

# Franklin Gazette

A PERIODIC PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF FRANKLIN

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1, WINTER, 1992

Friends of Franklin, c/o Dr. Larry Tise, Benjamin Franklin National Memorial, 20th and The Parkway, Philadelphia, PA 19103

**"A Plowman on his legs is higher than a Gentleman on his knees."**

*B. Franklin*

## From the Desk of Larry Tise

Every time the phone rings in our office, there is a good chance that the caller is someone who has never before contacted The Franklin Institute or the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial. There is a fairly good chance that the caller will ask some ponderable question about Benjamin Franklin. Did Franklin say this or that? Did Franklin really have a fascination with the number 24? Where did he actually fly his kite? How many children did he really have? Are there any living descendents of Franklin? What did Franklin think about ghosts, goblins, and spirits? Why does Franklin's picture appear in fire halls, on stamps, in stores, in hair styling salons, and every where else?

And every time the phone rings we try to provide some sort of answer. Sometimes the question is totally baffling and is beyond our ability to research or analyze. But many times the work is very rewarding. For example, we recently helped a Hollywood producer develop a good script for a children's science special on Franklin and electricity. We also helped a television producer come up with some good films on Franklin. We helped other researchers to find the right book, pamphlet, or article to make his/her book or article complete.

My favorite was the recent visit of Chinese/American historian Nian-Sheng Huang. Born and educated in China to the equivalent of a college graduate, Huang came to the United States in 1982 to study American history. He got a master's degree from Tufts and then moved on to Cornell University for a Ph.D. When it came time to pick a topic for his dissertation, his faculty advisor Michael Kamen suggested that he research the image of Benjamin Franklin in American culture--somewhat along the lines of Merrill Peterson's book on Thomas Jefferson. Huang has been working on that effort now five or six years. He has his degree and is now converting his finished dissertation into a book.

Thanks to the American Philosophical Society he recently spent some time in Philadelphia extending his research. Part of his time was spent at The Franklin Institute where he looked at materials relating to the creation of the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial and the National Memorial's extensive program to interpret Franklin in today's world through exhibits, conferences, symposia, tours, and awards. In between his researches he stopped long enough to talk to some of the staff of The Franklin Institute and a few Friends of Franklin. What a pleasure it is to know the length and breadth of interest around the world of Franklin and to meet the folk who are at the cutting edge of Franklin research.

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN NATIONAL MEMORIAL AWARDS PRESENTED

The Benjamin Franklin National Memorial presented its internationally recognized Bower Awards for Science and Business Leadership in connection with the 286th commemoration of Benjamin Franklin's birth. In an elaborate three day convocation including addresses, lectures, banquets, colloquia, and ceremonies, the National Memorial celebrated the achievements of two distinguished Americans who reflect in today's world the scientific and humanitarian genius of Benjamin Franklin.

The Science Award and a cash prize of \$331,000 was presented to Dr. Solomon Snyder of the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine for his research on the operation of brain receptors. His work has made it possible to develop therapies for behavioral disorders such as alcoholism, depression, and drug abuse and for such debilitating diseases as Down's Syndrome, Alzheimer's Disease, and Huntington's Disease. The Business Award was presented to David T. Kearns, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, but for many years CEO and Chairman of Xerox Corporation. His innovative restructuring and installation of quality controls returned Xerox to its premier position as the leading manufacturer of

photocopying equipment. But Kearns also has promoted for years the revitalization of America's public school education system.

Large audiences gathered to hear Kearns talk about his plans for American education, to hear both Snyder and Kearns give distinguished lectures, and to witness the impressive awards ceremony. A colloquium, "Masterminding the Brain," featuring eight neuroscientists attracted more than four hundred participants. A Franklin birthday dinner featuring one of Franklin's Japanese descendents, Yukiko Irwin, attracted an enthusiastic audience, as did also a special Saturday symposium focusing on "Benjamin Franklin and Medicine in the Age of Enlightenment." William W. L. Glenn, M.D., of Yale University School of Medicine, J. Worth Estes, M.D., of Boston University School of Medicine, and Lisa Rosner, Ph.D., of Stockton State College, stirred an attentive audience with their brilliant analyses of medical practices utilized and influenced by Franklin during his long, eventful life.

