

92 and Not Dead Yet: Rumpole's Rapid Recovery



John Mortimer

by [Reg Green](#) (January 2022)

Some good news for those of us who have crossed life's

watershed and are wandering a little uncertainly down the other side.

In his book, *The Summer of a Dormouse*, John Mortimer, creator of Horace Rumpole, the foul-tempered and bitingly witty British criminal defence lawyer, recalls that one day in his late 70s, he suddenly couldn't remember the name of the world-famous actor for whom he had just written a leading part in an acclaimed television play for one of most distinctive characters in the whole of literature. He said he felt like King Lear imploring Heaven to save him from madness.

But it wasn't Alzheimer's and Mortimer kept up his amazing output for almost another decade – publishing on average a book a year, writing scripts, fundraising for causes he was passionate about, splitting hairs with everyone who came his way and dying not of mental decay but a stroke.

So don't worry if, like me, you stride purposefully into a room and then can't remember why you went there. Or hunt frantically for your glasses and find they are on the top of your head. It's probably just a momentary lapse.

There was something else I was going to say. What was it? Dammit: I had it a minute ago. Oh, yes. The actor was Bob Hoskins playing Sancho Panza in the teleplay *Don Quixote*. If one of the most prolific writers of our time can forget names like that, what does it matter if, with so many things to think about, you occasionally flush the car keys down the toilet?

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Reg Green is an economics journalist who was born in England

and worked for the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times of London*. He emigrated to the US in 1970.

His life changed course in 1994 when his seven-year old son, Nicholas, was shot in an attempted robbery while on a family vacation in Italy. He and his wife, Maggie, donated Nicholas' organs and corneas to seven Italians, a decision that stimulated organ donation around the world and is known as "[The Nicholas Effect](#)." Reg wrote a book, also called [The Nicholas Effect](#), which was the basis of the television movie, "Nicholas' Gift," starring Alan Bates and Jamie Lee Curtis. At 92, he continues to work full-time to bring attention to the hundreds of thousands of lives that have been lost because of the shortage of donated organs.

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