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His Bedside Manner Leaves Something To Be Desired

Crusty Patrick McGoochan is playing TV's crusty new doctor—naturally

By Arnold Hano

In an early episode of the new CBS doctor show, *Rafferty*, a character describes Dr. Sid Rafferty as "personally cross-grained and professionally ill-mannered." The father of a girl Rafferty is treating calls him "an egomaniacal devil." A hospital administrator sniffs: "He's not one of us. Not our sort."

Patrick McGoochan nods benignly. "Rafferty has traits close to my own personality," McGoochan says. "Crusty. He's a crusty man."

Patrick McGoochan. Star of a television series. Earns thousands of dollars a week. Owns a piece of the show. Yet drives a Honda. Wouldn't drive even that if he could get about Los Angeles on foot. Says he doesn't know why he's doing a doctor show.

"Doctors are important," he concedes. "But plumbers are even more im-

portant. And garbage collectors. If plumbers and garbage collectors go on strike, that's when we need doctors."

"Enigmatic," a producer says about him, after the interview. "A strange man."

Jerry Thorpe, the show's executive producer, who, along with Warner Bros., owns the rest of *Rafferty*, thinks McGoochan is shy. "If there's anything that people find abrasive, it probably grows out of his shyness. He doesn't like people poking into his private life. I like him personally, but we have not socialized. I don't think we will."

He is much like the house he lives in, with his wife and daughters. He lives in Pacific Palisades, which conjures up visions of teetering cliff-top structures, staring out at the ocean. The McGoochan house is a Cape Cod cottage with no

ocean view. As McGooohan describes it: "Its view is of trees and flowers. It's absolutely enclosed. Very private."

Patrick McGooohan is not just an actor. He also writes. Besides teleplays, he writes poetry, three or four poems every day, thousands of poems filed away until there are enough for a private printing. He's had five private editions published, in printings of one hundred each, which he gives to friends.

Not that he cannot share his private moments. At lunch he announced: "My wife, Joan, and I are getting remarried next Saturday. A re-affirmation. When we got married 26 years ago, over in England, we were too busy for a church ceremony. I was rehearsing for Petruchio in 'Taming of the Shrew,' and Joan was playing Ophelia. I said to Joan, 'I promise you a white weddin' some time, but not now'."

Now they have time for a white wedding. Patrick McGooohan draws a ring from his pocket to show around the lunch table. "A white ring for a white weddin'," he says, shyly. The ring is white jade. "My wife is dark, a dark angel." A white ring for his dark angel.

Patrick McGooohan says white weddin'. He knocks the "h" out of *things* and *thoughts* and *thanks*; they come out *t'ings* and *t'oughts* and *t'anks*. He says laBORatory and GARage. His speech is a stew of Irish, English and American. He was born in Astoria on Long Island, back in 1928, the first child of Irish peasant-stock immigrants who had fled Ireland because they were broke. "My father had 10 shillings in one pocket and a change of collar in the other."

His father dug ditches in this country, and his mother worked in Macy's. They saved their money. After Patrick was born, they went back. "My father did not take to the pace of New York. He farmed in Ireland, in county Leitrim, the poorest county in Ireland. Its only export is people. He made the farm go for eight years and they emigrated again, this time to England."

Four daughters came along. The old

man saved enough so that everybody could go to college. The girls went. Patrick dropped out of school at 16. He worked the iron mills. He worked in a bank. He worked on a chicken farm, where he developed bronchial asthma and was laid up six months. The second day out of bed he saw a sign: "Carpenter wanted." He got the job, making sets for the Sheffield Repertory Company, in the basement of a 750-seat theatre. McGooohan built sets, painted backdrops, handled the lights, and became stage manager before he was 20. The Sheffield Repertory mounted 26 plays a year. McGooohan was prompting a play when a character became ill in the middle of the two-week run. "So they shoved me on."

It felt good. "But nerve-wracking. Scary. I'm always scared. It's a scary world. You have to be nervous. I don't want to be placid about my work."

He met actress Joan Drummond in 1950, and they would squeeze in suppers of fish and chips after getting off work. They also squeezed in a wedding a year later. McGooohan appeared in 26 plays a year for 12 years, working his way toward London, where fame and fortune lay.

