



# Rockland Buzz

## Main Street Magazine

Issue 165, May 22, 2020, Rockland, Maine

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*The Old School*  
Fellowship Education

**Metro Show**  
This week David Gogel  
Next Week Pinny Beebe-Center



Pinny Beebe-Center

This week David Gogel joined us on WRFR's Rockland Metro Show. David is the director of Rockland Main Street and we talked about the Council's idea to close Main Street to motor vehicles in June. Gogel is a member of the task force that is charged with developing a plan.

Next week our guest will be our representative in Augusta, Pinny Beebe-Center.

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.

## Steve Carroll On Main Street

Here's a photo from a visit to Burlington Vt. a couple of years ago. Many towns are revitalizing their Main Streets by creating more green space, wider sidewalks, more pedestrian friendly pathways, and outdoor cafes. Rockland has had opportunities in the past to make this transition, but has chosen just to talk about it. Now we are faced with yet another brief window to change our downtown area to be more inviting to visitors & locals alike. Let us seize this time, not to just try it out for a weekend, but to take our TIF money and our down time to build a better Main Street for future generations.



## Raising Confidence AND Maximizing Economic Activity

by Judy Pasqualge, Rockland, Maine

Everyone is now faced with a stark reality, regarding how to stay as safe as possible while increasing economic activity.

It is false to portray this as a choice of one against the other. The cost to the economy is usually calculated without suggesting possible new sources of income (even if temporary), such as increasing income taxes, a transaction tax on stock activity, and consideration of nontaxed offshore asset holdings and special tax breaks. Nor do calculations of lost revenue and GDP incorporate a certain virus resurgence, which could force new closures, and all the costs that have no monetary value. There is also little comment on the cost of putting workers back on the job in a context of lax enforcement of guidelines and too often a lack of paid sick leave.

Nor is there much comment on the impact of a loss of confidence in the safety of places where people do consume.

In Maine the most at risk includes (in overlapping categories): 250,000 age 60+; 77,000 veterans age 55+, and 25,000 disabled veterans; 67,000 on disability insurance; 300,000 with adult obesity; 145,000 with asthma, including 30,000 kids; 70,000 with copd; 250,000 with arthritis; 100,000 with diabetes; 350,000 with hypertension; 74,000 with CHD; and 60,000 cancer survivors.

The most at risk via jobs include: some 40,000 in (continued on page 2)

## Down Maine Street with Phil Groce Kind of Important

I see remnants of gas pumps, and I asked if this building began as a service station? "That's what it looks like, but in the 40's it was all a farm, and my father lived here," said Jon Thompson (left, in photo), gesturing to the surroundings to accent the changes. Changes, indeed. This facility, to my seeing, has evolved into a first-class motor-vehicle repair shop, now run by Jon and his young brother, Jason (right, in photo). It was hard for me to envision a farm this close to downtown Rockland on South Main, though the building next to the garage looked like an old farmhouse.

"It was a Chevron station in the 50's, and my grandfather ran it. There were two other owners later, and I bought it in 2002, and later my brother joined up." Had you been a mechanic before that? "I worked at Rockland Ford, and later, Fuller Cadillac, and before that a couple of other garages."

What was high school like for you? "We grew up in Owl's Head, and I went to Rockland High. It didn't appeal to me, though I got good grades. It started in my parent's driveway. All during high school I was more interested in working on lawnmowers, bicycles, friends' cars, whatever. When I graduated, I didn't have any interest in regular college—I didn't think it applied. So, I went to Southern Maine Technical School and got a degree in mechanic work. Seemed like the thing to do at the time. I've been at it ever since."

We were sitting in the lobby while his brother was working on a car in the shop, and just then a lady came through the front door holding the lapel of her coat over her nose to serve as a face mask. Jon jumped up and went into his office, which has a window into the lobby. He knew her by first name, and the transaction occurred quickly with a few pleasantries exchanged. She left, quite content. A permanent sign in the lobby stated, "Vehicles will be released after repair bill has been paid in full." Happened then, without a problem.

