

# Beyond the Fringefan

[# 534]

**BEYOND THE FRINGEFAN** reached the age of 71 this month (and he's not dead yet!), but didn't get to celebrate it much in between shuttling from the N.Y. Cadre (1088 East 40th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11210 (☎(718) NY-CADRE; 📧↔📧 nycadre [at] acedsl [dot] com; 🌐http://www [dot] nycadre [dot] org)) to a hospital and a rehab center where his wife spent most of the month. He thinks he's maybe getting a bit old for this, but ironically, it's exactly the sort of thing that increases with age. What can you do? He guesses he'll tell the story in excruciating detail here in **Beyond the Fringefan** #534, for readers of **APA-NYU** Volume 21, #5 (e-APA-NYU #210) and other upbeat conversationalists, published May 2023 as a combined production of Quick Brown Fox Press and Syscrash Consulting, both subsidiaries of **THIGAMAJIG**. Cartoon above from *Real Life Adventures* by Wise and Aldrich, 21 February 2022. All uncredited material copyright ©2023 by Marc S. Glasser. Member fwa.



**HELP ME, I THINK I'M FALLING:** As of lastish, Donna was hoping to heal from her January neck injury, but it didn't seem to be happening, and she was sleeping in the living room because she was feeling weak and unable to climb the stairs. Though I didn't write about it, she seemed increasingly subject to mental fog. Her balance was off and she couldn't see where she was going with the collar on, which led to more falls in the house. She hit her side in a fall on 29 April, but chose not to seek medical help. When she hit her head in another fall on 6 May, she and Ethan and I agreed it was time to bite the bullet and let the EMTs take her to the ER at Brooklyn Methodist (where her PCP is affiliated).

At the hospital, they determined that she'd cracked a couple of ribs in the fall a week earlier, but that she hadn't suffered a concussion that day. Under questioning, it became apparent that she hadn't been taking all her meds for several days—the weakness and the mental fog had made it seem like more work than she could manage. She wasn't sure what year it was or the president's name. The hospital decided to admit her, but it took them 26 hours to find her a room.

There was some discussion of “normal pressure hydrocephalus,” a buildup of cerebrospinal fluid that causes pressure on the brain, as a factor in the fog. MRI images were apparently inconclusive on this; the regular doctor who reads them kicked them up to one of the head (no pun intended) neurology guys, a Dr. J.B. Mostly everyone just kept telling us that it was crucial that she keep wearing the rigid collar, not just when out of bed now but 24/7. Donna, when lucid, complained about the discomfort and inconvenience (try eating a meal with that thing on!) but accepted it. When she was having a bad

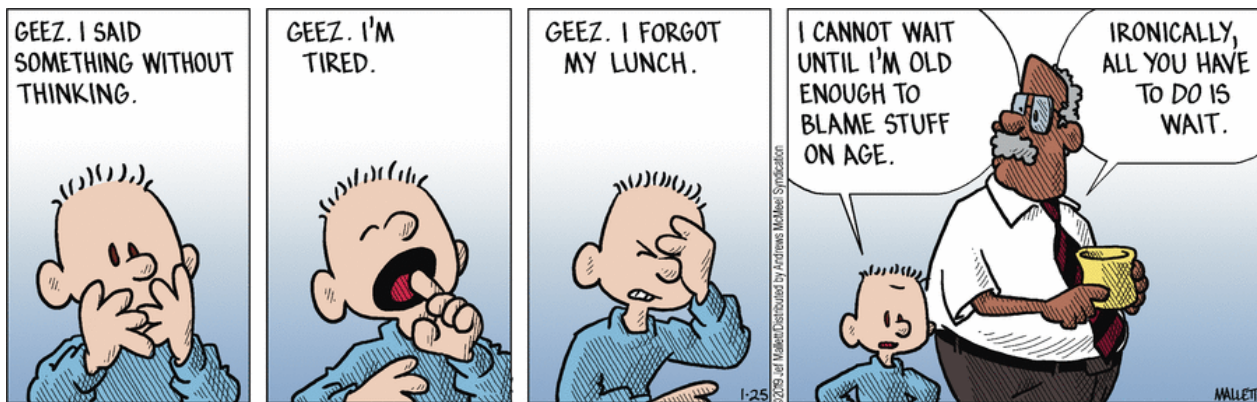
moment, though, she kept pulling the collar off; they stationed people to watch her when Ethan and I weren't around.

Another doctor she saw while there was an endocrinologist named Dr. D.R. He noted that the calcium levels in her blood were unusually high, and suspected an overactive parathyroid gland sending hormonal signals that cause calcium to leach out of her bones, not a good thing to be happening in an old lady's body. This might help explain the neck bone's failure to heal. He put her on a drug called Sensipar to reduce the excess calcium, and talked about (but did not actually prescribe) another drug called bisphosphonate which promotes bone growth and repair. [UPDATE: bisphosphonate is not a single drug but a class of drugs, the best known of which goes by the trade name Fosamax.]