He also managed to appear in a compost of bad films in England. You rattle off the names, and he winces: "Junk. All of them. There's nothin' there a civilized man would want to be reminded of."

Some moments he cherishes. He starred in Ibsen's "Brand" on the London stage and won an award as Britain's best stage actor of the year. He played Starbuck in Orson Welles' production of "Moby Dick" in 1955. Welles brought out the cross-grained best in McGooohan.

"I came in to audition. All the lights were on the stage; the rest of the theatre was a black abyss with Welles out there, listening. I started to read, and then I heard two voices—Welles and somebody next to him discussing production costs. So I stopped, and Welles boomed out: 'Why did you stop?' I said, 'I →

t'ought you might want to listen to me.' Welles snapped: 'I can listen and talk at the same time. Keep reading.' I started in again, and again he began talking, and again I stopped and Welles said, 'I told you to keep reading.'

McGoohan read again, and again Welles and his unseen partner began muttering. This time McGoohan took his script and threw it down and said, "Mr. Welles, you can stuff 'Moby Dick,'" and began storming out.

A chastened Welles called out: "Mr. McGoohan? Will you play Starbuck?"

McGoohan played Starbuck for the play's three-and-a-half-week run. He calls it "one of the most exciting moments of my career."

But what got him closer to fame were a couple of television series he made in the 60s, *Secret Agent* and *The Prisoner*. Both were transported to America, and pretty soon the McGoohans came over. McGoohan has been in such films as "Ice Station Zebra" and "Silver Streak," and has appeared as a guest on dramatic television. He wrote, directed and starred in episodes of *Colombo*; one of those performances won him an Emmy in 1975.

Jerry Thorpe, *Rafferty's* executive producer, calls McGoohan "a consummate performer. There's an enormous amount of spontaneity in his acting. He finds fresh ways of doing cliches. And he has a low-key sex appeal. Too many secretaries around here who have watched the show have said, 'God! He's attractive!' But not an 8-by-10 glossy attractiveness. He's not the prototypical television lead." So unprototypical he wears heavy horn-rimmed glasses on *Rafferty*, constantly pushing them back when they slip down his nose.

He's a big man, 6-2, 190 pounds, with partly gray, reddish-brown hair. He keeps in shape playing racquet ball at a local Y, shoots occasional pool, and plays high-calibre chess. His wife's game though is gin rummy. "She's very good at it. I t'ink we're runnin' neck and neck. We'll play 10 games; if she wins,

we go away for a weekend."

The McGoohan daughters who are home—Ann, 17, and Frances, 16—can fend for themselves. The oldest, Catherine, is married, and living in Fresno, Cal.; McGoohan is a grandfather.

In the new series, McGoohan not only acts but writes and directs occasional episodes. He didn't go out of his way to land the role. "I don't like to read pilot scripts. Too many pilots never sell. But my agent sent me this script. I liked this doctor guy."

Rafferty is scheduled Mondays opposite NFL football and a network movie. "If O.J. is on, I'll be watchin' him," McGoohan says. Then quickly: "I'm not denigratin' my show. I never watch my show, except when I have directed it."

He isn't denigrating the industry, either, but he's not very thrilled by it. The first four years in this country the McGoohans did not own a TV set. "When we finally got one, I made a verbal contract with the kids. I told them: 'Go through the TV listings and pick out the seven t'ings you want to watch this week. Remember, if you see two t'ings one day, there'll be another day you can't watch anyt'ing'."

When the restrictions were lifted, the youngsters controlled themselves; today they seldom watch at all.

McGoohan carries the critical attitude with him. Jerry Thorpe says: "He is difficult on a script. He is very critical, but the criticism is constructive. If something doesn't appear to be in character, he'll say so. 'Difficult' is not the word. He is a searching man, very discerning. His standards are inordinately high."

The searching goes on, inside McGoohan. He makes no pretense of being at peace with himself. "I'm an insomniac," he says. "I sleep four hours maximum. I get up at 2:30 A.M. I read or write, and then I'm out of the house to walk on the beach. It's lonely then, just people with their dogs and some surfers. I walk, and I talk to the dogs."

Then he hurries home, to be on the set for an early call. (END)