

**“68”**

by Claude Curran

Sixty-eight years between overnight hospital stays is a reasonable record, although seventy-eight or even eighty-eight would have been preferred. But there I was; make the most of it! How did this happen?

The short story is that I had the flu while receiving chemotherapy for a weird arthritis (isn't it all?). My blood pressure plummeted when I stood up too quickly triggering an episode of syncope. I ended up in a heap on the living room floor. 911!

The ER has its own set of sounds and odors which are neither familiar nor particularly pleasing. Eventually my ankle was X-rayed revealing a break and the other ankle was severely sprained. The attending physician inquired as to how I felt; I declined to go out on a limb at that point. However, I said it feels as if something is “flopping around in my leg and I fear it is broken.” IVs, fluids, pain killer in some grandcocktail; then after a couple hours languishing on a gurney smoking fine Cuban cigars and sipping very smooth Tennessee sour mash, I was delivered to a hospital room. The shift nurse came to welcome me and offer any aid I might need. She asked how I was doing and I indicated all was well except for some pain and that I felt something “flopping around” in my leg and I believed it to be broken. “No,” was the response, “the films indicate no break.”

The usual poking, drawing of blood, receiving pain killers and various other and sundry activities prohibited sleep (been there and done that, eh?). Sometime before the roosters commenced their daily activities the new charge nurse came in at shift change. “How are you doing,” she queried? “Fine except I think my leg is broken., I can feel it flopping around.” “I’ll check it for you,” she replied. Before long a CNA came in and said the nurse had checked the films and my leg looked fine. Later in the morning the physical therapist came in and aided me in standing. “Are you in much pain,” was the question? The standardized response was the same, “No, but I think my leg is broken, I can feel it flopping around.” The reply was the same as from all the others, “We have checked the films and we find no break.”

A little later in the morning I heard a knock on the door followed by a voice saying, “I’m the cleaning lady may I come in?” “Certainly,” I replied. This lady could not pass through the door...let me caution you not to jump to conclusions. She was not particularly large, however, she wore the broadest smile of anyone I have ever seen; because of that she had to turn sideways to enter the room! “What happened to you,” she asked. I recounted the events of the last 18 hours ending with the part about believing my leg was broken because “..... I feel something flopping around.” “Oh, you poor dear,” she said. Let me assure you right now, that statement was worth a horse syringe of pain killer!

Night two: same as night one. Morning two: same as morning one. Once again I mentioned to the PT that I felt something “flopping around” in my leg; she said she would tell her supervisor. In an hour or so her supervisor came to tell me they had reviewed the films and there was no break but that she had alerted the Hospitalist who said he would stop by. About mid-afternoon here he came. He was extremely affable; his marvelous demeanor was in itself healing. He sat on the edge of my bed chatting as he examined my mangled ankle. “Sometimes there is a hair-line fracture that is difficult to detect on an X-ray, but,”

he continued, “I will examine your leg.” He commenced at my ankle and used his thumb to pressure various points as he worked up my leg. Finally, about six inches below my knee in response to pressure, much to his surprise, I let out a yelp of pain that turned me instantly albino. The pain was very intense. He exclaimed, “Oh, my god, I believe your leg is broken!”

Next came a technician with an X-ray machine on a gantry and took an image of my leg. The screen was visible to me and the break looked like Zorro had honed his steel on it with the sign of the “Z! Soon, a surgeon arrived who indicated I would go into surgery as soon as an OR was available., where my leg would be stabilized with titanium screws. The last thing I remember before submitting to the anesthesia tugging at my brain was gazing into the bright lights where the surgeon was looming and saying, “Go ahead Doc, screw it up royally!” Then I lost consciousness, either the drugs did their intended job or he slugged me, which, I will never know.

In retrospect, I’m convinced all would have progressed much more quickly if I had more precisely described the sensation in my leg. Somehow, I don’t believe “.....I feel something flopping around in there” to be standard medical terminology! ▲

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## BASEBALL...

Two old guys, Abe and Sol, are sitting on a park bench feeding pigeons and talking about baseball, like they do every day.

Abe turns to Sol and says, “Do you think there’s baseball in heaven?”

Sol thinks about it for a minute and replies, “I dunno. But let’s make a deal: if I die first, I’ll come back and tell you if there’s baseball in heaven, and if you die first, you do the same.”

They shake on it and sadly, a few months later, poor Abe passes on.

One day soon afterward, Sol is sitting there feeding the pigeons by himself when he hears a voice whisper, “Sol ... Sol ...”

Sol responds, “Abe! Is that you?”

