



# Rockland Buzz

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## Isolation Reflection

Issue 160, April 17, 2020, Rockland, Maine

*The Old School*  
Fellowship Education

### Metro Show with David Gogel



This week David Gogel, the new Executive Director of Rockland Main Street, joined us on WRFR's Metro Show. David moved to Rockland with his family because he was charmed by our little city, and then landed the RMS job just in time for the Covid-19 crisis. He has proved a quick learner, and we had an interesting conversation, with help from listeners.

Our guest for next week remains to be confirmed, but we will continue our series of discussions with local leaders on the virus crisis.

So please join us next Wednesday from 5 to 6 pm for the Rockland Metro show, on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, and online at WRFR.org. And check the website for information about the many great shows on our local community radio station.



### Sergio Iavarone reports from the Eternal City

Dear Joe,

The former vice president Joe Biden In a TV debate with senator Bernie Sanders that took place on March 15, 2020, claimed: "With all due respect for Medicare for All, you have a single-payer system in Italy, it doesn't work there". I am sorry to say that Mr. Biden is really misinformed.

Italian health service is providing a vital defense against mass infection, ensuring that any ill person can get proper treatment. In a pandemic, even the health of the wealthiest depends on everyone being promptly treated. Yet even in such a trying situation, in Italy not even the most right-wing forces, are currently prepared to say anything about public health care. Thanks to it, among other things, while Italy has a GDP per capita at barely half the US level, Italians' life expectancy is around four years higher. The average Italian lives to over 83 years of age, the 5th highest life expectancy in the world, while the United States languishes in 35th place. Moreover, differently from what Biden thinks, Italy spends less

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## Isolation within Isolation - Glen Birbeck Disconnected



Yesterday, the 15th, as my niece was visiting in the door yard, A CMP guy comes walking up between the buildings. He'd just finished reconnecting our power. After six days of no power and nearly no heat we were returning to "normal". The line had snapped Thursday of last week at about eight thirty in the evening. An old tree got loaded down with too much snow. It fell on the power, internet and telephone lines, putting them in the road.

Neither of my LP heaters runs without electricity. They don't need much, 200 Watts or so, but they do nothing without any. For those six days my mother & sister continued isolation in the big house. I stayed in my building and slept dressed and with all the covers I had. I tried sleeping in the car. I tried using the car battery and generator with a power inverter (12Vdc to 120VAC) to provide electric power for the LP heaters. Worked for a few minutes then cut out.

Sleeping in the car (the only source of heat) was ok, but the getting in and out for natures call wasn't easy. During the day we had sun for three of the six days. The temps were low 30s to mid 50s. Dry mostly. The night it rained a lot I was in the car. I discovered how cold water running over the car hour after hour could cool the inside.

During the days we would cook and melt snow (no pump) on the BBQ grill. We hunted dead wood, a major resource here, to build fires with. On two of those sunny afternoons it was nice sitting outside, reading, tending the fire. The positive aspects of camping. On day seven the telephone and internet returned. The modern world of electricity and communications, gone in an instant, gone for six days.

It was a strange interlude in an already strange time. A crisis within another crisis. Enough people called the authorities and friends that we were checked up on. My niece came out twice offering water and cute ppe masks. A Rockport policeman came by.

I felt bad that I couldn't reassure my daughter in Tampa, that we couldn't reassure each other as we've done since everyone isolated. She knew about snow storms up here and managed to get a map of the outage locations including us. With no charged-up cell phone we were totally out of touch. My thanks to the utility crews, real heroes in these tough times. I now appreciate what "isolation" really is.



### LATE MARCH EARLY APRIL WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS DURING COVID-19

by Phyllis Merriam

Our bird watcher neighbor, formerly from Brooklyn, gave me a supply of shelled sunflower seeds to add to our depleted feeder that I can observe out the kitchen window by the sink. Sometimes, I use binoculars to get a closer view of the birds. First, the chickadees arrived to demonstrate their grab and go feeding method. A male Northern Cardinal, with his paler spouse, appeared, along with sparrows and small woodpeckers.