After a week, apparently the hospital had decided it had done all it could for the moment. On the evening of 12 May they discharged her to Ditmas Park Nursing and Rehab, with copious instructions, starting with wearing the rigid collar 24/7. (Thanks to it being a Friday night, a lot of stuff didn't get done in good time, like getting her her meds, but we got it straightened out piece by piece over the weekend.)

Discharge instructions included seeing Dr. D.R. within a week and seeing Dr. J.B. within three weeks; but calling their offices yielded the news that the soonest they could fit her in would be midsummer. Apparently the people who write the discharge instructions are unaware of the workings of the doctors who work in the same hospital complex. Bizarre.

We lucked into a last-minute cancellation at Dr. J.B.'s office and got to see him on 17 May. He's still not sure about the hydrocephalus diagnosis; he said there was also evidence that Donna's had small strokes in the past, and some brain atrophy of a kind that seems to be typical with age. His intern administered a cognitive function test to Donna that confirmed she's suffering some dementia. (She scored 8 out of 22; "normal" is 18.)



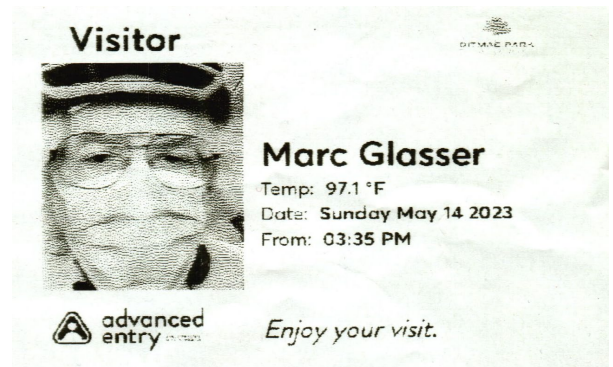
(Frazz by Jef Mallett, 25 January 2019)

Dr. J.B. wanted Donna to get some PT so she could get walking again, he re-reiterated the cruciality of wearing the collar 24/7, and he wanted to do a new scan—a PET CT scan—in August to see if she's getting any better. He also prescribed a drug, donepezil (a/k/a Aricept), that he said has been shown to help in some cases of dementia. For obscure bureaucratic reasons, it took nearly two weeks until Donna started receiving doses of it, and as of this writing, it's too soon to tell whether it's having any effect.

We're still awaiting clear direction on the bisphosphonate drug. The doctor at Ditmas Park told us that bisphosphonates' effect overlaps with that of the Sensipar, so that it would be redundant. I'll take that as authoritative if Dr. D.R. agrees when we finally see him just before the end of June.

So that's the story to date. Medicare will likely keep her at Ditmas Park for another couple of weeks; our experience is that there's pressure to send her home after a month. I'm ready to call the stair lift guys and have them install one as soon as she's home, so that she can at least sleep in her own bed and hobble to the Wreck Room to check her e-mail. This is not going to be over any time soon, I'm afraid.

On the good side, Donna seems more alert and oriented (even before the donepezil) than when she was in the hospital. We can carry on a coherent conversation, with her only occasionally trailing off and losing the thread of what she was going to say. The PT and OT people at Ditmas Park have started coming around to get her doing exercises, and she's walking (with a walker) again. And I've been getting plenty of exercise and fresh air biking to the hospital and the rehab—the weather's been nice, and parking for cars is pretty scarce around both places.



Me? I saw Dr. F.N. the orthopedist, who was sorry the epidural injection hadn't seemed to help. He was aware of one other nonsurgical measure that might help, a drug called gabapentin that is often used to treat neuropathy (diabetic, in particular but not exclusively). It has a laundry list of unpleasant side effects, though, so he started me on a minimal dose to see if any of those manifested before raising it to the full therapeutic dose. So far I seem to be tolerating it OK, though it was hard to tell whether the fatigue I was feeling was due to the gabapentin or to running back and forth between the Cadre and the hospital or nursing home on a daily basis.

