



# The Buzz

Local Collaboration

Issue 137, November 8, 2019, Rockland, Maine

## Beautiful and Broken

by McCabe Coolidge

"I believe in the beauty of all things broken" Terry Tempest Williams

While recuperating from another bout with Lyme's, I am paddling a kayak, counter clock wise around Lake Merritt. Just passing the boat shed filled with rowing shells, a man standing along the muck and grass of the shoreline greets me, "Sir, sir! Do you want a blessing?" I pull my paddle out of the water and lay it across the bow and coast closer to shore, wondering. He smiles, his skin like smooth ebony, dressed in black keds, jeans and a black, long sleeve shirt; he holds tight to a brilliant white scarf.

My kayak is still now. I do not know how to say "Yes! How badly I want, need a blessing!" Just now, as I am trying to recover, finding a little strength and inspiration on these waters of a small lake in the center of Oakland's downtown district. But I do not say a word or ask for what I need. I am mute. Me, a white man, a bit elderly, but okay economically, needing anything, anything at all from a stranger?

I nod my head, signaling 'yes.' I look him in the eye. He raises his hand high, high, higher and keeps it there as if intoning for the heavens to open up.

"O God of all blessings, God of light and darkness, bless this man who is in the water, bless this man who is silent, bless him not with words. Bless him with your love!"

He makes the sign of the cross and then stands still. Absolute quiet now. I cannot hear the traffic, nor the circling seagulls, or the kids on top of the hill chasing each around. And I cannot hear the voice in my head, warning me off this strange territory that I have drifted into. Warning me not to confess how needy I am now, adrift with a foggy brain, aching joints and a never-ending fever.

He wraps his white scarf around his neck, walks a bit up hill, turns around and gives me a so tentative wave...a smaller blessing, and then he stands there, a witness to this exchange of hope and despair, knowing he did what he could do.

I wave back, my paddle in both hands, dependent as I am on this paddle to bring me out of troubled water. One stroke, pause, then another, slowly, oh slowly not wanting to drift away and be alone again. I look off to my right...He is not there now. The green grass, the water lapping on small pebbles. The seagulls return, the kids now with their mothers and fathers.

Like I have lost all energy to help myself at this moment; I see the boat house, the dock, the shore and I know this. All it will take is one paddle, left then right, left then right and I will find my way back to an old security. My bike, Broadway Avenue, uphill, uphill to my daughter's apartment across the street from Safeway.

Last week, in my predawn jaunt to the Marriott Hotel for a free cup of coffee, about a mile from my apartment in Greensboro, I was walking across the railroad tracks, passing the store, 'Just Be,' I heard a forlorn voice: "Mister, Mister, will you help me!"

Next door to 'Just Be,' is vacant; the knee wall in front has recently been painted orange. Because of this street sanctuary, many homeless people now spend the night here. Blankets, sleeping bags and plastic containers of water spread about. I gaze in and see this man lying on his right side, reaching for something. I look down and it is a prosthetic leg. I am stunned. 'What happened?' I mumble to myself.

"Must have come off by itself in my sleep," he mutters. He is wiggling his whole body closer to his leg. Like a seal, squirming up onto the beach. I walk over as he reaches out and grabs the leg. I want to keep moving on and I want to stay and see if needs any help attaching the leg. I look around and do not see a walker or a wheelchair. 'Does he need more help?' I wonder. But I resist these impulses and turn away heading north. He yells out, "Thank you for stopping, sir, have a blessed day!"

On my way back, an hour or so later, he is not there. His blanket is gone. Urban Ministries is about four blocks away and starts serving breakfast around 6 a.m. 'He is probably there I tell myself.' I wonder how he got there.

On my next visit to Oakland I am walking along Telegraph Avenue on my way to speak to a therapist. Her name is Anne. "A Buddhist Quaker" is how she describes herself. She listens well, speaking only when she has a question or in suggesting a different way to understand my life, unemployed, wandering. I am troubled by her questions since I sense they all have something to do with me letting go. Letting go of what that person, me, was like before bitten by the tick. And that person now, newly retired from a job I loved. Newly regaining weight, newly looking for a purpose in life. I feel like a blue crab scuttling over here and there, asking the question, "Is this for me?"

I pass by a small but permanent encampment along Telegraph Avenue, right next to the Wells Fargo Bank. Pretty much the same crew, blankets on the sidewalk, guitars and dogs, water in bowls. But they do not beg. This morning as I pass by, I slow down. Some kind of ritual is going on. They are in a circle. Some shrouded with blankets others with caps and gloves but one, is kneeling like those football players, 'taking a knee', in prayer, before a game. I pause, keeping my distance. The one taking the knee, is touching and praying over a comrade whose left leg is all wrapped up in gauze. Dirty but not yet unraveling.