“Yes, it is, Sol,” whispers Abe’s ghost.

Sol, still amazed, asks, “So, is there baseball in heaven?”

“Well,” says Abe, “I’ve got good news and bad news.”

“Gimme the good news first,” says Sol.

Abe says, “Well... there is baseball in heaven.”

Sol says, “That’s great! What news could be bad enough to ruin that!?”

Abe sighs and whispers, “You’re pitching on Friday.” ▲

## CURLY AND RIPPER

Excerpted from *Money Sucks* by Mike Baughman

Late on an overcast morning, I drove about fifteen miles north from Ashland on Interstate 5, then headed eastward over a pot-holed two-lane county road. I had an appointment to interview an ex-convict named Kirk who lived in a rural area I’d never visited before. We’d made arrangements by phone, and he’d given me what seemed like clear directions, but I got lost twice. Finally I found the place, an old white trailer in a weed field off an unpaved road.

The interview was on behalf of a lawyer named Ralph Temple who had moved to southern Oregon from Washington, DC, and whose long career there had mostly involved civil rights issues, including work in the Sixties with Martin Luther King. Though nominally retired, now he was putting together a report examining the allegedly brutal treatment of prisoners at Medford’s Jackson County Jail.

I parked alongside the gravel driveway leading to the trailer, climbed out of my Subaru, took two or three steps, and watched two snarling pit bulls squirm out from underneath the trailer and charge straight across the yard at me. With no time to make it back to the car, I stood my ground.

The dogs—one a mottled brown, the other black—stopped no more than a yard away and crouched there, growling and snarling.

“Keep it up and I’ll kick you sons of bitches into orbit,” I said, just so they could hear my voice.

They kept it up, but came no closer.

“Anybody home?” I yelled at the trailer.

A young woman wearing jeans and a gray sweatshirt appeared on the rickety porch. “Curly! Ripper! Get your asses over here!”

The dogs turned at once and trotted back to the trailer.

“Sorry about the mutts,” the young woman said. “Who’re you?”

“I’m supposed to meet Kirk. He said he’d be here.”

Side by side, the dogs walked up the steps to the porch. The young woman eyed me warily. She had brown skin, dark eyes, and long black hair tied into a single braid that hung down her back. I judged her to be American Indian.

“What’s it about?” she said. “You some kind of bill collector?”

“Me? No. I’m helping a guy who’s writing a report about the lousy treatment of prisoners at Jackson County Jail. Kirk said he’d talk to me about it.”

That triggered a quick transformation. She invited me onto the porch, we shook hands, and she introduced herself—her name was Nina—and explained that her husband had been summoned into town unexpectedly to help a friend who’d been in a car wreck. While we talked, I stooped to scratch Curly and Ripper

between the ears.

Nina reached Kirk on a cell phone and made arrangements for me to meet him at a diner a few miles back toward town. While she talked, a boy of five or six peeked through the screen door behind her, then quickly disappeared.

After Nina gave me directions to the diner, we talked for a while. She mentioned that Kirk had been an outstanding high school basketball player with hopes to play in college until his arrest for marijuana possession landed him in jail. So that I could spot him, I asked her what he looked like, and for the first time since I’d been there, she smiled. “He looks like a young version of you,” she said.

Despite the fact that her directions had seemed clear enough, I got lost yet again, so the drive took five or ten minutes more than it should have.

The diner was a wooden building painted green. The parking lot out front was crowded. I found a space next to an old Chevy pickup loaded with firewood and then walked inside, where it was warm and crowded, mostly with the same kinds of working men who eat tacos at La Tapatia.

I had no idea what to expect. Over a period of months, I’d interviewed several ex-convicts for Ralph Temple, and some had been about as friendly as Curly and Ripper coming out from under the trailer.

A quick scan of the room showed only one young man who fit Nina’s description, sitting at a table for two against a window near the door. When I looked at him, he smiled and waved.

The interview was easy. We drank coffee while we talked, and the whole time, despite the subject matter, Kirk kept a surprisingly cheerful smile on his face. Yes, he and two friends had been arrested with marijuana in the car. It was his third drug arrest, so he did time at the county jail. Then, on probation, he had missed an appointment with his parole officer. He had called the office a day early to say he couldn’t be there, and to explain why, but there was no record of the call, and he was arrested again and jailed for parole violation. The arrest itself was the major issue.

He described it this way: “Four deputies came out to the trailer. All I was doing was handing one of them my ID. I wasn’t doing anything else. I didn’t provoke anybody. I didn’t say a word. I handed over my ID and then all of a sudden the deputies jumped me and pinned me down and beat me in front of my whole family. My five-year-old son and my eighty-year-old grandmother were watching.”

