



# Rockland Buzz

Winter On The Air

Issue 194, December 11, 2020, Rockland, Maine

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Fellowship Education



## The Bonnie Farmer Show Sundays and Thursdays 5 - 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.

## "Double Dipping," and the Rec, on the Rockland Metro Show

with Steve Carroll

When I talk about "double dipping" I'm not referring to an old Seinfeld episode when George "double dips" at the snack bowl. No, I'm referring to a practice that is becoming all too common, especially in union shops. Many unions have negotiated a clause in their contracts that allows members to retire, collect their full retirement pay, and then get re-hired and earn a full second salary. It's a great gig if you can do it. I do not blame the employees who double dip. I blame the employers who allow this practice to occur through re-hiring, and for being weak negotiators.

The Gang of 6 will be discussing "double dipping" next Wednesday at 5 on the Rockland Metro show on WRFR radio and Maine Coast TV. Rockland Police Chief Chris Young has announced his request to retire and to be re-hired by the City.

We will also talk about the Rockland Rec Center. The YMCA has recently announced they will not renew the contract they have with the City, and without a plan B the current option is just to shut it down. Of course indoor gathering will be limited during this time of high infection rates, but schools remain open and have had little disruption. Many Rockland residents feel we need a place for our youth to gather and enjoy after school activities. This will be a difficult winter for everyone especially our youth. Should we simply close such a valuable resource?

We'll be having our discussion via Zoom, and you will be invited to participate via phone or email. Please join us next Wednesday from 5 to 6 pm on WRFR's Metro Show, on WRFR 93.3 and on Maine Coast.tv.

## Down Main Street with Phil Groce The Facilitator

At an early age, David Gogel had the opportunity through his mother, a director of special education in the schools, to experience the enlightenment and joy that goes with interacting and appreciating those with limited intellectual and physical abilities, and also seeing and enjoying the positive qualities that most people never see. That enlightenment upon humanity in general, set the stage for a particular direction he sought and found in the business environment, as we will see.

David grew up in a small town in western Massachusetts, and he loved the personal aspect and convenience of being able to walk downtown and interact with shopkeepers he knew. After high school he went to school for audio engineering but soon lost interest and decided to pursue education in business. Later, his first job was in management consulting, and though he never considered himself a leader, he found himself lending a leadership role, because he would become inspired by the projects.

He found that in order to get things done, a person needs to feel passionate about the project, which also means that he needs to thoroughly believe in the project himself. In any endeavor, he discovered that passion is the catalyst that makes it all successful. As a youngster he observed that those people who were most fulfilled in life were doing work that inspired them.

He married a girl who grew up in the same area as he. After they had their first child, and after pleasure trips to Maine, he switched jobs to Portland in advertising where his role was helping municipalities discover their 'brand.' This type of thinking led he and his wife to think about a place to live in Maine where the stakeholders in the town focused on the public aspect rather than just development. By then, they had two children. A job opportunity appeared in Rockland. A month after David took his job as executive director of Rockland Main Street, COVID-19 struck.

David is the one paid employee of Rockland Main Street with offices on Main Street, and all the rest are volunteer, consisting of townspeople in the several committees that meet regularly and the Board of Directors. It is connected to a national organization—the National Main Street Program--which branches to a Maine organization—the Maine Development Foundation--and thence to the local branches in ten towns in Maine. The object is to support communities to find themselves and seek a successful future. After the last recession, so many communities across the nation found their downtowns boarded up and nearly deserted. I asked David about Covid.

"To tell the truth," he said, "it has inspired me just to see the resilience of the community in adapting and moving forward, and still keeping safety in mind. At first, it was a problem of triaging all the problems impacting the stakeholders downtown. It has taken some deep committee work from highly committed people who live in and know the community well. Especially with the shut-down, people in town felt that their heart and soul had been cut away. The experience reinvigorated their efforts."

How do you think Covid impacts the future? "Obviously, we made some immediate changes, like blocking off one lane through downtown to allow for outdoor dining and more public space. And for the future, it appears that people who live here want more community space, more trees. We call that shared space, and it allows for walkability—a big factor. We seek to make downtown a community hub. What communities do elsewhere is valuable to know, but we need to realize that this is Route One coursing through downtown. We have to deal with that.