The nominating period for the 1992 Bower Awards is now open again. Nominations are due not later than May 15, with documentation due not later than May 30. [LET]

## THE FRIENDS OF THE FRANKLIN PAPERS

By Floyd M. Shumway

The Friends of the Franklin Papers came into being on June 1, 1990, when ten people enjoyed a memorable luncheon at Mory's, Yale's beloved eating club, talking about how we could be of help to the Papers of Benjamin Franklin. By the end of our meal, when we walked over to the Sterling Memorial Library to visit the offices where the editing takes place and the Benjamin Franklin Collection is housed, we had determined to form an organization to give (or help solicit) support, both moral and financial, to those worthy activities.

The founding members were a mixture of Yale alumni, professional scholars, members of historical and hereditary societies, and community leaders. What we had in common was a fascination with Benjamin Franklin and the era in which he lived. We established modest annual dues so that the expenses would not deter interested

men and women from joining. At the same time, we made it clear that larger voluntary contributions would be wonderfully welcome, and from the beginning quite a few of our members have given us handsome support. Our membership has expanded to over forty people from seven states, and is still growing.

From the beginning, we have held semi-annual meetings consisting of a program on the campus, usually at Sterling, followed by a festive meal at Mory's. Our latest such gathering, on Saturday, June 8, 1991, featured a talk by Professor Benjamin W. Labaree of Williams College, who shared with us his memories of growing up in the family of the first editor of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Professor Leonard W. Labaree of Yale.

Recognizing that our members enjoy more frequent opportunities to hear about what is going on in the



## Larry Tise, Cont.

My last couple of columns about Franklin images and statues has brought forth a harvest of interesting letters and articles about little known Franklin images. Among the most interesting are these:

1. Franklin Friend Edward Gallagher of the Department of English at Lehigh University recently asked about a statue of the youthful Franklin unveiled in 1914 at the University of Pennsylvania. By way of Friend Dilys Winegrad and Sandra Markham, Curator of the University of

Pennsylvania Archives, we can shed some light. The statue is called "Benjamin Franklin in 1723" and stands today in front of Penn's Weightman Hall on south 33rd Street. The sculptor was Dr. R. Tait McKenzie, both an artist and a long-time member of the athletic staff at Penn. McKenzie

wrote an extensive article on the statue at the time of its unveiling for The Century Magazine in July 1914.

2. Franklin Friend Robert Radcliff of Wilmington, Delaware, brought another Franklin image to our attention from the same era. The May 1915 issue of Chess Amateur magazine contained a description of a large ceramic plaque of Franklin that appeared on the wall of the Franklin Chess Club at 1604 Walnut Street in Philadelphia. Two feet wide and three feet tall the image was inspired by the Houdon bust of 1781 and the simultaneous portrait by J.S. Duplessis. It was produced by Thomas Robertson and was surrounded by English and Teutonic images of Queen Elizabeth and other figures. Radcliff looked for the image at 1604 Walnut Street only to find it missing. After years of poking around for its whereabouts, he recently got the answer from Dr. John E. Bender, current president of the Franklin Mercantile Chess Club. According to Bender, the plaque is currently in Special Collections at the Temple University Library. Anyone interested in seeing the image should contact Thomas Whitehead, Curator, at the library.

3. Donald Wittenberg, principal of the Benjamin Franklin Elementary Academic Plus School in Philadelphia, sent us information about two other Franklin images at his school. The school is adorned with a wax statue of Franklin with a printing press and also a large papier-mache image of the Franklin statue at The Franklin Institute. All of these were produced by Harry Worrell, a fireman during the 1960's. The school in 1991 celebrated its 75th anniversary with a major program focused on Benjamin Franklin. Held on May 15, 1991, copies

of the brief history and program may be procured from Wittenberg at the school located at Rising Sun and Cheltenham Avenues, Philadelphia 19120.

