



Rockland Buzz

Local Little Magazine

Issue 164, May 15, 2020, Rockland, Maine

MAINE COAST.tv
COMMUNITY TELEVISION
On cable channel 1301,
MaineCoast.tv & Roku.

The Old School
Fellowship Education

Metro Show

This week Dave Miramant
Next Week David Gogel



This week our Senator in Augusta, David Miramant, joined us on WRFR's Rockland Metro Show. This was Dave's third visit to the Metro Show since the pandemic began. We talked, of course, about the covid-19 epidemic, and a variety of other topics too.

Next week our guest will be David Gogel, Executive

Director of Rockland Main Street. We will continue our series of conversations on the virus crisis, and with David we will focus on the City Council's plan to close Main Street to traffic - at least to some extent and some of the time - in June. David is on the Task Force that will work with the City Manager to decide the details.

Please join us for that conversation, next Wednesday from 5 to 6 pm on 93.3 fm in Rockland, 99.3 fm in Camden, and online at WRFR.org. Listen, and call in to 593-0013 to join the conversation.

You can visit WRFR.org to learn more about your local community radio station..

Down Maine Street with Phil Groce

Little Song, Little Dance

I asked if the voice on the Strand Theatre's recording was hers. Liz McLeod replied that it was, and why did I ask? I replied that she has a great radio voice, and was she a singer? "Yes, I do sing, but I also do many voices. You see, I was in radio for 15 years before I came here. I did commercials, acting, news, whatever needed to be done, both in Rockland and in Bangor. But radio as I knew it, no longer exists, except with WRFR in Rockland. That is non-profit, just as we are here. Local interest requirements were dropped for radio, and that opened the door for large corporations to buy up stations. Now we have large corporate radio."

The Strand is non-profit? "Venues like this can't exist in small towns without help from the community. The Dondis family owned it for 80 years. Meredith was a jewel in the community, greeting the theatre-goers out front. It was sold to an operation in Mass., then bought out by Flagship with the sole purpose of closing the competition. The Courier with Steve Betts played it up big, and the State intervened and forced Flagship to sell it. Matthew Simmons, a Texas oil man who retired in Rockport, bought it and rebuilt it, then reopened it in 2005. It was a hobby for him, and for the first 7 years it was for-profit; but he died in 2010, and it was transitioned to non-profit. I've been here for 15 years, and I serve as the House Manager, but I feel as if I've been here all my life."

Wow, what a rundown. What was your life like before you came here? "I was born in Searsport, and my uncle was a projectionist at the Colonial Theatre in Belfast. I was going to that theatre since I was five. I would help with what I could, and I was fascinated with the arc-light projection equipment. I watched lots of movies through the peep hole in the booth. He later was the projectionist at the Rockland Drive-In, now that big nursery.

"In the 80's, I worked around Belfast at a tee-shirt factory—that's humbling and . . . edifying . . . working in a factory. Lots of work then. I even took a bus to California and worked different places: a mushroom-growing-operation, sorted bottles, sign painted, wrote radio commercials--all short runs, just to keep going. After I returned to Belfast, the bottom fell out of the chicken business. The factories closed—throughout the state. That was a depression, especially in Belfast, and there was no work of any kind in the area. Brutal twenty percent unemployment.

"My family always lived a hard-scrabble life. I still do. Paycheck to pay check, and I'm approaching 60. But my heart is in theatre." Where did you find work after you got back? "I was lucky to get in at a radio station, but radio was fading, and it was a low budget enterprise." But you stayed in entertainment when you came here.

"Yes. I'm in charge of the facility. I supervise the employees. Everyone has to work together. I'm the one who comes up front and says, 'Welcome to the Strand.' I'm an entertainer--A little song/ a little dance/ a little seltzer down the pants—that's what we say, anyway." Sound likes fun.

"It's my family—closer than blood, though I am close to my mother. There's the business office and 3 kids who work up-front. The kids are great, usually going to school. I have 3 close friends who had worked here for years. We go to a Red Sox game and China Town together once a year and have a ball. That was my vacation: one Red Sox game. We have the tickets for this year, but with this virus . . . I don't know.

"Around here, baseball has always been the common currency of the community. Ned Martin the announcer for the Sox when I was young was the most articulate man I have ever heard. From him I learned to love the language. The other big influence on me was Mr. Rogers. I was in the first generation of kids that followed his example. And I learned to do voices. He did all of them himself in his show.

"Anyway, I am doing what I want to do, and especially with the Strand Radio Show that we do along with WRFR. We do that twice a year. I both write and produce it. It's comedy, variety, original sketches, local celebrities, and musical content by Brittany Parker. We broadcast from the stage here with live audience. The kids who work here participate—not polished—but it's more like it was in old radio. Lili Bonarrigo is one of the stars, in my opinion, never done entertainment, but she's a natural. She's now in college. We all do many different things, and maybe we're keeping dead-skills alive, and if so, that's okay. It's the Strand Family."

