

Homeward Bounds

By Danny Lanzetta

Author Gwendolyn Bounds focuses on small town life in her dazzling new book.

Gwendolyn Bounds is the kind of woman you wouldn't expect to find in a bar like Guinan's.

Guinan's is the "riverside chapel" located between the river and the railroad tracks in Garrison. Bounds readily admits that she wasn't too keen on stopping by for a beer in late 2001 when she was looking for a place to live after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center.

"I was looking for a place to live because my apartment was right across from the World Trade Center and was shut down," said the quick-talking and effervescent Bounds from her part-time home in New York City. "We were visiting some friends in Cold Spring and getting ready to head back to the city, and my friends kept saying they wanted us to have a beer at this pub in Garrison. We said, 'No, no, no, we have to get back to the city,' but eventually we gave in. One beer turned into an afternoon of listening to the people there tell stories, and that was how it all started."

Eleven days later, Bounds moved to Garrison, and the result was literary kismet. Her ode to Guinan's is called "Little Chapel on the River: A Pub, A Town, and the Search for What Matters Most." Bounds will be at Ariel Booksellers in New Paltz this Saturday, July 23 when she'll

Gwendolyn Bounds, author of "Little Chapel on the River: A Pub, A Town, and the Search for What Matters Most"

Ariel Booksellers, 3 Plattekill Ave., New Paltz

Saturday, July 23, 7 p.m.

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where I could wake up and be able to see green, to walk my dog and not be so stressed out. I wanted the chance to listen to people I wouldn't normally encounter," said the author, whose full-time home is still in Garrison.

At the center of "Little Chapel" is Jim Guinan, a grizzled and ailing Irishman who has owned the pub for almost 50 years. Complications from diabetes have forced Guinan to cede operations of the pub (and the connected country store) to his two children, who operate the businesses purely out of a sense of duty to the town and to their father's legacy. "I don't know if I could do that, myself," said Bounds.

"Little Chapel" is a rare book, a seemingly effortless paean to small town life, where the prose flows as easily as the bottled beer served at Guinan's. Bounds is a gifted writer whose unobtrusive style serves as a metaphor for the less harried way of life that she is trumpeting. She's not trying to impress her readers with her ability to turn a phrase. At the same time, she does an excellent job of turning real people into complex characters with which her readers can empathize. These are not just cardboard-cutout characters with gruff exteriors who will teach you a lesson if you listen long enough.

These are real people with real flaws and real hearts who are all bound by

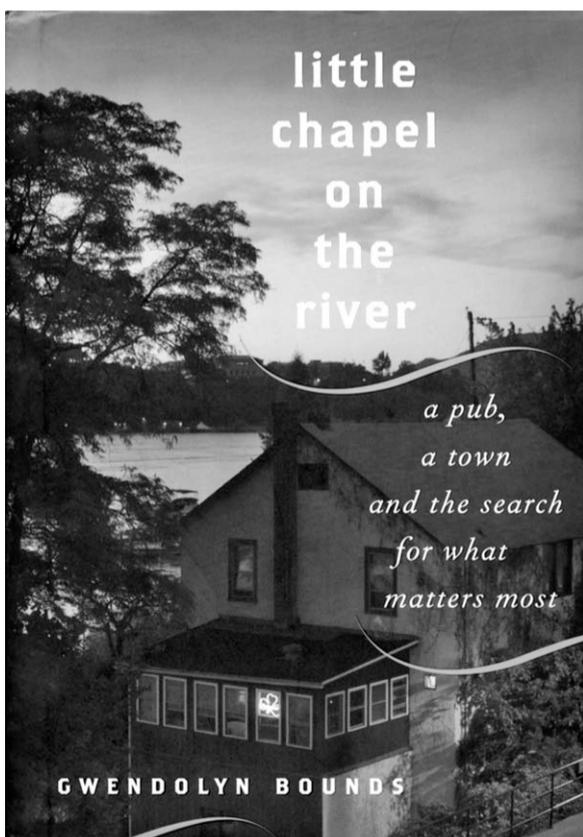
their singular devotion to Guinan's place.

It is also important to note that Bounds did not travel to Garrison looking for a book. "I didn't get a book contract until November 2002," said Bounds. "I didn't always know there was a book (in Guinan's). But all the big stories always get a lot of attention. Occasionally, writers will stumble onto something that truly matters. This book is really just a love story about a place."

Bounds did say, however, that it hasn't been easy giving up her old ways.

"Life is hard and we need to keep asking questions (of ourselves). I'm still going to be stressed out at times, but at least I'm asking the right questions now."

And from those questions, a breathtaking "Little Chapel" was born. ■



read excerpts from her book. James B. Stewart (not to be confused with Jimmy), author of "DisneyWar," will also appear. The reading starts at 7 p.m.

Bounds said she came to writing as a career by a "stroke of luck. I was one of those kids who would write everything down. If I had a fight with a friend, I would write about it."

After graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1993, she got an internship with the Wall Street Journal – and never left.

Nearly a decade into her career with the Journal, Bounds said she was a "rush rush person" who rarely thought about anything besides her job. That all changed after Sept. 11, 2001.

"(Guinan's) was just the calmest place I could imagine. I realized I wanted to live in a place



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THE FRONT PAGE

Written by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, "The Front Page" is a play that is considered responsible for defining the modern stereotype of a reporter as a hard-drinking, hard-boiled journalist intent on uncovering truth even in the face of danger. The comedy was a smash hit from its premiere in Broadway's Times Square Theatre on August 14, 1928; it ran for 276 performances.

On August 11, the three-week run of the production kicks off at The Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck, with a special program published by Pulse. The show program will provide usual Playbill materials about the players and the plot, as well as some history and mission information about the Rhinebeck Theatre Society. Don't miss this unique opportunity to reach new audiences, and support a cultural mainstay in Hudson Valley community theatre, as Pulse will donate a portion of the program advertising proceeds to the Rhinebeck Theatre Society.

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