4. From the Museum of the French Revolution (Chateau de Vizille, 38220 Vizille, France) recently came a large poster with another wax image of Franklin. Produced in 1790 by the French sculptor Orsy, the image includes a totally bald Franklin seated in a wooded area with Voltaire, Rousseau, and a small child. The four individuals are enclosed

in a wood and glass framed structure. The piece is one of the most uniquely valuable items in the collection of the Museum.

5. Franklin images also do well in the business and advertising world. Chrysler Corporation recently featured a Franklin portrait in Time

magazine with a glowing notation that Franklin "was

the very embodiment of the self-made, boot-strappingly ingenious Yankee . . . who rose to acclaim as the wise man of America."

6. Ben Franklin Retail Stores makes good use of the Franklin image to produce big bucks. The company recently went public and sold 2 million shares to expand the franchise system that includes 760 variety stores and 225 craft stores in 47 states nationally. The Franklin image seems to do well.

7. Not only is the Franklin image quite popular throughout the United States and around the world, but so is the name. Friend William Carr just sent us a program from The University Club of Washington, D.C. On January 1, 1992, the Club rededicated its newly renovated library and designated its first floor library space as the Benjamin Franklin Room. Present for the ceremony with appropriate remarks on Franklin's involvement in various clubs (Junto, Masons, and Honest Whigs) was, of course, noted author and educator Carr.

8. Last, but certainly not insignificant, is the fact that Friends Martin and Jane Mangold gave birth on September 3, 1991, to a son whose name is BENJAMIN Thomas Mangold!

Aside from all the Franklin lore, the Friends are getting quite serious about raising funds to support the Franklin Papers project at Yale. We recently published a very nice piece titled "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin" for use by anyone connected with the Friends in soliciting gifts for the project. Any Friend wishing a copy for use in promoting the Franklin Papers should contact our office.

Be sure to join us for our spring tours on April 24-25 and for our fall tour September 25-26! See you there. [LET]

## "THE BRILLIANCE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN"

Among the many special exhibits and programs that have recently come to our attention is one that was inspired by Kelly Ballard of Franklin University of Columbus, Ohio, and which was staged by the Ohio Historical Society at its excellent nearby Ohio History Center. Ballard was put in charge of making plans for the 90th anniversary of the establishment of Franklin University. She promptly began calling around to find out about Benjamin Franklin--namesake of the downtown technical and business-oriented school--and soon found her way to the Benjamin Franklin National Memorial.

Her call came while we were still remembering the excellent exhibit mounted by the University of Pennsylvania in 1990 commemorating its own 250th anniversary. Penn's wonderful exhibit--"The Intellectual World of Benjamin Franklin"--brought together some of the most precious Franklin artifacts available anywhere. Why couldn't Franklin University follow up and make use of some of Penn's outstanding research?

Fortunately everyone agreed to help out--Dilys Winegrad, Lucia Dorsey, and Christine Ruggere at Penn; Phil Greenslet threw in a batch of rare items from his personal collection; The Franklin Institute sent our Franklin odometer and a lightning rod; the Ohio Historical Society added some more items. The Historical Society organized the exhibit. Kelly Ballard organized some very beautiful published guides to the exhibit. And there it was in grand glory from January 10 through March 10. The publicity was great; the attendance we are told, was even better.

Congratulations, Kelly! [LET]

## FRIENDS CONTINUED

editorial office, we have this year initiated a series of luncheons, and these have proved enjoyable and well attended.

We cannot pretend to compete with the funding agencies which provide the major support for the Papers of Benjamin Franklin, but we do give the project added visibility, and such financial assistance as we can generate will be very useful and greatly appreciated. We believe that additional people will be drawn to our group and that it will continue to grow in both size and usefulness.

Anyone interested in The Friends of the Franklin Papers may contact Dr. Shumway at 37 Temple Court, New Haven, CT 06511.