### **Fringe Reception:** Comments on APA-NYU, Volume 21, #4 (e-APA-NYU #209)

MINAC SAVER VERSUS ¿WOULD IT KILL YOU TO RELEASE ME? (Chas Belov): "But the part I don't remember is ¿what happened after we were done with the complete copies?" Generally, if one or more contributors had sent in fewer than the copy count, we'd collate incompletes on up to the copy count. Any leftover pages after that would be offered back to the contributors; if they turned them down, I'd hold on to them in case it later turned out that a copy of the collation was missing any of them. I still find envelopes of overruns from time to time in the storage area at the Cadre we call the apa closet. They go into recycling nowadays. /\*/ (¢APA-NEWS) I used to go to an Arby's in lower Manhattan for lunch occasionally in the 1970s and 1980s; they ran newspaper coupons on Wednesdays. That Arby's shut down, and there weren't any others handy for my lunches. I don't think I've had an actual meal at any fast-food place in a decade. I hardly ever eat lunch since I've retired. What should I know about Chinese burgers? Some sort of "fusion cuisine"? A search for "Chinese burger" "Brooklyn" turns up a few places I could maybe get to in my bike wanderings—one offers a

chicken burger, a cod burger, a pork burger, and a shrimp burger. /\*/ (¢me) I mentioned last year



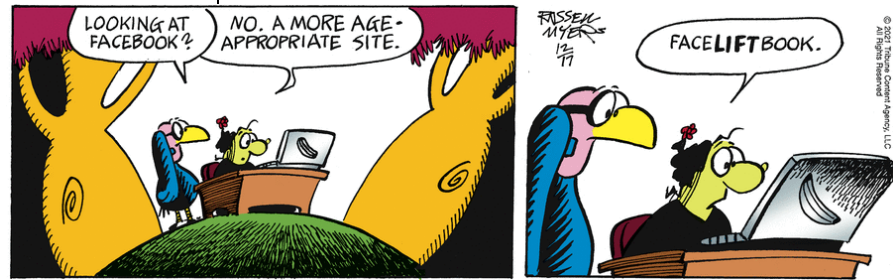
(Bizarro by Dan Piraro, 27 February 2021)

that the reason I went to Stony Brook to see the surgeon Dr. S.S. was that he was the nearest one (and one of very few in the States) offering



hernia repair via the Shouldice technique, a method that does not leave plastic mesh inside the patient. There are plenty of surgeons closer to home who use the mesh method. /\*/ “If one of us had garlic both of us had to have garlic” seems a fair rule. With the last few lady friends I’ve had, it’s generally worked out that way even without an explicit contractual agreement.

an en dash – to see what they look like in the final digest. /\*/ I liked your translation of Facebook into Hebrew as “Punimsefer.”



(Broom Hilda by Russell Myers, 17 December 2021)

## JAMISON, TAKE e-LETTER

(Mark L. Blackman): (¢APA-NEWS) “The Alous are popular in crossword puzzles.” The Friedmans once joked that there’d been a fourth brother named Boog—but his agent convinced him to change his last name to Powell. /\*/ (¢me) Yes, there are Assembly districts, and I mentioned those back in the January zine. I wrote, “Assembly districts (AD)—which elect state assembly members—are bigger than election districts (ED). Each AD may contain dozens of EDs.” Again, when you walk into the polling place, which ballot they hand you depends on which ED of which AD you live in. And yes, there are state senatorial districts (SD), and just to make things worse, an SD may include pieces of several ADs. To avoid making you keep track of your SD as well as your AD and ED, they draw the boundaries so that each ED is entirely within one SD. (Don’t worry; this will not be on the final exam.) /\*/ The procedure you describe for going from Word doc to text submission is pretty much what I use. Just for curiosity’s sake, I’ll include a few special characters in my text file here—“double quote marks,” ‘single quote marks’, an em dash—and

ICONOCLAST (Joel Nelson): (¢me) No, I haven’t seen any of the weird character strings in the text versions of your zines. It’s only Mr. Blackman who seems to be under that particular curse. /\*/ Several cars ago, I tried to replace a taillight bulb myself, and gave up after half an hour because there seemed no way to get into the place the bulb went without breaking the taillight assembly off and then gluing it back on afterward. I finally took it to my mechanic, who explained that the only way to access the place where the bulb went was to carefully break the taillight assembly off and then glue it back on (using a hot glue gun). I guess if it happened today, I could find that out on the Internet. I’m glad your car’s turn signals are more tractable than that old car’s were. /\*/ My father was a big fan of Julie Andrews, and the original Broadway cast album of *My Fair Lady* was in heavy rotation on the stereo in my childhood. It was the first place I heard the word “sabbatical,” I had to ask what it meant, and it was a few years before I learned to spell it. (It was in the song “I’m an Ordinary Man”: “Let a woman in your life/And your sabbatical is through!”)

June will shortly be bustin’ out all over, so get out and enjoy the warmth before it turns oppressive and your air-conditioning bills skyrocket. Remember that the Fourth of July Ferry Meeting will be on the sixth of July this year; it’s sneakin’ up on us as you read this. Be well, and stay out of hospitals.

>Portions of the preceding have been living with a fallen woman.<