



Rockland Buzz

City Stewards

Issue 188, October 30, 2020, Rockland, Maine



Strand on the Air Halloween Special

It's all treats and no tricks for the STRAND ON THE AIR Halloween Special! The Strand Theatre's radio variety hour returns over WRFR on October 25th at 5pm and October 31st at 3 pm with a Fun-Size bag of Halloween laughs and tunes with Liz McLeod and the Strand Family Players, Brittany Parker, Dan Bookham and some special surprise guest stars. Don't miss a special extended-length visit to Abysmal Point, where Mrs. Grunden, Lilita, and Gertie confront the terrifying "Curse of Wilton Waldrop!" And All Things Rescinded returns with an in-depth look at high-tech, socially distant Trick or Treating. Like all our STRAND ON THE AIR broadcasts this year, the Halloween edition is written, directed, and edited by House Manager Liz McLeod, with cast members contributing their parts from home via the Internet!



A Taste of Chaos

Hosted by DJ
Jonny Black
on

WRFR 93.3

Wednesdays from 9 to midnight

Featuring a mix of original programming,
industrial, goth, alternative and Punk.



Down Main Street

with Phil Groce

Keeping Things Straight

Tanning, in a laundry? Kay Cochran laughed, "That was Kevin's idea [Kevin Labree, owner of Garden Island and Tanning along with his wife, Kathleen], "and you probably won't believe it, but he brought in one tanning booth, and it was so busy, he brought in another. He was going to get a third, but Covid came along, and people started shying away, especially since many of them used it for tanning just before they went on vacation.

"But they really don't need to worry about germs anywhere in the laundry, because Kevin insists on everything being strictly clean, and he's out here and there, up and down ladders cleaning everything; and so is the crew that comes in later in the day. Everything is clean. And we all help. It's a community."

Kay has worked in the laundry behind the counter for nearly 10 years. Now 78, she looks back on a varied career, but with one essential component, as you will see. "I was born in Camden, went through the schools there. The work was easy for me, but I didn't apply myself, though I remained on the honor roll in high school."

Off to college? "That wasn't in the picture. I was living on the farm of my grandparents on Howe Hill, along with my mother, my brother and sister. In school, I was the only student whose parents were divorced. I thought of it as sort of a scourge." Then she laughed, "and I would tell my teachers that my last name was Johnson, the name of my grandparents . . . kind of confused the teachers."

What happened after high school? "I always worked, even in high school on the farm, raking blueberries, whatever, and after graduation, I found I made more money working at Marriner's Restaurant than having an 8-hour job. The first thing I did was buy a '53 Chevy. Freedom, at last.

"Then my grandparents sold the farm, and we all moved to a house they built in Camden on Mechanic Street. I was working at Paramount Restaurant in Rockland then [long gone], and I met Frank, who worked in construction, mostly operating cranes. We married and had 3 daughters. We eventually moved to Tolman Road in Warren. I still live in Warren. Twenty years ago, my husband and I separated.

"I had begun working in the division office of MDOT. There was a group of us, about the same age, and we all worked together; but I was the one who kept things straight in the office. I felt it my duty to look out for the workers on the outside. I worked nearly 40 years for the State. I still stay in contact with many of my fellow workers. After that, I worked at Marriner's Paving for a few years. It was just like my work before—trucks, equipment, men working outside. Marriner's closed, and I began working here."

What's it like here? "Never bothered me to fold clothes or help people. My grandparents instilled in me to work hard, always be honest, and do my best—no matter what it was. Sometimes I think I should have worked harder in high school and gone to college, but I have had a good life, still is good, and all my kids and grand and great grandchildren live in Maine. You see, I keep really active, gardening, mowing my own lawn, pushing the mower along. I just keep going. I think that if I stop, I'll just go to pieces, which is probably true, especially when I look at others when they are about ready to step into their 80's. I used to travel a lot around our country with the family. Been to all the lower 48, spent winters in Florida. Like to do more."

What's special about this place? "I know most of the people who come in here to wash their clothes, either grew up with them, or know their family, or friends; and we always have something in common. They like to talk, and I like to talk with them. This is no boring laundry. And the staff all works together. We have fun. So do the people coming to the laundry. We handle dry cleaning, but the cleaning isn't done here. We also have sort of a thrift shop."

Thrift shop? "Sure," she turns on the stool she is sitting on and points at clothes on racks. "Those are clothes that people just leave here. They don't come back to get them. We sell them cheap. And Kevin allows us to bring in some of our own to sell. We wash everything up and present them nicely. Believe it or not, some people come in here twice a week to buy clothes. These are the clothes they wear."

