

# BRAIN SNACKS

*Fast Food  
for Your Mind*

... being a collection of peculiar ideas,  
curious questions, oddball observations,  
pithy quotations, factoids, lame jokes,  
quirky definitions, mysteries,  
weird news stories, rants,  
witticisms and nitwitticisms,  
strange speculations, and other stuff  
you didn't know you didn't know



Karl Albrecht

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## The “Front Matter” is in the Back

Most people just skip that stuff any way, so let’s get right to work. If you get that far, you’ll see the usual Introduction, the author’s philosophical diatribe, etc. There’s no preface, no table of contents and no index, because I want you to discover the various brain snacks in this book one by one.

Here’s your first snack.

### Selfies: So, What’s New?

Selfies are nothing new. Artists have been painting self-portraits for centuries. There’s a catch, though – that selfie of Rembrandt is not what he looked like. It’s how he saw himself in a mirror – backwards. That bump on the left side of his nose was actually on the right.

Same for Van Gogh and all the others.

Try this with your smart phone. Take a selfie, flip it left-to-right, and send it to your friends. See how many of them spot the difference.

Or, send both versions and ask them to tell you which is the normal one and which is reversed.

### Multi-Tasking: What’s the Big Deal?

Kids today brag about multi-tasking. My neighbor, who’s 83, says, “What’s the big deal about multi-tasking? I’ve been doing it for years. I can sneeze, cough, belch, fart, and pee at the same time.”

## Partly Baked Idea (PBI) # 1: What Shall We Name the Baby?

These days, advertisers try to place their commercials in every conceivable spot where they might get attention. One popular strategy is to buy "naming rights" to some well-known public place such as a sport stadium, a racetrack, or a conference center.

The obvious extension of this, of course, is naming babies. If you need to build up a little extra cash flow, and you have a baby on the way, why not sell naming rights for your child?

Think of the possibilities: your kid will be telling everybody "My name is Verizon Williams," or "Hi, I'm Nabisco Jones." Or, "I'm Budweiser Barnes – you can call me 'Bud.'" All through their lives they'll be advertising their sponsors every time they answer a phone, send an email, sign a check, or fill out a form. They should get paid for it.

Come to think of it, why not sell the rights to the family name? You might be able to get a good package price. "Meet John and Mary Citibank, and the little Citibanks."

Or, maybe not . . .

## How Big is a Blue Whale?

Big.

Really big.

Really, really, really big.

The blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) is the largest existing creature on earth, and probably the heaviest animal that has ever existed.

A typical adult will grow to more than 100 feet long and weigh almost 200 tons. That outweighs the largest dinosaurs ever discovered by about two-to-one.

Blue whales cruise at about 12 miles per hour, and dash at speeds up to 30 miles per hour.

A blue whale's lung capacity is typically about 1300 gallons, equivalent to the gas tank capacity of over 100 passenger cars. When it exhales, it blows a spout up to 40 feet high.

With a heart about the size of a Volkswagen and weighing 1,000 pounds or more, its primary aortic vessel is over 9 inches in diameter.

The whale's tongue alone typically weighs as much as 3 tons. Opened fully, its mouth can hold about 100 tons of water – and prey. But despite its huge mouth volume, it typically can't swallow any one object much larger than a beach ball. It feeds almost entirely on *krill*, tiny sea creatures that it scoops up in huge quantities. One whale may consume as much as 4 tons of krill per day.

When feeding, a blue whale can dive more than 300 feet deep in pursuit of krill, and can stay down for as long as 10-20 minutes.

Blue whales can store over 90 percent of the energy they take in, stocking up fat for the long migrations to and from their breeding grounds.

A baby blue whale already weighs about 3 tons at birth – about the same as a full-grown hippopotamus, and it might be as long as 25 feet. That's by far the largest animal ever produced by live birth.

A blue whale mother typically produces over 100–150 gallons of milk per day to feed her calf. The calf will initially put on weight at the rate of about 200 pounds every 24 hours.

The mother continues to feed the baby for about 6 months, by which time it will have grown to double its size at birth.

