

Metro Show with Dave Miramant



This week Dave Miramant, our Maine State Senator, joined us on WRFR's Rockland Metro Show. Dave was last with us five weeks ago. As last time, we had a far-ranging conversation, and some interesting calls.

Next week we will continue our series of conversations with local leaders on the virus crisis. One topics next week will certainly include the proposal to close Main Street to automobile traffic for the month of June. What do you think?

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 call in to 593-0013 to join the conversation.

Visit WRFR.org for more information.

Check out The Buzz online: thebuzz.me



Our friends Nate Davis and Paul Coster have put together Opportunity Knox, an online platform designed to support and sustain Knox County's small businesses through the COVID-19 crisis. Individuals can visit the website <https://opportunityknox.me> to purchase a gift certificate or credit to one or more small businesses, or make a contribution to one or more non-profits in our region.



Here is an old painting of the Rockland-built clipper ship Red Jacket beating to windward in a gale under reduced sail. Perhaps this is a metaphor for our current challenge. Beat on, dear Rockland, and stay off that lee shore!

Down Maine Street with Phil Groce

The Way It Is

Heather Goff has worked for South End Grocery on South Main going on 5 years and tells me that it is a family-friendly place where everyone working together gives it a positive aura. Owned by Steve and Dodie Hiller for 25 years, it has so many useful items, along with groceries and an active deli where outside workmen come to assemble their lunches around noon. It's the only place on Main Street that you can buy a hammer. A jumbo 3 topping pizza comes in at less than \$10.00. Heather helps in the deli, but usually she's at one of the two registers up front. They currently allow only 5 customers in the store at a time because of the virus.

At the cash register, Heather smiles genuinely and constantly while knowing just about every customer by name, kids' names, and pets. Customers exchange a sentence or two of chat while paying. Can't linger. The place is busy. As one visitor from New York put it, "It's a great big store in a tiny package."

Heather and her husband, Ronald, and their three children, live just around the corner. She opens the store early in the morning, but she now spends time cleaning and spraying disinfectant, and not so much time with food preparation. Ronald works in the kitchen at Knox Center.

Before they moved to Rockland, they lived in Friendship in a small apartment in a barn. She still misses Friendship. Heather's father, a Robinson, retired from lobstering, now owns Sea Breeze Farm and sells produce in a farm stand in Friendship. Her mother retired after nearly 50 years teaching primary grades in Friendship. Heather and her husband moved to Rockland while Heather was pregnant with their second child. I asked Heather if she had she ever considered going to college.

"My brother went, and he's now a music teacher. I was shy in school and stayed behind the scenes most of the time. I mostly liked art, and I considered going to art school. I had both good and bad experiences in high school. I didn't feel ready for college. I got a job at Shaw's while still in school, and I found that I like working in a grocery store, and I liked the money. So, after graduation, I just continued there—for 8 years, in fact. Then I quit to be a stay-at-home mom until I had to go back to work for money reasons. That was 20 years ago. And I still have all my fingers after using Italian meat slicers for so many years. I am glad I feel essential here, and especially I am glad I am still working, what with all this virus scare. We don't get any outside help."

Somewhere along the line, you stopped being so turned inward. "It made me feel good when people responded to me so positively here. That's what is so great about a small store." What do you do when you go home? "It takes me a little while to settle down, and all 3 of our kids are home, the youngest is in the 7th grade, and one is in college, and the other has a job, but he's laid off—like so many other people. Tele-school is the big thing now—emergency learning, they call it." All that must keep you terribly busy?

"Not terrible, it's good. You may have noticed the masks the workers at the store are wearing. I make those. I'm a fiber artist on the side, and I sew, but mostly I knit and crochet. I usually go to several craft fairs each year. I have 3 different spinning wheels to make the different yarns I use. I feel good that I can give the masks to people who need them, and I sell some, too. People coming into the store were so very frustrated and feeling isolated with the Covid restrictions at first. I could see it in their faces and by what they told me. But now, it seems that we have turned a corner, because most people at least know what to do. And we have supplies they need in the store." In my head I heard G.I. Joe saying, "Knowing is half the battle."

"At work, we all are positive. No one wants to come to a store and hear complaining. Many people come in feeling defeated and isolated. We can give them friendliness and appreciation, and in the process, we feel appreciated, also. I thank my parents for all that."

Do you see anything positive about what is going on in this crisis? "My parents always told us that we all are equal. My father would talk with anyone no matter their status or their money. Of course, my mother dealt with all walks of life being a teacher. And I see some of that coming to the surface in this crisis, because everyone is affected in some way. People who always worked now know how people without work felt. It's humbling. Nothing the matter with that. We all have to adapt.

"And I can't say it has been easy for us. We are in deep with emergency learning and all 3 kids at home. Like my husband, I'm busy just about all the time. Same with everyone around here. We all live from pay check to pay check. Sometimes I just burst out in tears. But it's about as good as it gets—just that it's hard. And we try to be as positive as possible. My mom says that she's glad to be retired."

I had to do this interview by phone due to the restrictions of the Covid emergency. I could hear the kids in the background, and the dog barking. Heather and her husband are living the American Dream, or what is left of it in our culture. With their courage, they're making it. I can understand why she breaks out in tears now and then. Who wouldn't? That's the way it is.