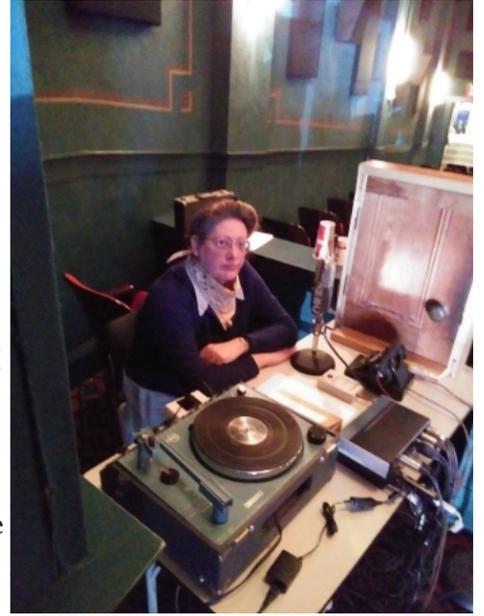
When is this Show? "May 17, live, right here with WRFR. It's the last vestige of live radio around: Local radio for local people, and unlike hyper-managed corporate radio, it has a soul. We're going to have to do it with social distancing."

To me, it appears that you have sacrificed a lot to live out your love of putting positivity into peoples' lives through your desire to entertain. "No kidding, but thank goodness for our director, Jesse Davis, who has kept us on the payroll. And this Covid thing has put the screws to me. I just lost one third of my income, working on the side as an independent contractor writing liner-notes for an outfit that puts out old radio shows. Added to that, I live alone, and I really do not have the resources to battle if I get sick.

"The Strand is my only purpose, but I gotta do what I gotta do."

Gotta thank you for that.

Copyright Philip C. Groce 2020



Consult the Council Tuesday at 6pm on WRFR

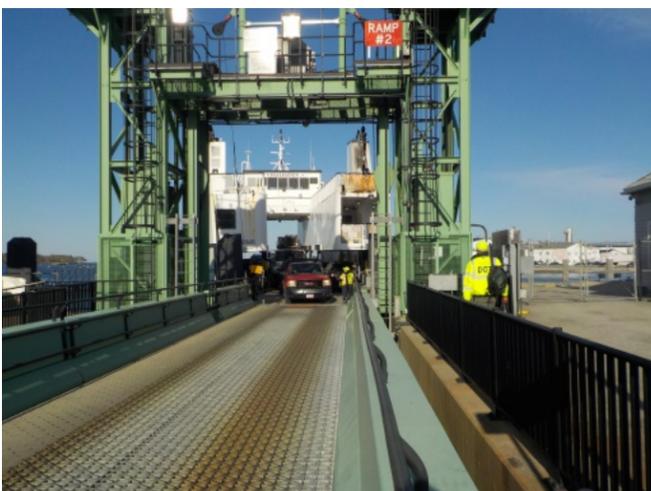


Rockland Mayor Lisa Westkaemper and City Councilor Nate Davis will discuss current events and take calls on WRFR's Consult the Council show on Tuesday, May 19 at 6pm. Consult the Council is a semi-regular weekly show featuring a conversation

between two rotating members of the Rockland City Council. Listeners are invited to call in to 593-0013 during the show with questions or comments.

STRAND ON THE AIR Social Distancing Special Sunday, May 17, 5pm - 7pm

Mask up and sit six feet away from your speaker, as the latest installment of STRAND ON THE AIR, the Strand Theatre's popular series of radio variety specials comes your way over WRFR.



Rockland Ferry Terminal, May 14 2020

Check out The Buzz online:
thebuzz.me

RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam



Yesterday evening, as the last light of the day faded, a neighbor's forsythia glowed, oblivious to any viral threats. It was breathtakingly beautiful. Equally lovely are a neighbor's white tulips that look transparent in the afternoon sunlight.

Crows are building nests in a friend's yard up the street. Wish a crow couple would choose us, too. Such a seemingly small thing to be of concern in these trying times.

Ventured out to the 7 am opening of Hannaford for a quick trip. There were about a dozen of us in our masks lined up politely and at least six feet apart with our disinfected carts waiting patiently. Inside, shopping was orderly and everyone I saw wore masks – except an elderly man who kept blocking the one-way aisle. I wanted to ask him to put on a mask and keep the six feet distance. But I kept silent, having read about an incident in Los Angeles when a Target clerk asked a customer to wear a mask. The customer's response was to break the employee's arm.

Incidents of anger or civil unrest are emerging around the country and here at home. Two area break-ins and robberies have occurred. Some people are getting desperate. The other night I awoke from a nightmare in which anonymous intruders held us at gunpoint. My anxiety is emerging, even as I deny it during the daytime.