It didn't take long for finches to swarm the feeder – even fighting each other for food. The rosy finches are lovely but I like the yellow ones best. They look like pet store escapees and remind me of my grandmother's revolving generations of canaries she kept in a cage by her chair near her dining room bay window. Below the feeder, two mourning doves waddled around picking up seed droppings. A starling alighted on the feeder's support pole and proceeded to try and feed. Its weight and size were too large, so it grasped the pole with its feet and gradually worked its way down and aligned its beak with the feeder openings. Amazing ingenuity.

Every morning around 6:30 a.m., I put out dry cat food for the crows I've been feeding for about two years now. I put the food on the patio so the sea gulls don't raid the food. I place the dried cat food in a long line for easier less crowded dining. The crows call to each other to alert their

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letter from Rome, cont. from p. 1

than one third of what the US invest on health. We have these results despite of the several cuts on public health care in the last years.

Universal public health care is doubtless the reason why Italy hasn't collapsed, explaining why the difficulties we face haven't turned into mass tragedy. In Italy every sick person will be treated as best as possible, regardless of his personal finances. None of the Italian tested or cured for COVID-19 has been charged a single euro. It's written in the Constitution that the Republic protects health as a fundamental individual right and collective interest.

Sadly we have allowed the various equivalents of Donald Trump to make our health service a bit more like the American system. Over the last 25 years various legislative measures introduced quasi-market elements into our public health service, greatly weakened its effectiveness while also regionalizing control over it. The Italian equivalent to the idea dear to many Americans that you have to "earn" the right to health through work and income. This is the reason why the region that has more than any other embraced this kind of policy, i.e. Lombardy, is by far the biggest coronavirus outbreak in Italy.

If we are worried, it is because far too long we have allowed our own Trumps to cut staff numbers, facilities and equipment. I hope that my American friends learn our lesson and not to make the same mistake.

Sergio

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## Awakening the sleeping giant

You have probably never heard of a company named "Delhaize." Headquartered in the Netherlands, Delhaize is one of the worlds largest food retailers with gross revenues in the billions, and owns a local market you most likely visit once a week, Hannaford. Another favorite local retailer, Walmart, is owned by the Walton family, with reported a net worth of \$191 billion dollars. Our Home Depot is part of the worlds largest home improvement chain, with reported revenues of over \$35 billion last year.

We locals shop regularly and spend more than we would like to admit at these and other "Big Box" national retailers. Then there's "online" shopping. Companies like Amazon are raking in billions of our hard earned dollars as we all sit at home and let our fingers do the shopping.

In just a few weeks we will probably be venturing out to purchase all those things we have been putting off buying. Where will we shop? Hannaford's or the Good Tern Co-Op? Shaws, Jessie's Market, or South End Grocery? Will we support Home Depot or Hammond Lumber; Lowes or Spears?

Our decisions will make all the difference in the vitality of our local community going forward. Yes, many of us are out of work and money is tight, and we think we might get it cheaper at the Big Box, but how often is that true?

So many times I have gone to the big chain store only to find I could have bought a better product at Spears, or found fresher fish at Jessies, for the same or even lower price. Where we spend our money does make a difference...a BIG difference in supporting our friends and neighbors and those businesses that employ local workers.

We are a community and in order for us to survive & grow we must work to support each other. When you support local businesses that money stays in your community.

by Steve Carroll

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We are all volunteers. Email [gowrfr@gmail.com](mailto:gowrfr@gmail.com).

Phyllis Merriam, cont. from p. 1

companions to the breakfast buffet. One of the daily crows has an injured wing but its flying isn't impeded. It is the boldest of all the crows. Maybe its courage resulted in its injury. The same crow was eating seed droppings under the feeder when the red squirrel confronted it just inches away. The crow was completely unfazed. After awhile, the little red squirrel gave up like a little kid trying to taunt his big brother.

