front of him but the rear of the car started to fishtail. The driver struggled to regain control but the car plowed into a horse drawn ass rail cart filled with turf. The sports car disappeared under the cart pitching the farmer forward and smashing him to the ground. The horse fell to the ground and with much whinnying tried to get up but all he could do was thrash around.

Shane stopped his car and ran to the scene. A farmer came out of his house and Shane shouted for him to call the emergency ambulance and the guards. The driver of the sports car was pitched through the wind screen and smashed head first into the rear of the wagon. He was obviously dead. Shane could find no pulse.

He went to the farmer who was already soaked with blood. His leg was broken and there was a terrible laceration along his calf. Shane ran back to his car and grabbed some tape. He took the shattered boards from the wagon and made a splint but first he had to deal with the bleeding. He took his own belt and wrapped it around the thigh of the injured farmer as a tourniquet and asked a bystander to make sure it was tight. He then finished his splint. Meanwhile the guards pulled up and the ambulance was right behind.

Shane spoke with the guards and told them what he had observed about the accident. He asked the paramedic to recheck the driver of the sports car. He thought the man was dead, and indeed, he was.

Sean introduced himself to the guards and the paramedics. They all knew who Shane was from his media coverage and one of the guards frequented the Lantern.

The guards took Shane's statement but not before the paramedic came by to congratulate him. He said the farmer would have bled to death by this time without Shane's intervention.

"Thank that young lad over there," said Shane, pointing out a teenager. He is the one who held the tourniquet tightly enough."

"You know where to reach me," he said. "May I leave now? I have to be at the University by 6:00."

The guard sent him on his way and indicated that they would be in touch with him as their investigation progressed.

Thoroughly shaken and with his pants loose, Shane got into his car and resumed his trip to the University.

When he arrived at the campus he was still shaking as the adrenalin left his body and Katie immediately noticed it as he held her, even more tightly than usual.

"Shane what happened?"

Shane gave the short version of the story, leaving out the death, and said he would fill her in on the details when they were alone later.

Shane excused himself and went to the men's room to wash up. He was starting to feel a little better, took some deep breaths and rejoined the festivities under the watchful eye of a worried Katie. He was no longer trembling and held out his hand for Katie's

observation. He leaned over and whispered into Katie's ear. "I used my belt for a tourniquet so just ignore me if my pants fall down."

Katie laughed and gave him a wicked look. "Don't worry! If your pants fall down, I'll know exactly what to do." And she nudged him with her shoulder.

The dinner guests started to collect. Angela was escorted by Dr. McDermott and she was stunning in a purple dress with yellow accessories. Even Katie noticed and thought, "Wow, mom really looks great when she dresses up. For all those years she never had the opportunity, and now, look at her. She is beautiful."

Sean, his wife, and some of his staff members came in. Mairead Hurley also looked lovely.

Fr. Jim McCarthy from the Newman Center was a guest, and much to Katie's surprise he was joined by Fr. Liam O'Malley. Katie knew about the party at the Lantern and presumed that Liam would be there.

And wonder of it all, Dr. Kieran Nolan, President of the University and his wife, Fiona arrived. Katie greeted them and introduced Shane as her fiancé for the very first time.

As they moved away, Katie whispered to Shane that this must really be a big deal to bring the chief of gods down from Olympus.

Waiters took drink orders and other uniformed young ladies, students trying to make a pound or two, started to circulate among the group with hors d'ouvres. Katie and Shane both ordered soft drinks since they were the stars of the show, they didn't want alcohol inhibiting their ability to think on their feet or to communicate clearly.

Katie and Shane were treated like guests of honor and the small crowd gravitated around them. They wanted to know about the kind of person Gay Byrne was. Shane talked about him as the perfect gentleman and Katie talked about his professionalism and his communication abilities. Both talked about how pleasant he made their experience and how, without confrontation of any kind, he was able to get the information he wanted out of them.

Others wanted to know about U2. Katie talked about how normal they were and that the conversation was terrific. You will have to see the show to see how great our interaction was.

"They chose the song they played in honor of Katie's mom," said Shane, which came as a big surprise to Katie's mom.

"It worked out beautifully," said Katie. "You will see that when the program comes on."

“In fact, Bono is researching the literature of the ancient legends for song possibilities and I said I would send him a bibliography.”

The maitre d' called them to dinner to a long baronial table set for them in the center of the room. Katie had never before seen the place settings or the cutlery before and correctly surmised that the staff had put out their best for this event. She was very impressed. When they had a reception for her doctoral award they served finger foods with plastic knives and forks. For this they had candlelight from candles in Galway Chrystal candelabras, Irish linen table cloths and napkins, Galway Chrystal glasses and goblets, and genuine Tiffany cutlery.

“Just like happy hour at the Lantern,” whispered Shane. Katie smiled and whispered back, “we may never see the like of this again.”

Archbishop Manning was asked to say grace. It was a brief, eloquent, and beautiful prayer of blessing.

Fr. O'Malley came by to their seats to thank them for the gifts to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. “A gift like that will help a lot of people for a long time.”

Shane smiled and said, “We don't expect this to continue on, but if it does, maybe we'll start a foundation for you.”

O'Malley squeezed their shoulders in appreciation.

Considering the academic nature of their surroundings, the table talk was very non academic. Shane reflected that when people break bread together, they strip themselves of their pretenses and become real. Shane thought of the sign over the dining room door of the Lantern, “And they knew Him in the breaking of the bread.” He thought about how important that message was to him and how owning the pub was really a ministry. He would have to share that with Liam O'Malley.

