



Down Main Street with Phil Groce Brewing a Life

It is said that with Covid, the new normal is everything turned up-side-down. That is pretty much the case on Main Street. Six months ago, who would have thought that to enjoy one of the beers from the nano brewery, Liberator, on South Main, and feel safe, you need to sit at a table on the street itself protected from the traffic going south by cement barricades. You can go inside—ah, air conditioning—but the bar is cordoned off, and there are a few tables well socially distanced.

Karen Ruggiero, wife of the master brewer, Rich Ruggiero, is behind the bar doing paper work, and Rich is doing something with the taps. Early in the day, and no business, yet. Where is the business? Locals, of course, but the blast from the festivals and tourists is gone. That adds up to a lot of money, especially when you have been open less than 2 years, and just accelerating when Covid attacked.

“Our motto is love what you do, and never surrender,” said Karen. “I love being here to support him and this place.”

Rich chimed in from a distance, “It’s all about persistence. I have to do this.”

I asked Karen if she had interest in anything like this, say, when she was in high school? “I did go to a technical school, but I wanted to be a fashion designer.” You and Rich design beers, I said. “That’s the end of the story,” she replied. “My mother had a sewing store, and at one time my father fixed sewing machines. Doing things with materials was in my blood. But after graduation, I joined the Air Force. That was 1980, and I was in for 4 years.”

Is that where the World War II Liberator bomber theme came from? “No, that’s a tribute to Rich’s father who flew a B-24 during the war. I was in intelligence in the Air Force, and mostly in Italy, where we were intercepting Russian communications and trying to wade through them to see if there was anything interesting.” You had to learn Russian? “To some degree, but basically, we were triaging the messages, and other people looked at them in depth. One time we were able to intercept calls regarding a kidnapped Italian General. We actually found where he was, and he was liberated. I felt good about that.

“After discharge, I went back to school and later got a degree in business administration and finance. Then I got married and stayed home in Mass. with our 2 children. I went back to work when we divorced, and after a time as the manager of a call center, I chose banking. But I got out of that business as it was collapsing because of the poor mortgage dealings.”

What got you up here? “My sisters and mother were living here since the late ‘80’s. My mother owned Golden Hand Decorating in Rockport. This was 2008, and by then, my kids were on their own. I worked for 2 years for Boston Financial across the street. I ended up taking over my mother’s decorating business and changed the location to the old Sears building in Rockland. The name changed to Mid-Coast Blind and Shade, and by 2017 I stopped that because I could not get the quality products I wanted to sell. I tried working and doing one of my loves--teaching horseback riding—but by then I was married to Rich, and I needed and wanted to be full-time with him.”

You do some of the brewing? “He’s the brewer, and I know some, but he’s the master at it. There are plenty of things for me to do in this business. We work well together. Before, he was brewer behind the Rocky Bay Brewery, owned by a local doctor, and unfortunately, ill-starred. He has consulted on several start-up breweries locally, and he even worked some in blueberry processing. Like many around here, he did a stint at Bank of America. He knows a lot about machinery. He learned much of the highly technical stuff by going to the Siebel Institute of Technology in Chicago for 2 years when he was younger. But he learned a lot on his own.

“This, right here, is his passion, and I love being involved. It’s our lives. We seasonally change the selection of beers every 6 weeks, and this is a nano brewery, which means we don’t make more than 3 barrels at a time. This is a beer-drinkers brewery. We have food, like pizza, chili, hot dogs, pretzels. But, it’s the beer. People can come by and pick up 22 oz. bottles. We even have a chocolate stout, using Bixby chocolate here in town, also an Archer’s Summer Ale—for Archer’s restaurant in town. We like to make local connections and use locally produced ingredients.”

“That road construction in 2019 was awful for everyone on South Main,” said Rich across the bar. Yes, I remember the congestion, dust, and the detours. Best just to avoid the area, I figured.

This building is very old, I said. “1840,” said Rich. “Originally a haven for abused females. So, there were a lot of rooms. When MBNA was here, they remodeled the rooms for visiting MBNA executives. Polly Saltonstall owns the building now. She has her office upstairs where she publishes Maine Coast Boats and Harbors.”

Karen, do you have any other interests? “Now that you ask, I’ve started a travel agency in association with a California company. You can find it at queensbees58@outlook.com. I can arrange any type of travel, and I can do that from anywhere. You know, you have to keep reinventing yourself to make things go. Right now, I’m also making textile masks for Covid.”

I asked her if she fixed snowmobiles, too? She gave me a thin smile. “My role is to help keep this place going.” Maybe she thought about fixing snowmobiles?

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The School Machine

by Steve Carroll

Let me start by defining what I mean by “Machine.” Wikipedia describes a machine as “a mechanical device that uses power to apply forces and control movement to perform an intended action.” A machine can also mean administrative action that uses its power to apply control over an intended action.

So let’s get to the point. In a few weeks schools all over the country will be re-opening in the midst of a global viral pandemic. For months our Federal, state & local leaders have warned us of the dangers of congregating in groups, saying that “social distancing” is the way in which we can avoid exposure. Now as fall approaches some are saying that even though adults should maintain separation and avoid social gatherings, it is OK to send our children into an environment where they are in close contact with other students, on buses and in classroom settings - based on the belief that “children must be in school.”

It would be difficult to understand this contradiction, unless you understand the workings of “the machine.” Remember, a school district maintains a large infrastructure of buildings and personnel, a large fleet of buses and millions of dollars in payroll for teachers & administrators. To just stop or slow down this “machine” could cause a great deal of disruption. Those in charge have an interest in keeping the machine going, despite facts that do not support their action.