Yesterday, I noticed a crow gathering dried Hosta leaves for nesting material - a sure sign of spring. A couple of years ago, I read a story about a 10 year-old girl whose father built her a wooden platform in their yard, so she could feed the crows. Over time, the crows brought her a variety of shiny objects they placed on the platform for her. (To date, no such luck has visited me...)

We have two squirrels that have set up housekeeping. The grey squirrel in the big maple and the red squirrel in the spruce tree by the kitchen; they often mix it up in mad chases. The red squirrel, a manic, herky-jerky teaser, lets the fat, grey squirrel chase it round and round a tree always keeping just out of reach. The red squirrel seems to be saying, "Nah, nah, nah, nah!"

Two days ago I noticed a ladybug on the kitchen ceiling and sometimes on a kitchen windowsill. It occurred to me it somehow got into the house to get warm and might be hungry. I put out a small celery leaf, on which it alighted and walked around on it for a while. Then I googled, "What do ladybugs eat?" I first tried a tiny piece of dried apricot, not having the recommended raisins. The ladybug showed no interest. Then I decided to put a small dab of Swedish cloudberry jam on the celery leaf. Well, the ladybug was all over the jam, eating seemingly non-stop. It hasn't moved from the windowsill by the sink, just roving over and around the jam it snuggled up to as it dined. I have enough cloudberry jam until its warm enough to release the ladybug into our backyard. Thinking of not having the ladybug, I miss it already.

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## On a Walk

with Fred Bloom

For the last few days I have been working in the garden, but yesterday it was raining, so I thought I would take a walk. I put on warm clothes and rain gear, but when I turned to go out the door, I noticed that the rain was turning to snow. By the time I reach the road it was all snow and getting heavier. It was melting instantly on the asphalt road surface, but the meadow was turning white, the far hills were invisible, and the near hills were ghostly shadows behind the snowy mist. Somehow, snow seems to muffle sound. No cars were passing. The wet snow clung to my clothing as I walked along my usual route. As I was returning, the snow had started to form a thin sheet on the asphalt, and as I turned onto the dirt road, the wondrous apparition that comes with this kind of snow-which turns every small branch into a delicate white line etched onto the landscape, creating a serene realm of perfect stillness and silence- had arisen and it put me into a kind of trance. At the pond I stopped to see if I could spy the beaver who has recently taken up residence there. The pair of mallard ducks, the male with his emerald green head and neck; the smaller female completely colorless, the little married couple, were paddling around at the edges of the dry stalks of last summer's growth of marsh grass. There was no sign of the beaver, who may have decided that this was too small a pond, and she, too big a beaver, and moved on. My eye lingered on the pair of ducks, always together, snow piled on their backs. They come every year at this time, and only stay for a few days before moving on. Their summer home is probably in Canada.

How deeply ingrained in our being is the idea of marriage, that these birds share with us that notion- of male and female, each necessary to the other, each completing the other. For how many centuries, eons, has it been like this- male and female? Even the plants are male and female- as though in some way this expresses some fundamental law- the ying and yang of the universe. A reciprocity, a mutuality, a me/you, a basic twoness, not at, but near, the source of creativity. For the single cell, growth was impossible beyond a certain point. It was only with the invention, or eruption, of twoness, that further development became possible- resulting, finally, in this miraculous being- a duck, who can swim and who can fly, but who is innately one half of a pair, a part of a marriage. There is no self without other, no I without thou.

The other side, of course, is individuality. Standing there in the snow I was aware of my aloneness, my solitude. I thought of all the old people, now, like me, alone in their house, their apartment, in these present conditions, forced to confront their stark individuality. I see all the videos, the zooming, skyping, facetime-ing, the trying to stay connected, as though fleeing from the anxiety of aloneness. And yet, as I stood there, it seemed that we must face it. How often are we lonely, more lonely, even in a marriage than when we are literally alone. Aloneness is also fundamental. Surrounding the ying and yang, there is the circle, the one, beyond all twoness, alone, as we are alone. Standing there gazing at the ducks, I knew that there was no one who could be there, in my mind, with me. And yet, that is what I was longing for.



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