



Rockland Buzz

The Longest Nights

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The Old School
Fellowship Education



Strand on the Air Socially Distant Good Riddance to 2020 Edition

The Strand Theatre presents the next installment of their original radio variety show series with the Socially Distant Good Riddance to 2020 Edition on Sunday, December 27 at 5pm. The shows feature comedy skits and music, and can be heard by tuning in to WRFR at 93.3 in Rockland, 99.3 in Camden, or by streaming at WRFR.org. Each show will then be available to stream on the Strand Theatre website at RocklandStrand.com, and as a podcast.

Join Liz McLeod, announcer Dan Bookham, and the Strand Family Players for a comic farewell to the year everyone can't wait to kick out the door, and hear what happens down in Abysmal Point when Mrs. Grunden vows to forget everything that happened in 2020. There'll be new music by Brittany Parker – and a unique Rehearsal-turned-Recital performance by some outstanding local jazz talent courtesy of the Midcoast Music Academy! No need to stay up till midnight as we say goodbye to 2020 with laughs, tunes, and a deep breath for 2021!

Like all of our STRAND ON THE AIR broadcasts this year, the December edition is written, directed, and edited by House Manager Liz McLeod, with cast members contributing their parts from home.



Campfire in Doggerland or Staring into the flames by Glen Birbeck

Oak logs burned in the fire pit. In the sky geese flew toward Thomaston, toward the warmth beyond. I did that once. Now I double hunker down. The virus and sub zero wind chill my reasons. Geese fly but don't wear masks. Not this year anyway. Next year? who knows. At the end of 2021 Geese might be wearing masks and I might fly south again. My gaze drops from the sky to the flames. I toast my palms over burning oak.

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Down Main Street with Phil Groce Up Front

The students were close in Julia Batty's high school graduating class, consisting of 3 students, at the Mid-Coast Christian Academy (MCCA). But after being home-schooled up to high school, and involving the home-school cooperative, Julia felt socially solid, and she knew exactly what she wanted. Her father, a computer expert working for Rockbound computer in Rockland, and her mother a teacher, now teaching at MCCA, according to Julia, they were always supportive but gave no opinions whether she should go to college, or begin working somewhere at the bottom, or whatever. They had confidence in her judgement about herself.

Julia proceeded to get an associate degree in theology and then began studies to complete her undergraduate degree at UMA in Rockland, looking to graduate school in social sciences and counseling. She told me, "I think I can add a certain depth or option to the field in family counseling with my background, not being totally in the secular field, not that I proselytize, but it is like any background. We all have different backgrounds—no one person is better than another." I could see the value or her grounding, coming from the solid family she grew up in.

Covid must heavily affect UMA. "Most of it is online now," she said, "and I miss the give and take, bouncing ideas off other students, to see what they think. Online just does not fill that bill." I met Julia when I walked into the store, Wooden Alchemy, on Main Street. Julia works there part-time during the off-months, and full-time during the summer, always attending school. "I am able to pay for my schooling to get my bachelors. Graduate school is another matter."

What's it like in the classes? "There are a few students my age in class, but there are older adults coming back to school, many of them already have grown families. It gives me an added perspective that I appreciate greatly—that maturity."

In the store, surrounded by elegant, carefully crafted works of art, some decorative, some practical, all laser-made, I felt as if I were in a different world altogether: definite, stable, ingeniously crafted, and practically priced. In the back was a tuba, entirely crafted from wood—just on-display, as there were other items just on display that the artist chooses not to sell. There were a few items on consignment, and I noted some of the lathe-crafted wooden bowels made by John Coppola. I mentioned John to her.

"I apprenticed under John for a year. I found that there's a lot of satisfaction in crafting an object with your own hands. When he brought new stock for consignment at the store, he was good enough to tell them I was reliable and hard-working. The timing was right, and I was selected for this job."

Do you like selling to the public in this store? "I can talk with anyone and have a good conversation. I worked in a restaurant as a bartender, and I know how to relate . . . and listen. I immediately get a feeling where the person is coming from, and many times I can suggest something that they might want already in the store."

"Right now, people seem lonely, and they like to talk, whether they buy something or not. I can connect with them, and I feel blessed to have such a great job and be around all these beautiful pieces. Everyone has a story, whether it's a veteran, or someone who wants to talk about their job, or vacation, kids. I love it, and I'm happy to pass on that passion to the customers that the artist has for his creations. I feel that passion, and it makes the world not look so bad in these times. It's hard to be cynical when I see customer's faces light up when they see this art."