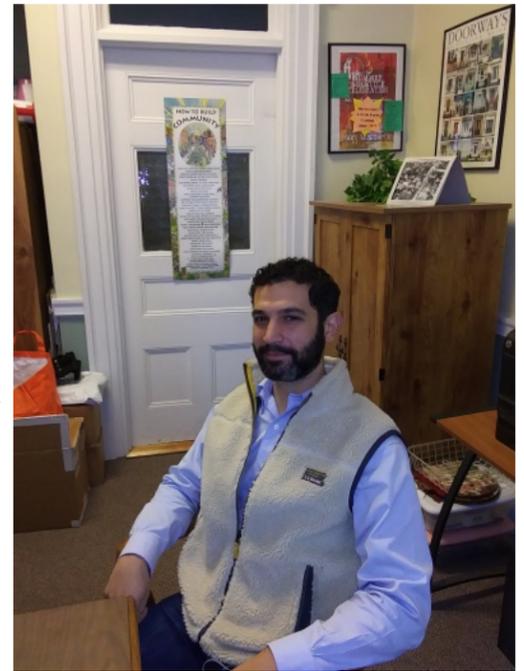
"Thinking is going on about increasing the density of activities downtown, and giving it a sense of place that people can enjoy coming here and hanging out, and on a more permanent basis, allowing more affordable rentals for apartments above businesses. There are ways that we can integrate traffic, parking, deliveries, and especially maintain the historic buildings and waterfront, and still increase access.

"It's important to remember that we have different people coming here at different times of the year, but also that people come downtown at different times of the day. The challenge is finding the right places to make changes that will bring about the biggest impact, without disruption. Rockland has its own brand. If someone comes downtown to buy something, they know they will talk with friendly staff who they may know individually and who know the products. It's a conversation, an experience that people from here and away crave. Retail is more than just an exchange of goods and money. What people experience, is Rockland's 'brand.'"

You mean turning Rockland into a destination? "No, it's more than that. That idea is top-down. We need the driving force to be a focus on community members, and with their resilience, and with the vitality of small business, all giving a historic sense of place. The people are historic, as well as the place."

To me, this sounded very democratic--from the bottom up. "If you want to be a resilient community," David continued, "it has to be able to thrive, and that only happens when the people who live here find satisfaction and keep the small-town experience. That's why my family is here. The pandemic showed that it won't work unless we all work together. Improvements need to be incremental and in keeping with history while allowing mixed-use- density, and allowing an increased number of people who can enjoy our town at all income levels and still keep the town real.

"My job is to listen to all the insights to help bring about what community members love, and then amplify that. I have the privilege of unfettered access to people who are doing great work to help Rockland survive meaningfully as a place to work and live. That's a different business approach.



# A Battering Ram



by Glen Birbeck

A battering ram is being driven against the doors defending our democratic institutions. This attempt to overturn an election hasn't lost steam, it is just regrouping. Threats are made in public against honest citizens working to keep our democratic mechanisms intact. The firehose of lies and fantasy blasts away. An old axiom is being exercised, toss enough dung at someone or something, and a bit will stick. People vaguely believe that where there is smoke there must have been a fire. The court cases are window dressing. One after another, by the dozen, they've been thrown out. The arguments are ludicrous and without even fabricated basis. The ram batters the thick and ancient doors. Sadly they weaken, but they hold. It isn't iron strapping and cut nails that keep these doors intact. It is faith. It is respect. It is a rational understanding of what happens when chaos reigns and democracy is subverted. This year, nearly done, somehow lumps the virus and politics together. A noxious mix. The political climate poses more danger than the virus. A successful democracy like ours must be considered in the same light as the eighty-year-old with a heart condition - at risk. We are always remarking at how amazing it is that this double centenarian is still as healthy as it is. It isn't immortal. Its external enemies are only cheerleading and egging on internal and domestic forces. In my long life I've learned that many people, maybe most, do not see truth as an absolute. The uncomfortable truths. The naked and damning truths. Honesty isn't paramount to most people. The cornered rat in the white house isn't defeated. No, it is empowered. It creates a fable. It invents its martyrdom. It mobilizes its brown shirts. Just as Adolph Hitler's jail stint sanctified him and his movement, The tweeting toad's loss in a fair election will be turned into fascist founding myth. Hitler used to great effect the social media of his time, Radio, film, Newspapers. The American Bund has media just as effective. It will over the next few years shape an increasingly dangerous armed insurrection. It is encouraging that many Republicans have denounced this attempted putsch. It is a very ill omen that so many, fearful of the wrath of Trump's followers, do not. I appreciate that to them a cowardly silence is required to secure their salary as public servants. Pleasing Trump has priority over both reality and democracy. Somewhere out there in some right-wing militia is a contemporary Horst Wessel. He was the Nazi martyr who's death was the subject of the party's anthem, the "Horst Wessel" song. He was an early SA officer killed by communists in street fighting in 1930. With Trump and his followers encouraging violence it is inevitable there will be violence. We say, Thank God, it is only Trump's ego at the center. If it were an idea, a creed, a philosophy bonded to him, things would be worse. But it's bad enough. Let's hope history doesn't see this attempted putsch as the big event of 2020 - giving second billing to the virus. Loss of our democracy would be worse than any pandemic. More injurious and longer lasting.

