

King for a Day

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 24 February 2015 10:02



While rummaging through our living room library recently, I came upon a lovely whimsical poem called “If I Were King,” published in 1924 by the author of “Winnie-the-Pooh,” Alan Alexander Milne:

I often wish I were a king,
And then I could do anything.

If only I were King of Spain,

I'd take my hat off in the rain.

If only I were King of France,

I wouldn't wash my hair for aunts.

If I were King of anything,
 I'd tell the soldiers, “I'm the King!”

Milne was born in 1882, the year the U.S. Senate ratified a king-worthy treaty establishing the

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Red Cross; he died in 1956, the breakout year for the “King of Rock and Roll,” Elvis Presley. In the nearly 60 years since then I’ve given some thought to a similar wish. In my case, though, the ongoing burdens of being king would be too much to bear. *But...* if it could be arranged for just a day, there would be plenty that I’d like to attend to. Here are a few decrees that come to mind.

Crank up the cloning factory. A recent story in *Time* really touched me. It described the efforts of Boston University’s Edward Damiano and his research team to invent a bionic pancreas. This device could allow people with Type I diabetes—which over a million Americans have to deal with—to live a relatively normal life. For Damiano’s afflicted son, David, this would be like jumping over the moon. It would allow him to enjoy the everyday things in life that most of us take for granted. Like being able to go to summer camp, to the beach, or to school without having to constantly monitor and adjust his blood sugar level. And worry about it.

He would be free to just be a kid. As king, I’d like to be able to do whatever it takes to bring forth (‘clone’?) thousands of men and women just like Dr. Damiano. With his college degrees culminating in a Ph.D. in Applied Mechanics, this won’t be cheap, and neither will all the lab equipment and test materials needed to eradicate every major illness that threatens our children. But hey, as king, I should have the power to blow away any serious money problems. Just think of all the places we could divert wasted money from!

Maybe we could appoint people like Bill and Melissa Gates as project directors, this should be right up their alley.

Bicycles, bicycles. The colourful mayor of London, [Boris Johnson](#), has promised to continue a “cycling revolution,” predicting that London will become as welcoming to bikes as cities like Amsterdam or Copenhagen despite recent safety issues. Speaking at City Hall, Johnson recited updated figures from [a](#)

[major police traffic operation](#)

launched following six cyclist deaths in less than two weeks; he said more than 2,000 motorists and cyclists had been stopped by officers in the past two weeks for infractions such as running through red lights.

We all know the health effects of regular aerobic exercise. Speaking on Bloomberg TV recently,

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Johnson couldn't say enough about the benefits of biking: "Go by bicycle and you'll arrive at meetings in an irritatingly good mood." As king, I would proclaim every week as National Biking Week and arrange for tax deductions, award ceremonies and free ice cream to all of those who happily participate (would the lower calorie kind really be necessary to not offset the benefits of more exercise?... nah, I'd be the king!).

Buddy, can you spare \$8? True story. While I shopped recently at Publix, a young woman came up from behind my cart and told me she needed "\$8 for baby formula." Sure enough, she had a baby in tow. (Yes, a real one.) In the space of just a few seconds, I wondered what to do. If this was a scam, she could buzz off. But if she was on the level, now what? And how much is baby formula? Should I give her a couple of bucks and wish her a nice day? Okay, but then she would need to solicit who knows how many other shoppers to reach her goal. How humiliating.

But she really *could* just be trying to hustle me. I concluded it was better to potentially make a mistake in her favor and gave her the \$8. "God bless you, sir," she responded. That was good enough for me but I'll never know what I really should have done (hey, Aunt Bossy, what do you say?). Were I king for a day, I would commission a research team to develop a hand held truth detection device which could be used to see who is for real and who is a fake—in real time. Police departments and heaven knows who else might find this kind of tool—maybe a wand type of thing—useful. In the meantime, I'm left to trust my instincts. But who says they're any good?

Boy this king thing is exhausting. Maybe for the rest of the day I'll need to cruise a little and deal with simpler jobs. These came to mind as I drummed my fingers on Mr. Milne's wonderful book and decided it would also be a great time to eradicate all forms of animal abuse. Forever. And treat them humanely.

Highlighter life. Aren't highlighters great, at least for those of us who still like to handle paper? How about we provide multi-colored highlighters to everyone who would like them. We could ask the \$8 lady for a distribution "formula for success."

Crab traps great and small. While we're at it, how about setting up a crab trap exchange so people could borrow crab traps and experiment with catching their own delicious lowcountry dinners. No crabby people need sign up and no, this is not a giveaway 'trap'.

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Fast forwarding TV ads. How nice to be able to record favorite TV shows so you can fast forward through the ads. Let's get this technology to everyone who wants it. Presto! And speaking of TV, how about all shows going forward must be as good as "24," "60 Minutes" and "The Good Wife"?

Fresh flowers, bread, pickles and homemade ice cream. I'm really running out of steam, so just a couple more waves of my scepter should do it for now.

How about we let everyone's home smell and look great for cheap, with pretty table arrangements for all and great eats to boot? Make mine sourdough, bread and butter pickles, and peach.

Booked solid. You just can't have enough good books around, can you? Let's see what librarians and other 'booksters' need and just write them a blank check?

Uh-oh, blank checks can be dangerous. Maybe my last act for the day would need to be crowning an economist and budgeter in chief. He or she can sort through my laundry list and establish implementation priorities. Or, perhaps, we skip the economist and see if we can find the human equivalent of Winnie-the-Pooh, someone friendly, steady and full of common sense.

Kind of a heavy lift, right? Well, maybe that's why they say it's good to be king.