

My Kingdom

By Pete Clark

Just think about it! I am king of this vast mid continental area first explored by Hernando de Soto, beginning in 1539. De Soto went across the southeastern part of what is now my kingdom to the west shore of the Mississippi River where he died from a fever in 1542. The first permanent European settlement was Saint Augustine, Florida, founded by the Spanish in 1565.

The people who would sow the seeds for the conquest of a continent and the muscling out of the Spaniards, landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. From then until after World War II my kingdom expanded through the booty of wars, forcing an island queen to abdicate and purchases of territory. Manifest Destiny sucked in the territories between the Missouri River and the West Coast.

I will declare that deep valley, of a song of yesteryear, a National Recreation area where my subjects may relax at picnic tables in the sun or under a shade tree. There will be cabins for shelter and trails for hiking, streams for fishing and hills to climb, where from on high, they may stop and listen to gentle whispers of a breeze blowing through the valley. They can enjoy the bounty of life in its natural surroundings.

Since my people love sports whether it's collegiate or professional, and since I have the absolute power of my kingship, I am going to change the national anthem to *On Wisconsin*. It is a rousing song that will fire up people for any project, not just for watching football. I agree with Benjamin Franklin that the turkey should be the feathered representative of my Kingdom. After all, without turkeys, Thanksgiving would not be what it has become. Before society advanced and became regimented, people wore the skins of their prey to gain the strength and instincts of the animals they hunted. My subjects wear the jerseys of their sports heroes for the same reasons.

A thing I must do is to designate the Big Rock Candy Mountain, with its lemonade springs, sunshine and singing blue birds, along with its surrounding area, a national park. There will be neither armed police nor guard dogs in the park and hobos will be welcome and they won't have to sleep in boxcars or ride the rails. At rest areas, attendants will dispense cups of bubbling lemonade and bits of hard rock candy. Inexpensive rustic restaurants and hotels will be there for everyone.

Most importantly, as king, I will have a well-educated, healthy, happy and productively employed populace. I will urge my people to take that worn and tattered platitude, *It is better to give than to receive*, and make it central to their interpersonal relationships.