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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 | ~~{Original email subject} Submitting Trowbridge interview~~  
2 | ~~'There's no substitute other than being at the meeting yourself'~~

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 | ~~Cor Trowbridge, who led BCTV for close to two decades,~~  
4 | ~~reflects on the station's evolution and legacy~~

####END SUBHED####

5 | TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

~~From: Annie Landenberger <verbatimvt@gmail.com>~~

~~&gt;~~

~~Date: Fri, Nov 21, 2025 at 8:54'6"AM~~

~~Subject: Submitting Trowbridge interview~~

~~To: Jeff Potter <editor@commonsnews.org &gt;, Randy~~

~~Holhut <randy@commonsnews.org &gt;~~

## A Conversation with Cor Trowbridge

—by Annie Landenberger

Submitting: Friday, Nov. 21, 9 AM

COR TROWBRIDGE was among the dozens of area producers, creators, and fans gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Brattleboro Community Television (BCTV) at Stone Church ~~November~~Nov. 14.

~~Succeeded nearly two years ago by Johnny Gifford, s~~In a recent conversation with *The Commons*, he wasTrowbridge, the executive director of the PEG (Public, Educational, and Government) station from 2006 to 2024.

~~In a recent conversation with *The Commons*, Trowbridge~~ looked back on her 18-year~~her~~ tenure, which coincided with rapid changes in broadcast and video technology that also has disrupted the fragile business model of public access stations like BCTV. She also led the organization through a global pandemic.

Trowbridge is now the special projects manager at Brattleboro's Winston Prouty Center, where she is working on the Village at Winston Prouty housing development project, which aims to eventually complete 300 new housing units on the property.

"It's a huge challenge, much like BCTV was," she said. "So I'm just trying to put my shoulder to a different wheel."

\* \* \*

**Annie Landenberger:** What had you done prior to ~~being~~ there starting work at BCTV?

**Cor Trowbridge:** I worked in the town planning office as grants manager and assistant town manager. So, of course, I was familiar with BCTV. When this job came open, somebody said, "you should really apply," so I just walked across the hall from my old office. [The station operates from the Brattleboro Municipal Center.]

**A.L.:** Had you had any video production background?

39 C.T.: My background was administrative. I have personal  
40 interest and enthusiasm for photo and video, but I think ~~they~~[the  
41 BCTV board] thought that having a strong administrator and then  
42 being able to hire the technical expertise would be another way  
43 to [organize].

44 BCTV was in a big mess when I took it on, so I knew that  
45 whatever we did, it was going to be better. So that made it OK.

46 A.L.: You're praised for raising awareness of the value of  
47 what BCTV offers and getting [the organization] some  
48 remuneration for those services. And also for figuring out how to  
49 counter the impact of dwindling cable subscribership. What kind  
50 of financial situation did you inherit?

51 C.T.: Well, just as I walked in the door, Comcast  
52 purchased Adelphia and had to negotiate a CPG (Certificate of  
53 Public Good) with the state as cable operators are required to do.  
54 Comcast was a bigger business.

55 ~~And so, and the Vermont Access Network of stations~~  
56 ~~throughout Vermont--~~

57 A.L.: There are 24?

58 CT: Yes. They ~~And so, the Vermont Access Network of 24~~  
59 ~~stations throughout Vermont~~ negotiated a CPG that was better.  
60 Consequently, our basic funding level, which at that time was  
61 based only on subscribers in Brattleboro, Guilford, and Vernon,  
62 became more stable than it had been before.

63 Then we went through a strategic planning process:.

64 ~~Our~~ Our goal was to make BCTV a valued community  
65 resource. ~~Because a~~ At the time, people would just say, ~~h~~"Hey,  
66 can you send a camera here? Can you send a camera there?"  
67 When I came, we covered only Brattleboro ~~S~~select-board  
68 meetings live. We covered Vernon ~~S~~select-board meetings when a  
69 connection worked, but there was no staff there.

70 So the strategic plan to expand made what we did more  
71 consistent for towns.

72 ~~Technically at the time --all these things converged at~~  
73 ~~the time I walked in the door--~~ we had just switched over from

74 analog to digital everything. And cameras had evolved. We began  
75 using mini-DV tapes instead of these big VHS tapes and——

76 **A.L.:** Those cameras were beasts!—

77 **C.T.:** —— that was making it more accessible for people  
78 to use our equipment. So membership grew from that. ~~[And soon-~~  
79 ~~towns served included Putney, Dummerston, Newfane,~~  
80 ~~Townshend, and Jamaica as the signal was strengthened].—~~

81 So then BCTV was designated not only for Brattleboro,  
82 Vernon, and Guilford, but also for ~~these five other towns~~ Putney,  
83 Dummerston, Newfane, Townshend, and Jamaica: ~~†~~ This meant-  
84 cable revenues from the cable subscribers, a small percentage,  
85 now came to BCTV.

