DAVE CARROLL DID NOT WANT TO BE A ROLE MODEL

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Dave Carroll could not walk. It was a central fact about his life. It was something that was there and could not be denied and was there and had to be denied. It was something that he and others had to dwell on and something that he and others could not dwell on.

But he was not Dave Carroll, the crippled guy, as he sometimes called himself. He could not be reduced to this trait. He was Dave Carroll, the law professor, teacher, and friend whose success was not asterisked, as in "he did well, considering what he was up against." He did well, period. And of course he did well, considering what he was up against. These are both correct facts of the matter about him.

When a man dies, it is commonplace for relatives and friends (and even strangers) to imagine what he would have said or thought or wanted done (or not) if he were still here and could see us struggle with his departure. It is not always clear why we care about what the departed would have preferred, but we do care, a lot, and I am not going to question this.

I do not think Dave was comfortable with the idea that he was an exemplar for how to live generally and for how to live with a physical disability. And surely no one is comfortable knowing that he is a point of comparison for those who feel sorry for themselves. ("Stop complaining about limping; Dave would love to be able to limp.") But he knew he was a model, a representative, watched by everyone who ever wondered how they could exist and function and not be demolished by a catastrophe like polio. His legs were paralyzed; his right arm down to his hand was paralyzed; he had the full use of only one limb, his left arm—all the result of polio contracted when he was in high school. (He played football, and

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perhaps this bleakly illustrates the "revenge effects" of athletic accomplishment; some have said that polio has a taste for highly developed athletic musculature, but I have not researched the point.) He was not gifted at self-delusion, even though he knew its comforting properties, and so he knew, in particular, that it was too simple to expect or even want people to ignore the fact that he could use only one arm, plus one hand. The disability does not simply drop from sight in all contexts, as if nothing were the matter. Yet one often found it difficult to stay focused on his disability even if one wanted to. The disability became part of a semivisible baseline, dropping from sight when listening to Dave question someone's legal analysis, explain something to a student, talk about some idea to write about, or even explain the discipline of betting on horses, which kept him amused through many seasons at Santa Anita. And sometimes, the disability was paramount. There was no way around this, and it went beyond the need for ramps and high-tech vans and door handles suitably placed. It went to alternative lives foreclosed.

He succeeded wonderfully as a teacher, scholar, and friend to students and colleagues alike. He was a presence in every aspect of the life of the Law School—teaching, writing, administration, workshops, befriending students, advising colleagues, advocating reforms (or the status quo, when need be), attending appointments dinners, livening up parties, and schmoozing in the faculty lounge. One would raise Dave as an illustration of what it means not to be self-absorbed. He never let anyone or any institution down; no one ever worried about the quality of whatever Dave was doing—except Dave himself. At least twice a year, every year, he would mutter bleakly about never being sure he had ever graded an exam correctly or consistently with others. "Who'll know the difference?" was a thought that probably never occurred to him.

I expect that the most common images of Dave were of him smiling or laughing at something, or holding forth on whatever it was that interested him while he was operating the machinery that lifted him into his van (a vehicle forever giving him trouble) or let him get out. That is fine. But there is another layer to these images, or at least to mine. He hated having a physical disability. He made no secret of it. He did not characterize it as being differently abled. He hated the fact that it burdened or foreclosed important opportunities in his life. He hated the trouble he had to go through to get from place to place. He hated being without a mate. But he also hated the fact that the damage done to him shortened his lifespan. He did not welcome death as a release from bondage; he grabbed onto everything that was open to him and never stopped living, hoping.
accomplishing, and enjoying life to whatever limits the world imposed on him. That is why he was and is a model, whether he liked it or not. But not solely a model for the efficient management of disability—rather, a model for how to live, abled or otherwise, with whatever hits you. He bore the role of role model well; that was part of his friendship.