Then the phone rang. I heard Jon say to the customer, whom he knew by first name, that the trouble was a rat nest in the air box. Apparently, the customer expressed concern, and Jon said, rather soothingly, not to worry. It happens all the time, and the rats can do that in just a day, believe it or not, and not to worry, that it was the third nest he cleaned out in the last 3 weeks.

Back to the lobby. I told Jon that I have the same feeling here that I had at Barkers Garage in Union many years ago. You take the car to the place, don't really need an estimate, though they generally would give you one, and they fixed the problem, charged a fair price, and off you drove. Guaranteed. Finest kind. "Yes," said Jon, "we are in that tradition. You have to take care of your customers, sort of like being a bartender. The customers know us. We have a good customer base. Husbands can feel okay with their wives or daughters bringing in the car and being comfortable about car repair. I remarked that the sign up on the wall about payment was needed if he and Jason were going to hold up their part of the bargain. A slippery slope for many garages. Jon agreed. "My wife, Becky, comes in once a week to do office work. That helps a lot."

How has Covid affected you? "By this time of the year, we would have a surge due to people getting their tax refunds. They have other more important bills to pay. So, it's slower than usual. Also, not driving so much. Same everywhere. At first, with Covid, we were concerned about people coming into the lobby. We locked the door, and people had to knock. We would leave the keys in the car and take credit cards numbers over the phone. Now, we wipe down the place. My hands are the cleanest they've been for 20 years. We take off our clothes when we get home, wash up. So far, so good."

I noted a large painting of a peacock on the wall next to the window into the office. I asked him where that came from? It's by a customer, Mae Towers, an artist in town. I saw it and liked it—the colors jumped out at me. I like Mae as a person, and I wanted to help out by buying it. I think it looks good right there."

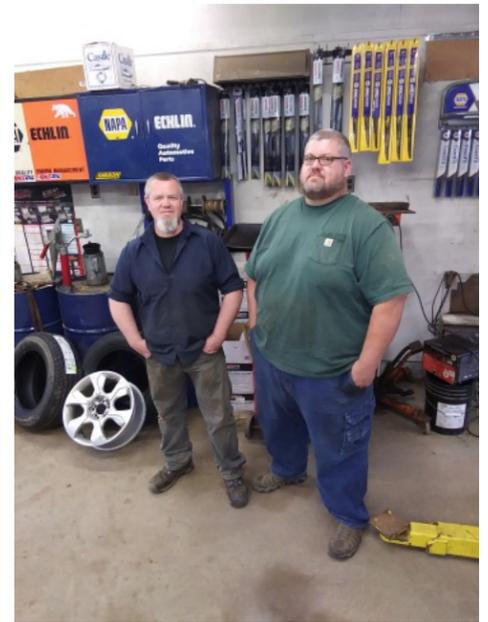
I told him that I thought he was a pillar in the community, providing real services, and knowing so many people. He smiled, "Some people have called me the 'Mayor of Knox County.' Everywhere I go, I see people I know. I enjoy it, even though I'm actually an introvert. But I like the social events in the Masons and with my wife in Eastern Star."

Jason, his brother, walked into the lobby wiping his hands, preparing to go home. I asked him about the Covid effect. "We both miss the social contact. We're both huggers. Can't do that now. Actually, there are a lot of positive things, especially since we still do not have community spread. For instance, takeout. It's awesome. We try to support the people we know. I think people living in crowded places out-of-state are going to start moving up here. My wife and I miss church."

Jon added, "And we are saving money. I looked in my wallet today, and I found the same \$20 bill that I put there 2 weeks ago. Now I'm taking my own lunch, not stopping by the Coffee Roasters to get a cup of coffee, or going by South End to get a sandwich. More meals at home, more time together."

As it says on their sign: "Genuine Automotive Services: A Family Operated Business That Genuinely Cares About You and Your Car."

