

Where the ocean ends

by Doug Bond

On the way to the colonoscopy he says, “They're not going to find anything I can't outrun before I'm dead of old age anyway.”

He has started the counting in earnest: My last car, my last driver's license photo, my last census, the last probe up my ass.

He could outlive all of it. Or not. For now, we are going to the place where they will scan his walls. Threats and lesions, cracks and gaps, places where the devil breaks in.

My father was once a state champ swimmer. I remember those shoulders from when I was a very young boy. I would ride on the saddle space of his back in the community pool down by the beach in our small coastal town. The long lane lines seemed to stretch out forever.

I ease his car into empty parking stripes alongside the low-slung clinic building and listen to him talk of the future in the tentative certainties that have at heart nothing certain about them. I'm reminded of the things I'd thought of as a kid about Columbus, and the other famous sea explorers. How amazing to be the first to find out, to see where the ocean ends, where it is that can't be seen, to finally know for sure what is there.

I can still see the illustration in the school book from years ago, the earth a large, flat-edged box and the water breaking, hard, in a ninety degree angle and falling.

Falling into nothing.

