



Rockland Buzz

Still Going

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The Old School
Fellowship Education



July 4 - African Americans defending our freedoms. Ron Tesler "took this photo at Hanscom Air Force Base. Late 90's maybe. The air crew was up from Mississippi - they were assigned to a C130."

Paul Chartrand reports from Paris

2020-A unique election year

Most of us are thinking of November and our upcoming national and statewide elections. Only four months and so much at stake! Maine's July 14 primary and local elections are coming even sooner, after postponement from June 9. I voted absentee and will likely do so in November, as will many fellow citizens. Waiting in line at the polls, handling ballots and pens, shaking hands with candidates, chatting with friends and signing petitions seems less appealing in the pandemic era. Town meetings will also look very different this year.



Along with other recent life changes, this move to more absentee and mail in voting may permanently change elections in Maine and around the world. I have been in France for their recent mayoral elections, which take place every six years on two consecutive Sundays in March. The second Sunday is a runoff between the two high vote getters from the first vote, unless someone gets over 50% on the first ballot. If so, he or she is Mayor without a runoff. There is no write in or mail in voting here. If you cannot personally vote, you may name a proxy to vote for you at the polls. This year Covid-19 threw a huge curve ball into the March schedule of two consecutive Sundays.

Mayors are important civic figures here; those from large cities have a chance to implement their party's programs and demonstrate their effectiveness; they often move on to seek national office. Small town mayors may stay in office for decades and may serve as more of a ceremonial figure, performing all marriages and speaking at regional assemblies for their constituents, as well as managing the day to day activities of their town. But campaigns for large city mayor posts are intensely fought and closely followed. They often show where political winds are blowing; mayoral votes fall near the halfway point between presidential elections held every five years.

Pres. Macron began confinement measures on March 13; full confinement was ordered for March 17. Most everyone thought the March 15 elections would be postponed, since we were told to avoid gatherings and masks were unavailable that early in the French Covid experience. But Macron finally decided France needed to exercise its democratic responsibility that Sunday. The first round elections were held amidst social distancing, liberal amounts of sanitizer and lots of criticism from left and right. Only about 55% of voters showed up, which was almost a record low for this country. The President immediately and indefinitely postponed the March 22 second vote. Mayors elected with over 50% of the vote soon took office, while all incumbents stayed in office in cities where a second round was needed.

Thus began either the longest political campaign since WWII or the campaign that never happened. Everyone had much more to worry about and even the limited French style of campaigning was impossible. No one even knew when the second round vote would take place until mid May, when "Either before July 1 or in Jan, 2021" was announced. Late in May, as hospitalizations and case numbers dropped, the June 28 date was confirmed.

Only about 42% of French voters came out to vote last Sunday. Some large cities had even lower turnouts of between 32-38%. The numbers were shocking for a country that prides itself on democracy and civic participation. Covid-19 fears certainly shocked many voters into abstention, especially in cities where one candidate was highly favored to win. But many mayoral seats were contested and those who voted brought some interesting results.

In several large cities, despite low turnouts, the Socialist candidate won or maintained an existing seat. In a surprising number of other cities, Green Ecology candidates won first time elections. In most cases the two parties worked together to a degree not seen previously. Many believe the long delay between the first and second ballot, as we re-examined our lives through a more worldwide lense, also contributed to this Green gain.

The far right Republican Front kept their existing seats but did not win any new or upset victories. Center right Republicans have not done well since 2017 when they lost many supporters to Macron's new party; they did not gain any new ground this week.

The biggest losers nationwide were two relatively new parties: Macron's "Republic on the March" and the far left "France Unbowed" led by Jean-Luc Melancon. Both formed during the 2017 Presidential vote, out of alienated center left and center right party members. This is a serious blow to Macron's new party and shows he will need to work hard in order to win re-election in 2022. But Socialist and Ecology groups need to unify further and find a strong candidate to take on an incumbent President in two years. Macron will start with the home field advantage.

Losing candidates blamed the low turnout on overall disaffection with major parties and institutions, fitting their dialogue about the need to fix a broken system too long dependent on two major parties. France's handling of the pandemic left much to be desired, which certainly hurt Macron's new third party. So the Ecologists, with the least resources of any party and no seats in Parliament, captured more of the political winds than expected and will build towards future elections. How much did this year's pandemic concerns and a long delay for a second vote help this movement? Will months of reflection on our lives, our neighbors, our cities and towns, inspire US voters to make unexpected choices for the future in our upcoming votes?

