

## Metro Show

This week Pinny Beebe-Center  
Next Week Gordon Page



This week Pinny Beebe-Center, our representative in Augusta, joined us on WRFR's Rockland Metro Show. Pinny was interviewed by Steve Carroll.

Next week our guest will be Gordon Page, who is running as the Republican candidate for the Maine State Senate seat now held by Democrat David Miramont, who has been a frequent guest on the Metro show. We hope to learn from Gordon about the issues that are likely to be before State government and how he would like to approach them.

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.

## Rockland Bicycle Club

On Sunday, May 31st, the Rockland Bicycle Club



will host the its first weekly recreational bicycle ride. Bicyclists will meet at South School (190 Broadway, Rockland) on Sunday morning at 9AM. The rides will be a no-drop and adjust to the bicyclists. Continuing through the summer and fall, the series will end on Sunday, September 27th with a ride to the historic Marshall Point Lighthouse (50 miles).



May 2020, Rockland, Maine

## Down Maine Street with Phil Groce The Art of Happiness

The motivation of an expert auto mechanic to buy a painting of a peacock for the wall of his shop inspired me to contact that artist for an interview. Mae Towers lives in-town Rockland, with her studio in her home. People may know her from her work in food-service at Rock City Café on Main. The era of Covid necessitated phone interviews, and I have yet to see her in person, though my wife who used to have lunch at Rock City before Covid intervened, remembers her and says that she is a beautiful young woman with lots of life.

Born in Fort Fairfield, she attended school there. "High school was difficult for me. My parents divorced, and though I was a high honors student, I sort of dropped out: not attending school. I was on my own. But when they started saying that I had missed so much that I would have to repeat, that did it. You know, we had the same art teacher from kindergarten to high school. Not great.

"Luckily, I was able to be admitted to the Carleton Project, in Presque Isle, which then had only 10 students." A private school? "No, an alternative school. I was on my own, and I worked at Pat's Pizza while I was going to school."

Was it there that your art career began? "My mother was an artist—not professional—but we always had art materials around the house. I was turning to art for therapy. When I was drawing, I felt better. But then an art teacher took me under her wing and showed me the basics of oil painting, and that really got me started. I graduated a year early."

What then? "I decided to move to Texas, Wichita Falls. I found food-service work. I didn't last long there, too many people. I missed Maine. I hadn't realized all that Maine had to offer. I came back to Presque Isle, bounced around, got a CRMA and ended up working in a nursing home in Portland. Came to Rockland because my sister lived here. Worked at Plants Unlimited, and then my father died. I had a small inheritance that allowed me to build a house on property of my brother's in Stetson—off the grid, not much to look at.

"But there I had the time to start art work seriously, and I found it made me happy. I did that for a while, but I was not satisfied with a kitchen job there. So, I came back to Rockland. Worked in food-service again, and painted.

"I was trying to paint like a photo, and I felt so frustrated, but then I saw my dog sitting in front of my painting. On a whim, I painted exactly that. It was fun, and I used bright colors. That was the first painting I sold. Sort of in-thanks, I donated 30% of my commission to the Dog Underground Railroad project. I then started 'Louie the Neurotic Dog'—which is actually my own dog, and I was able to raise \$3000 through events and art auctions of paintings of Louie for rescue organizations. I was working full-time at Rock City Café at the time."

Seems that you were beginning to hit your stride. "Yes, and I became a represented artist through the Jonathan Frost Gallery on Main. I became engaged and had 2 kids, and I was still finding time for commissions. But like the times, we're now both out of work--he from Café Miranda.

To what do you attribute your success, so far, in your art? "I have the ability to catch energy—even that pickup truck on my Face Book page, just sitting there, has energy. I think I am able to do that with inanimate objects because of my work with animals. I have the ability to expose animals' personalities, and people can relate to that. I can make the eyes so they follow you around the room. To me, that's really it."

Did you study art to develop your talent? "Not art school. I observe others' art. I carried out my own study of Monet and Van Gogh—especially regarding brush stroke. For me, the most important thing is to do MY thing, the thing that represents what I feel and see. That's self-study. That's art. People tell me that they can easily identify my style, and it makes them smile." She's a courageous individual, I thought.

"My aim is not for the money bit. I have the basic urge to create things that will help the plight of animals. Ultimately, I am thinking about an animal sanctuary or something along those lines that I can donate to and develop." Why do that? "I love it when my art makes other people happy, makes them smile. In the future, that direction may take me a bit more cartoonish with distinct lines, but that pleases me. Someone called it heightened realism."

I was thinking that one of our daughters loves chickens, and I referred her today to facebook.com/maetowersart to see Mae's paintings of the creatures in a variety of dispositions. Mae's love is up-front—her specialty.

How has Covid hit you? "Both out of work, and we're here along with the children--6 months and 3 years-- and they have a lot of energy. Though we love them, it's 24/7. I can't concentrate long enough to paint. All it takes is the baby crying. The Frost Gallery had a 'Critter Show' scheduled for the First Friday Art Walk (June 5), but now it will have to be virtual on the website. The gallery is open to the public. Those openings of shows mean a lot to me--the people looking and commenting.

"Covid has increased the stress level for us, and I guess for everyone. I know I can sell my work, but I can't find the opportunity to create. It all will pass, I tell myself."

Just then the baby started crying, and we had to end the interview.

