

***Cranium Clutter?  
Franklin – More than Flying Kites***

Among the many great citizens of American history, Ben Franklin has always stood out from the crowd. He was an odd fellow that was a founding father, a scientist, an inventor, a statesman, a writer, a philosopher, a musician, and a successful businessman. He was, and is, an ideal role model for all those that wish to leave the earth a better place by their presence.

*"The noblest question in the world is: What good can I do in it?"- Benjamin Franklin. Sounds somewhat familiar to a quote from a famous President, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."*

Ben Franklin was born in Boston in 1706 – number fifteen in his family. He stopped schooling after two years and educated himself by reading. Unfortunately for Boston, Franklin ran away to Philadelphia, where he established himself as a printer. His publications Pennsylvania Gazette and Poor Richard's Almanac were masterfully crafted works that included such features as cartoons, illustrated news stories, political satire, and letters to the editor.

The Almanac reflected Franklin's wit, and some of his famous quotes include: *"Many have quarreled about religion, that never practiced it", "a full belly makes a dull brain", "he that cannot obey cannot command", "early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise", "when the well is dry, we know the worth of water", "a word to the wise is enough", and "God helps them that help themselves".*

One of the more famous quotes credited to Franklin came after the 1776 Declaration of Independence meeting, "Gentlemen, we must now all hang together, or we shall most assuredly hang separately."

Franklin not only drafted parts of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, but is the only person to sign all four of the documents that helped form the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Alliance, Amity, and Commerce with France, the Treaty of Peace between England, France, and the United States, and the U.S. Constitution.

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Franklin is credited with numerous inventions, and most were born of necessity and an unquenchable curiosity. For example, Franklin required reading glasses and rather than constantly remove the glasses to look at other objects – Franklin created bifocals.

Franklin's brother had kidney stones, so Franklin studied the human body and invented the first American flexible catheter. As a constant traveler, Franklin studied ship design and improved upon watertight bulkheads.

Every colonial home used a fireplace, which Franklin found to be inefficient and unsafe. So, he invented an iron furnace stove, called the Franklin stove, which was later redesigned but kept the name. As a swimmer, Franklin developed oval paddles with a hole for the thumb, later to be termed swim fins.

As a musician, Franklin played the violin, harp, and guitar, and invented his own glass harmonica, where tones were created by touching the edges of a spinning glass with wet fingers.

Franklin discovered that storms track from west to east, and made some of the first-recorded weather forecasts in his Poor Richard's Almanac.

And everyone knows of the famous kite experiment, where Franklin tied a key to a wet kite string, and when the lightning struck the kite a spark jumped off the key, demonstrating that lightning was a form of electricity.

In his later years, Franklin retired to spend more time reading. Unable to reach books from high shelves, he invented a long-handled tool with closing claws to grab objects.

As a civic minded individual, Franklin is credited with establishing the first fire company, the first fire insurance company, America's first library, and even served as postmaster for all the Colonies.

Although a great inventor, Franklin did not believe in the patent protection and made his inventions available to the public.

Whether you like it or not – Franklin was the one to introduce Daylight Savings Time in the US.

Franklin truly believed in the American Dream where hard work and dedication would bring success. After all, that was his life and experience. More information about Franklin is available at the library and on the Internet at <http://sln.fi.edu/franklin>

*"If you would not be forgotten as soon as you were dead...either write things worth reading or do things worth the writing."-- Benjamin Franklin.*

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