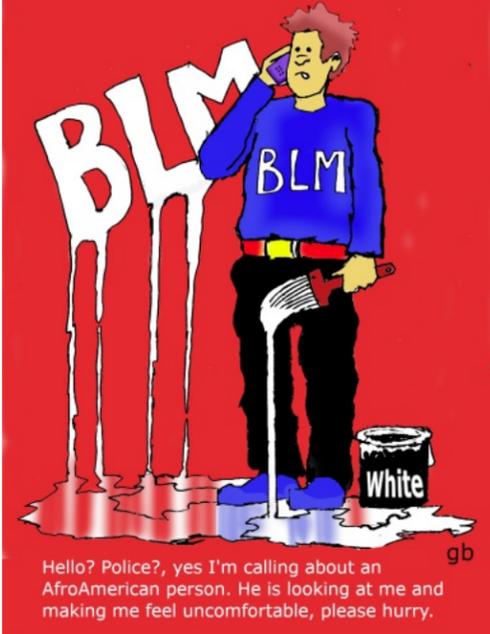


A conversation about local issues on WRFR, Wednesdays from 5 to 6 pm

Please join me, Steve Carroll, next Wednesday on the "Metro" at 5 O'clock when my guest will be Mike Miller, local restaurateur, Real Estate salesman and founder of the popular band "Steelin Thunder". We will discuss the impact COVID-19 and the effect has had on Restaurants, real estate and the music industry. Your phone calls are always welcome, so join in on our conversation next Wednesday at 5 on Rockland's only local Radio: WRFR, 93.3 fm Rockland, 99.3 fm Camden.



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Hello? Police?, yes I'm calling about an AfroAmerican person. He is looking at me and making me feel uncomfortable, please hurry.

by Glen Birbeck

Picking the perfect watermelon:

A how to guide

by Chris Wolf

Nuttin' says summertime like the sweet taste of ice cold watermelon. You think you know watermelon? Think again. Did you know there's a picture of one in King Tut's Tomb? Watermelons have been around for a few millennium though they weren't the sweet treat we know today. Agronomists have labored for centuries to bring to the picnic table that which Mark Twain called, "the food of the angels."

Originally a watermelon was a hairy, little ball with a bitter taste, but, it had one secret ingredient. The fruit was packed with water. Watermelons are about 90-percent water. It took a few centuries to breed out the bitter gene and the watermelon started looking more like it does today.

4,000 years of watermelon history is a lot to write about, so let's just head to our local supermarket or farm stand and tell you how to get the best watermelon for your buck.

1. Watermelons come in all sizes and shapes. Size and shape does not determine ripeness or flavor, but weight does. Since the melon is mostly water and water is weight, a heavier melon stands to be juicier. Pick out two or three melons you like and then lift them to determine their weight. Pick the heavier one.

2. Look on the underside of the melon. You want to see a yellow area. That's where the melon rested on the ground. If it's not there or a different color there's a chance the melon is not ripe.

3. Give the whole melon the once over. Inspect it for bruises or soft spots. If it appears to have them the melon is past its prime. Put it back and pick another one. Also look for cuts and cracks in the skin as well. No one will short you for not wanting to buy damaged fruit.

4. A lot of people swear by the thump test. Give the melon a thump with your knuckle or flick of your middle finger. You want to hear a hollow sound. This indicates the melon is ripe, but it is no guarantee it's not overripe.

5. You can look at the stem where the melon was attached to the vine. It should be brown at the base. Green indicates the melon was not ripe when it was picked.

The darker the color, the better the melon; critics agree medium-sized melons are better than large or small ones. Unlike some other fruits, watermelons will not ripen after they are picked. What you buy is what you got.

And old wives tale about watermelon seeds growing in your stomach if you swallow them. Not true. Though most varieties we see in stores now are the seedless kind. That gets into chromosomes and I'm no scientist, so there's no reason for me to even try to explain it.

Less seeds mean more room for melon. And I'm okay with that. I can remember as a kid sometimes it was a labor intensive chore to pick through the seeds to get to the melon.