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# A Wind for Change

by Glen Birbeck



My daughter asked me if she should stock up on food. This 75 days into the "crisis". Two and a half months after the emergency declaration. "Can't get a freezer, they're all sold out" she said. Her generation has its own idea of emergency rations. Things like salads in plastic. Heirloom tomatoes, each tomato resting its own little jewel case. I told her, "Dry beans, rice, flour, sugar, salt - Things that last". Her eyes must have rolled hearing that. How much of a crisis can it be? Her groceries are still delivered. My idea of 50 pounds of dry beans didn't resonate. "Things that don't need to be kept cold", I told her.

In Tampa people need to be kept cold. People and everything not native. They couldn't live there without refrigeration. The A/C is for moisture too. Having visited a few times I can appreciate that. Civilization would wilt and grow moldy without A/C. Beans and rice? My daughter doesn't follow my advice. Knowing this I limit advice. I could have suggested she get a house in the countryside. I might have suggested a bit of the "prepper" mentality. Or, a return to nature with chickens in the door yard. Ain't going to happen, not voluntarily. When she heads for a place in the boonies so will millions of others. The skills she and they lack for a return to nature would fill several books. Civilization is a house of cards. It grows more fragile as it gets taller.

This virus is just a breeze. Consider the wind gust nature and chance might direct our way. The long and complex supply chains were cunningly designed but for one thing only, profit. We've set out from a harbor in a boat heavily loaded. The sea surface is smooth, like glass, not a ripple. Our boat has half an inch of free-board. For you landlubbers "free-board" is the distance from the top of the water to the edge of the hull. When things are calm half an inch is just enough. Oh we might have to bail now and then but we're OK. Our civilization has grown up depending on that smooth sea. Its only been a couple of hundred years since the industrial revolution. To nature that's just a moment. My list of survival staples would have been perfectly understood by someone in 1820. The salad would have been in their garden. The plastic zip lock bag still raw petroleum sleeping under the sands of Arabia.

Seeds sold out early in the virus crisis. Having the tomatoes in the back yard makes more sense. The first step in making our civilization more windproof is local sourcing. Local tomatoes. Locally generated electricity. Local leadership. Redesigning the way we live will not be easy but it is necessary. A strong wind is blowing for change.

## COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

A neighbor emailed photos of birds at her feeder: an Indigo Bunting; a Baltimore Oriole; White-crowned Sparrow; Brown-headed Cowbird; Rose-breasted Grosbeak. An Indigo Bunting's vivid electric blue is like the color borrowed from a peacock.

Orange bits for crows with their breakfasts of dried cat food. The same four crows that come for daily breakfasts are all over a piece of chicken found in the back of the frig. But they ignore past-it raspberries. Maybe the grey squirrel will eat them.

For weeks, I've been giving away homemade food to relatives and friends: Brownies, granola bars with dark chocolate icing, gingerbread, fruit pudding cake with Maine blueberries and rhubarb, Artisanal No Knead Bread, a variety of soup, yellow-eye baked beans, etc. I'm limited by caregiving my husband to do more. There must be thousands upon thousands of kind gestures by residents of our city and our state.

My motivation to keep physically active has really waned over these weeks. I find myself becoming impatient with small, insignificant matters. Time seems to exist in the repetitive present. It might be like living inside Camus's novel, "The Plague."

Jess's Fish Market re-opened yesterday for curbside pick-up. Staff was slammed with customers who filled the parking lot most of the day - a testament to the staff, quality of the products and support of local fishermen. For dinner, we savored fresh haddock lightly dredged in flour, dipped in beaten egg, sautéed in olive oil in a cast iron pan, with sides of fiddleheads and potatoes mashed with buttermilk, butter, salt & pepper and a touch of mace. Bless Jess's for being in our neighborhood. If things get really bad, I would crawl to their curbs for fish pick-ups.

People, politicians and various media outlets talk incessantly about "returning to normal" or "a new normal." This is a false narrative. Denial in a crisis is humanity's natural coping mechanism. But there will never be a return to pre-COVID "normal." Normal is conforming to a standard. Do we really want a return to the standard of social and economic divides in America and Rockland with so many homeless, so many food insecure, so many unemployed, our Rockland service industry that may not survive? New ways of living and caring for each other must be discovered in order to survive a post-COVID Rockland, Maine, America and the world.

These days, remembering is much on my mind. Are We Really All In This Together? States Trump favors have received more PPE's & testing kits than they requested. Other states, such as Maine, have received only a fraction of the need. A relative overheard two men laughing at giving a restaurant false names and phone numbers for contact tracing. I'm noticing more and more people in Rockland neither wearing face coverings nor keeping 6' apart.

A friend offered an idea to motivate Trump people to wear masks: Red masks with the logo, "Make America Great Again" to match their hats. I'd like a mask with the logo: "If You Can Read This, You're too close."

Pages of the New York Times commemorated 1,000 of the nearly 100,000 American COVID-19 victims: "They were not simply names on a list, they were us." Meanwhile, the president went golfing, like Nero fiddling while Rome burned. The sound of our D.C. leaders remembering COVID victims is like one hand clapping. My hope is that like the 9/11 lost, someday America will declare a national day of remembrance.

In Maine and around the country, Memorial Day revelers gather in crowds risking viral spreads. As an Army officer's daughter, I recall it as a solemn day of remembrance. What happened? It's become a premier day for all manner of sales and car dealership bargains. I choose to honor my four family members buried at Arlington National Cemetery with personal remembrances.

In the early evening sunlight one grey squirrel and one Mourning Dove forage together for bird seed droppings. Two of the most unlikely species find peace on common ground, as human political divides drive COVID-19 responses.

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### Vintage Country

Tuesdays 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Join Kieth for three solid hours of country music the way you remember!



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