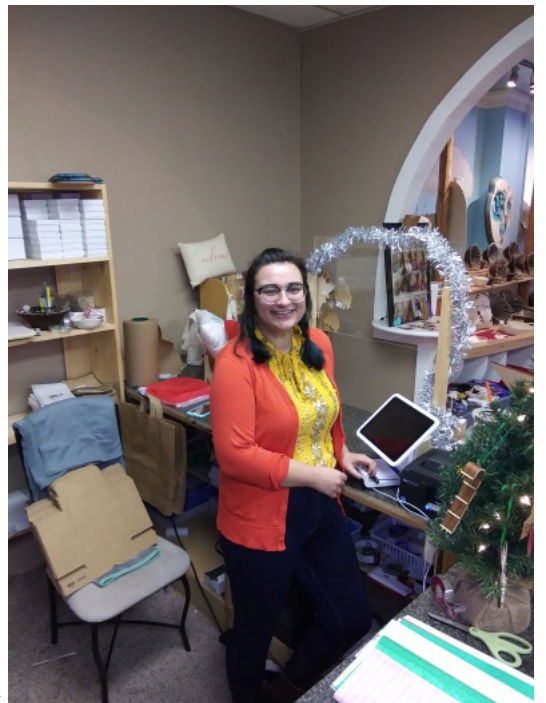
"The tourist-trade has dropped off with Covid, but in normal times, people come in here to buy something from Rockland, Maine, and that's good. You would be surprised how many of these very large pieces are in summer homes. They get a chance to talk to us and see the Maine perspective, which they love to hear, and 60% of that money stays in the community, as opposed to something bought from Amazon that benefits elsewhere. You would think that it would be slow in here right now, but Covid has local people looking locally, like, 'I live in town, and I should be supporting it. Those are businesses that are in danger.'"

Where are these piece made? "Rob [Jones] does it all in his basement. He has three laser cutters with most of the production on 3 large tables, including finish work and painting. He's originally from this area, and he thought up this entire set-up on his own."

I wanted to hear how the artist would describe his own work. So, I called Rob Jones. Nice voice, very friendly on the phone. "It's engineering as art," he said, "although I have never had training as an engineer. I guess you would call me an intuitional engineer, self-taught. But I don't consider myself what you might call a traditional artist. Nearly all art I see has a large emotional content, and I do not respond to that. Engineering and math make sense to me. I take pride in precision and detail. I like the feedback from the very cool people who stop in to look at my work."

"Recently I had the opportunity to connect with the people who are restoring that giant coal fired steam engine, the 470, sitting on the tracks north of Ellsworth, where the tracks end and the hiking path begins north. They have given me the blueprints, and since we are closed during the winter after Christmas, I am going to use that time to construct an entire scale model of that engine for them. That's right up my alley, and I am really excited about the project."

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The tree guy left us with lots of oak. It seasoned naturally. It dried where it stood until he cut it. From a bucket twenty foot up he removed limbs and branches. His delicate ballet in the bare canopy dropped a chord's worth of oak to the ground. I dragged logs up the drive. After I'd quit twitching I used my new electric chain saw. It did an impressive job - even on oak. A new axe and some effort split logs into sticks. Oak splits beautifully. It burns well too. The Cadillac of camp wood I suppose.

Just as I've let the hair on my head run riot, the trees on the family finca have had their way. Acorns and apples as nature intended cover the ground. Keeping the driveway and power line safe from falling timber prompted us to part with the \$\$\$. The tree person was worthy of his wages. Difficult to put a price on living pre electric for a week as we did this past spring.

In my imagination, I join the ancients around the fire, gathered for warmth. But it was more than warmth to them. More than cooking and heat treating materials they had access to. Stones split by fire becoming tools. Sharpened sticks hardened by flame. Fire was also something intangible. For them then as for me now there was a mystery in the flames. Something akin to the computer screen but more subtle. In Doggerland, that Atlantis of the north sea, they must have sat at the fire as I do and thought about everything. Twenty-five thousand years ago they'd have thought about the tribal politics in their area. They might have wondered why the Gods had sent a new virus to decimate the people. Technology too had its place in their reverie. Those new spear points for fishing!, what will they think of next. Made of bone and barbed so the fish stays speared. Its all in the fire, their thoughts and mine.

Doggerland's highest hills are now the dogger bank. Four hundred feet below the waves between England and Holland the sea floor gives up bones and spear points to drag nets. The rising seas at the end of the last glacial age flooded Doggerland. A burst ice dam to the north sent a tsunami to gauge out the English channel. Hills that in that time were the highest points in Doggerland will now anchor huge wind turbines. Could those ancient people imagine container ships and tankers passing six hundred feet over their heads? Can we here on the Maine coast imagine a mile of ice above us? There was, many times, and there will be again. Our age with its pandemic and politics is the thinnest of moments in the life of the world. You want an answer? a reason? look into the fire, study the embers, It's as likely there as anywhere.

