

# INTRODUCTION

How many times a week do you have to call your own mobile phone in order to find it? How often have you walked into a room, been momentarily distracted and then completely forgotten the purpose of your visit? And how often have you put important documents in such a safe place that you can never find them again? If you've ever got hold of the wrong end of the stick and then misplaced the stick entirely, you have fallen victim to a senior moment.

Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by the word 'senior'. These bouts of distraction, lapses in concentration and episodes of temporary absent-mindedness can occur at any age. You don't have to be over forty for your favourite phrase to be 'What was I doing?' or for your mind to wander so far that it is out of breath by the time it eventually returns to you. I had a senior moment at about sixteen when, in the process of eating a sweet, I kept the wrapper in my hand and threw the sweet into the fire (I'm senior enough to have grown up with coal fires). Furthermore, when I relayed this sad little tale to a school friend, she confessed that she had once done exactly the same thing. Of course, I may have had senior moments before then – but I've forgotten them.

I do, however, remember the first time I was on the receiving end of a senior moment. It was during the bitterly cold British winter of 1963, and the headmaster of our school decided, in an unprecedented act of compassion, to let us all go home early one afternoon because of the thick snow. The school had a system whereby a central buzzer was pressed to denote the end of each lesson, but unfortunately the headmaster, not being used to this apparatus, accidentally pressed the fire alarm instead.

## **SERIOUSLY SENIOR MOMENTS**

Consequently instead of going home early, 500 boys were left shivering in the playground for half an hour while the red-faced headmaster explained that there was in fact no fire: he had simply had a senior moment.

There is a tendency to worry about having senior moments but, rather like that extra roast potato, the occasional one never does any harm. As this book shows, such great minds as Nelson Mandela, Einstein and Beethoven have all suffered from senior-momentitis at one time or another, and if it's good enough for them, then it's good enough for the rest of us.

The best thing to do is to have a good laugh about it, safe in the knowledge that whenever you forget a friend's name, try to make a phone call on the TV remote or struggle in vain to open a screw-top bottle of wine with a corkscrew, you're in good company.

GEOFF TIBBALLS, 2010

## GONE AND FORGOTTEN

American actress Mary Martin (mother of Larry Hagman) was still mourning the death of her second husband, Richard Halliday, when she went to see Dame Edith Evans's one-woman show at London's Theatre Royal in the 1970s. After the show, she went backstage to meet Dame Edith.

'Oh, Edith!' she wailed. 'Since I last saw you I've lost my dear husband!'

'I lost mine a long time ago,' replied Dame Edith matter-of-factly. 'I can't even remember his name.'

### MEMORY TEST

'By the time you're eighty years old you've learned everything. You only have to remember it.'

BILL VAUGHAN

## CLASSICAL GAS

John was sitting in a diner one lunchtime when he suddenly realized that he needed to break wind. The music was really loud, so he thought he could disguise his gas by timing his emissions to the beat of the music. After a couple of songs, he started to feel much better.

As he finished his coffee, however, he noticed that everybody in the diner was staring at him. That was when he remembered he was listening to his iPod ...

## SERIOUSLY SENIOR MOMENTS

### **OH, CRUMBS!**

The 1824 war between Britain and the Ashanti (part of present-day Ghana) saw the British troops fighting a desperate rearguard action. Surrounded by 10,000 warriors and running low on ammunition, as a last-ditch attempt at keeping the enemy at bay they ordered the army's stores manager, Charles Brandon, to break open the reserve ammunition that he had brought from the coast. With the Ashanti forces closing in fast, Brandon unscrewed the ammunition boxes, only to find that they contained biscuits instead. He had brought the wrong box.



### **TREE TROUBLE**

A State Trooper stopped a car on a quiet country road and approached the elderly driver.

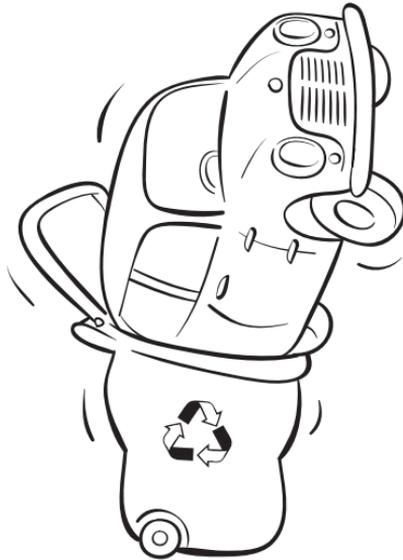
'Excuse me, ma'am,' he said, 'but can you explain why you've been driving so erratically for the past five miles? You were weaving all over the road.'

'Thank heaven you're here, officer,' gasped the old lady. 'I very nearly had an accident. I looked up and there was this tree right in front of me. I swerved to the left and there was another tree. So I swerved to the right and there was yet another tree. It was the most frightening experience I've had in my whole life.'

The officer calmly reached through the side window to the rear-view mirror and said, 'Ma'am, there was no tree. It was your air freshener.'

## DOWN IN THE DUMPS

Cars would be so much simpler for us to handle if they didn't have so many knobs, pedals and sticky-out bits. It's bad enough when we accidentally switch on the windscreen wipers every time we intend to turn right but confusing the brake and the accelerator can be no laughing matter, as sixty-five-year-old Heiner Mollard found to his cost. Backing his car up to a garbage bunker at a Swiss recycling centre in 2010, Herr Mollard accidentally pressed the accelerator instead of the brake and plunged thirty feet over the edge and down into the pile of trash. After he had been winched to safety, he suffered the additional embarrassment of being fined \$100 for leaving an 'inappropriate item' – his car – in a recycling bin.



**LIKE A BROTHER**

Scriptwriter Barry Cryer was standing at the bar at ATV's Elstree Studios in the early 1970s with American director Barry Levinson when the latter pointed out the elderly Groucho Marx sitting in the restaurant. It so happened that Cryer had brought with him a copy of *The Groucho Letters* in the hope that the great man might sign it, and Levinson offered to take the book over.

Cryer watched apprehensively as Levinson spoke to Groucho, who then peered over to the bar to see who was making the request and, with a quivering hand, signed the title page. When the book was brought back to him, Cryer saw that it had simply been signed 'From Groucho'. He was perfectly happy with that but Levinson insisted that it should be personalized, so he took the book back to Groucho and asked him to write 'To Barry' and also to add 'Marx' after 'Groucho'.

This was where matters became confusing as Groucho wrote 'Marx' in the wrong place and was immediately corrected by Levinson. The result is that Barry Cryer now owns a copy of the book with the dedication: 'To Barry Marx from Groucho Marx'.

**SHORT FLIGHT**

An old lady phoned British Airways and asked, 'Can you tell me how long it takes to fly from London to New York?'

'Just a minute, madam,' said the operator.

'Oh, that is quick,' said the old lady. And she hung up.