"O God who blesses all things. Bless this leg of Mark's." Heads nod. Mark is clutching the speaker like a lifeline to somewhere else. "Bless him soon, bless him quickly..." And he lightly waves his hand up and down Mark's wounded leg. Heads are bowed now. All is quiet. There are no 'amens.' After some silence, they all return to the street side of the sidewalk to their possessions, their dogs, their life on the street.

For twenty-five years I was the one gave the blessings. I was the one who made the sign of the cross. I was the one who dipped my hands in water and blessed a new born on her journey into a life of sorrow and joy. I was the one who made a sign of the cross with ashes on Palm Sunday. I was the one who placed my hand on the bowed head of the penitents and said soothing, hopeful words.

But for these past twenty-five years I have not been that one. And now when I have been thrown a curve ball, I do not know who I am and what I need to be doing with my life.

Walking up a flight of stairs on the north side of Berkeley, I am going to sit with Anne who spends half her time in Myanmar, living and working with homeless children. And now, here she is welcoming me into her office filled with soft muted paintings. She stands, a slight smile on her face, waiting.

And here I am. Needing a blessing, not knowing how to ask for one. We share the silence. This solitude is warm; this solitude is dense, allowing some annunciation to move in around us. A slight, ever so slight drift of a breeze flickers the candle set between us. We both acknowledge it, nodding slowly to the wafting, to the settled sense that brokenness is here. Now. Mine. Hers. Her children so far away. But here, now, there is brokenness, and in this strange moment I can see the beauty.

MAINE COAST.tv  
COMMUNITY TELEVISION

On cable channel 1301,  
MaineCoast.tv & Roku.

The Old School  
Rockland



## Oceanside High School Open House

Buzz photographer Ron Tesler went to the open house and took these photos. He says "very nice - lots of people."



More photos on page 2

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8:

- Public Veterans Day Assembly at Camden-Rockport Middle School, in Camden, Friday, November 8, at 2 p.m. With a presentation of colors, speeches by veterans, students reading thank-you cards, and a band and chorus performance. All are welcome – arrive between 1:40 and 1:55 p.m.
- “The Grand Budapest Hotel,” 7 p.m. in Belfast Free Library’s Friday Night Flix series. November’s Wes Anderson films continue with the story of an odd friendship between the concierge and the lobby boy at an elegant hotel in Eastern Europe in the 1930s.
- Photo Program on South Union, 7 p.m. at Union Historical Society’s Old Town House, 128 Town House Road. See South Union’s former school, post office and railroad stop at Thurston Brothers Casket Factory from the collections of Linda McAllister and Sybil Wentworth, who grew up in South Union. A brief meeting will precede the program.

## SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9:

- Artist’s Reception for Obrianna Cornelius at Camden Public Library, from 3 to 5 p.m. Her watercolor landscapes are in the Picker Room Gallery in November. She will be at the reception.
- “Thank You for Your Service” Meatloaf Dinner in Warren, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Masonic Hall, 105 Camden Road. Donations accepted from attendees who are not veterans. RSVP: 273-3154.

## SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10:

- “Poets Face Change,” 1 p.m. at Cushing Public Library. Ellen Goldsmith leads the Camden Conference workshop that will let people respond to poems by Matthew Arnold, W. S. Auden, Naomi Shihab Nye and U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. All welcome. Details: 236-1034, [CamdenConference.org](http://CamdenConference.org).
- Sunday Jams in Rockland, Sail, Power, & Steam Museum, 75 Mechanic Street, 1:30 p.m.

## MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11:

- “They Shall Not Grow Old,” 7 p.m. at Camden Opera House. Peter Jackson’s documentary with colorized and sound-enhanced images from World War I. The screening in the Community Thank You Films series is free.
- Monday Jams at St. George Grange, at Wiley’s Corner, 7 to 9 p.m. through October. Country, gospel, folk, bluegrass.

## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12:

- Midcoast Women Collective Voices: “Women in Agriculture – Seeding the Future,” 6:30 p.m. at Camden Public Library. A panel of Maine women who are experts in their fields will discuss what’s happening in Maine agriculture, from the State House to the fields. Details are at [MidcoastWomen.org](http://MidcoastWomen.org).
- Five Weeks of “My Next Career Move” at Camden Public Library, offered from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesdays, October 22 to November 19, by New Ventures Maine. Learn how your current skills connect to future careers, identify high-growth job fields, explore education and training options, and strengthen your resume for a job search. Registration: [NewVenturesMaine.org](http://NewVenturesMaine.org), 593-7942.
- Tuesday Jams in Thomaston, Federated Church, 8 Hyler Street, at 7 p.m. Folk, country, blues, gospel. FMI: 273-2914.

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13:

- Knox County Retired Educators to Meet, at 11:30 a.m. at Offshore Restaurant in Rockport. The group will order off the menu at noon. Anyone who has retired from a position in education (bus driver to superintendent) is invited. FMI: 594-4397.
- “The Conversation,” 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Anderson Inn, Quarry Hill, 30 Community Drive, Camden. The free class will help attendees consider what is most important so they can gain confidence with starting end-of-life care conversations. Registration required: 301-3950, [JourneyToHealth.CourseStorm.com](http://JourneyToHealth.CourseStorm.com).

**Contribute yourself to The Buzz**email [steinberger@gwi.net](mailto:steinberger@gwi.net)

This is an all-volunteer effort.

We are eager for your writings, drawings, photos, etc.

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14:

- “Interactions Among Plants and Insects: The Complex Webs They Weave,” 7 p.m. at Camden Public Library. Maine Master Naturalist Roger Rittmaster on native plants and insects and why their survival matters. He is the author of “Butterflies Up Close: A Guide to Butterfly Photography.”
- 10th Anniversary Screening of “Up” at Rockland Public Library, at 6:30 p.m. Everyone’s invited to the free screening of the animated film for all ages about a retired salesman who ties thousands of balloons to his house and sets off for the lost world of his childhood dreams, along with an 8-year-old, unintentional stowaway.
- 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.

**Around Town** is compiled each week by C.O.H. Gifford, Jr. who would like to remind readers that an expanded calendar is available at [wrfr.org](http://wrfr.org)

Please submit calendar items to [gowrfr@gmail.com](mailto:gowrfr@gmail.com)  
Our thanks to The Free Press for sharing its calendar.



More photos from the Oceanside High School open house, by Buzz photographer Ron Tesler



John McDonald, Superintendent of Schools

**WRFR and The Buzz are supported by our local business sponsors. Please give them your custom!**

American Legion Post 1 • Apache Boat Works • The Apprenticeshop • Astrology with Ananur • Bar Harbour Bank & Trust • Blues Festival • Brio Promotions • Brooks Trap Mill • Bufflehead Sailing Charters • Burpee, Carpenter & Hutchins Funeral Home • Cafe Miranda • Camden Conference • Camden Harbor Cruises • Camden National Bank • Camden Opera House • C'est la Vie Consignment • Chartrand Imports • Courier Publications • Dead River Company • Dowling Walsh Gallery • The Drouthy Bear • Eastern Tire • Eric Gabrielsen • First National Bank • For His Glory- Bible Baptist Church • Frantz Furniture • The Free Press • Genuine Automotive • Gilman Electrical Company • The Good Tern Co-op & Café • Guini Ridge Farm • Hoffman's Thomaston • Home Kitchen Cafe • Jensen's Pharmacy • Jess's Market • K & P Speed Shop • Knox Village Soup • Lyman Morse • Maine Street Meats • Maine Coast TV • Maritime Energy • Mountainside Services • Mid-Knight Auto • Monhegan Boat Line • David C. Olivas, DDS • Peaceful Passage • Pen Bay Pilot • Pen Bay Medical Center • Red Bird Acupuncture • Rhumb Line Restaurant • The Ripple Initiative • Rock City Employee Cooperative • Rockland Savings Bank • Rockport Charters • Sammy's Deluxe • Samoset Resort • Schooner Bay Printing • Scrimshaw Cannabis • Side Country Sports • Southend Grocery • State of Maine Cheese • Strand Theatre • Swan Restorations • Suzuki's Sushi Bar • Tea Printers • Toshie Ichyanagi Tesler, CPA • Viking Lumber • Wayfinder School • Willow Bake Shop • The Zack Shack

**Get The Buzz at these Rockland locations:**

Dunkin Donuts \* Rock City Cafe \* Camden Nat'l Bank \* Main Street Market \* Jensen's Pharmacy \* Willow Bake Shoppe \* Offshore Restaurant \* Good Tern Coop \* Rockland Library \* City Hall \* Jess's Market \* Southend Grocery