

# Longtime journalist and Brush Prairie resident exposes TV news corruption in new novel

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Brush Prairie resident Shannon Capps has released a new novel titled Runaway Train, which covers the corruption of the TV news business of the late 1980s.

The book, which was released on Oct. 5, is inspired by his own experiences as a TV news journalist in that era. Capps said he wanted to shine a light on how biased the media has become and

point out its lasting impact on public opinion.

“I think reporters need to pull themselves out of the equation,” Capps said. “I think we need to present the news without them getting in the way. If that one change was made, we would see a world of difference in the confidence of the reader.”

Capps also added that it’s not just about what the media does in how they tell the truth, but it’s also the perception of how it tells

the truth, which has contributed to what he calls a confidence crisis in how readers trust the media. He pointed to a Gallup poll that showed only 9% of Americans “trust the media a great deal,” while 33% “don’t trust them at all.” Then he mentioned an Edeman poll which reported that 56% of people think “journalists are purposely trying to mislead” them.

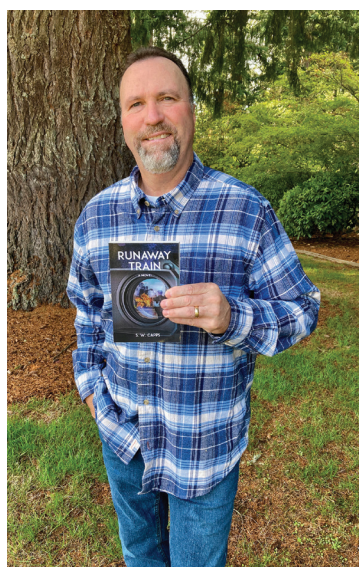
While he doesn’t fully agree with the polls, he acknowledges the media could do a lot better to change those perceptions. There is one possible solution Capps believes could change that.

“I think the truth and all of the truth needs to be elevated as a priority,” Capps said. “I know that’s difficult when ratings are involved and you have to acknowledge that they are a business. Like any other business, they’re in there to make money. Certain ways they present things sell better than other things. When I got into the industry, the motto a lot of the TV stations went by was ‘it’s news that you can use.’”

While “news you can use” is a great idea, he added, it doesn’t necessarily stir the pot. Because ratings and money are involved, it forces people in the media to compromise their values, and furthermore, the truth, he said.

Nowadays, it’s become standard fare that a reader or viewer knows how the reporter feels about a given topic, Capps said. There are entire networks devoted to not hiding their viewpoints, Capps pointed out. When it comes to good TV news reporting and newsgathering, he thinks people should think of the umpires in Major League Baseball.

“When umpires do a really good job, people don’t notice them,” he said. “So when jour-



Shannon Capps, 57, shows off his new book, Runaway Train.

**When journalists report the news in an unbiased manner nowadays, you don’t notice them. Unfortunately, if you’re not noticed, your paycheck doesn’t get better.”**

— Shannon Capps, Brush Prairie author

real events he witnessed that are showcased in the novel. He saw interviews that he said were fake and others that were presented as live, but in reality weren’t. All of these circumstances caused him to rethink his chosen path.

Despite the loss of confidence in the media, Capps is hopeful that won’t always be the case. Capps said since 56% of viewers think the media is “lying to them,” he believes that statistic should serve as a tipping point and send a message for the media to hold themselves accountable.

“I believe like anybody who comes out of college, where everything is based on theory and ideology, when you actually land in your profession, it’s hard not to get jaded,” he said. “The real world is different from your training. I will say I did become disillusioned enough to change my viewpoint over the years.”

Runaway Train by S.W. Capps can be ordered online at swcapps.com. Behind the scenes details about the book can be viewed on the YouTube channel called Behind the Book online at youtube.com/watch?v=dqdXhQ5uJqE.

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