COVID-19 has entered the White House. Since the virus cannot be kept at bay in the most protected residence in America, what about the rest of us ordinary folks? The few cases in Knox County and our Maine spring give us a false sense of security.

Meanwhile, our city council has decided to close Main Street to traffic in June so people can shop afoot. Hmmmm... The most shopping on Main Street is by tourists.

Tourists are not likely to flood Main Street either in June or in summer when all our festivals are cancelled. How will those of us who can do curbside purchases from restaurants support them in June? How would people shop and remain virus-free?

Other countries that reopened are locking down again because of virus resurgence.

Monday I saw the drive by property tax assessor in their red compact cruising around Rockland. Each pass took about five minutes. The city claims these drive buys (pun intended) will raise property taxes on one third, keep the same property tax rate on another third and a third will find their taxes lowered. Really? This calculation doesn't pass the straight face test. At such a sad, sad time when so many have so little this seems oddly out of touch.

Humor via local, state and national political cartoons has become my stress-reliever. My favorite editorial cartoonist, Barry Blitt, just won the Pulitzer Prize. A relative is loaning us the complete "Seinfeld" series. Binge-watching here we come!

Living the American Dream

by Steve Carroll

My Mother, like millions of Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, collected S&H green stamps. You collected stamps given by area merchants as an incentive to shop with them. At night, instead of playing video games, the family would help Mom lick and attach pages of stamps in S&H green stamp books that could be redeemed for a whole variety of goods available at the S&H green stamp store - first located on Main Street (now the location of Key Bank) then later on Park Street (now the location of Rockland Wholesale).

"Living the Dream" was the tag line prominently displayed on the front cover of each S&H green stamp book. This was a big deal back then. Everyone collected Green stamps and many local stores felt they needed to give Green Stamps to attract customers. I remember a lady who actually bought a washer and dryer by redeeming hundreds of stamp books.

I reminisce and ponder just how we can bring back our local economy following the devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We need to somehow encourage people to shop at their local businesses at this pivotal point in our recovery. If we continue to support Giant corporations like Walmart, Amazon, Home Depot & Lowes, Shaws & Hannaford's we will shortly find an empty Main Street, a hollowed out local economy, and be left only with the option of feeding at their trough.

Shopping local and supporting small area merchants has never been more important. If we continue to let our fingers do the shopping we eventually will have no where else to shop. I would also encourage small area shops to be creative and think of how they can again draw in local shoppers by offering incentives like stamps or coupons, and also by offering services like on-line shopping, curbside pick-up or free home delivery. Locally we must compete on the same level as the big boxes, by offering creative websites and convenient shopping options.

This summer I hope to see a giant farmers market and a vibrant Main street with music playing and outdoor cafes filled with customers.

This is our moment, Rockland. Just like the title of John Birds new history book "Rockland Rise & Renewal". This City has seen many changes over its evolution, and this is just yet another. Are we ready to seize it? If we fail to turn the tide, I fear we may lose many of our small Mom & Pap stores forever, and this is NOT the change we want to see.



An Eagle Soars Above the Pond

by Glen Birbeck

The temperature managed 60 so I made the three miles walk. When the wind chill's bad I only walk two. There was still a wind today but it wasn't as cutting as most days. Spring is slow to warm this year. Most days the wind blows 10 to 15 with higher gusts. I'm bundled up but want to err on the cautious side. I don't need the irony of getting a cold or flu now. These challenges don't take turns in fact they love to pile on. Guess humans are not exceptional after all. On the way back I stop at the Tolman Pond Market. Its been closed since the beginning of the April but the picnic tables are out. So I stretch and sit and watch the ducks sunning themselves, The sea gulls checking out fresh water and high above an eagle, soaring. Its such a master of flight. Just the way it dances on the thermals tells you its an eagle. It's outline is distinct. Most distinctive though is its size. Hundreds of feet up and it still looks big. How highly developed this bird's vision and visual processing must be. I know it can see me. I wear a red jacket on these walks, its a busy road, or it was. The eagle must be aware of the ducks and gulls too. Oh to be so free, disconnected from the our locked down world. Unaware of us and our problems. People are noticing how nature, how being in nature, can calm, provide perspective. We are but a part of the world, we are not THE world. The eagle reminds me of the bigger picture.



Help at The Buzz & WRFR

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

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 • The Grasshopper Shop • Guini Ridge Farm • Hall's Funeral Home • 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 • 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 • Side Country Sports • Southend Grocery • State of Maine Cheese • Strand Theatre • Swan Restorations • Suzuki's Sushi Bar • Tea Printers • Toshie Ichiyangi Tesler, CPA • Viking Lumber • Wayfinder School • Willow Bake Shop • The Zack Shack

Get *The Buzz* at these Rockland locations: Main Street Market • Jensen's Pharmacy • Southend Grocery

The Buzz is composed and printed by the Fellows of The Old School at the WRFR studios, 20 Gay Street, Rockland. Email: wrfr93.3@gmail.com