



Rockland Buzz

Community Philosophy

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The Rockland Metro Show Continues on the Virus Crisis

this week with State Senator Dave Miramont



The Metro Show has been evolving with the times. In the past we have had as many as eight of us around the microphone, hosts and guests (not always clear which was which) with a wide-ranging informal discussion, and lots of fun. We are still having fun, indeed that is more important than ever, but our topic has become disturbingly clear: the epidemic that is sweeping over the world, and has reached us even here in our quiet little city.

Two Wednesdays ago we moved our discussion out of our crowded little studio into our meeting room, and sat, five of us, around a large round table, keeping six feet

between us. We were joined by two MD's and tried to learn as much as we could about the current state of medical knowledge of the epidemic. This past Wednesday, as the importance of distancing became increasingly clear, we decided to have just one host in the studio, yours truly, and one guest. That brave guest was our State Senator Dave Miramont. Dave helped us to understand much about our state government's response to the crisis. We learned, for example, that telephone questions about unemployment compensation have overwhelmed the 14-person staff that handles claims, that claims should be made via the web, and that the online forms should be filled out carefully because errors lead to the need for technical assistance, the staff for which is also overwhelmed.

We also took calls from listeners. After some technical glitches, the cause of which is still not clear, we managed to get our callers on the air. We learned from Liz Jenkins about the important work being done by the food pantry and the great support they are getting from the community. We had callers with questions for Dave, and we had a wide range of views on the crisis. Indeed, the phone did not stop ringing - and we did not stop answering until our hour was up.

As we go to press with The Buzz we have not decided who our guest will be next week. Things are moving very fast, and we want to be on top of what matters at that moment. It is also true that next Wednesday is April 1, a factor to be reckoned with.

The most important thing that we have learned from our last episode on the Metro Show is that our most important function to bring people together. When listeners call in and can be heard on air, we all understand better who we are as a community. Nothing is more important in a crisis such as we are facing than that we work together in our common interest. The necessary communication, sharing and collaboration is especially difficult in an epidemic, when we must physically isolate ourselves from each other to avoid the spread of the infection.

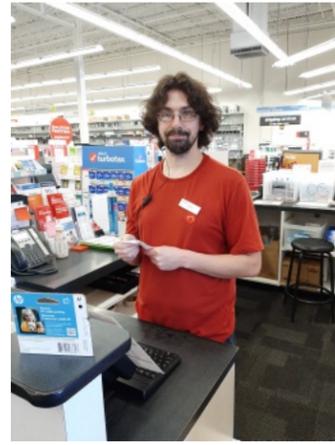
No doubt all of us have been spending more time on the phone, and on our computers, these last few days, but these have their limitations. National and regional radio and television are also useful, but leave us alone as spectators. Small local radio, it turns out, is a great medium for communication in an epidemic.

With the consolidation of radio, WRFR is now the only radio studio in Knox County, and we are right here in the middle of our little city, eager to serve. Our call-in show on Wednesday showed us the unique and wonderful way that we can serve, and we intend to keep it up.

Our thanks to Dan Dunkle at the Courier Gazette and their online portal Village Soup. They have made access free to everyone for the duration of the crisis, and are doing a great job as an information center. Dan was kind enough to post a note on Village Soup about the upcoming call-in show with Dave Miramont on WRFR, and this was very helpful in inviting people to join in the discussion.

Please do join us next Wednesday from 5 to 6 pm to continue that discussion.

Tune in on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, or online at WRFR.org. And please do call in: 593-0013.



Saluting our Front Line Soldiers

photos by Steve Carroll

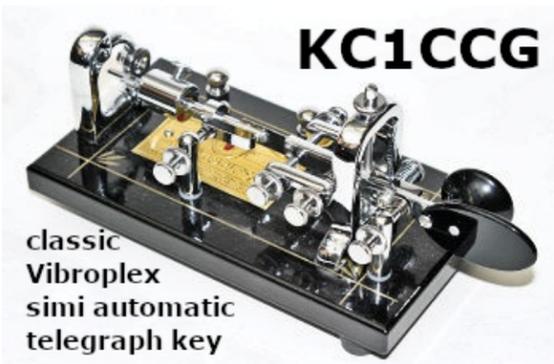
Community Works

My dictionary defines "community" as "a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common." However the meaning I associate with community is "a group of people working together for the common good." The results of this are most often seen during times of natural disasters: floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and, yes, epidemics. Citizens working together to help others in need. Our rescue workers, police & fire, those hearty young men & women in our military. The everyday workers keeping the mail coming, taking your trash, pumping the gas and making sure the stores are open and shelves are stocked. Let's also remember the caregivers, the doctors, nurses and home health care providers. It takes many hands to keep our community running. We should thank and respect them all. They are our front line troops, our community at work.

- Steve Carroll



Collage by Phyllis Merriam



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Glen Birbeck writes from Self-Isolation in Rockport

The self isolation I've imposed on myself doesn't include radio. Via short waves and Morse code every day I meet new people. These "contacts" are a change from the overload of news. Ham radio, for me, preserves a bit of the comfortable world now gone. At 25 words per minute I hear stories of jobs on hold, knee and hip operations postponed, planned runs to the store, keeping kids occupied at home. My story is simpler than most. Just myself and a hundred unfinished projects. I'm connected yet disconnected. Plenty to do, but unoccupied. It's a time to focus. -gb

Sylvie Coyaud writes from Milano

Ciao Joe, here it is, yours to edit or bin. Here deaths are still increasing, but a bit more slowly. We're not really hoping yet, but we keep "our fingers crossed", stay safe - sylvie

We heard about the first cases on January 21, the patients were in a hospital in Rome and getting better. Tourists, "not us". A month later Codogno, about 40 miles from Milan, was locked-down, and after two days so was Lodi only 20 miles away. We were warned. Still, in my neighbourhood - a village around a square with a church and an old fashioned market - we felt safe. Not here.

