



THE VIEW DOWNEAST

BY RUTH LEUBECKER

Bicentennial project highlights state's stellar uniqueness

by Ruth Leubecker

In these months of cancellations and postponements due to COVID, Milbridge perseveres — as it always does — in doing its special summertime things in benefit of the town and the theatre.

And in 2020, of course, it's the Bicentennial, even though most of Maine has let any vestige of celebration drift over into 2021. But not Milbridge. Never Milbridge.

Last summer's lighthouse project was a great success, and this season's art project has expanded that effort. Nineteen detailed pine cutouts created in the shape of the state of Maine have produced 19 delightful pieces of art, all based on the theme "All Things Maine."

"We recruited amazing local artists to adopt the cutouts, using their fantastic talents to transform them into works of art," explains Richard Bondurant, chair of Gateway Milbridge. "The results are simply incredible."

The first display of the pieces accompanied by biographies of the artists and the stories of the chosen themes will be on display this weekend in the Milbridge Theatre lot. The display welcomes fans from 9:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday.

The lively Maine cutouts are creative masterworks and will be spaced around the lot so that visitors can socially distance. The weekend display will remain on the lot for the next three weekends. Then the artwork will operate on a rotating basis, first appearing in the windows of the Seaworthy Event Center.

Last year's lighthouse art project raised over \$9,600 toward the renovation of the theatre, with the Friday Night Live Concerts raising another \$6,835. This year, because



of COVID-19, there will be no live concerts and no Milbridge Days. Although that's a disappointment, it was not unexpected in these troubled days of uncertainty.

The outdoor stage for the live concerts was moved several months ago from the theatre property to its new waterfront location where it tenuously awaits future concerts, but not this summer.

Meanwhile, "All Things Maine" is an expanded exhibition, this season featuring 19 artists compared with last year's 10. "This is a bigger project than last year's lighthouses," explains Bondurant. "But like last year, community voting will take place online to select the favorites. Because of this expansion we will do a top three selection with cash prizes for the top three."

Beautifying Milbridge has been a parallel goal to making money for the 80-year-old theatre. Four years ago Gateway Milbridge had 20 king-sized planters built, and each season volunteers plant flowers in them. This year of 2020 each will have an American flag amongst the flowers to commemorate the Bicentennial year.

Milbridge volunteers should be so proud to envision the impressive fruits of their labors.

Renovating the dilapidated theatre was an ambitious program to undertake from the very beginning. But due to their often ingenious fundraising and diligent volunteerism, they have completed the exterior of the building, and are now concentrating on the interior. Which naturally, invites more details and choices to be made — lighting, seats, stage, sound equipment.

The seven-phase building project has flourished under the guidance of Bondurant and a proactive Gateway Milbridge. Like last year, in August an auction of the 19 states of Maine will be held with all proceeds going to the theatre. The pieces are 36 inches tall and 24 inches wide. While they would make impressive wall hangings, other creative uses might also be suggested.

Hats off to Milbridge — a proactively creative community in all times, but especially appreciated right now, with so much of life on hold.

Organizer Richard Bondurant has confirmed the auction details have been finalized. It will begin online the morning of Aug. 5, ending at 8 p.m. on Aug. 11. Details will be posted on milbridgetheater.org. - S.C.D.

FREEDOM STUDIES

BY JONATHAN REISMAN

School daze

Opening schools this fall should not be a partisan issue, but it is and will be. The physical and mental welfare of our children and the well-being and fitness of our economy and communities should be the decisive factors, but will not be. Education policy is and will be most strongly influenced by the overwhelmingly left of center National Education Association and associated teacher unions. The NEA is arguably the strongest and most influential interest group in the Democratic Party (with apologies to Planned Parenthood, AARP, Trial Lawyers, Black Lives Matter, Antifa, Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan). The Democrats have shown they will do whatever they can to damage, demean and defeat President Trump, including destroying the economy, lying to the nation about Russia, Russia, Russia, lying in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, on CNN and MSNBC and just generally lying in wait for any opportunity to lie.