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Jon (left) and Jason Thompson

Check out The Buzz online:  
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"Raising Confidence" cont. from p 1.

healthcare; 6,000 first responders; 5,000 postal workers; 8,000 in education; 5,000 in janitorial/cleaning; 45,000 in food services/drinking places; 17,000 in grocery stores; and 5,000 in jail plus 1,700 staff. This figure does not include workers whose job might be otherwise 'safer' but have preexisting conditions, or workers who are in very risky jobs AND have these conditions.

Thus, the context of these people's lives assumes great importance, and will often determine the level of confidence felt.

Factors that currently lessen this confidence:

1. Little education on the fact that the most at risk comprise more than half the population, and that many are advised to continue the stay at home, and the age 60+ to not even go to the grocery store. Little mention is made of the projections of statistical models on case and death numbers under various conditions of opening (example, by RAND).

2. Few reminders, let alone enforcement, of guidelines regarding distancing and wearing face coverings. One has to avoid the Rockland boardwalk and Main Street, and too often get off the sidewalk. The guidelines are also not enforceable in grocery stores. In short, individual choice seems to be prioritized over lessening contagion and infection.

3. Although many people oppose the 14-day quarantine for out-of-staters, the honor system for enforcement is seen by others as reckless, as again prioritizing individual choice.

4. The message sent when (well-intentioned) officials (in difficult positions) choose to not follow CDC guidelines on opening, and report virus statistics in ways that differ from medical recommendations or the norms of other states.

5. The growing image that the most at risk are only the age 60+, and that they are expendable - people who have paid taxes into the SSA fund for decades (paying for older generations' benefits), and now yearly spend tens of thousands of dollars in Maine. There is already a loss of confidence, and more hesitancy to spend. What is the impact of this on the image of Maine as a place to retire?

There is a need for more information and for it to be presented in different ways -- including public service announcements, mailings and signs, needed on a continual basis, especially to update what is known about the virus.

The individual is on his own to discover, for example: that COVID-19 can survive in the air for 14 minutes; that there is a dangerous syndrome affecting children and the signs of it; that USS Roosevelt seamen tested positive, then quarantined for 14 days, then tested negative twice, and some positive again; that some places require a 28-day mandatory quarantine; that clusters of infection have been traced to circulation via air conditioning in enclosed restaurants.

There is also room to find different ways that people can consume. For example, the farmers' market is now off limits to many. Perhaps vendors, items and prices could be listed at some distance from the market, orders taken and goods handed over.

At this point, it may be well to prioritize three reminders:

--that the choice to NOT act as if one is a symptomatic carrier is now serving to lessen consumption, hurting all sorts of business owners and employees, and to increase anxiety;

--that the current priority given to business opening with no safety enforcement also lessens consumption;

--that the combination of these two, in a broader regional and national context, severely affects confidence.

**Editor's Note:** We thank Judy Pasqualge for contributing her views to The Buzz. We hope to be the means of a healthy debate on the pros and cons of more or less restriction and enforcement, of appropriate versus oppressive vigilance, of freedom versus authority - all general issues that are coming to a head with the virus crisis. If you have some thoughts to share in The Buzz, please email them to steinberger@gwi.net.

## WEEK TEN

### COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Buzzing of mowers and perfumes of newly mown grass are signature signs of spring.

Tender green of budding trees - almost chartreuse against azure skies - is bittersweet in these uncertain days, weeks, months and maybe years to come of the invisible viral menace.

Our Cinnamon and Interrupted Ferns, ready to unfurl, look like scrolls on violins.

Snow Marine Park's dog visitors joyfully leap and run around. The dogs are oblivious to the virus and don't threaten each other - unlike some anti-science protestors in Maine and around parts of our country.

More than 90, 000 Americans have now died of COVID-19, with more to come. I find it impossible to wrap my head around this catastrophe. For a visual of these deaths, imagine all the citizens of Portland and Bangor lined up, end-to-end in body bags.

Most of the deaths have been vulnerable nursing homes residents. Families will have second thoughts about placing relatives. Yet, there may be no other choice. Some politicians around the country dismiss elders' deaths as expendable.