*The Associate Editor would like to acknowledge that the issue Volume 2, Number 3, Fall, 1991 should be correctly labeled as Volume 2, Number 4, Fall, 1991.*



## FRANKLIN AT YALE

### "Keep Bright the Chain"

by Claude-Anne Lopez

Each one of us on the Franklin editorial team has a few pockets of specialization. Ellen Cohn, for instance, has a particular expertise in regard to the printing press and foundry that Franklin ran in his house in Passy during his mission to France. Thus she learned of the former existence in New Jersey of a remarkable museum of typography and also, somewhat later, of its closing. A little sleuthing on the telephone revealed that the museum's book and manuscript collection had been acquired by the Butler Library at Columbia University. Ellen, currently interested in types sold to Franklin by the Fournier family, called up the library and found that, yes, they possessed a specimen of type designed by Simon-Pierre Fournier expressly for Franklin, that, yes, we could use it as an illustration for our vol. XXX, and also that they had acquired, as part of the typographic collection, a large scrapbook little known as yet to scholars.

Claude-Anne Lopez, who has a passion for scrapbooks, the source of many a treasure (and for whom any pretext to visit New York is a good one) decided to go along. Repulsing any temptation to stop at the zoo or an art gallery, they headed uptown dreaming dreams of discovery.

By mid-afternoon, Ellen had her Fournier specimen and the scrapbook was up for inspection. Disappointed at first by the series of mouth-watering menus that filled its pages, mementos of so many banquets in Franklin's honor-dotted with just enough of Poor Richard's appeals to frugality to heighten the gastronomic ecstasy--Claude-Anne suddenly fell upon a 1913 newspaper clipping containing an excerpt of a now-disappeared letter from Franklin's wife Deborah. As she was copying it with the delight only an editorial heart can experience, she heard not a subdued exclamation nor a triumphant cry, but a roar from Ellen: "The pot! The milk pot!"

What milk pot? Ellen was pointing to a little square of paper pasted in the scrapbook. It showed an elegant-looking silver pitcher bearing the following caption:

"Cream Jug made by Smith & Sharp, London, 1765. Presented by Dr. John Fothergill to BF on his departure from England. Left in his will to his executor, Henry Hill, 1790... Now in the possession of Mrs. Francis B. Gummere, of Haverford, Pennsylvania."

Ellen explained that a year ago, while Claude-Anne was out of the country, much time had been spent trying to decipher a barely legible letter from Franklin's London landlady, Mrs. Stevenson, written on March 16, 1779, in answer to one from him of late January. Around that time, Franklin had gotten unofficial word that he had been nominated sole minister plenipotentiary, and he knew that he would be spending a long time in France. He asked Mrs. Stevenson to send him a few of the items he had left in her care: "a Copper Pot lin'd with Silver to roast Fowls in," and some fossilized mastodon teeth he wanted to show his French friends. Mrs. Stevenson replied that she had found the roasting pot but, to her eternal embarrassment, couldn't locate the elephant's teeth. As

compensation, she listed -- as best as the editors could read them -- a number of his belongings whose whereabouts she did know, and offered to send him the "siver Milke Pot kip bright the chain." She entrusted it to her daughter Polly, who announced on May 30 that the milk pot would soon be on its way to Paris. It took longer than expected, but it was delivered at the end of December by the scientist Jan Ingenhousz, who had come to Paris to confer with Franklin about his latest experiments concerning oxygen.

"Kip bright the chain?" A perplexed typist had originally transcribed the phrase as "kipe boight the chair," but Ellen had changed it after laboring over each word of the manuscript at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. What was it supposed to mean? The Franklin editors couldn't guess, and they sent off vol. XXIX to the Yale Press without an-

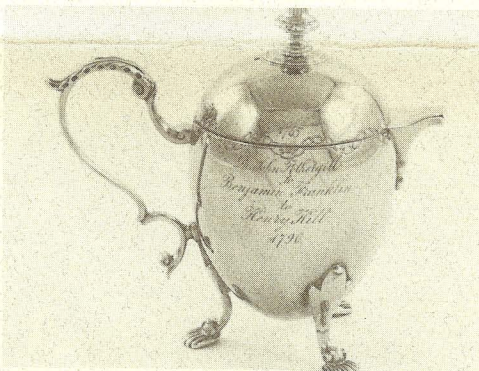


Photo from the Sterling and Francine Clark Institute  
Williamstown, Massachusetts

notating that passage of Mrs. Stevenson's letter. Now that the pot itself had miraculously surfaced, it was too late to add it as an illustration in vol. XXIX, but thanks to the time it took in transit, it will fit neatly in vol. XXXI when Franklin received it. (At this stage, the number of documents is so enormous that we can only publish four months of Franklin's life per volume.)