86 That expanded our territory in an official way. Then we  
87 went to all these towns and selectboards and said, “~~H~~hey, we’re  
88 going to be covering your meetings now, every single one. And  
89 this is how it’s going to work.” As you can imagine, there were  
90 some growing pains, but eventually everybody got used to it.

91 We also started to say, “~~Y~~you know, these are the  
92 services that you’re getting— —— your major community events are  
93 being covered. And we’re going to charge a certain amount for  
94 that. So we started to negotiate an annual fee on top of the small  
95 amount received from cable subscribers. We had a contract with  
96 each town and everything became much more straightforward.

97 All these things converged at the time I walked in the  
98 door.

99 **A.L.:** What about staff? Some paid, some volunteer--

100 **C.T.:** So by charging what it costs to do the work, we  
101 could expand our field staff to be able to cover multiple meetings  
102 at the same time on the same night and cover events that  
103 required multiple staff. It just expanded our capacity.

104 **A.L.:** Wonderful. What challenges did you face?

105 **C.T.:** There’ve been many threats over the years to the  
106 existence of public access television. Cable companies kept  
107 going to the ~~FCC~~ Federal Communications Commission, the  
108 federal authority that regulates cable, saying, ““~~h~~Hey, it’s not fair

109 that we have to pay these fees to support public access but  
110 satellite providers don't. And Internet providers don't." It's gone  
111 back and forth, but any threat to that fee structure is an existential  
112 threat to public access the way it's funded right now.

113 **A.L.:** What impact did Covid have?

114 **C.T.:** I really didn't know what was going to happen  
115 because nobody could meet anymore. So ~~[wewhen the country~~  
116 ~~went into a public health emergency lockdown]~~ we went home  
117 that day ~~[that everything shut down]~~ and got on Slack and on  
118 Zoom, and we ~~were~~ wondering, "Is BCTV going to survive this?  
119 Because what we cover is people doing things in the community,  
120 right? And now no one's doing anything."

121 Then we realized these towns needed technical  
122 assistance to get themselves to doing their meetings online. So  
123 we started working on that with each town administrator, who  
124 was, like, "How do I work this? How can we get people who  
125 are at home in the room? How can we get the audio to sound  
126 better? How can we show when a vote is being voted on?"

127 So it actually showed BCTV to be more relevant than  
128 ever.

129 **A.L.:** I remember.

130 **C.T.:** We had to figure out, ~~you know,~~ how to do a  
131 hybrid meeting, how to ~~do~~ everything that we take for granted  
132 now, ~~we~~ we were just figuring that out on the fly.

133 It was a huge technical challenge and the staff just  
134 absolutely pulled it out of the hat; they were some of the first  
135 people to go out in public and be, like, "Yep, I'm going to cover  
136 this meeting. I'm going to wear a mask. I'm going to stand at a  
137 distance. I'm going to have my camera."

138 **A.L.:** They really were local heroes.

139 **C.T.:** That was one of those moments in BCTV history that  
140 was, like, "This could be the end." But it actually propelled us  
141 into the spotlight as the people making it possible for people to  
142 meet and for the public to know what was going on.

143 | **A.L.:** Otherwise it'd have been the dark ages of our  
144 towns.

145 | **C.T.:** That's right. And now you can see from our meeting  
146 coverage that we have people attending remotely. And when  
147 somebody is talking on screen, you see that video pop up, you  
148 see the name. It was brilliant in terms of moving technology  
149 forward.

150 | **A.L.:** And there was creative programming—     music  
151 and the Rock River Players' Solo series. BCTV camera people as  
152 artists kicked in and did beautiful work. It got people in the  
153 performing arts engaged; it gave some entertainment in a time  
154 when everything was dry.

155 | **C.T.:** You're absolutely right. Yes. People looked to BCTV  
156 as a tool that could help solve some of the pain of isolation.

157 | **A.L.:** Johnny ~~†~~Gifford, the current executive director~~‡~~,  
158 says you are 100% responsible for BCTV being a leader in its  
159 field now. And Nolan ~~†~~Edgar, production manager~~‡~~, has said one  
160 of the beautybeautiful parts of working with you is that you could  
161 really see potential in people and you would just nudge them  
162 toward that.

163 | ~~-~~So what would you say is your legacy?

164 | **C.T.:** I was really like a lot of ~~EDs~~~~†~~executive directors~~‡~~:  
165 When you come on, you try to say "yes" until you have to say  
166 "no."