A number of countries, including Australia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Israel, Taiwan and Uruguay, have reopened with relative success. Each country and education system is different, but a reopening strategy cognizant of differential infection rates and using social distancing, protective

personal equipment, reduced class sizes and staggered schedule strategies has been successful. It is also expensive and would require federal assistance. Is it worth the risk and expense? I think yes, because the cost of not reopening and/or largely depending on online distance instruction will be devastating to our children, our economy and our communities. Failure to reopen with live instruction will almost certainly assure Trump's defeat in November, which is why the NEA and the Democrats will do all they can to prevent reopening, all the while lying that their position is about teacher and student safety.

Lying is such a Democratic virtue that it is possible that cognitively impaired Joe Biden will pick lying Susan Rice as his Vice-President. Rice (in)famously lied to the entire country on all the Sunday morning talk shows after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Benghazi consulate, claiming the murder of our Libyan ambassador was the consequence of an anti-Muslim video from an obscure American Christian pastor. UN Ambassador Rice saved President Obama and Secretary Clinton's bacon lying to the nation that morning, and was rewarded for it by becoming President Obama's

(Freedom Studies cont. pg. 20)

GUEST VOICE

Governor promoting fear and control

by Rep. Shelley Rudnicki

Back in March, Maine people faced an uncertain coronavirus threat. Some projections had 2.2 million people dying, meaning thousands in Maine.

Maine's Chief Executive was able to act quickly to lock down Maine and bend what we thought was going to be a COVID-19 curve. Republicans supported the steps taken in the first few weeks when America prepared for the worst and our President took quick action.

Early on, the decades-old emergency powers statute, along with modifications to the June Primary date and scheduling of town meetings, was working as intended.

Mainers did what they needed to do, learned how to minimize risk and adjusted to COVID-19.

The wisdom of continuing to impose a lockdown of Maine life and our economy, in the absence of scientific data to support it, is increasingly questionable.

Consider these facts: Maine was slow in providing daily numbers for negative COVID-19 tests. In mid-May, more than two months after the first

confirmed case here, Maine was the only state in the country not compiling daily reports on the number of people tested. Even as Maine has increased its testing to over 87,000, the average daily number of new cases continues to decline. In the week ending last Monday, the state averaged 23 new cases per day. It had an average of 32 new cases daily for the week ending June 15. There is still no word on when the new mobile testing lab announced last May will be operational; Maine's seven day positivity rate is 1.0 percent; Dr. Shah recently announced that Maine has one of the lowest fatality rates in the country, and the lowest fatality rate in the Northeast; Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Sagadahoc, Somerset, and Washington counties have had no deaths from COVID-19; Washington County has had zero deaths and zero hospitalizations. Washington County's case count remains at two, and hospitalizations remain well below the peaks of 35 on April 7 and May 25. Today, only 10 individuals are hospitalized across the state due to COVID-

(Rudnicki cont. pg. 20)



Letters to the Editor

Loyal opposition?

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, also known as the CARES Act, was a \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus bill passed by the 116th U.S. Congress in response to the devastating economic effects of the pandemic. It was hastily put together in a matter of weeks because of the emergency created by the looming economic crisis.

Part of the CARES Act was the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). This gave money to businesses as a loan, but the loan would be forgiven if 75 percent of the loan was used for payroll while the business was shut down. Under the PPP, the loan amount which was

forgiven would not be taxable by the IRS.

Under Maine's present income tax laws, these forgiven loans would be taxable. To make them exempt from Maine income tax, the legislature would have to meet and pass the appropriate legislation. This would likely easily pass if the Maine legislature met. This is just one of many problems which Maine faces that needs to be addressed.

Although the Democratic caucus wants to go back in session, the Republicans refuse. The Republicans, including Senator Marianne Moore, even refuse to vote on whether or not to go back into session. They

are not saying that they won't go back into session, they refuse to vote at all. Meanwhile, a lot of issues raised by the pandemic go unresolved.

It is time for the legislature to do what it was created to do; represent the people of Maine. As President John F. Kennedy said: "Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

Jeffrey Lovit is a resident of Addison and is a candidate for the Maine State Senate in District 6.