

The Roundtable

**Published Mostly Weekly by the
Bangor Area Breakfast Rotary Club**

www.bangorbreakfastrotary.org

March 2, 2017

This Just In

Erin Rhoda acknowledges the importance of “immediate” stories published in the Bangor Daily News as well as in media found in print and on-line around the world. Ms. Rhoda, as “Maine Focus” editor for the BDN, has a gift of taking her time and digging deeply into the societal concerns that make up our lives.

The Washington, Maine native is the editor of a team at the Bangor Daily News called Maine Focus, which works on in-depth journalism projects that dig into some of the state's most pressing challenges. She won the national George J. Mitchell Scholarship to earn her master's degree in creative writing in Dublin, Ireland, before coming back to her home state. She was named the 2016 Maine Journalist of the Year for her work covering the opiate epidemic.

Newspapers are about telling stories, she said. She told of writing about the state's dwindling population in such areas as the Cary and Oxbow Plantations. Conversations with residents of what are called the “rim counties” revealed memories of what life was like, of what and who are no longer there.

She talked with Steve Sherman at the Oxbow Plantation. The population was 66 at the 2010 census. As of 2016, the population was estimated to be 50. The Plantation will de-organize this summer. Ms. Rhoda quoted Raymond at the Cary Plantation: “I can't help but miss those people.” A community connector is missing: “These little towns don't have a ball team any more.”

Domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, drugs and the economy confront Mainers living in dwindling



Erin Rhoda

population centers. The BDN asked Ms. Rhoda to assume editorship of “Maine Focus” that concentrates long-form journalism on these problems. She took training in multi-media presentations on rape and sexual assault, and attended Spruce Run’s program on domestic violence.

Ms. Rhoda noted that news organizations are generally not geared for in-depth or long-term projects (she worked on the Garrett Brown addiction story for three years). “There is power in storytelling and in great journalism.”

If you missed Ms. Rhoda’s story about Garrett Brown, or even if you did read it, it is worth taking some time to revisit the story. He told his life to Ms. Rhoda. His mother had to tell her of his death.

<http://external.bangordailynews.com/projects/2016/02/garrett/#.WLhOpzgoETh>

Last May, the Bangor Daily News sponsored the One Life Project to which people were invited to address addiction in Maine. The event was inspired by the life and death of Garrett Brown. He said, “If this changes one kid’s life, saves one kid from being in jail, saves his family the pain of seeing him go through it, saves one kid from overdosing and dying, then all that I’ve done hasn’t been in vain.”

Ms. Rhoda said, “I learned two things from this project: that people are a lot stronger than we think, and their stories can help bring people together.”

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Announcements and pronouncements: **President Kristy Kimball** reminded board members of the meeting on Wednesday, March 8, 7 am, at Links. **Ken Kimball** needs four general helpers to stay for the whole evening for *All That Jazz* on March 22. He needs three more judges also. **Lisa Wahlstrom** stayed on topic, so to speak, and promoted business card ads for the *Jazz* program book.

Judy Horan said the Membership Committee urges us to bring at least two guests, one per month. “Go through your contact lists,” she said. **Joe Pratt** distributed a colorful (well, 2-color: red and blue) showing, in bar graph form, employment in the Federal Government related to which party was in The White House, the Senate and the House. “The new administration needs to fill 600 vacancies,” Joe said. “But maybe they won’t.” Including the military, there are 5.3 million Federal employees. Without the military, the figures are 2.8 million. The chart’s numbers are apparently true facts.

Birthdays! **Paul Miragliuolo** fined **Caroline King, Stacy White, and John Cheney**. As the Dynamic Duo (**Myers and Wahlstrom**) serenaded, each “celebrant” realized that there are no statutes of limitations on Breakfast Rotary birthday celebrations.

The Joker’s Wild drawings are suspended until the annual meeting in June. The current balance is \$280.

Les Myers- March 2, 2017

Postscript

Today is writer Tom Wolfe’s birthday. In an essay published in 2007, Tom Wolfe argued that the newspaper industry would stand a much better chance of survival if newspaper editors encouraged reporters to “provide the emotional reality of the news, for it is the emotions, not the facts, that most engage and excite readers and in the end are the heart of most stories.” He said there are exactly four technical devices needed to get to

"the emotional core of the story." They are the specific devices, he said, "that give fiction its absorbing or gripping quality, that make the reader feel present in the scene described and even inside the skin of a particular character."

The four: 1) constructing scenes; 2) dialogue - lots of it; 3) carefully noting social status details - "everything from dress and furniture to the infinite status clues of speech, how one talks to superiors or inferiors ... and with what sort of accent and vocabulary"; and 4) point of view, "in the Henry Jamesian sense of putting the reader inside the mind of someone other than the writer."

From "The Writer's Almanac"



Mt. Hope