

Good News Gary

By
Chad Hutson

509-863-3713
Hutone@comcast.net

OVER BLACK

A man's voice fades in. Deep baritone. Concerned, yet oddly soothing.

ANCHOR 1

Another deadly shooting in the city's Westview area today.

Another voice. A woman's. Exacting and purposeful.

ANCHOR 2

Wildfires continue to burn in the Deep Creek area, ravaging hundreds of homes.

More voices of TV anchors.

ANCHOR 3

A tourist was decapitated by the blades of the helicopter...

ANCHOR 4

Police revealed the killer googled 'where to stab someone so they die'...

ANCHOR 5

Peaceful protestors were fired upon by Military Police today in Romania, killing at least...

ANCHOR 6

The priest, whose career spanned three decades, was arrested after he admitted to molesting dozens...

The voices of the anchors run over each other as the horrifically sad stories grow in volume.

A gloomy cacophony of noise, growing evermore insidious.

Then... SILENCE.

FADE IN

INT. NEWS DIVISION CONTROL ROOM - DAY

A short, plump MAN (70s) stands before a massive wall of video monitors. This is WERNER WHUTLEY, Network President for Toppe Media.

A collage of solemn TV news hucksters reflect in Werner's glasses as his bushy eyebrows tilt inward, frustrated with all the bad news.

He zeroes in on one screen in particular - a TV newswoman, MARLENE OWENS (50s), in a purple top, delivering the five o'clock news.

She has sweeping blonde hair, dramatic eyes framed in overdone lashes, and pancake foundation that doesn't quite match her neck. She bobs her platinum blonde head emphasizing EVERY. THING. SHE'S. SAYING.

Werner grumbles.

WERNER

Wow, we really need to upgrade the talent in Seattle.

On the monitor-

Marlene bobble-heads another sentence as a CHYRON appears on the screen behind her: "Good News Gary."

Werner's eyes light up. He smiles.

WERNER

Except for this guy. Finally, some good news!

INT. KGRT TV - NEWS STUDIO - DAY

A manly, thick mustache with subtle shades of brown and red. It turns upward on the edges and belongs to GARY CARLTON (40s), as he smiles broadly. He's an overly idealistic, salt-of-the-Earth kinda guy ya can't help but root for.

Gary watches Marlene and her fellow anchor DAN STEELE (60s), who possesses expertly combed-over hair and a permanent grin showcasing bleached pearly whites. Rumor has it, his hair hasn't moved since 1989.

Dan and Marlene sit at the brightly colored, tear-drop shaped TV 10 Action News Desk. Behind them, a sweeping video panel and the letters **KGRT Action News** backlit with brilliantly colored LED lights.

Gary eyes the two anchors intently as they watch his story on the monitors embedded in the news desk.

The red light on the TV cameras pointed at them remains off as they watch the daily **Good News Gary** segment.

Dan smiles broadly at what he sees as Gary's smooth, comforting voice floats over the studio speakers.

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)

For 41 years, Neil walked these streets.

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 He delivered utility bills,
 birthday cards, graduation
 announcements, political flyers,
 and letters from loved ones
 fighting in wars. And Neil didn't
 stop at mail. He even helped
 deliver a baby in this neighborhood
 years ago.

Gary beams seeing his colleagues enjoying the story.

The anchors' faces glow as they lean in to the monitor
 showing --

*An elderly black man, Neil (70s), walks up to a large
 CROWD replete with a table, cake, and presents.*

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 Neil walked this route for the last
 time as a mailman Tuesday and
 instead of hopping into his postal
 truck and heading back to the Post
 Office, he was greeted with this.

*Neil is shocked at the large turnout of residents he's
 delivered mail to all these years.*

GARY (O.S.)
 A going-away party for a man who
 had such an important role in their
 lives for decades.
 (beat)
 Even the baby he helped deliver
 came to say thanks.

*The BABY/MAN (30s) reaches around Neil and hugs him.
 With tears in his eyes, Neil hugs the Baby/Man back. The rest
 of the neighbors gather around them.*

The anchors smile at Gary's story.