Katie looked over at her mom who was genuinely enjoying herself. She was engaged in the conversation around her. When she caught her eye, she winked at her. Peadar was definitely in his element but it was obvious that she fit right into it. Mother and daughter exchanged smiles and all was right with their world.

The dinner was excellent, a choice of prime beef or lobster. Their glasses were filled with wine which Katie carefully sipped. Others at the table were dinking heartily. Katie hoped that the airing would not become raucous. She wouldn't expect that from this crowd but she had never been with such dignitaries before.

Just before coffee was served, Sean Hurley asked everyone for their attention. He wanted to thank the University for making this night possible. Sean introduced Dr. Nolan who said, “This is a great night for the University and thanked Katie for venturing into the lay community as a representative of the University. We hope to do more of that kind of

outreach because we have the resources to be of very significant service to the community at large. We are leaving the ivory tower and, hopefully, we can heal our society with the intellectual and social capital at our disposal. We are not about to start monasteries but we can build social community centers of learning and creativity. Dr. O’Bierno and Shane, we thank you for making the first step possible.”

Everyone clapped and started another toast. “Other guests are in the Faculty Lounge, said Sean. I wish all of you a great evening; one that I am certain will be memorable. I have not seen the tape but Gay Byrne assures me that is beyond sensational. It is half nine; please follow me into the dining room to join our other guests.”

There were about one hundred people in the faculty lounge, representing most of the faculty and the student government. Others included the representative political leaders, and community leaders from the County Galway region.

Sean’s staff had arranged a huge screen and the technical equipment to provide excellent view for all.

At ten minutes before ten, there was a fill in broadcast for local news. All of a sudden, to the surprise of all, the announcer was saluting Shane Ryan, the publican from Rosseville who saved the life of farmer Sean Simons. There were photographs of the wreck. They had already removed the body of the driver of the sports car who was still unidentified but they found a file photo of Shane from the Nina G episode and flashed it on the giant screen.

An embarrassed Shane squeezed Katie’s hand and said, “I told you there was more to tell.”

President Nolan leaned over and asked Shane what he did in his spare time. Shane smiled and said that he was just a normal guy chasing after one of his professors.

Shane whispered to Katie, “The newsreader trumped me. I wanted to tell you those details myself but in private.”

The surprised crowd started to applaud Shane. He very graciously waved to everyone. Katie held on to him for dear life before something else happened.

The group grew quiet for the lead in to the Gay Byrne Late Late Show, currently being watched on just about every television set in Ireland.

The familiar stage set filled up the huge screen. Katie and Shane had not paid much attention to the opening of the show and they were talking with the boys from U2 during the monologue. The page collected them during Byrne’s desk activity so they were seeing part of the show for the first time. They had not seen any of the commercials so there was some newness to reliving this again.

They saw their introduction and the banter before the interview. Shane thought his joke about the rest of the Irish population coming to the Lantern was lame but everyone in the lounge laughed. It was better than he thought. Chris and Liam will love it.

Katie's banter about Wonder Woman, a nice deflection she thought, and emphasizing that Shane was Superman also worked. The crowd laughed but then again, he saved another life only a few hours ago.

Shane told the story of the Nina G crew, a story he thought was a wooden presentation because he had told the story dozens of times before. The story was actually told well and the crowd in the lounge had the same interest as the audience in the studio.

True to being Shane, he minimized his role and attributed the rescue to the Grace of God. Shane really believed that and his belief came across in his statement. You could sense that in the Faculty Lounge as well.

After the commercial, he turned his attention to Katie. He mentioned that he understood that Katie was good with a frying pan. She tried to make a joke about her cooking skills but Byrne quickly led her into the story. She told the story of the intrusion at Leveegee, again emphasizing that Shane had subdued three of the intruders. She talked about her mixed feelings about so severely injuring the intruder.

Byrne deftly led her to talking about her mother. Angela sat up very straight. However, Katie's emphasis that this was a life altering incident and the regrets associated with it touched her deeply because of the good fortune of connecting with Peadar.

This led to the discussion of Angela's parenting skills and Katie's fantasy that she really was a difficult child. She wasn't at all difficult from Angela's perspective.

The crowd was impressed with Katie's wild child allusion and her revision of Psalm twenty-three drew some laughter. *"Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because I am the toughest girl in the valley."*

Most of the group assembled did not know that Shane and Katie were formally engaged and they clapped at the story.

Fr. O'Malley put his head in his hands when Byrne talked about a thousand engagements this week in the churches of Ireland and a long line outside the Rosseville parish house.

Katie's line about her, Bono, and Edge using aliases got a big laugh in the Lounge.

Everyone said, "ahhh" at Bono's dedication of their song and Angela was very touched.

Everybody cheered at Katie dancing with Bono.

When the picture faded away the room burst into applause and cheers.

Sean was beside himself. He rushed up to Katie and Shane and tried to hug them both at the same time. "This is an award winning program," he gushed.

Congratulations filled the room. More drinks were served and the craic became empowered.

Dr. Nolan took the microphone and called for order for just a minute. He talked about how proud he was that a member of the University faculty had presented herself so well. He addressed Katie's concern that she did not get to talk about the University. He pointed out that presenting herself as Dr. Kathryn O'Byrne carried a lot of weight and her praise of the Newman Center as one of her parishes gave the University something of a face. He stated that Katie and Shane's stories were real "grabbers." He congratulated both that they presented themselves so well. He then thanked Dr. Hurley for his preparation and negotiations and Dr. McDermott for having the idea in the first place. "A moment of chance was very effective and God smiled on us," he concluded.

Everyone clapped and the party continued into the night.