A second chance! Back to New Haven we went, in great excitement. The obvious place to start the search for further information was Franklin's will. It provided the answer to one more mystery: "And that my Friend Mr. Hill may also accept my Silver Cream Pot, formerly given me by the good Dr. Fothergill with the motto, Keep bright the Chain."

Keep bright the chain. Keep the chain of friendship bright and shiny. Claude-Anne knew that this was a formula Franklin had picked up from the treaties with the Indians, one that, with his remarkable gift for friendship, he liked to use, even teaching it to his French friends who learned to say: Il faut garder la chaîne de l'amitié claire et brillante.

Where could the pot be now? Still in Haverford? As luck would have it, the folder containing the will also held a multiplicity of notes, most of which fell out and glided all over Ellen's desk. And one of them gave the clue. It was a letter sent on August 14 (no year given) by English professor Norman Pearson, of Yale, to Whitfield J. Bell, then Associate Editor of the Franklin Papers.

It read: "Knowing how oddments of information may be useful, and even the most obvious passed over when noted by someone other than an editor himself, I thought you might just possibly not have known that the Sterling and Francine

Clark Art Institute in Williamstown [Mass.] has in its collection a milk jug, 1765, which is labelled as having been presented by Dr. Fothergill to Franklin for his pleading the cause of the colonies with Great Britain..."

As soon as Ellen contacted the Clark Art Institute, information flowed from the expert and amiable Beth Carver Wees, Curator of Decorative Arts, in the form of a black and white glossy photograph and catalogs from auctions and exhibitions.

The photograph revealed, to everyone's delight, an engraved chain which undulated along the lower edge of the cream pot's cover and the upper edge of its base, linking the two together.

The catalogue of the 1917 exhibition held at the Pennsylvania Museum on the theme of old American and English silver calls the object a "Cup with Cover" and describes it as follows: "In form of egg; three shell feet; double scroll handle; turned finial; linked chain engraved where edge of cup and cover meet; above handle the inscription; keep bright the chain. English, hall marked 1765. This cup was made in London, 1765, by [Daniel] Smith & [Robert] Sharpe for Dr. John Fothergill, Royal Physician..."

It also gives its early history: "Left by Franklin to his friend and executor, Henry Hill; left to his sister, Milcah Martha Moore, and by her presented as a wedding gift to her cousin, Hannah Burling Smith, on her marriage to Robert Field Mott of N.Y. Left to her son, Richard F. Mott, of Burlington, N.J. Loaned by his daughter, Amelia Mott Gummere (Mrs. Francis B. Gummere)."

Amelia Mott Gummere passed it on to Samuel J. Gummere in 1934. It was exhibited in 1936 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art ("Benjamin Franklin and His Circle"), and lent to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia from about 1952 until the time of its sale to the Clark Art Institute in 1955.

And there it rests now, for all to see and dream about the hands, famous and not, that touched it:

--Dr. John Fothergill (1712-1780), the Quaker physician with whom Franklin worked so hard at finding some form of conciliation acceptable to both the colonies and Great Britain, a man of broad medical reputation, a collector of rare plants, shells and insects, a philanthropist of whom Franklin said: "I can hardly conceive that a better man has ever existed."

--Mrs. Margaret Stevenson (d. 1781), the devoted landlady who must have shined it up so well before sending it off for she was in love with her former tenant who rather pretended not to notice.

--The Dutch-born Dr. Jan Ingenhousz (1730-1799) who brought it to Paris, physician of the imperial family at the Court of Vienna, pioneer in electrical studies, Franklin's loyal friend and medical advisor.

