

Whose Butts These Are

by David Butwin

On a walk in Owls Head the other day I was musing about the cigarette butts one sees along the road, and I found myself counting the number of paces between the butts, sometimes 30 or 50 but more often just 3-5-10. It was only recently that I realized (duh!) that the ciggies are not tossed off by walkers or cyclists but by motorists, probably many in pickup trucks. Now came another puzzle which I tried to present to wife Pam and friend Elizabeth on the Seafolk deck in Rockport the same day, to little avail. Try to picture it: are the butts you find, say, on the right side of the road tossed by drivers on that side which means said butts would have to be expelled through the passenger side window. That would be a long reach, inviting the possibility, as I further theorized, that maybe passengers are often the smokers and tossers. Of course it's possible that the act is sometimes carried out by drivers going the other way, meaning a long toss across the road onto the opposite shoulder. Elizabeth would have none of it, saying the butts are tossed randomly onto the road, and then roll off the gentle incline onto the shoulder. That didn't fly with me: cigarette butts don't behave that way, incline or no. We three did agree that either human consideration or lady luck seems to render the expelled cigarettes lifeless when they come to rest, a good thing because fires can start up without much encouragement in these tindery days of September. Which led me to a final thought (causing my companions to throw up their hands and suggest a change of subject): maybe the smokers (and they are legion in these parts and I am not condemning them, there are worse sins) snuff out the butts before expulsion. So many questions, so little time, we're back to Jersey soon. Can anyone help me?



Rockland native Glen Birbeck draws things and ideas from scratch. He spends his winters usually in Ecuador, but this year he is going to Spain, all on his modest social security check. Season permitting, he visits us regularly on the Metro show, Wednesday's at 5 pm. Photo of Glen, right, by Thomas Ives

LIKE A BIRD ON A WIRE

By McCabe Coolidge

He walks into the Sailing, Power and Steam Museum's assembly room, just a little bit late. Dressed in Dickie dark blue pants and shirt, he lays his guitar case on a table and gazes around at the musicians, who are gathered in a semi-circle. He peers at his black Keds for a moment; unlatches the case and pulls out his guitar. Looking for a chair to sit in, he lays his guitar down and wanders about the big room. Nancy is singing one of her favorite Ricky Nelson tunes that she loves so much.

After some wandering in and out of the room, he chooses a chair and sets his instrument down and watches and listens. Where he chose to sit gives him some time to ready himself. Three more musicians will play a song before the microphone is passed to him.

I have fallen hard for these music jams. Like others I am a groupie; going to the 'Steam' on Sunday afternoons, then off to the Grange at Wiley's Corner in St. George on Monday nights and finishing up the trifecta at the Federated Church in Thomaston on Tuesday evenings.

Living in Floyd Virginia in the Blue Ridge Mountains for years I was well versed on Blue Grass and Country music as well as how to dance to it. No stomping just slide your feet about. But now I am enamored by the music here in mid-coast Maine, so what is different about these jams? Variety of music-Elvis to the Beatles; 17th century Irish tunes played by guitar and dulcimer with some words that break my heart. And there is always a long nod to Hank Williams and then along comes an Emma Lou Harris song.

Camaraderie. Teasing, Joking, applause of support for newcomers who are risking a lot to play in front of an audience for the first time, plus the seriousness of how these musicians study and rehearse at home. They invest their lifeblood into this venture. What's not to like?

Meanwhile it is the 'wanderers' turn. "Bird on a Wire," he intones, starting off with a riff and then his somber baritone voice matches up with his electric bass guitar. Leonard Cohen, who wrote and sings 'Like a bird' is way up there on my list of favorite musicians. And the wanderer's thoughtful playing and singing hints that this music might be some of his own lived experience: he sings oh so slowly, with a dramatic effect and he pauses here and there, like a quiet conversation with a friend over some scotch on the rocks.

Growing up the youngest in my step family- my biological brother was 12 years older than me. He loved Patti Page and that crew, then the next down loved classical music and the one closest to my age, just 8 years older loved jazz. And

my dad collected big band albums. By the time I went to college, I brought my Stan Getz, Bill Evans, Fats Domino and Dinah Washington to my dorm room.