Will our Memorial Day 2020 recognize these and those who cared for them? A federal order to lower all American flags around the country for the rest of this year seems like the least that could be done to honor our fellow Americans.

Have been trying to figure out the logistics of serving patrons soon allowed to dine in our local restaurants. How do you eat wearing a mask? Do you try to fork food in under the mask? If wait staff can only serve one table, do restaurants need to hire more staff? How many unmasked patrons to a table? Are only those who sheltered in place together allowed per table? Who enforces these rules if some patrons resist as has happened in other states? Other countries have just closed restaurant dining when lockdowns were lifted and viral spread reoccurred.

We plan to continue curbside service at area restaurants we try to help.

It occurred to me that our 1856 home has been witness to two pandemics: the 1918 flu and 1940's into the 1950's polio. I survived the 1950's polio scourge intact. So many were not so lucky. Having been quarantined then, this COVID-19 sheltering-in-place isn't so unusual or frustrating - unlike for younger people who have never experienced such restraints on their freedom.

Haircuts, the need for one, or DIY's are interesting to observe. One young woman on the Harbor Trail wore her retro Sinead O'Conner lookalike proudly. A number of older men sport white ponytails. Newly bearded men look like 19th Century photos from the Rockland Historical Society.

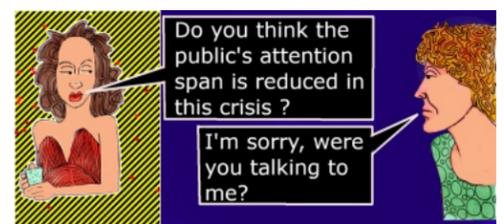
## So this is a war eh?

by Glen Birbeck

So this is a war eh? I think I'd feel better without that analogy. Life in the trenches in WW1 or slogging thru jungle in WW2 was much tougher than this. But then I'm not at the front. Those folks, the medical workers, the delivery and infrastructure people, they are fight a war, confronting the invisible enemy. I'm in a little trench, a spider hole, of my own design.

Makes me think of "Ground Pounder Day" in Iceland. I'd been in the Navy (the USN) about a year. It was 1964, I was finished with tech schools & at my first assignment, Iceland. The US forces up there were by treaty part of the Icelandic self defense force. One day a year we needed to be out in the lava fields playing war. The rest of the time me and my crew sat at consoles listening for Russians. That involved headphones and teletype, not rifles and grenades. Never mind. If the "balloon" went up (if the sheet hit the fan) we'd be ready to defend the island. An old timer at the base told me how to handle ground pounder day. "As soon as you get there", he advised, "start stacking rocks and collecting moss". The chunks of hard lava built up a wall to windward. The moss got stuffed into the cracks. He told me to also take a couple of sleeping bags. Lava isn't the softest stuff to sit on. I had a rifle but no ammunition. I had a little radio. By mid morning I was snug as a bug & awaiting the main event. At our end of the valley, higher up, sat an army cannon. A mile or two away, at the other end of the valley, a couple of abandoned trucks. I can't remember doing anything military that day. I listened to 60's rock and roll from Armed Forces Radio and waited. I might have had a book, can't recall...it was a long time ago. When it got late enough in the afternoon a megaphone announced what we'd been waiting for. The day's highlight. Above and behind me the cannon roared. Might have been 90mm. Not my area of military expertise. Anyway it was loud. What I most remember was how long the projectile took to reach the other end of the valley and the cool sound it made as it flew above us. Time stretches when you wait for a shell to land. They must have had it sighted in because a few seconds after the cannon roared the target leaped into the air. An echo reverberated up and down the valley. Wow, I thought! My first and only taste of combat. Pretend combat.

I didn't enjoy it enough to switch from the Navy to the Army. The war in Viet Nam was heating up at that time but the Pentagon never called. Used to be civilians just cheered the soldiers and sailors did the fighting. In the nuclear era the "war fighters" will mourn civilians. That's new. Novel virus from China moving west, that's a recurring theme in human history.



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