

Note to Self: Must Live Longer

Written by Jack Sparacino

Wednesday, 30 January 2013 11:15 - Last Updated Wednesday, 30 January 2013 11:34



Most of us seem to need a good reason or two to get out of bed in the morning and go about our day, fight the good fight if necessary and earn our keep. Or just try to enjoy it.

With several nerve wracking medical situations and the unexpected loss of a dear friend somewhat behind me, I'm more convinced than ever that I need to live a lot longer – for several reasons, including the chance to finally unravel a few more mysteries (and fit into some old sport jackets). Here is my current top 10 list, large and small, and as usual I am absolutely open to suggestions.

1) What's better about living in the Lowcountry than our easy access to the beach at Hunting Island and the seemingly endless creeks and rivers? But what is it, exactly, about spending time at the beach that is so transformative? Barry Yeoman tries to answer this question in a nice article in the 2/13 issue of Coastal Living magazine. He dutifully catalogues many discrete elements: the soothing sounds, rhythms, feels and smells. The lovely blue water, pleasant activities, food, and memories. Reduced stress. Negative ions, even. But I think the real joys of trips to our beaches and rivers or to the spectacular marshes go well beyond all those specifics. Even as a trained scientist I'm thinking that perhaps we treasure these experiences in part because they elude being put into a bottle, cubby hole, screen saver, video, article or anything else. Maybe it's just the simple idea that some experiences, the gentle interplay between people, wildlife, water, and sand, for example, are natural and transcendent. Supernatural, perhaps, or metaphysical and quite beyond mere scientific dissection. (Hello, Shirley MacLaine.)

2) My wife and I recently received a snazzy catalogue from the clever folks at Hammacher Schlemmer touting a dazzling array of snappy new products and gadgets. But why, exactly, would a regular person actually need any of the following: a remote controlled tarantula, a ceramic pet fountain, a talking watch ('hey it's 5:00, pal, time to go home!'), "the only rechargeable illuminating wrenches" (can you get them with sparkle grips?), and a magic wand remote control? Well, if the company's operators are actually standing by, maybe they can offer a few answers.

3) Still on the subject of ads, TV this time, how is it that the people hawking the benefits of back pain patches are frequently actors (yo, Salonpas) and not standard issue folks like the rest of us? Couldn't the company find suitable people from the millions of us who actually do suffer from serious back pain? Hey, I'm available, along with half my friends.

4) Now, if I may simply reach for the moon: living to see another stratospheric musical talent like singer Sam Cooke or rocker Freddie Mercury would be restorative. Cooke had one of the silkiest voices and smoothest styles of any man who ever approached a microphone ("You Send Me," "What a Wonderful World," "Cupid," and on and on). His stunning, reckless murder is still painful to read about nearly 50 years after his death. Is there anyone in the pipeline to replace him?

Mercury stands as one of the premier rock talents of all time – complete with a spectacular four octave range voice – who also died far too young some 20 years ago. His hyper flamboyant stage performances as front man/composer for Queen ("Killer Queen," "Somebody to Love," "Love of My Life," "Crazy Little Thing Called Love," "We Will Rock You," etc.), fortunately, were well filmed, and his many recordings – including a stunningly successful foray into opera with world class Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballé on the CD "Barcelona" – have held up supremely well. Could we just please have another one or two musical talents like these folks come along before too long?

5) Here's an oddity, at least for someone who has always enjoyed freshly brewed plain coffee. Who really wants Blueberry Cobbler coffee? Or Chocolate Cappuccino, Cinnamon Sticky Bun, Eggnog, or Ginger Bread Cookie? Here's an idea, maybe worth a patent – if you like sticky buns or cookies, for example, why not buy some to go with your unflavored coffee? Maybe these queries need to go straight to the purveyor, New England Coffee. (And I always thought New Englanders were plain spoken, straight ahead types who stuck with the Red Sox no matter what, liked a good thick chowder, and who tramped five miles uphill in the snow to school and another five miles uphill coming back).

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6) Seeing the first woman sworn in as president would be a huge milestone and maybe more likely than ever to happen in the near future. The U.S. Senate has now reached 20% women and we all know how well some women have done in senior executive positions. I'm especially optimistic on this one.

7) How cool would it be to watch the Chicago Cubs win another World Series? Having once lived just a few blocks from Wrigley Field and enjoyed many of their games, this one is personal. Jeepers, it hasn't happened since 1908 and I doubt that anyone who saw it or heard about it first hand at the time is still around. Wrigley is one of the most beautiful parks in the majors, right up there with Fenway and if memory serves the seats are just a tad wider.

8) Learning how to use all the functions on our programmable stove would be so nice. Who knew a stove could come with a 30 page owner's manual? What's timer 2 for? Can you bake something without convection? How does the self-cleaning function work and do we have to leave the house? Is there a CD player in here somewhere and if not where are all those darned beeps coming from?

9) Experiencing a virtual colonoscopy sounds like a small blessing. Having undergone several that were real, a couple of fakes would be great as long as they accomplished what they were supposed to. Wouldn't it be wonderful to forego a day and a half of consuming nothing but Jell-o and clear broth, not to mention the (ahem) cleansing agents you have to ingest toward the end of the prep phase to get ready? And yes, I recognize that this means giving up the best breakfasts of your life after the real procedure since you are nearly hollow.

10) Learning how to operate a smart phone would be a milestone. Knowing how to use GPS would be handy, not to mention sending pictures and using Google in real time. And how about finding a coffee shop whose menu isn't cluttered with items like half caffeine-mocha-mint-popcorn-hazelnut-banana surprise espresso!?

Well, that's my list. A few of the items should be a cinch in the next year or two, while some of the others could take a while. So I'm preparing to live to 110 or so.

Maybe a nice cup of fresh hot coffee would help me along. Regular, please.

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