

Glen Birbeck

## Down Main Street with Phil Groce

### Understanding the Course

You will find the Worthington Scholarship Foundation inhabiting an imposing granite building on Main Street. I found the front door locked but walked around to an unlocked side door. I entered a large reception room, well-appointed and comfortable, empty of people. A few more feet in, I discovered a small office in the back, lit by natural light and manned by Jay McIntire. I obviously surprised him, but I felt immediately welcomed. Without reservation, he agreed to an interview.

Jay was born in New Hampshire, but at school-age he ended up, along with his two siblings, in Hampden when his father, who has a PhD in psychology, accepted a position with University of Maine in Orono. Hampden was chosen by his parents, as they felt it had the best school system in the area. Jay, of course, attended Hampden Academy, the town's high school.

"I was not in the socially-popular dating crowd, but I suppose I was considered a problem-solver. I got elected to the student council, was president of this and that, and served for two years as the student representative to the faculty committee. I felt as if I could move in any circle within the student body and also the faculty."

I asked how that social ability came about. "I remember when I was in preschool, there was a teacher who was gay, and he had limited support, as was the case during those times. But he was welcomed in our home. That was the same with people of other races and religions. No group or individual was off-limits or judged by superficial differences."

What was college like? "I went to Orono—in psychology, but to tell the truth, I got tired of people thinking I was analyzing them. I changed my major to music." Music? "I loved the trumpet, but more than that, I loved music, though I did not envision myself as a professional or a teacher of music. I loved its discipline—never getting it 100%, having no end to growth. I knew then that I would always be a learner. As it turned out, I did much better on the Graduate Entrance Exam than I did on the College Entrance Exam. So, I must have learned something being a music major." Then off to graduate school?

"A friend gave me a book about the Audubon Expedition Institute which had a bus in which you spent two years, examining cultures, subcultures, and environments all over the country, for instance, Indian reservations, Amish communities, Washington D.C. and many other places. I ended up with a master's degree in environmental education. In Maine, then, I couldn't find work in my field.

"I obtained a job in Patten in special education. That experience lit an interest in me in special and gifted education. I entered the PhD program at the University of Virginia in gifted education. I left the program before completing my dissertation and got a job in Washington D.C. with the Council for Exceptional Children. It was there that I met my wife.

"After a job in Texas leading the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, we found our way back to Maine 15 years ago, where I became the Superintendent of Schools for Wiscasset. When they consolidated, I went to New Hampshire for a few years before becoming the Superintendent in Brewer. Our two sons were school-age, and we needed to settle and establish social relationships. We chose Winslow, where my wife now works for the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program. Our sons are now 16 and 17.

"I was hired by the Worthington Foundation 3 years ago. The foundation was started by David, a retired owner of a geophysical company, and his wife, Beverly, a retired commercial airline pilot. They both were the first generation in each family to attend college. Through the foundation I believe they positively change the trajectory of the lives of hundreds of young Mainers.

"We supply scholarships to students in middle and lower income who are going to college full-time within Maine. They started with Oceanside HS in 2010, thence to Camden, then Medomak, and now 23 high schools. Major does not matter. It could be in plumbing in community college or premed at Colby College. The application is through the college, with support from high school guidance counselors. I'm the Program Director and serve as a primary contact. We currently have 400 students under scholarship."

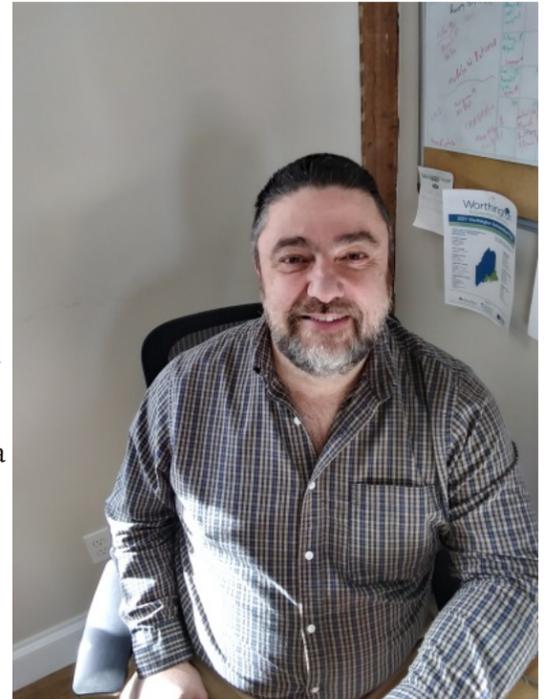
What do you like most in your job? "We have all sorts of kids, with the full range of needs and challenges. Though I have contacts with the colleges, the guidance counselors, and the business partners, I make myself available 24/7 to the students. I have become a professional supporter and advocate, and I love it." What do you do?

"If they need something important, I usually can show them how to do it—themselves. I build relationships, and I am able to follow them throughout their college careers and see them flower. It's about moving with the positive, beyond the negative." For instance? "Very practical things: how to structure life to become a student, how not to procrastinate, how to balance social life, how to develop motivation." And Covid?

"It has been brutal. Eighteen-year-olds move into college to find themselves in a single room and unable go into others' rooms or the cafeteria. Being isolated is outside their normal experience, and I see epidemic stress, anxiety and depression. It's a matter of triage and giving support when needed, like a social worker. I have to look at the whole person."

What is your conceptual framework? "We all are on individual courses and each has value. If I don't easily see value in a student's course, then I need to learn more about that student. Each is separate, all diverse, and if you serve each, then you help them all. I don't have the resources myself to help a lot of kids, but with this foundation I can be a catalyst for change in many different people. What a privilege!"