A male blue whale has one of the smallest brains for its size of any animal – about 15 pounds – but the largest penis of any animal – up to 10 feet long.



"The three great requirements for a happy life are:  
something to do, something to love, and something to hope  
for."

~ *Joseph Addison, British essayist*



## Nitwitticisms # 1

"When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results."

~ *U.S. President Calvin Coolidge*

"The vast majority of our imports come from outside the country."

~ *U.S. President George W. Bush*

"Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country."

~ *Mayor Marion Barry of Washington, D.C.*

*Question:* If you could live forever, would you – and why?

*Answer:* "I would not live forever, because we should not live forever, because if we were supposed to live forever, then we would live forever, but we cannot live forever, which is why I would not live forever."

~ *Miss Alabama, in 1994 Miss Universe contest*

"God's like, so cool. Think of the coolest person in your life. He made that person. And He's cooler than that."

~ *Actress Justine Bateman*

"Why is he not learning or leaning so but so little, with my help. How comes his past teachers have been passing him from grade to grade without the advancing or progressing academically. I will like to know what is causing the mental blockage."

~ *Brooklyn, NY elementary school teacher's student evaluation*

"Up your bottoms."

~ *Chinese host, toasting American diplomats*

"Up yours, too."

~ *American diplomats, returning the toast*

## Thinking About Thinking

Thomas Edison said,

"Five percent of people think.

Another ten percent think they think.

And the other eighty-five percent would sooner die than think."

(A bit harsh, maybe – or maybe not.)

George Bernard Shaw said,

"Most people only think a few times in their lives. I've made an international reputation for myself by thinking two or three times a week."

The British statesman Horace Walpole said,

"The world is a tragedy to those who feel, and a comedy to those who think."

Charles Kettering, the American inventor and automotive genius, said,

"Human beings are so constituted as to see what's wrong with a new idea, not what's right. To verify this, you have only to submit a new idea to a committee. They will obliterate 90 percent of rightness for the sake of 10 percent of wrongness. The possibility a new idea opens up are not recognized, because not one [person] in a thousand has imagination."

Albert Einstein said,

"I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots."

Tenzin Gyatso, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, said,

"Who can say which will more important in the end: landing on the moon, or understanding the human mind?"



## Don't Dis' the King

2d Two students in Thailand face up to **15 years in jail for insulting the royal family** after performing in a play that featured a fictional king and his adviser.  
BBC News ↗

I'll bet Yul Brynner wouldn't have put up with it, either.



"Whatever extra money I ever got, I spent on books.

If there was any left over, I bought food."

~ *John Adams, 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. President*



### ♪ "All My Files, Lord . . ."

I'm told that Japanese versions of Windows offer more polite error messages than the English versions. Apparently they prefer a *haiku* style, in the poetic three-line form.

Like these, for instance:

A file that big?  
It might be very useful.  
But now it is gone.

Yesterday it worked.  
Today it is not working.  
Windows is like that.

The Web site you seek  
cannot be located  
but endless others exist.

Chaos reigns within.  
Reflect, repent, and reboot.  
Order shall return.

ABORTED effort:  
Close all that you have.  
You ask way too much.

First snow, then silence.  
This thousand dollar screen dies  
so beautifully.

With searching comes loss  
and the presence of absence:  
"My Novel" not found.

Windows NT crashed.  
I am the Blue Screen of Death.  
No one hears your screams.

Stay the patient course.  
Of little worth is your ire.  
The network is down.

A crash reduces  
your expensive computer  
to a simple stone.

Three things are certain:  
Death, taxes, and lost data.  
You may guess which has occurred.

You step in the stream,  
but the water has moved on.  
This page is not here.

Having been erased,  
The document you're seeking  
Must now be retyped.

Rather than a beep  
Or a rude error message,  
These words: "File not found."

Serious error.  
All shortcuts have disappeared.  
Screen. Mind. Both are blank.

## Have You Written Your Epitaph Yet?

If you haven't composed your epitaph yet, maybe it's time to get going on it. You wouldn't want to leave such an important message – what people might think about you for a hundred years or more – to a bunch of unqualified amateurs, would you? Lord knows what sentimental drivel or lame clichés they might inflict on you.

