

a fanciful idea

His earliest memory was a drawing he did in third grade of a huge tree with only one leaf left clinging to it. His teacher had asked him what it represented and he explained "it doesn't care if it makes it to spring but it sure as hell planned on being the last one on the tree." His parents weren't amused.

"Why so serious?" he thought to himself.

Some forty years later billionaire real estate mogul Jack Napier had a problem. Although he could have anything he wanted with the snap of his manicured fingers his life was missing something. For years he struggled to put his manicured finger on it but it wasn't until he happened to walk by a television that was showing a cartoon from his childhood that he realized what it was.

Whimsy.

He, along with everyone he knew, had grown up and left behind the very innocence and wonder that had fueled their imaginations in the first place. Everyone was so serious now.

Why so serious?

What the world needed was whimsy and he was going to deliver it whether they were ready for it or not. Well, that wasn't quite accurate. He was going to make sure they were ready. He was a stickler for details. You don't up a billionaire by accident.

Let's start with basic idea. What part of cartoons usually generates the most whimsy? To John that was an easy question. Falling pianos and anvils. They were always surefire laughs. So he was going to fly over a major city and drop pianos and anvils out of a cargo plane from high altitude.

No doubt you are reacting the same way that his advisors did to this plan. Shock, horror, disbelief, the list goes on and on. The problem, John explained, was that they (and you apparently) lacked enough whimsy to see the humor in the probable property damage and possible loss of life. He needed a way to make sure that people didn't rush to judgment.

Jack hired an army of reporters, writers and bloggers to make sure that after the initial event that there were going to be plenty of stories appearing about how everyone should see the lighter side of a piano falling into a crowded outdoor marketplace or an anvil crushing a taxi and anyone inside it. He could spin it from reckless blunder to good-natured tomfoolery.

His advisors were still not convinced it was a good idea.

He needed something else. A ringer.

His name was a Paul "Stubby" Runion, an out-of-work father of four who was desperate to make sure his family was provided for. John would take care of Paul's family for life if he was willing to do one thing; get hit with an anvil.

He agreed to not only get hit with an anvil, anyone could have done that, but do so at a predetermined time and place. The place being an X painted on the sidewalk. He would be carrying an umbrella and at the appointed time he would look up into the sky and see the anvil heading for him. He would look forlornly into the cameras that were surrounding him, slowly open his umbrella, wave good bye and take one for the team. John assured his advisors that any distress caused by the gore of this meeting of plummeting iron and flesh would be offset by the zany music and laugh track that would accompany the resulting footage.

Done correctly this would go viral and the whole world would thank him for introducing some whimsy into their otherwise serious lives.

His advisors remained unmoved from their original concerns.

Why so serious?

He got new advisors who thought the idea was brilliant and in the end it turned out the idea was brilliant. Everything went as he'd imagined and then cities bid amongst themselves to host the next event. Piano and anvil manufacturers paid top dollar to make sure it was their pianos and anvils that would be raining down and there was even a popular show called *Stubby* where contestants attempted to be selected as the next "Stubby".

When all was said and done Jack Napier made a fortune and instead of the streets being empty because everyone was frightened of being squished it was akin to Pamplona's Running of the Bulls where every square inch was covered by excited people looking up.

And the weird thing was, so help me God, it was whimsical.

—*Lance Manion*