Philip C. Groce 2021



## Spring is in the Air

by Steve Carroll

Spring is in the air and I am exuberant about our magnificent March weather.

Usually, a snowbird making the flight to warmer climates over the generally harsh winter months in Maine, I decided to quarantine myself to home base this year due to the COVID-19 crisis. This winter has been one for the records in so many ways. Lots of changes and more to come.

Wanted to report on the work of the City's Downtown improvement committee I joined last month. We will finish our work next week and send our recommendations to the council on April 5th. Living in New England my whole life I understand just how hard it is for Mainers to embrace any change at all. In my numerous travels throughout this land, I have experienced many small towns that have invested heavily to improve and beautify their downtowns. So many places have fought to bring back their antiquated downtown areas to be pedestrian-friendly shopping districts that have drawn people away from the shopping centers and helped to revitalize their Main street shopping districts. I have experienced in town parks filled with flowers and music for all to enjoy.

Although I am encouraged by improvements being promoted by the younger more progressive business owners, there still remains in this community an overwhelming oppressive trend of "we can't do that" or "No that won't work". This overburdening attitude of "why can't you just leave it the way it is" sometimes leaves me in tears. I feel most citizens want to see their community improve and become a better place to live. It is no wonder young people leave to find a better way of life. I for one have stayed and tried to turn the wheel of progress, but at my age the old arms are getting tired and think being a snow bird is not that bad. You still have a chance to meet new people and see new places and ultimately acquire a better understanding of how each place is different in some special way.



GB

# A Plea,

24 March 2021  
Judy Pasqualge, Rockland, ME

(Initial disclaimer: the comments below I find applicable to all political groups (DP, RP, Independents, progressives), all levels of attained 'education,' and all sectors of employment and income levels.)

Today on CNN, former CIA official and current counterterrorism analyst Philip Mudd, in response to a question on the recent mass shootings, said (my paraphrase) that one of the problems is the mentality of many people in the US, their arrogance in thinking that their way is always better than that of other peoples and countries; one sees this regarding gun violence, regarding the healthcare system, and in other areas.

My definition of arrogance is: an overestimation of one's knowledge or understanding.

On another show, an Asian-American activist said that anti-Asian hate and violence has to be dealt with consistently, i.e., continually i.e., as a priority, not as a one-shot sound bite.

So, I looked up the number of minority peoples in Maine and in Knox County.

Maine: of a population of 1,344,212: whites (1,268,936; not Hispanic/Latino: 1,250,117); black or African American (22,852); American Indian (9,049); Asian (17,475); Hispanic/Latino (24, 196) (US Census Bureau categories/info as of July 2019).

Knox County: population of 39,772; whites (38,340); black or African American (318); American Indian (199); Asian (278); Hispanic/Latino (636). So, altogether, there are some 1,430 nonwhites (plus 636 who are of two or more races).

In this letter I'd like to say, to all of you in 'minority' groups, I am sorry this is happening to your communities, and think it is important to speak up about it.

This is a call on everyone to speak up consistently to voice support to minority friends, acquaintances, workers, etc.

And this is a plea to state and county officials, elected or not, police and sheriff departments, the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street associations, religious leaders, clubs/associations, the media anyone with the public ear to join in, and make it clear that: "THIS IS MY PROBLEM, TOO."

P.S. As an aside: please also voice support and appreciation to Hannaford workers, who have not been deemed as essential workers by the state, and thus not a priority to get the vaccine.

Just read about another new term associated with Covid-19: "quaradreaming" or the increase in Americans reporting nightmares during this period in our history. When people get more REM sleep during stressful times they have more nightmares. I've had some strange dreams about not wanting deceased dear friends and relatives to leave and my husband has had scary dreams about historical eras. Although not called "quaradreaming", this phenomenon has been reported in combat veterans suffering from PTSD and witnesses, survivors of 9/11 and other trauma.

More relatives and friends are reporting their second vaccinations while I've read about disturbing numbers of front-line health care workers refusing vaccines. Some people because of allergic reactions are unable to have the vaccines. All the more reason to achieve herd immunity to protect those friends and relatives.

More retirees and Covid-refugees are buying up houses and empty lots in the South End for big \$. There aren't enough houses for buyers. These are mostly retirees who probably wouldn't be working remotely. If our young people are going to be able to work remotely and not have to rely on low-wage service industry jobs, faster broadband is long overdue. Maine is 43rd in the country in access, speed and cost.

Lovely warmer, sun-filled days inspire me to continue scraping the east side porch and bay window in preparation for a professional painter. I've been doing this off and on since last year. I find painters want to paint - not scrape and sand. I don't blame them; scraping and sanding are tedious tasks and not really meditative.

Relatives delivered pea shoots they've been growing, along with lettuce, under grow lights in their basement. They're calling their operation, "Monk's House Farm." I added the shoots to a curry chicken salad with mangos, apples, grapes and raisins to go with a southwest chicken soup I made for lunch. Crunchy fresh greens in March! These Rockland relatives are always doing creative things like Zoom jamming from their new music studio with San Diego band friends.

The bald eagle is again sweeping the air over the Head of the Bay with its huge wing- span and frightening gulls. As far as I can tell, it's a year round resident. News reports say the American Bald Eagle, once endangered, has tripled its population to 9,700 nesting pairs in America. We're lucky to have our own neighborhood bird.

Broken Wing maintains her first-crow-in-the-morning appearance at breakfast. I'm going to try sitting out on the patio to see if she'll get closer or be spooked. She recognizes me and isn't afraid of me at about 8 feet. Could I become a crow whisperer?



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