Though, as a kid, I kind of miss shooting those seeds out of a straw. Sometime I'll tell you the story of how Jimmy Dyke and I took on half the fourth grade class in the Great Watermelon Seed War of 1962.

For now, its summertime and you're on your way to buying the best watermelon ever.



COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Crows are all over House Lo Mein leftovers, with a side of peanuts. Crows are so comfortable they bring their offspring and lounge around on our patio furniture.

Non-meat recycling goes into my mulch pile. Recycled meat goes into the crows.

A friend thinks I'm running a Crow Café and wonders if the birds social-distance.

Observed launch of a lobster boat with a lemonade stand (also called an Ash Point Piazza). (Definitions from "The Illustrated Dictionary of Lobstering" by Kendall Merriam) I hope markets open up for a nephew and other lobstermen and women. Summer people besiege our local seafood store. Staff and customers wore masks.

Rockland Main Street closings to traffic to boost commerce seem to have been a bust. Why hasn't Rockland adapted Camden's successful "Camden is Blooming"? There must be a Camden committee willing to share their methods with Rockland.

Notable info: George and Martha Washington owned 577 enslaved human beings and took nine of them to Washington when he became president. Contrary to popular myth, his false teeth were not wooden; his dentures were made from the pulled teeth of his enslaved people, as well as filed down cow's teeth. It's not clear whether Washington paid his dentist or his enslaved people 122 shillings for the human teeth. (Source: Mt. Vernon and "George Washington's Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the 18th Century" by Robert Darnton, PhD.) Encounters of unarmed Black Americans with police often end up as fatalities explained by "prejudice and incompetence." In other words, officers have been "trained to disregard a natural inclination to default to truth - and start imagining the worst of the stranger they stopped - that the stranger might be armed and dangerous. Because we do not know how to talk to strangers, what do we do when things go awry with strangers? We blame the stranger." (Source "Talking to Strangers" by Malcolm Gladwell)

Beautiful summer days have rendered our and others' lawns dried out spaces.

Shady areas fare better. It's too humid to plant the Astilbe in the fern/hosta garden.

SUMMER HAIKU

Electric blue Bachelor Buttons

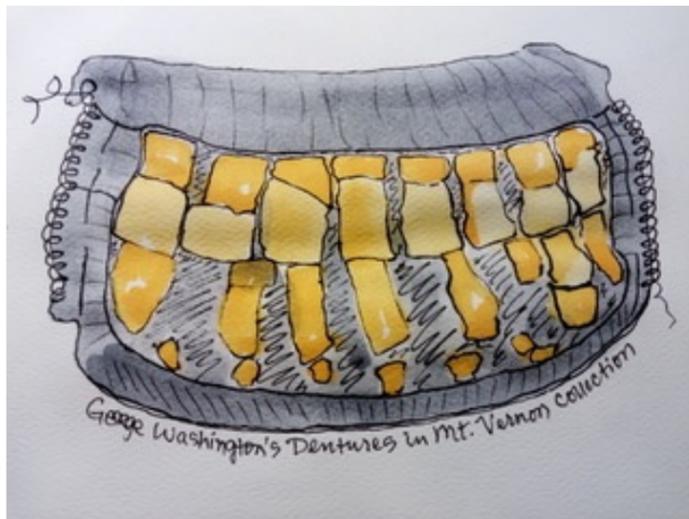
Raise spiked heads

Alert and watchful

Rockland's Dooryard Books owner is giving away books and bookshelves as he is closing. Yet another empty store on Main Street is making the street look more and more toothless and emblematic of the dropping temperature of our local economy.

Humid air and refracted early evening light on the harbor docks create the illusion of boys on their bikes riding the water.

Firecrackers from an Owls Head early Fourth of July celebrant created a shared neighborly experience and I love the loud Doppler effect over the Head of the Bay.



Dublin to Dingle Live on WRFR Thursdays 10 a.m. to noon



Dublin To Dingle, a 2-hour Irish music show, is hosted by Christine Murphy. There may occasionally be live music in the studio or guests sharing their own unique Ireland experiences; musically, culturally or just as one who has a love of Ireland. Any musicians that would like to come in and play live in the studio may contact Christine: maine2ireland@gmail.com

At The Buzz and WRFR we are all volunteers. We would love to have you join us. To learn more, visit our website at WRFR.org - and call Joe at 596-0731.

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