What holds you together? "I'm realistic, not a dreamer, and I have always been able to handle my life, handle money. I can do it. I guess you would call it self-reliance. My grandparents had no education, not even high school. My great grandfather was a stowaway coming from Sweden. Had nothing. Trouble was, he was an alcoholic—died young, penniless. Addiction was a problem, just like today. My grandparents went through the great depression, worked hard, very thrifty, developed a farm. We were lucky to have them. My brother, Bobby Whittier, had a large dairy farm in Union. Both he and his wife are gone now. Miss them a lot." All of us in Union do, too. "My sister, Shirley, lives in Camden."

"You know, Kevin and Kathleen are from Maine, too. Good people. We all understand good work and see eye-to-eye. Kathleen runs the restaurant at the golf club. They both like to golf."

After I talked with Kay, I had a better appreciation of what makes Maine and the Maine people so attractive to people living away. But sometimes it's easy to overlook what I am living in. Thank you, Kay.

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The Old School
Fellowship Education





2020 Fall photos from around Maine by Steve Carroll

CAN THE PLAGUE SAVE AMERICA?

by Joe Steinberger

Enlightened Self-Interest

The Covid pandemic and the Presidential election are making it harder for us to ignore America's class divide. That is a good thing, because growing class division is a cancer on our democracy, and curing it is essential for our survival. Covid and the like will come and go, Presidents will come and go, but if we continue to be so divided as a people, our long-term prospects are bleak.

It might not seem obvious that better-off Americans should care if the rest of us fare badly. Our current path might be thought to be fine for those who are getting richer, even as it is disastrous for those who are getting poorer. In fact, however, those of us who are doing well these days would be fools to think that we can thrive in an America in which the majority face increasing insecurity and humiliation.

The Covid crisis is an example of how we depend on each other. Since ancient times, when plagues have come the privileged classes have fled the cities and holed up in their country houses. In this way they are able for a time to fare better than the "common" people, but as the plague spreads outside it inevitably gets into their mansions as well. After all, the rich would not be rich if they did not have servants. We see this playing out today, with disease spreading first among the poorer communities, and then spreading to infect a wider circle.

The concentration of wealth and power has obvious advantages for those who gain it, but it comes at a cost not only to the rest of us, but to the "winners" as well. We all depend on our success as a nation. In this moment it is becoming clearer that if we cannot respect each other, and support each other's well-being, we will fail together.

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WEEK THIRTY-THREE

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE by Phyllis Merriam

This morning I gave the crows a breakfast of a meaty chicken carcass left over from making chicken stock. I was leery the crows would leave bones lying around to attract unwanted critters. In a matter of minutes six crows completely cleaned up.

My husband wonders if there are any other crow cafeterias in Rockland.

Even though Maine has very low infection rates, we have had outbreaks due to careless negligence. Still, covid refugees with cash are engaged in feverish bidding wars for mid-coast properties. There are more buyers than houses for sale.

I'd like to see widespread PSA's by Maine's CDC, especially as we're all facing our first covid winter. I won't name places I'm now boycotting that allow customers to shop mask less. Stores have no way of enforcing mask wearing but self-monitoring seems in short supply among enough people to raise my alarm bells.

Ragged clouds against a pewter sky briefly reveal the perfect half-moon with its aura. With covid's uncertainties, beautiful natural gifts are reassuringly predictable.

The big orange Cross-orb Weaver spider has disappeared from the front porch web. I don't think I have arachnophobia and it's not poisonous. But I hope it doesn't find a way into our home. The idea of accidentally stepping on it in my bare feet or having the spider crawl across my face or weaving its web into my hair while I'm sleeping is enough to believe I must be afraid of spiders to have these intrusive thoughts.

We went to the Keag Store for take-away lunches and to our surprise discovered a chicken by the post office scratching the ground for worms. She looked like an ISA Brown and was friendly like that breed. I gave her some French fries she eagerly devoured. She reminded me of a long ago ISA Brown chicken named "Louise" which was owned by friends. Louise was very sociable and climbed into my lap where she snuggled, so warm and soft to the touch. What a gift to be deemed safe by chickens.

Today I saw seven wild turkeys foraging by the driveway of Super Shoes. They were oblivious as cars whizzed by. Turkeys look so prehistoric - half-bird-half-mammal. And they run so awkwardly trying to catch up to their outstretched skinny necks.

The leaves on our two Ginkgo trees have turned bright sulfur-yellow. The contrast with our twelve year-old dwarf Japanese maple, which leaves are turning from burgundy to a garnet red, is the epitome of autumn's luscious colorations. Once I found a Ginkgo leaf on School Street where no Ginkgo trees grew. The leaf must have blown in from Beijing.

Six days before the election pundits and pollsters are hyperventilating. I think I'll go to bed early election night and check out what's really happening around 4 a.m.