I’ll listen to your opinion....
....as long as it agrees with mine
by Steve Carroll

At this weeks City council meeting several residents wrote to express their opinions on a proposed ordinance change related to accessory dwellings within the City.

Nate Davis and Ben Dorr are requesting a change to the current requirement that all accessory dwellings be attached to the primary resident. On the surface this seems like a simple change since the attachment really serves no purpose and only becomes an impediment to adding an accessory dwelling unit. Many residents feel with the increased demand for affordable housing this ruling creates a roadblock to in-town development. Among those letters read by the City manager was one that demanded “ if you don’t like the way things are here, then maybe you should leave”. I like several others were offended by these rude remarks. Although many who wrote to express their opinions were positive, several felt the town was perfect just the way it was and there was no need for any changes.

One hundred and fifty years ago this town thrived on burning lime and cutting fish. I am certain most would not want to return to those days, but sure there were those that complained loudly when those industries began to wane. I can imagine my great grandfather being curious as to why we needed indoor bathrooms. Like it or not change is a part of life and we must learn to live with it. At 70 I often find people under 30 have a far different view of the world than I do, however we must ask “isn’t their view just as relevant as mine." In just a few short years it will be their place and the older generation will need to step back and let them shape the future.

Each person’s view or opinion is important rather they agree with you or not. There is no one right or wrong way. If we find ourselves only listening to those that agree with us, than very little progress is possible. Democrat or Republican, left or right, gay or straight, all opinions count equally. Let us listen to each other and find common ground. I’ll listen to your opinion, especially if it does NOT agree with mine.

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The Buzz is composed and printed by the Fellows of The Old School at the WRFR studios, 20 Gay Street, Rockland. Email: wrfr93.3@gmail.com

WEEK FORTY

COVID-19 RANDOM NOTES WHILE SHELTERING IN PLACE

by Phyllis Merriam

Meaty chicken wing bones satisfy Broken Wing and the few young ones from her brood that join her for breakfast. Two squirrels join in for the peanuts. The feisty red squirrel is still AWOL. Did it move to another neighborhood? Is it safe?

Saw a group of four seniors grocery shopping going the wrong way up the aisles wearing their masks below their noses. Their maskadaisical behavior caused me to feel really hostile. I felt like asking them if they were suicidal or homicidal. Instead, I veered away from their aerosols and got out of Hannaford as fast as possible.

I’m experiencing angry feelings with no particular source. Maybe Iceland has an answer. Their “Let It Out” campaign invites anyone in the world to record their screams online and then the screams are broadcast over Iceland’s remote areas. Maine has plenty of remote uninhabited areas that could absorb anyone’s screams.

Lovely neighbors dropped off a tin of homemade Christmas cookies. The cookie tin had the following messages: “Fab-Yule-Ous”; “Up to Snow Good”; “Express Your Elf.”

Other great neighbors left more Christmas cookies and seasonal decorated masks.

OBSERVATIONS: End-of-the-day clouds over Owls Head look like giant grey cotton balls. The lighted Christmas tree in a schooner’s mast appears to be suspended untethered against the dark sky. Rockland’s lobster themed Christmas tree is a joyful annual tradition that I think also honors those who risk their lives fishing. Staff in my fav neighborhood grocery store wears cheerful Christmas candy themed leggings and a mask and today, a snowflake theme.

I saw some words in an unrelated article that fit the covid virus: morbid, frenetic, fierce, unknowable, complicated, elusive. I hope federal and state vaccine disseminations aren’t complicated, elusive or refused by too many Americans.

I’m finding weekly grocery and household supply shopping very tedious. I handle multiple bags multiple times: Into the grocery cart; out of the cart and into the car trunk; out of the trunk onto the house ramp; up and off the ramp as I wrestle the kitchen’s double doors and onto the kitchen table; into the frig, freezer, pantry, kitchen cabinets and utility room. This must be an answer to the riddle of why the minority of grocery shoppers are men. I’m tempted to buy a cart that would make out-of-the-trunk-into-the-house a lot easier but it costs the same as one week’s groceries. Maybe I should just stop whinging and whining and consider it free aerobic exercise.

Here is a story I recommend to anyone who needs some seasonal uplifting.

<https://www.thelily.com/a-4-year-old-made-a-garden-a-neighbor-pretended-to-be-a-fairy-it-was-the-start-a-beautiful-friendship/>



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