--Franklin and the many people who had tea with him in Passy: Jefferson, Lavoisier, Condorcet, Lafayette... They all read the inscription, looked at those delicately engraved links of friendship. And now, two hundred and seventeen years later, it is up to us to do our best, in our own way, to keep bright the chain.



SOUND SENSE
by William G. Carr

Franklin, Massachusetts, named in honor of Benjamin Franklin, was incorporated as a town in 1778. The enterprising town fathers wrote at once to Dr. Benjamin Franklin in Paris asking him to respond to the honor by giving the town a bell.
Although appreciating the honor, Franklin replied that, "Sense being preferable to Sound," he would rather give the town some books for a library.
This was an extremely busy time for the American Minister to Paris. He asked his former companion in the Honest Whigs Club, Dr. Richard Price, to arrange the selection and delivery of "a little parochial library" for "intelligent, respectable farmers."
Price, a non-conformist clergyman, took Franklin's assignment seriously. In addition to a few of Franklin's favorites (The Spectator by Addison and Steele, Montesquieu's The Spirit of the Laws, Locke's Works, and Blackstone's Commentaries), the library of nearly 100 titles consisted mainly of devotional tracts, theological controversy, and collections of devout sermons by disputatious Divines.
With the assistance of Camela Smyke, a graduate student at George Washington University, I have lately learned something of the library's current status and the events since its first patron preferred sense to sound.

The original collection has been preserved. The town's current librarian has a list of its titles. The collection is in a separate case in the Reading Gallery of the Ray Memorial on Main Street. This building, constructed in 1904, is an impressive gift by the daughters of Joseph and Emily Ray, nineteenth century developers of local manufacturing industry.
The Greek-temple-style granite structure is entered through massive bronze doors. Decoration within is provided by murals depicting Grecian festivals.
The artist is Tommaso Juglaris who, after studies in Turin and Paris, came to America in 1880. His murals were commissioned also for a church in South Boston and other buildings. The Franklin library building also contains several large paintings by H.H. Gallison. It has a Reading Room, Lecture Hall, and a Children's Room.
By a curious oversight, the great WPA American Guide includes no entry for Franklin, Mass., although its 1348 pages of small type include entries for Franklins in thirteen other states.
Perhaps the most far-reaching influence of Franklin's library gift was created by the coincidence that Horace Mann was born on a farm at the edge of Franklin only five years after the death of Benjamin Franklin. Horace Mann spent a boyhood of constant privation. His for-

malschooling was scant, severe, and shallow. He never attended school for more than ten weeks in a year.
Nevertheless, love of knowledge led him to the town library. He could recall years later -- and with some vexation -- that he found mostly "old Theological histories" and that he "wasted his youthful ardor" upon their pages.
Yet, with the help of this library, self-study, and the guidance of just one of his many itinerant teachers, the lad prepared himself to enter Brown University. There he graduated at the head of his class and began the distinguished career in law, education, and public service which won his election to the Hall of Fame at New York University and the title "Father of the Public School."
Looking back, Mann spoke his heart as well as his mind when he said, "Had I the power, I would scatter libraries over the whole land as the sower sows his field."

1Van Doren: 741-2
2Illustrated 62-page booklet on the Ray structure.
3Mann, Mary, Life of Horace Mann, Boston: Walker, Fuller and Co., 1865 (Centennial Edition, Washington: National Education Association, 1937), pages 9-13.

REGISTRATION FOR FRANKLIN TOUR III
APRIL 24 -25
(See Page 6 for Details)

Table with 4 columns: Day (Day One-Philadelphia, Day Two-New Jersey, Both Days), Date (April 24, April 25, 24-25), Member rates (\$50, \$50, \$90), and Other rates (\$55, \$55, \$100, Total Enclosed).

Please check form of payment Check Visa MC AE
Card No. Expires

LUNCH SELECTION
for Friday, April 24
(please choose one of the following)

- 1. Roast turkey w/Lemon Basil Mayonnaise on Italian Bread.
2. Baked Ham & Brie w/Honey Mustard on Honey Grain Bread.
3. Tuna Salad w/Capers & Sun Dried Tomatoes on Honey Grain Bread.