Other countries have taken different action, by isolating children into smaller groups or “pods.” Our system has for years been “consolidating” schools and moving away from small neighborhood schools, and this has exasperated the problem. As more consolidation occurs, more control is given to the district or “machine” and it becomes far more difficult to change direction.

I would encourage our school administrators to take a broader look at how we school our children and come up with more innovative methods that provide our children a safe learning environment, one that protects them, the teachers and the community.

Our area has been relatively virus free, while many parts of the U.S. have experienced high rates of infections. Let’s not open Pandoras box by sending our children into harms way and possibly causing a county wide infection. We are heading into a storm and have time now to change course. All of us have power over the machine. We dictate its action. Let’s control the machine and not let it control us.

WRFR Off the Air - Temporarily!

by Joe Steinberger

Wrfr's 19 year old transmitter began complaining about a month ago. The intermittent interruptions were hard to diagnose. Where was the problem? In the broadcast console? In our audio processing? In the emergency alert system? A connection somewhere? As the interruptions became long enough, our diagnosis (which we hope is correct) was that the problem was in the transmitter.

The transmitter was manufactured by RVR Elettronica in Bologna, Italy. RVR specializes in FM broadcast and is a world leader in this technology. In 2001, while a group of us were working to build the station, I spent a week in Italy and had a chance to visit the RVR factory to select our transmitter.

Our new transmitter, the latest from RVR, arrived today, August 6.

Meanwhile we have taken advantage of the break to install a new computer for our "World in Song" automation.

Everything should be up and running by sometime this Monday.

We are grateful to the Maine Association of Broadcasters for a grant that covered the cost of our new transmitter.

Bay Winds Concert on Sunday

Bay Winds North will present a free "drive-in" outdoor concert Sunday, August 9, at 3:00 PM at the American Legion Winslow, Holbrook- Merritt Post 1, 335 Limerock Street, Rockland,

Concert goers may remain in their vehicles during the program or bring a lawn chair. If leaving the vehicle, please wear a face covering and respect the 6 feet social distancing.

Bay Winds North, now in its 12th season is conducted by Marlene Hall. Over the years, the group has presented numerous concerts in the mid coast area as well as participated in local parades.

Sunday's program will include the following selections, "The Rooster Lays Eggs in Rockland", Karl King's Bunker Hill March, the popular Syncopated Clock by Leroy Anderson, as well as a salute to the State of Maine in honor of its 200th Anniversary.

Everyone is invited to join Bay Winds North Wind Ensemble on August 9 for an afternoon of concert band music.

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Six to nine fledgling American Crows have been faithfully arriving for their patio breakfasts. "Broken Wing", who mothered at least some of them, does not appear with them anymore. The fledglings are amusing. Some like to lounge about on the patio furniture, while others are more adept at going straight to the dry cat food. For a while yet, fledglings will have their hoarse, gravelly and limited vocalizations.

July days are hot and humid. The lawn is burnt out. Sitting outside in a hot breeze is stifling. Mask wearing - to which I'm wholly committed - makes breathing even more difficult in this heat. And where has the summer gone? How can it be August already? Wasn't it just the other day I was wearing a quilted vest?

I would hate to be a teacher during covid. On top of all the pre-covid demands, going back to the classroom will be beyond stressful with even more tasks. Trying to rodeo children who are eager to be with their friends again, any number who will forget their masks, and will not know how or will resist distancing, will require the patience and skills of nailing Jell-O to a wall. And the support staff - how much disinfecting all day long is possible? Bus drivers will have to disinfect buses at least twice a day or four times a day if there are split in-classroom sessions.

I've been cooking more during covid than at any time in my life. I have perfected omelets, chocolate Bundt cake, fruit pudding cakes, sheet pan recipes, roast chicken, homemade soups and pasta sauces, etc., etc. Most of my cooking is done from instinct and experience, without recipes - just using well-established procedures. But it's not the cooking. It's running out of imagination and creativity, with my increased levels of boredom and impatience. If a new recipe has more than five ingredients or steps, I ditch it. I'm looking at a recipe for 9 ingredients and 11 steps. Forget about it. I'd sooner drive 9 or 11 miles for take-out.

Well, Rockland surely knows how to keep its property tax payers on edge. First, owners' Property Cards were never mailed out ahead of the revaluations for data corrections, agreements or adjustments of the housing/land data so that the cards had up-to-date information ahead of KRT Assessors revaluations and phone interviews with property owners. Other Maine towns and cities routinely do this fair process. The cards are also full of abbreviations that many (most?) property owners don't understand. So, any phone appointments with KRT assessors and any tax abatement requests by property owners will be like trying to function blindfolded with one hand tied. Maybe we should all rent out our homes and go live in our backyard sheds. The silence of city councilors is deafening.



Glen Birbeck



The Bonnie Farmer Show

Sundays and Thursdays 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Bonnie's show is an eclectic mix of Rock n Roll, R&B, Funk, Blues, 60s bands, current Pop bands, and other genres. Bonnie weaves an old Earl Hooker song with Anouk, or Van Morrison with Dr John. No limits. Bonnie has been producing and airing live shows for the past 10 years on wrfr. Bonnie does not podcast and truly believes in the LIVE experience of a "one of a kind, one time only show." Thanks for tuning in

Hip Hop with Blue Heff

Fridays 8 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Join Mateo Mendoza as he shows you the world of Hip Hop.



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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