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Notes from editor (not for publication):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 &lt;[verbatimvt@gmail.com](mailto:verbatimvt@gmail.com)&gt;

&gt;

Date: Fri, Nov 21, 2025 at 8:54'€'AM

Subject: Submitting Trowbridge interview

To: Jeff Potter &lt;[editor@commonsnews.org](mailto:editor@commonsnews.org)&gt;; Randy

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6            **A Conversation with Cor Trowbridge**

7            —by Annie Landenberger

8            **Submitting, Friday, Nov. 21, 9 AM**

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

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

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

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

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

30          \* \* \*

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

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

39          **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        **C.T.:** Yes. TheyAnd 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 goal was to make BCTV a valued community  
65      resource. BecauseaAt 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 Sselect-board  
68      meetings live. We covered Vernon Sselect-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: ~~t~~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, “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, “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 FCCFederal Communications Commission, the  
108 federal authority that regulates cable, saying, “hHey, 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 [we when 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<sup>2</sup> 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 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~~ing to say, "~~D~~o I  
189 | trust this adult trying to sell me this product? Or do I trust this 17-  
190 | year-old?" He's saying, "~~L~~et's make a YouTube channel."  
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~~ell, 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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255 #####END TEXT#####

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#####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL#####

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256 for *The Commons*. She also is one half of the musical duo Bard  
257 Owl, with partner T. Breeze Verdant.  
258 &lt;

#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

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