

# What does the foothill say to the mountain?

**P**uns are a sort of currency in the Courier's newsroom. Every now and then we'll go off on a tangent and spend 10-15 minutes trying to top each other's jokes.

Well, top may not be the right word. It's probably more correct to say it's a race to the bottom.

Whoever lands a pun so bad that everyone's head hurts (including the one who told it) "wins" the contest.

Last week we had a visitor drop in to the newsroom. Sister Donna Donovan spent a few minutes showing she was right at home in such a setting. We had heard the "two tired" bicycle joke before. She had a couple new ones, though, and they were just as groan-inducing.

Those of us who didn't already know Sister Donna met her as she came in for our editorial board meetings over the past year. She was always a welcome visitor, with a ready sense of humor and a sharp mind.

A few days later we got word she had died. There wasn't any indication of decline during her brief visit. She seemed just as quick as ever. While I'm sure she had lost a step or two over the decades, when you're in your 70s you've earned that.

Sister Donna's death was a surprise in the newsroom. It stunned



**Matt Milner**

Courier managing editor

everyone for a minute or two. Then we started telling each other the puns she had used against us in her last visit, and you could almost see her grinning.

When I'm asked, I generally say I'm not really afraid of death. I'm not a big fan of some of the ways to get there and, given the choice, I'd rather go quickly. But death itself isn't something I fear. More than anything it produces a sense of curiosity.

The Alzheimer's Walk is today. I've

been working with the local committee to get things pulled together over the course of the past year. Dealing with such a subject inevitably makes you think about mortality. My great-grandmother died of Alzheimer's. It's not a way I would want to go.

I had the chance to know her before the dementia advanced too far. I remember a wonderful storyteller, someone with a mind as quick and lively as anyone I've known. Stories from my mom and her siblings reinforce that impression, though those events took place decades before I was ever on the scene.

My sister, born about three years after me, doesn't have those same memories. They are from a narrow window of time that closed too soon for her.

I'm not sure there's any grand theme tying these thoughts together. Certainly there are no revelatory statements in this column. And that's where death leaves us a lot of the time. We have no answer, no reply that seems adequate to the immensity of what each of us will, eventually, face.

We'll miss Sister Donna's occasional visits to the paper. We were lucky to have the chance to know her.

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