I'm still working on mine. I have it narrowed down to a half-dozen or so possibilities, and I'll be sure to pick the final one before I ascend to the next plane of existence.

Of course, there could be a problem with an epitaph: what if they cremate you instead of bury you? Do they put your epitaph on the urn that your ashes come in? Or, should you order a cemetery plot and a headstone, just to make sure people see your epitaph? These are important life questions, folks.

I thought it would be a nice service to my readers to offer a few thought-provoking examples, something to get y'all started thinking. Here are a few of my favorites.

Some of the biggest names in history had fairly simple and modest departing words. For example,

*Will Shakespeare* wrote his own epitaph, inscribed on the stone covering his crypt in the old Trinity Church, in his native town of Stratford Upon Avon (forgive the historical spelling):

GOOD FREND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE,  
TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOSED HEARE!  
BLEST BE THE MAN THAT SPARES THES STONES,  
AND CURST BE HE THAT MOVES MY BONES.

*Isaac Newton* reposes in Westminster Abbey, one of the highest honors bestowed upon a native Englishman. Alexander Pope proposed a snappy epitaph, but the Abbey's top brass rejected it in favor of a more serious, mundane tribute. Pope wanted the stone to read:

NATURE AND NATURE'S LAWS LAY HID IN NIGHT:  
GOD SAID, 'LET NEWTON BE!' AND ALL WAS LIGHT.

MARCH 20TH 1727

*Sir Christopher Wren*, the genius architect who masterminded much of the reconstruction of London after the great fire of 1666, rests in the magnificent St. Paul's Cathedral, considered by many to be the crowning achievement of his brilliant career. His epitaph, in Latin, says:

LECTOR, SI MONUMENTUM REQUIRIS, CIRCUMSPICE  
(Reader, if you seek his monument, look around you.)

*Thomas Jefferson*, the third president of the United States, didn't bother to mention that honor in his epitaph. He mentioned only the three achievements of which he was most proud:

AUTHOR OF THE DECLARATION OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE  
OF THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
AND FATHER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

*Ben Franklin*, ever the self-effacing wry humorist, said modestly of himself:

THE BODY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRINTER  
(LIKE THE COVER OF AN OLD BOOK, ITS  
CONTENTS WORN OUT, AND STRIPT OF ITS  
LETTERING AND GILDING)  
LIES HERE, FOOD FOR WORMS.  
YET THE WORK ITSELF SHALL NOT BE LOST,  
FOR IT WILL, AS HE BELIEVED,  
APPEAR ONCE MORE IN A NEW

AND MORE BEAUTIFUL EDITION,  
CORRECTED AND AMENDED BY ITS AUTHOR.

*Edgar Allen Poe*, one of America's most popular novelists and poets, was content with the final line of his most famous poem, "The Raven":

QUOTH THE RAVEN,  
"NEVERMORE."

Some of the less famous left behind whimsical or ironic epitaphs, or – in some cases – were interred with inscriptions devised by others, some with a dark sense of humor, or perhaps little respect for the deceased.

In East Dalhousie Cemetery, Nova Scotia:

HERE LIES EZEKIAL AIKLE  
AGE 102  
THE GOOD DIE YOUNG

In Arizona's famous Boot Hill cemetery:

HERE LIES LESTER MOORE  
FOUR SLUGS FROM A .44  
NO LES, NO MORE.

In Ruidoso, New Mexico:

HERE LIES JOHNNY YEAST  
PARDON ME FOR NOT RISING

In Nantucket, Massachusetts, Ezekiel Pease is buried with:

PEASE IS NOT HERE,  
ONLY HIS POD  
HE SHELLED OUT HIS PEAS  
AND WENT TO HIS GOD

Auctioneer Jedediah Goodwin is remembered as:

JEDEDIAH GOODWIN

AUCTIONEER  
BORN 1828  
GOING!  
GOING!!  
GONE!!!  
1876

A long-lived spinster in Scranton, Pennsylvania was remembered as (note the clever pun in the last line):

1787 - JONES - 1855  
HERE LIE THE BONES OF SOPHIE JONES.  
FOR HER DEATH HELD NO TERRORS.  
SHE WAS BORN A MAID AND DIED A MAID.  
NO HITS, NO RUNS, NO HEIRS.