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 Neil had only one thing on his mind
 when he was on his route. Get these
 fine folks their mail, no matter
 what. Now, he's made his last
 delivery.

Marlene blots at tears without smearing her makeup. Dan's
 eyes are also misty. He blots too because, you know, makeup.

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 Neil will look for something new to
 do in his retirement.

GARY (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 He said that will likely include
 taking walks to stay healthy and to
 keep him from getting bored. He may
 even stroll over to this
 neighborhood - the one in which he
 spent every weekday of his life.
 Old habits are hard to break.

The producer counts down back to live cameras.

PRODUCER (O.S.)
 OK, we're back in five.

NEIL (OVER STUDIO SPEAKERS)
 These people are like family. You
 don't just stop seein' them 'cuz
 you're retired. Now, I can see them
 whenever I want.

Marlene's emotions get the best of her as she lets out a
 whiny whimper.

MARLENE
 Bwhauuup!

She mouths to Gary: "beautiful story."

Dan sees she can't talk and offers to end the newscast.

DAN
 Marlene, I can close us out.

She nods yes.

PRODUCER 1
 We're live in three...

The producer holds up two fingers, then one, and points...

The red light pops on atop the TV camera facing the desk.

DAN
 A beautiful story, Gary. From all
 of us at K-G-R-T Action News,
 goodnight.

Gary smooths his bushy mustache confidently.

The camera red light blinks off and the producer gives the
 all clear.

Marlene leans over the desk and grabs Gary's hand.

MARLENE

Darn you, Gary. Another package
that's ruined my makeup.

She playfully slaps at his arm as they stand.

MARLENE

You get to do such fun stories.
They give you hope!

Gary smiles and twists the end of his mustache.

INT. KGRT TV STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Gary skips down the hallway, light on his feet with kinetic
energy, popping his head into offices of colleagues.

Gary feigns a tip of the hat in the first office.

GARY

Great series on those darn
potholes, Gwen.

GWEN (20s) petite and bubbly smiles HUGE.

He continues down the hall. Finger guns at the next office.

GARY

Love, LOVE the piece about Medicare
contracts, Petey. Thank God I'm not
that old... Yet!

The next one, overplaying an air guitar and singing an off-
key rendition of "Times Like These."

GARY

It's times like these we learn to
live again! Sophia, your interview
with Dave Grohl was amazing.

Touchdown arms at the last office in the hall.

GARY

Jordan, how about those Seahawks?
Am I right? Pete Carroll is a GOD!

Gary bounces away and into his office, high-fiving himself.

Down the hall, Gwen (20s) pops her head out the door of her
office, still smiling and clutching her heart.

GWEN
Thanks for the feedback, Gary
(beat)
He always makes me feel so good!

INT. KGRT TV STATION - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Gary chats on the phone with his daughter Chloe (19). Behind him on a shelf, six golden Emmys sparkle in the sunlight.

GARY
Glad you liked it, Chlo! I love
that I get to meet so many
interesting people in my job. So
what's your big news?

CHLOE (ON THE PHONE)
Daddy, sit. Sit down. Are you
sitting?

Gary looks around, as if Chloe can see him.

GARY
I'm sitting.

CHLOE
I got in! I have been accepted to
the U. I'm a University of
Washington HUSKY!

Screams ERUPT from the phone as he holds it from his ear.

GARY
Wow, Sparkle! THAT'S good news!

CHLOE
That means I'm coming back home.
Isn't that great?

GARY
You have no idea. It's been pretty
lonely around the house since you
left for Oregon.

CHLOE (ON THE PHONE)
Daddy, you've been my rock through
everything. Do you know how much
this means to me?

GARY
Everything, Chlo.

CHLOE (ON THE PHONE)
YES! Everything. It's what I want.
And it's what Mom would've wanted.

The clicking sound of Marlene's heels on the tile floor causes Gary look over to the door. Marlene leans into Gary's office, motioning to him she needs to talk.

MARLENE
Sorry to interrupt, Gary. Bert wants to see you.

Gary covers the phone.

GARY
On the phone with Chloe.

