

What's in a Name?

by Harry Dunn
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I used to be quite good at remembering people's names, but not any more.

Yesterday, we visited Bunnings' nursery to buy some plants to re-stock the hanging baskets, and we bumped into Alan and his wife, Kay.

I spoke to Alan, addressing him by name – correctly, as it happens, and attempted to introduce my wife, Helen, to his wife, Kay, but I called her Carol, not Kay. Alan whispered in my direction: “It's Kay” he mouthed. “No, I said, “Her name's Helen,” to which Alan responded, “Kay: my wife, not yours and *her* name's Kay, not Carol.”

The misunderstanding was sorted out, and we both moved on.

A minute later, somewhere in the perennials aisle, we ran into Bob, another old bowling friend, who I addressed as *Brian*. “How are you, Brian” I asked, “Haven't seen you in ages, Brian” and hastened to add “By the way, I'm Harry, just in case you've forgotten”.

Bob looked at me slightly puzzled,, because we had, in fact, met only a couple of weeks earlier. He made no sign that I got the name wrong. We chatted away for a couple of minutes during which I addressed Bob as Brian and also as Alan, whose name had attached itself to my enfeebled brain from our recent meeting. I introduced Bob to Helen, saying “Brian, I'd like you to meet my wife, Alan.”

Bob had the good manners not to correct me on these mis-naming issues, but his expression clearly showed his concern for my decline, and we departed, with Bob wishing me good luck, because, apparently, I looked as if I'd be needing some.

Five minutes on, somewhere in the perennials aisle, just near the forget-me-nots, Bob's real name came to me in a flash. “It's Bob, of course” I cried, “Bob, not bloody Brian! I'll go and find him, and explain why I was calling him Brian.”

At this point, I was restrained by the Mail-order Bride, who decided that I had created quite nough confusion for one day, and steered me towards the check-out instead, but, would you believe it, I'd forgotten to bring my credit-cards...