A gentleman named Thorp, reportedly a miser who resented paying by the letter for a carved message, decided to save money. He settled for:

THORP'S CORPSE

Thomas Smith, an enterprising businessman from Annapolis, Maryland, was not one to miss a selling opportunity. On his wife's gravestone he carved:

HERE LIES JANE SMITH  
WIFE OF THOMAS SMITH, MARBLE CUTTER  
THIS MONUMENT ERECTED BY HER HUSBAND  
AS A TRIBUTE TO HER MEMORY.  
MONUMENTS OF THIS STYLE  
ARE 250 DOLLARS.

Disgruntled heirs in Amsterdam, who had been neglected in the deceased's will, decided to dis' him with:

EFFEN NYT  
(In English it means "Exactly Nothing.")

Martin Luther King, Jr., the legendary civil rights leader, invoked a verse from an old slave spiritual:

FREE AT LAST. FREE AT LAST.  
THANK GOD ALMIGHTY  
I'M FREE AT LAST.

Show business people seem to have a preference for the wisecrack as a parting message.

Rodney Dangerfield, the durable comedian who specialized in self-deprecating humor ("I don't get no respect"), parted with:

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Merv Griffin, a long-serving veteran of the TV talk show format, reminded his stone's viewers:

I WILL NOT BE BACK AFTER THIS MESSAGE

Mel Blanc, the venerable and well-beloved voice of many cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, and Elmer Fudd, signed off with his trademark line:

THAT'S ALL, FOLKS!

### Favorite Lame Joke # 1

A man lay on his deathbed, minutes away from expiring. His faithful wife sat next to him, patiently holding his hand.

He managed to rouse himself one last time and said, "Carol, I'm sorry, but I have a confession to make. It's something I can't bear to take with me to the grave."

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"Well - this is rather uncomfortable - I was unfaithful to you. I had an affair with my secretary."

"I know, dear," she replied.

"You do!?"

"Yes."

"Well, there was another time, too. I had sex several times with the woman who lived next to us in Seattle."

"I know, dear," his wife replied.

He gazed at her in astonishment.

"Well," he said, "there was one other time – a lot worse than those, I'm afraid. I even had sex with your sister."

His wife replied softly, "I know, dear."

"You knew about all of those times?" he said, his face showing his puzzlement.

"Yes, I knew."

"But, didn't it bother you?" he asked, incredulous.

"Well, yes, it did bother me," she said. "That's why I poisoned you."

### Those "OTUS" People

A common abbreviation for referring to the U.S. President is "POTUS," meaning "President of the United States."

Some people refer to the Congress as "COTUS."

Some refer to the Supreme Court as "SCOTUS."

Some go so far as to refer to the President's wife – the First Lady – as "FLOTUS."

I suppose that makes the Presidential family dog "FIDOTUS."

The system will probably break down, however, if Americans elect a married woman as president. Would her husband be "FGOTUS" – "First Gentleman?" Doesn't sound right.

If they called him the "First Dude," he'd become "FIDOTUS" – but that's already taken if they have a dog.

If you come up with an acronym that sounds OK, you might get a medal.

### "Are You Crazy" Department

A woman in London decided to part company with her imaginary friend, Bernard, after extensive treatment by a psychologist. She put Bernard, up for sale on eBay. She said she felt entitled to some form of compensation for giving him up.



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Dr. Karl Albrecht is an executive management consultant, coach, futurist, lecturer, and author of more than 20 books on professional achievement, organizational performance, and business strategy. He is listed as one of the Top 100 Thought Leaders in business on the topic of leadership.

The Mensa society presented him with its lifetime achievement award, for significant contributions by a member to the understanding of intelligence.



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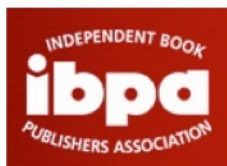
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