167 | I didn't have a technical background, and that could  
168 have been looked at as a negative. But in a way, it was a positive~~‡~~,  
169 because I couldn't micromanage that aspect of the station.

170 | And I said "yes" to a lot of things because I didn't know  
171 any better. You know, I just had to trust people.

172 | **A.L.:** You remind me of the "yes, and..." rule in improv.

173 | **C.T.:** Plenty of times I said "yes-~~‡~~"    and it didn't work. But  
174 that's the nature of work with technology. Then you say~~‡~~ Next  
175 time we're going to try it this way."

176 | ~~-~~And that's why the ethos of the staff was that we never  
177 did anything the same exact way twice. It's always to be

178 improved. There's always a debrief. There's always a way we can  
179 make it a little bit better.

180 | **A.L.:** Trust was essential.—

181 | **C.T.:** ~~So here I have had~~ this 17-year-old employee,  
182 Roland Boyden, and I ~~saysaid~~: “Well, we’re going to get this  
183 digital server. We’re going to use this proprietary service that goes  
184 with the server to put the videos online, right?” And Roland said,  
185 “~~you know, w~~Why don’t we just put them on YouTube? That’s  
186 where everybody’s watching videos.”

187 But this server company had been trying to sell me a big  
188 package. So that’s a moment where I ~~m had~~ ~~ving~~ to say, “~~Do I~~  
189 trust this adult trying to sell me this product? Or do I trust this 17-  
190 year-old?” He’s saying, “Let’s make a YouTube channel.”—And  
191 I ~~m was~~ looking at what all the other stations ~~are doing; they’re~~  
192 ~~and they were~~ using this proprietary software, ~~but I say,~~

193 | ~~But I [told Roland],~~ “~~W~~well, OK, let’s try it.”

194 | **A.L.:** Wow. Bold.

195 | **C.T.:** And So I feel that was my strength— ~~—~~ being open  
196 to other people’s genius/crazy ideas and talents and being willing  
197 to fail.

198 | ~~BCTV was in a big mess when I took it on, so I knew~~  
199 ~~that whatever we did, it was going to be better. So that made it~~  
200 ~~OK.~~ I feel like that was my strength: being open to others’  
201 suggestions and open to constant change.

202 | With technology changing as much as it was, we would  
203 figure out how to use something and the next year we would  
204 abandon it for something else. Everything just kept changing and  
205 improving so quickly, and we just kept trying to stay a step  
206 ahead.

207 | We’d see technology that was going to help our  
208 community and move our work forward, so we just dove in and  
209 tried it until something better came along.

210 I feel like that was a good match for BCTV. My skills and  
211 my strengths were administrative, but my personality was very  
212 much accepting of change as a good thing and as a constant.

213 | **A.L.:** Anything to add about legacy?

214 | **C.T.:** At the end of my time there, we had gotten HD  
215 | channels. We had gotten on the Comcast channel directory. That  
216 | was a goal I'd had from the minute I walked in the door. That felt  
217 | good.

218 | -And now to see at the 50th how Johnny is just taking it  
219 | further with audio services. And he's on camera doing interviews.  
220 | And his being involved in the music scene is really moving that  
221 | programming forward. And the idea of being part of the  
222 | emergency network, ~~you know, that's exactly where BCTV is~~  
223 | ~~meant to be.~~ Those kinds of partnerships. ~~So~~

224 | -I'm very, very excited to see how this is all going.

225 | **A.L.:** Why does BCTV matter?

226 | **C.T.:** BCTV and all public access stations allow local  
227 | voices to be heard and allow people to understand what's  
228 | happening in their community and to be able to communicate  
229 | with their neighbors about their views ~~—to understand what's~~  
230 | ~~happening.~~

231 | -Governmental transparency. That's a big factor. And  
232 | these days, you can't have too much governmental transparency.

233 | -Everybody's going to have their views, but being able to  
234 | watch a video of a meeting, to see what's actually said, the tone  
235 | in which it's said, the facial expressions ~~—~~ there's no substitute  
236 | for that other than being at the meeting yourself.

237 | **A.L.:** And it creates an historical document so that when  
238 | we come into kerfuffles or contests, it's there. That's to be  
239 | cherished in this world of fake news.

240 | **C.T.:** That's absolutely true. BCTV has lived up to that  
241 | promise to be an essential community service.

242 | ~~Currently Trowbridge is working on the housing~~  
243 | ~~development project at Brattleboro's Winston Prouty Center. "It's~~  
244 | ~~a huge challenge, much like BCTV was. So I'm just trying to put~~  
245 | ~~my shoulder to a different wheel."~~

246 | —



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257 | Owl, with partner T. Breeze Verdant.  
258 | &lt;  
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