

More after the Break: A Reporter Returns to Ten Unforgettable News Stories

Jen Maxfield

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More after the Break is a moving memoir about what journalism really entails, both for reporters and their subjects.

In her memoir *More after the Break*, Jen Maxfield reflects on memorable news stories, including details that never made it to the air.

As a local news reporter, Maxfield has a fast-paced job: get to the scene, get the story, file the report, and move on. But some stories are too powerful to ever forget. Driven by curiosity and compassion, Maxfield writes about reaching out to the subjects of past interviews to find out what happened to them, and how they learned to make sense of the tragedies that brought the television cameras and microphones to their front doors.

With intimate, emotional details, Maxfield reconstructs the events that first brought her into her subjects' lives, like a ferry accident, a hit and run, and a terrorist attack. Such narratives are informed by Maxfield's original and follow-up interviews, as well as by supplementary information supplied by court documents and other contemporaneous sources. She highlights the common humanity that she and her subjects share by reflecting on her own happy home life, noting how the slightest twist of fate could have put her in the same tragic position as those whose doors she knocked on.

The book's focus is on the humanity of its subjects—people who lost loved ones, suffered injustices, or survived what seemed unsurvivable. In the process of acquiring and telling these stories, Maxfield also shares fascinating behind-the-scenes information of the less glamorous aspects of journalism, from being penned into a box at funerals to being snapped at by people who view her presence as an intrusion on their privacy.

The book also takes time to review Maxfield's actions, asking how they might have helped or hurt the people she reported on. She wonders often if the benefits of publicizing a person's story—such as monetary donations or inspiring others—are enough to overcome the inevitable limits of news coverage. Often inconvenient, sometimes dangerous, and always rewarding, being a reporter is more than a job, Maxfield asserts: it is a heavy responsibility that, if assumed without care, can have severe consequences.

Unlike a ninety-second news story, there can be no clean ending to a family's trauma. Maxfield's touching memoir pulls back the curtain on what it takes to bring people's stories to light, but also elucidates the pros and cons of doing so, highlighting the remarkable resiliency shown by many survivors, even after the cameras stop rolling.

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EILEEN GONZALEZ (March 7, 2022)

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