Afterward, at the jail, despite his requests, he had been refused medical treatment.

I wondered what could be affecting Kirk now, why he was smiling. As if reading my mind, he explained:

“The good news is, I got a job! Just yesterday it happened. A tree company hired me. Arborists is what they call those tree people. All I’ll do at first is cleanup work, under the trees and all, loading

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## TEACHING AT OLLI?

Margaret Evens

In 2008 I retired from classroom teaching at SOU. In my nearly 30 years of teaching I had found a great change in teaching environment. Students were becoming less and less prepared and many more lacked intellectual curiosity. I felt more and more that I had to entertain them in order to get and keep their attention. When I began to get phone calls from students' parents begging me to change their child's grade, I figured it was time to stop this kind of teaching, sooner rather than later. Then I found OLLI.

OLLI, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, on the SOU campus, has over 1600 students, and offers over 100 classes each term. Here are students who want to be there---to explore something they've always wondered about, to learn more in an area in which they are somewhat knowledgeable, to interact with professionals in a particular area. There are no exams or papers and no grades. The classes meet, usually, once a week for 2 to 10 weeks. The students truly want to be in class. You are able to teach to those who have honest questions. If someone doesn't understand what you've said, that person will let you know. Teaching is fun again!

You don't have to teach only your major area. I've organized courses taught by the current SOU music faculty, by current music conductors of various ensembles, as well as courses on Bach's "St. Matthew Passion," and the history of music up to 1600. In addition I've taught a course on how one can become a philanthropist.

I would like to invite you to consider teaching a course or two for OLLI. There's no pay, but teaching might become fun again for you. And you might want to join OLLI as a student, too!

I remember when I entered my first college class as a teacher and sitting in the front row was a woman old enough to be my grandmother. I looked at her and asked myself what right I had to be teaching her. Of course, she was an over-achiever and wanted to be there. That's the kind of student you'll find in the OLLI classroom.

If you have any questions about this, please don't hesitate to contact me at [mevans@sou.edu](mailto:mevans@sou.edu) or 541-482-3075. ▲

## FALL LUNCHEON

Hopefully our newsletter finds you in good health and looking forward to another year.

Our Fall luncheon will be held on October 16, 2015 with the same venue we have used in the past wherein we will disperse at approximately 11:45 to obtain a lunch at the Stevenson Union Food Court and bring it back to the meeting room. We have a special program this Fall which will be the Old-Time Fiddlers featuring non-other than Ron Bolstad. Our meeting will take place at 11:30 am in the Rogue River Room of the Stevenson Union. We will have a short social time and then disburse for lunch. We welcome all and you do not need to have lunch to attend. Lunches can be paid in cash or by credit card.

For those of you who missed our Spring luncheon, you were deprived of special presentations by SOU's director of Athletics, Matt Sayre, football coach Howard, and one of Coach Howard's football players, Melvin Mason Jr.. The presentations exemplified the positive effects that these individuals provide for our athletic program as well as to SOU as a whole.

We have scheduled our Winter luncheon for February 26, 2015 and the Spring luncheon for May 20, 2016. We hope you will be able to attend and we are always in search of members to serve on our council. This is not a big commitment and we welcome anyone wishing to help. Please contact a member to express your interest. Current council members are: Ralph Fidler, Glenda Wood, Belinda Melendez, Bonnie Rott, Barbara Breneiser, Ed Hungerford, Bob Riehm, Frank Lang, and Ernie Ettlich. ▲

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limbs and branches into the chipper, but the boss says he'll teach me to climb and handle a chainsaw if everything works out. It'll work out! I guarantee it will! I start tomorrow! It's the best damn thing that's happened to me in two years!"

"Congratulations," I said, and I reached across the table to shake his hand.

"Thanks, man!"

"It's a real coincidence. My son's an arborist."

"Well now I'm one too!"

A joyful smile lit up Kirk's clean-shaven face and, looking across the table at me, a light shined from his clear brown eyes.

My last order of business was to ask whether he'd sign his name to a copy of the interview if I mailed it to him.

"Hell yes!" he said. "No problem! I'll never go back to that jail again, I'll guarangoddamntee you that! I got me a job!"

I'm not sure I've ever met a stranger to whom I took such an immediate liking. ▲

*The Retirees Association*  
*Fall Luncheon*  
GUEST SPEAKER  
Ron Bolstad and The Old Time  
Fiddlers  
October 16  
11:30am-1:30pm  
SU Rogue River Room