

= A Hero Sits Next Door =

" A Hero Sits Next Door " is the fifth episode of season one of Family Guy , originally aired on Fox on May 2 , 1999 . The episode features the introduction of Joe Swanson , who would become a main character in the series . Peter Griffin must find a replacement player for an upcoming softball game . Peter eventually convinces Joe to play for the team after learning that he played baseball in college . When Joe shows up the following morning , Peter realizes that Joe is in a wheelchair . Joe turns out to be a great player , and the team wins the game . Peter becomes jealous of Joe and tries to become a hero . In a subplot , Meg Griffin tries to get Joe 's son Kevin to notice her .

" A Hero Sits Next Door " was directed by Monte Young and written by the writing team of Mike Barker and Matt Weitzman . It featured guest performances from actress Suzie Plakson , figure skater Michelle Kwan , as well as actors Wally Wingert and Carlos Alazraqui . Much of the episode features a cutaway style of humor that is typically used in Family Guy , many of which feature cultural references and include Super Friends , Pez , Teletubbies , and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy .

The episode received positive praise from television critics , who considered it to be a memorable introduction for the character of Joe Swanson ; certain critics praised the fight sequence between Joe and The Grinch , while others criticized the episode 's cutaway gags as well as its plot twists , which they regarded as " odd " and " counter @-@ intuitive " .

= = Plot summary = =

At the Happy @-@ Go @-@ Lucky Toy Factory , safety inspector Peter Griffin is working when his boss Mr. Weed introduces Guillermo , a ringer who will attempt to assist the company in winning the annual softball game . At home , Peter 's wife Lois informs him of their new neighbors , the Swanson family , and wishes for him to make friends with them ; however , Peter is not interested and leaves with Brian for softball practice . The regular pitcher is absent , so Peter fills in . He injures Guillermo with a wild pitch during practice and must find a new player to replace him or be fired .

Meanwhile , Lois goes with her son Stewie to meet the new neighbors . She is greeted by Bonnie Swanson and soon after meets her husband Joe , while Meg falls in love with Joe and Bonnie 's son , Kevin . When Peter comes home he is rude to the Swansons . Later that night , Peter thinks about who can replace Guillermo , and Lois mentions that Joe played baseball in college . Peter sees Joe in his truck and sitting down on a chair later that day , which prevents him from seeing he is in a wheelchair , and invites him to join the team . The next morning Peter and Mr. Weed are at the field . Joe shows up for the game and Peter and Mr. Weed are horrified to see that he is in a wheelchair . However , Joe turns out to be a fantastic player and leads the team to victory . That night Joe has a celebratory party in his house , where he reveals that he is a police officer who was crippled after fighting The Grinch on the roof of an orphanage (this was later revealed to be a cover up , in the 2012 episode Joe 's Revenge) and soon becomes very popular with the neighbors , including Peter 's family .

Joe 's popularity makes Peter jealous , so Peter wants to be a hero too . He attempts to stop a bank robbery to compete with Joe 's heroism . Peter and Brian are taken hostage in the process , but Joe convinces the robbers to surrender . An applauding crowd hoists Joe away in praise , leaving his wheel chair empty . Stewie tries to unlock the " power of the wheelchair " , but Lois manages to remove him and puts a pacifier in his mouth , so he quickly falls asleep . After the hostage situation , Peter is disappointed , but his family consoles him by telling him that he is their hero .

= = Production = =

" A Hero Sits Next Door " was written by Mike Barker and Matt Weitzman , the first time writing for the series for both , and directed by Monte Young , also his first Family Guy episode . During the production of the episode , the writers shared one office lent to them by the King of the Hill production crew . MacFarlane compared the production of the first season to a college project ; the

only difference was that he was being funded this time . The guest cast for the episode featured actress Suzie Plakson , figure skater Michelle Kwan , as well as actors Wally Wingert and Carlos Alazraqui . Recurring guest voice actors included writer and animator Butch Hartman . " A Hero Sits Next Door " serves as the introduction of police lieutenant and neighbor of the Griffin family Joe Swanson (voiced by Patrick Warburton) , as well as his family consisting of his wife Bonnie (Jennifer Tilly) and their son Kevin (Jon Cryer) .

During the production of the episode they developed a way to hide the fact that Joe used a wheelchair . This was done by showing the character Joe from the waist up during part of the episode . " A Hero Sits Next Door " is notable as it is the first episode of Family Guy not to feature words in its title pertaining to " Death " or " Murder " . This convention was originally started due to creator Seth MacFarlane being a fan of 1930s and 1940s radio programs , particularly the radio thriller anthology Suspense ; however , this convention was dropped after individual episodes became hard to identify and the novelty wore off .

I 'm a huge fan of old radio dramas and I came up with this idea , when the show was still trying to find itself at the beginning , that the title of each episode would be a very ominous title borrowed from an old 40 's suspense drama . And thus we had titles like " Death Has a Shadow " and " Mind Over Murder " that had nothing to do with the show . We realized that that kind of stopped being funny after four episodes . It 's two in the morning and we 're trying to come up with these things . So we kind of grew out of that and moved on to more traditional titles .

The story of how Joe was crippled has recently been retconned in a recent episode (Joe 's Revenge) . In the episode , Joe reveals that he was actually paralyzed by a drug dealer , whom he was investigating , after accidentally giving himself away .

= = Cultural references = =

The Super Friends make an appearance in the episode when Peter references a time when he played strip poker in the Hall of Justice . After Wonder Woman loses and takes off her clothes , Robin simply stares at Peter instead of a naked Wonder Woman .

The episode also makes a historical reference when a boy is showing his friend a Pez dispenser that looks like John F. Kennedy 's head . The dispenser is then destroyed by a policeman 's bullet . The boy says , " Oh well , at least I still have my Bobby Kennedy Pez dispenser " . This is a reference to the assassinations of both John and Robert Kennedy .

= = Reception = =

" A Hero Sits Next Door " received favorable reviews from television critics . In a 2008 review , Ahsan Haque of IGN praised the episode , rating it a 7 @. @ 9 / 10 and calling it " a great introduction for Joe " . He noted that the fight sequence between Joe and the Grinch " paved the road for many action sequences to come " . He also praised the strong emphasis on storyline . He deemed some of the gags " classic " including the gag featuring the Super Friends . Robin Pierson of The TV Critic wrote a more mixed review , rating the episode a 55 out of 100 ; Pierson found the plot odd , stating that its twists were counter intuitive , causing them to be less funny and not stand out . He also felt the cutaway jokes were short and average . He commented positively on some of the jokes , and the inclusion of Peter 's new neighbors saying they provided a new dynamic to the series .