## WEEK THIRTY-NINE

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

A neighbor looked out her window the other day to discover a young Cooper's hawk sitting by her bird feeder. Nothing that exotic ever comes down the street to my house. It must be their backyard woods that provide enough cover and shelter to attract wildlife. Her husband thinks the deer that make frequent appearances must get there by following the RR tracks. Broken Wing remains a faithful diner.

Last week's Pyrex baking pan explosion gave me some blowback while I was taking out the trash. The bag with the 9" x 12" shattered glass bumped against my leg, slicing my pajama pant and leaving a 6 inch gash in my leg. It didn't really hurt but what a bloody mess. I decided a trip to the ER was wise where surgical glue and a tetanus shot took care of it. On my drive home, I realized I was still wearing my pajamas. Oh, well. Who really cares about fashion statements during covid?

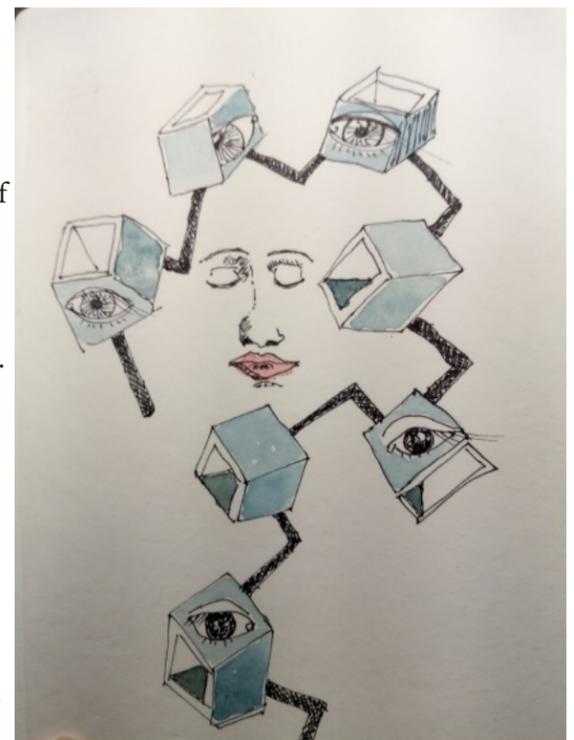
Our governor reports the feds will shortchange Maine on the first covid vaccine shipment. Since trump hasn't said a word about the surging cases across America or offered one iota of compassion for the 300,000 Americans who have died, this news is hardly surprising. We have a lot of anti-Vaxxers in Maine & in the country. Achieving herd immunity will likely be a high covid-mountain to climb.

People are in the Christmas spirit this year by decorating their homes early. In the maritime tradition, moored schooners display lighted trees on their masts. I'll be glad to see the end of the year 2020. The many-layered covid sandwich is anxiety inducing: No help from congress for the suffering; a GOP kneeling in trump idolatry; my covid-fatigue, trump-fatigue and 2021 future-fatigue. It feels like I'm a plane circling endlessly waiting to land and come back down to earth. I'm in a blue funk.

OBSERVATIONS: Two Rockland Public Works employees drive by in a city truck not wearing masks. A UPS truck follows them with two employees wearing their masks. Several pairs of Harbor Trail walkers at dusk wear masks, reflective vests and carry flashlights. Large males walk their small dogs. Small females walk their large dogs.

A stylin' young woman wears plaid leggings that match her plaid mask.

I see where city council is re-attempting the "tiny houses" ordinance under the guise of providing "affordable housing." This ordinance will make existing dense neighborhoods even more concentrated. Even if it passes, tiny houses do not come at tiny prices, either as homes, rentals or Airbnb's. "Affordable" isn't in a building. It's what's in your bank account. City council loves Zoom meetings because even fewer residents participate via live stream meetings for Public Comments to challenge city decisions.



Our mid-coast escaped the Polar Vortex with only a little snow that looked like Mother Nature sprinkled confectioner's sugar over the land.

### Bring some cheer to this Covid Winter!

Help us plan a once-in-forever Valentine's Day event on local community radio and television

and in the livingrooms and kitchens of the fine people of our Rockland Metropolitan Area

call Joe at 596-0731, or email team@wrfr.org



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