Marlene looks impatient.

GARY
Hey, Chlo wanna say hi to Marlene?

Gary switches to video, puts Chloe on speaker, and turns the phone around to Marlene. She motions to Gary not to show her to Chloe. Too late.

MARLENE
Hi Chloe. I hope school in Oregon is going OK.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER PHONE)
Well, now I'm going to be a Husky!
I got accepted into the U!

Marlene again motions to Gary she needs to talk to him.

MARLENE
Wow, that's great news. Sorry, but I need your father.

Marlene fakes a smile, then looks back to Gary.

MARLENE
He said he wants to see you now.

Marlene stands, waiting.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER PHONE)
We'll need to start filling out paperwork. Can we even afford this?

Embarrassed by the question, Gary looks to see if Marlene heard. She clearly did, as she hasn't taken her eyes off him.

GARY

We weren't expecting this so soon,
but we'll be fine. You just focus
on getting registered for classes.
I've got the finances covered.

Gary looks concerned.

CHLOE (ON SPEAKER PHONE)

Love you, daddy.

GARY

Love you, Sparkle.

INT. KGRT TV STATION - STATION MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

TV Station Manager BERT HEPTON (40s), slicked back greasy
hair and a tailored suit, sits at a large, EMMY-LESS desk.

Across from him sits a nonchalant Gary.

BERT

I can't figure this out. We were
trending so well for the past
fifteen quarters, and then WHAM!

Gary jumps out of his nonchalantness as Bert STRIKES the desk
with his hand.

BERT

The numbers just dropped off. Like,
we are seeing people turning OFF
the newscast before your segment.

Bert hands Gary a document detailing the ratings slide.

BERT

Corporate is down our throats about
this. They want a change.

GARY

Are these numbers right? It just
doesn't add up. They dropped so
fast.

BERT

You know this business, Gary. It's
trendy as hell. One minute it's
this, the next minute it's that.

GARY

Well, whatever the problem is, we can fix it. I have ideas for new promos. And lots of story ideas...

BERT

They're saying they can't continue to see the numbers slide, so...

GARY

We'll polish up the segments. More razzle dazzle!

Gary waves "jazz hands" at Bert as he shakes his head no.

BERT

The ship has sailed on good news, Gary.

Gary is undaunted.

GARY

Don't be silly, Bert! People love good news. We'll get those numbers back - I KNOW! Animal rescues!

BERT

Gary.

GARY

Seniors learning to play instruments! Renaissance Fairs. Those people are wacky, am I right?

BERT

Gary, no.

GARY

GOAT YOGA! Long-lost twins! The newest Oreo cookie flavor! TINY HORSES AS PETS! DESIGNER TOILETS!

BERT

GARY! Stop! Just stop.

Gary stops, catching his breath. His enthusiasm fading as reality hits him.

GARY

I've brought this station Emmys, national recognition, and solid reporting for 10 years.

He leans in toward Bert, hopeful.

GARY

I make our viewers SMILE. EVERY.
SINGLE. NIGHT.

BERT

The ratings drop triggered your
performance clause. We are
terminating your contract.

INT. KGRT TV STATION - GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

A file box sits on Gary's desk. Crinkled papers, framed photos, and his Emmys spill out the top. Gary hides behind it, head down.

A head pops into the doorway. It's KRISTIE (late 20s), a spirited save-the-Earth kinda girl whose bravado belies her tiny frame. She's Gary's videographer.

KRISTIE

Hey man. You here?

She looks at the desk and sees him partially hidden.

KRISTIE

I've got tomorrow's schedule...

Gary lifts his head and shakes it "no." Kristie suddenly notices the contents of the box.

KRISTIE

Noooo, they didn't. They wouldn't!
This is TOTAL bullshit.

GARY

Yep. Tonight was my last show.

Kristie covers her mouth with her hand in shock.

KRISTIE

I can't lose you. You gave me my
break here when you hired me.

Kristie's shock turns to defiance.

KRISTIE

Our first interview isn't until
nine tomorrow, but I'll bump it to
eleven so you can prep.

Gary looks up surprised and confused.