Then more family doctors got ill and the containment measures increased day by day. Now there are very few people in the streets. Like the rest of the village, the small condo where I live is nearly empty, quietly waiting for the curve to flatten, the deaths to peak. From our rear window, we don't comment the bad news anymore. Instead we exchange good ones (they are some) and tips: no eggs left at the supermarket, try the market. When I open the shutters in the morning, from a window or balcony somebody will look across the courtyard and say "Tutto bene? Do you need something?". Our world is upside down and yet for all the pain and sadness, it is indeed "bene", good and right.

My village has never been so kind.

Lockdown in the City of Light

Well, not quite, since I am about 5 miles from Paris on the River Seine. But all is very quiet on my daily jog through this smaller commuter city of 35,000. No traffic on the roads, very few other walkers or joggers during the beautiful sunny days throughout this past week.

The lockdown seems quite effective so I have little to report outside of my mind and my apartment. A rare trip to the local bakery for croissants or local store for cat litter are similar. Wait outside with others 6 feet apart, only one person enters the store at a time, and all is transacted using the 6 ft rule. Masks are still rare; one does not see many except for those worn by service personnel.

Neighbors in Italy, Spain and Germany have more cases and deaths than France, but no one knows how many infected persons are here, or anywhere. How many need hospitalization is a more accurate yardstick for now. The consensus seems to be that the lockdown is effective and will continue until hospitalizations decrease to manageable levels, protective equipment is widely available and enough testing is available to see not only how many are infected, but how many unknowns have been infected and are now possibly immune. Six weeks is probably a minimum to get there, based on the curve of infection and sickness, and national production capabilities.

As a scientist interviewed here said recently, this little organism means no harm; it only wants to reproduce. But it cannot do so alone, it needs to invade living cells to do so. A virus only exists in relationship to others, as do most of us. Think of how the word "viral" has become so overused lately; it speaks of sociability and relationship in an information based society. Our often ignored relationship to other animals and plants on this planet has led us to this pandemic, even though it has been predicted for decades.

The question was never when or where it would begin, but how well prepared we would be. Now we see.... not so well. In all our different countries, we humans are desperately playing catch up now, and we may succeed to a point, based on what we see in the earliest hit areas. Not without many losses: of loved ones, wealth, businesses and jobs, plans and hopes. Hopefully we will focus more on working together for a healthier planet for all living beings, once we digest this experience.

Paul Chartrand

Help at The Buzz & WRFR

We are all volunteers. Email gowrfr@gmail.com.



March 26, 2020, Rockland, Maine



Fred Bloom writes from Mt. Vernon

Yes, nature has it's ways. I read a column recently by a Professor of Classics who reminds us that when there was an epidemic of some illness in ancient Greece, it was attributed to the hubris of the people. The Greek gods were more like personifications of the natural forces in the world: love, war, childbirth, death etc. Unlike the Judeo-Christian God who punishes those who don't obey His laws, hubris is the ignoring of those natural forces, limitations, and harmonizers of the natural order of things.

I have recently been thinking about Gary Snyder's statement:

"As a poet I hold the most archaic values on earth . . . the fertility of the soil, the magic of animals, the power-vision in solitude, the terrifying initiation and rebirth, the love and ecstasy of the dance, the common work of the tribe. I try to hold both history and the wilderness in mind, that my poems may approach the true measure of things and stand against the unbalance and ignorance of our times."

Snyder believes that the high point of human culture was in the late paleolithic before the invention of agriculture and the rise of the city-state. You could take this quotation to be a statement of the full scope of paleolithic culture, and applied to the present, it is a complete formula for what needs to exist for there to be intelligent human society, and what needs to be in place for that society to survive what is coming. And in the opposite sense, everything not on this list is all of what we must abjure, abandon, throw overboard, for the ship to remain afloat. If we did, if we could, the world would come back into balance, and we would be in harmony with the gods. Everything beyond that is hubris, and will be punished.

The foundation of it all is the common work of the tribe. That is what we must rediscover- it means community. Our tribe has been obscured from us. We don't see the tribe in the midst of which we live. It is obscured by the enticing, enthralling images on the screen which mesmerize and narcotize us. This garrish pseudo-reality is itself a fake replica of tribe which is now the world monoculture, a mass media spectacle, produced and directed by the masters of the world-capitalist economy- a monopoly of pseudo-reality, and pseudo-truth. None of it belongs to us, or has any purpose but to distract us from ourselves and our true fulfillment in the ancient, authentic things listed by Snyder. This prophetic list is for us to contemplate.

Snyder says in another place that we all belong to two groups: our community and our network. Our community is the people living around us, those who share with us a physical terrain. Our network is those who share our inner world- our vision, and our values and insights.

I would say that neither of these is our community. It is not community so long as the two are separate. In some way we must expand our concept of our physical terrain to be at once, our immediate neighborhood and the entire globe. And we must somehow expand our network to both encompass the full range of human proclivities- those who cheer for Trump, those who cheer for Bernie, and those who cheer for no one- and finally we must limit our communal trust to those most archaic values on earth. That list is complete and never changes.

Is such a thing possible? Is it even possible to imagine this as an ideal goal to work towards? It seems beyond reason to think so, and yet, it seems clear that it is imperative.

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