But it wasn't until I was searching for some grounding during the tumultuous Viet Nam War years that I started going off on silent retreats. In 1971, just north of Germantown, Maryland is Dayspring Retreat Center. Three hours of silence is followed by some talking and reflecting on the experience. On the first evening one of the co-leaders started off, not by talking. He startled me by singing...

"Suzanne takes you down..." And by the time he was finished, I was in tears. The underworld of my life that had stayed private began to surface. I hadn't known about Leonard Cohen or his muse until that evening. Cohen's music and his haunting voice flowed into that emptiness that I was experiencing. Like a call from my depths. I was opened up.

In the two hours together, each musician gets at least two turns to share a song and so it came back round to the 'wanderer' Here is what he said: "I know I just played this but I have to play it again until I get it right!" I had never heard a musician play the same song twice at a jam.

"Like a bird on a wire..."

Like a drunk in a midnight choir

I have tried in my way to be free."

'Like a bird on a wire, I have tried in my way to be free.' Feeling lost and disoriented in Florida, I started to spend summers in Rockland, then Owls Head and Spruce Head. After meeting up with Mark, one of the musicians at these jams, at the Rockland Farmers Market where I was throwing pots, I asked him: "I've been to the Federated, are there other 'jams' in the area?"

Taking out a slip of paper, he wrote them down and that is how I began to find my way. Encouraged I told my partner Karen about this and we asked ourselves what this meant to "try in our own way to be free." After some reflection we then asked ourselves, "What are we doing in Florida?"

Soon after we were evacuated from our home because of Hurricane Irma. I searched the internet and found that Greensboro North Carolina was hosting the National Folk Festival that weekend and so we drove on up. And we fell in love with Greensboro. And we continued our commitment to be in Maine during the summer.

Friends ask me, 'What is it you like about these jams you go to? Why I don't even know where Wiley's Corner is!"

Most I can say is this:" Going to the 'jams' and being a member of the audience, taking notes, laughing, sometimes crying, is like having a compass and a depth finder on a boat, I am rediscovering where I am and who I am and where I might be headed. I'm pretty excited about the next ten years of my life."

- Farmers' Markets:** **Camden** Saturday Market: 9 a.m. to noon at Tannery Park... **Rockland** Thursday Market: 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Harbor Park... **Union** Friday Market: 3-6 p.m. on Union Common: The market's September 20 musicians will be the Skidompha Strummers.
- **Calling All Scarecrow Makers**, for Rockland Scarecrow Days from Saturday, October 5, to Friday, November 1. Clubs, families, solo artists, groups and everybody is welcome to make one, show it off, and post a photo on social media for judging. For rules and a free scarecrow frame: call 593-6093 or email RocklandDowntown@gmail.com. •

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20:

- Reception to Open "Contemporary Greenwood" at the Messler Gallery, at Center for Furniture Craftmanship in Rockport, from 5 to 7 p.m. Fresh takes by makers from the U.S. and Europe. The show runs to January 2, and after the public opening the exhibit will be on view at WoodSchool.org.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21:

- Comments Sought by Rockland Comprehensive Planning Commission, 9 a.m. at Flanagan Community Center, 61 Limerock Street. The city is updating its comprehensive plan – the roadmap for its growth – and invites people to weigh in. Learn more at RocklandMaine.gov/comp-plan.
- Free Car Seat Safety Event, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Walmart in Thomaston. Experts will be there to show how to install and use car seats correctly. Techs will determine if your child is in the right seat for their age and size. Learn why it's important to register your car seat with its manufacturer so you can be notified if there's a recall. There will be a drop for old and outdated car seats. Free.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22:

- Sunday Jams in Rockland, Sail, Power, & Steam Museum, 75 Mechanic Street, 1:30 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23:

- Community Poetry Reading at Liberty Library, 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to the celebration of Maine poetry. No registration required. a.m. Catinka Knoth leads the free Monday classes, with all materials provided. "Scenes of September in Maine" will teach students to draw local buildings, a different one each week, with a focus on perspective.
- Monday Jams at St. George Grange, at Wiley's Corner, 7 to 9 p.m. through October. Country, gospel, folk, bluegrass.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24:

- "Food Routes" Author at Rockland Public Library, 6:30 p.m. Food historian and futurist Robyn Metcalfe looks at how food gets from production to our plates and the role technology will play in food supply chains as the world becomes increasingly urbanized. She is a lecturer at University of Texas at Austin and director of Austin's Food+City, which gives out \$50,000 in prize money annually to food-chain innovators who are improving how cities are fed.
- Tuesday Jams in Thomaston, Federated Church, 8 Hyler Street, at 7 p.m. Folk, country, blues, gospel. FMI: 273-2914.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25:

- "A Matter of Balance" at Rockland Public Library, Wednesdays, September 18 to November 6, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The free program is for adults age 60 and older to increase activity levels and reduce fear of falling.
- Free Naloxone Training, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at Rockland Congregational Church, 180 Limerock Street. Learn how to use the life-saving medication to counter the effects of a heroin or narcotic overdose. Registration is required: 301-3950 or JourneyToHeal-th.CourseStorm.com

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26:

- Funnyman Ben Perry and His Stuffed Sidekick Stanley, will tell jokes and silly stories and trot out gags at Rockland Public Library on Thursday, September 26, at 2 p.m. The Rocklander's 40 novelties (like a nutshell containing a piece of paper that says "It") have been captured in a book called "Lime City Humor," copies of which he'll sign after his free show.
- "One Bridge, Two Voices/Un Puente, Dos Voces," 7 p.m. at Camden Public

Library. Janet Gold of Camden and Ana Maria Aleman of Honduras on their book of bilingual poetry and their visit in July to the international poetry festival Los Confines in Gracias, Honduras.

- Baby Time at Rockland Public Library, 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. Thursdays for newborns to 2-year-olds, with older siblings welcome. Miss Katie will guide fun with rhymes, finger plays and stories.
- Thursday Jams in Warren, Saint George River Cafe, 310 Main Street, 6 p.m. and Friday Open Mics, second and fourth Fridays, at 6:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27:

- Book Sale at First Universalist Church, 345 Broadway, Rockland, on Friday from 4 to 7 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fiction, nonfiction, children's books, games, puzzles, CDs and DVDs. A cafe will offer beverages and goodies. Drop off donations at the church Monday to Friday, September 23 to 27, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. More info: 236-8795.
- "A Family for ME" Foster Care and Adoption Info Meetings, for people who have wondered about the process of becoming a licensed foster parent or adoptive parent. For the location and time of the next meeting: AFamilyForMEMaine.org or 615-6011.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28:

- Mushroom Walk & Talk at Erickson Fields Preserve, Rockport, on Saturday, September 28, from 10 a.m. to noon. Naturalist Kirk Gentalen invites everyone on a guided hunt for native mushrooms, with a focus on the nonedible ones. Registration appreciated, but not required: jalbury@mhct, 236-2739.

Around Town is compiled each week by C.O.H.Gifford, Jr.

Please submit calendar items to gowrfr@gmail.com

Our thanks to The Free Press for sharing its calendar.

SMALL TOWN CITY: A Work in Progress

Screening September 25 at 5:30 pm.

Local filmmakers Susan Aasen and Scott Sell are making a documentary about Rockland's continual evolution—as told by Rockland, Maine. On-camera interviews are woven together to tell a story of Rockland's burgeoning creative community, underpinned by the arts and institutions like the Farnsworth and CMCA. The documentary explores the spirit of collaboration that binds the city together across all kinds of creative pursuits.

Come screen a short rough cut of the film featuring your friends and neighbors, and join the filmmakers for a Q&A and a chance to offer your thoughts about the film and Rockland in general.

As an ABC News journalist, Susan Aasen received two Peabody Awards and was a five-time Emmy winner. With a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University, Scott Sell has been a creative writing and multimedia instructor, online news producer, and in-house filmmaker at the Island Institute. Sell has made films for the Farnsworth Art Museum since 2015, including its arts-in-education programs and murals with Alexis Iammarino at Oak and School Streets in Rockland. He's now a producer and editor at Compass Light Productions.

The program is part of Uncork the Arts, sponsored by J. Edward Knight Insurance.

The rough cut screening will be held at the Farnsworth Auditorium at 16 Museum Street, Wednesday, Sept. 25 from 5:30 to 6:30 pm.

Note: Susan Aasen will be our guest on the Metro show, at 5 pm on a Wednesday soon, on WRFR, 93.3 & 99.3 fm. You are invited to join our on-air conversation too, any Wednesday at 5 at the WRFR studio at 20 Gay Street in Rockland.

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