Copywrite Philip C. Groce 2020



News from Paris

Spring is here with 70 degree sunny days, April showers and aromatic flowers. But parks and walks on the Seine remain closed to reduce crowding during our limited 1hr walks each day. Outdoor exercise was not permitted between 10am & 7pm for a few weeks, but that has now been relaxed. Many \$150 fines have been levied against those breaking rules or leaving home without a necessary self-permission letter.



Thankfully, due to these and other restrictions, hospitals and ICU's have passed their most difficult period for now, with fewer daily admissions each day. A loosening of some restrictions and closures will happen May 11, followed by another gradual step in early June, somewhat like Maine's multi step process. Gradual opening of schools is the most important change May 11, subject to parent permission. School is open here until early July so there still may be some time left for in person, safe distance learning.

For me, life will not change much in May. Restaurants, cafe's and museums will not open until at least June and large public events will not happen this summer. There will be no foreign tourists coming to France this summer, which will have a huge impact on Paris, as it will in Rockland.

The Tour de France is still trying to happen, but there are doubts. The start of this iconic 3 week bicycle race was postponed from early July to late August; that date conflicts with new summer restrictions. For more everyday cyclists and wannabe's, the Minister of Ecological Transition (do we have one of these in the US?) recently announced a 20 million euro budget to encourage cycling transportation as we come out of confinement. Many more bicycle lanes and storage facilities will be opened, and anyone can use a 50E repair allowance to renovate their old bike.

As cities like Paris begin to open and face a new influx of cars and pollution, these measures will attempt to retain some of the positive changes of the last month: less pollution, empty streets, no traffic, etc. The Mayor of Paris also plans to close the long and busy Rue de Rivoli to private autos, for now and hopefully permanently, as long as she is re-elected someday in the long delayed national mayoral elections. Anne Hidalgo already closed the banks of the Seine to cars, which opened up this beautiful pedestrian space that we may use again after confinement.

Relaxing of community restrictions will require a massive increase in distribution of masks and testing units, which have been chronically short here as in the US. We expect to soon see re-usable cloth masks in all stores for 2-4 euro, and testing available in many localities for those with symptoms. So far, only those with symptoms requiring hospitalization have been tested.

President Macron has lost support due to the clear lack of government pandemic preparation, but with no election until 2022, he has time to begin fundamental changes to the underfunded health care system. Macron has admitted to mistakes and promised changes. Healthcare is in front of us every day, and will be for the foreseeable future, so we will look for positive change in this area as well as in the ecological transition.

Paul Chartrand

END OF APRIL 2020 COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

By the end of April my husband and I have been sheltering in place for 48 days. In some ways it's a time warp; it feels both rapid and time has slowed its pace.

Looking out our windows makes it feel like everything is normal. A father and his little boy ride by on their bicycles enjoying companionship and fresh air. A variety of pet dogs controlling their people on the Harbor Trail. Teenage boys racing their skateboards into uncertain futures. Couples in love walking by tightly holding hands. Sunrises and sunsets are glorious. The early morning jogger we can set our clocks by. Birds at the feeder or chasing each other in spring mating rituals. Ospreys returning two days early whistling over the Head of the Bay. A bald eagle ruling from the height of a neighbor's spruce tree. Crows gathering each morning for their dried cat food breakfasts. A neighbor's emailed photos of deer, foxes and hawks out and about up the street. The Mourning Dove giving up its life for a Red Hawk.

Things I don't miss: HANDSHAKES because you never know what you'll get: The Bone Crusher Power Play, The Dead Fish, The Clammy Clasp, The Damp Digits, The Limp Lefty, The Half Hand.

Another thing I don't miss: WEARING A BRA: The absolute freedom of going braless is something a guy cannot possibly comprehend. A camouflage of vests, sweaters or coats is still working during my fast forays to get milk and eggs or the Sunday papers. This new habit will get trickier in warming weather.

Things I do miss: HAIRCUTS AT SEASIDE SALON

We are well overdue for haircuts. I've trimmed my own and my husband's hair and have prepared my apologies for whenever we can return to Crystal's capable hands. Weeks ago, my husband decided to grow a stay-at-home beard, which started out OK. Now he's looking more and more like an Amish man morphing into ZZ Top.

People I'm Puzzled By: THOSE WHO REFUSE FACE COVERINGS & 6 FOOT SPACING

While more and more people are wearing some type of protective face covering and keeping their distance, there remain holdouts in our community. Why are some people willing to lose precious things we will never get back? Is their boldfaced "personal freedom" worth the sacrifice of their health and the greater good?

People I'm grateful for: Our mail delivery lady who leaves a note, asking if she can help in any way. My husband's VA home health aide, a gentle, big bear of a former Marine, who does our grocery shopping. Semper Fi! The VA TeleHealth nurse, who coordinates his care and who has become a friend we will never meet. Our calm and reassuring Governor Janet Mills. John, at Genuine Auto, who keeps our ten-year old Toyota running. Family and friends, who reach out to us. The medical staff and their cleaning crews, who risk their health and safety for everyone else.



PPE in 1349

What we would consider a mask for carnival got its start as 14th century PPE, personal protective equipment. At the time it was believed plague was due to evil smells. The Middle Ages must have had its share, the streets serving as sewers. The defense against a bad smell? A nice smell, like lavender. The beak, often made of leather, was stuffed full of aromatic dried flowers, roses, carnations, herbs. A hat and leather coat extending to the floor completed the doctor's outfit. They carried a walking stick and wore gloves, both to avoid touching a corpse. They carried chalk to mark doors of houses with infected inside.

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