No. for
No. for

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY STATE ZIP
DAY TIME PHONE EVENING

Deadline for registration, April 15, 1992.



## ON THE TRAIL OF THE LAST FRANKLIN

### 3. Surprise at Sea

by Claude-Anne Lopez

Were I ever to write the life of Temple Franklin (and I may well, some day), this is where I would begin. In mid-Ocean, on the Pennsylvania Packet, in the spring of 1775, far enough not to hear those famous shots in Concord and Lexington. Benjamin Franklin is observing the jumping dolphins, maybe, or taking his daily measurement of the water's temperature. A tall, fair-haired boy of fifteen, Temple, also known as Billy, is watching him. He would like to know why he has been whisked out of school so quickly and secretly, admonished not even to say goodbye to his companions, why this Dr. Franklin, an American living in London who has been good to him over the years, ever since he was a little boy, was in such a hurry to get them both on board in the dark of the night. And what is he writing in his cabin, the famous Doctor, hour after hour, suffering no interruption? The adolescent, I like to imagine, gathers his courage.

--Sir... he begins. The old man turns around and smiles.

--I must tell you something, Billy--he interrupts--something that will surprise you. First of all, don't call me sir anymore. Call me grandfather.

--Grandfather, sir?

--Yes, I am your grandfather. I did not tell you sooner because...because it was not convenient. Your father did not wish it.

--I have a father, sir?

--Of course you do. And not just any father. My son, William Franklin, is the Royal Governor of New Jersey.

--And my mother, sir, I mean grandfather, where is she, my mother?

--A little difficult to understand at your age, Billy. Your mother...well, nobody knows where she is...she has disappeared...you are what is called a

natural child, born out of wedlock, but you have not been abandoned...you were sent to a very good school, were you not... your father saw to it that you lacked for nothing and very soon you will meet your stepmother, your father's wife, a charming, elegant lady who used to live in London, just like you. They have a splendid residence in New Jersey. I have not seen it yet but your father certainly spared no expense in furnishing it... Billy, are you listening?

--Grandfather, is there any way I could find my mother?

--Forget about your mother, Temple. She was not the kind of person one would want in one's family... The whole thing was a mistake... Look to the future. Your stepmother Elizabeth will love you like a son. She has not had any children of her own, much to her regret, and now you are to be their child, their heir, come to think of it you are the only Franklin male in the family, not William Temple anymore but William Temple Franklin, the bearer of the name...

--...

--You also have a warm-hearted aunt Sally, my daughter, you have two little cousins, Benjamin and Willy, 6 and 3, her children, whom I have never seen. Her husband will be your uncle Richard. My sister who lives in Boston will be your great-aunt Jane. Not always an easy person, Jane, but...

--No grandmother?

--Come on, Billy, don't you remember that my wife Deborah died last December?

--Yes. I remember. She was always writing about little Benjamin, the Kingbird.

--And now that you know about your family, give me a hand with my maritime observations.

--Could you tell me, grandfather, what it is you are writing so many hours a day?

--It is a letter to your father, a long letter in which I tell him how hard I worked to avoid a break between England and her colonies. I call it The Journal of Negotiations. Your father, you see, is very attached to England. He holds his position from the Crown, of course, and his wife is intensely English...

--So am I, Grandfather, I'm English.

--You're an American, Temple, don't you ever forget that. My father, Josiah, emigrated from England when he was not allowed to practice his religion and we Franklins have been American ever since. I am still hoping against hope that the King and his government will see the light and grant the colonies their lawful rights, but if worse should come to worst, I know where my loyalties are. And yours. And your father's I hope.

--...

--Tell me, Temple. Did you ever guess that we were related? Did you ever wonder why I took so much interest in you, in your studies, in your talent for drawing?

--I guessed there was much I was not told. The maids stopped whispering when I entered Mrs. Stevenson's kitchen. And then Mrs. Stevenson, your landlady, and her daughter Polly had a way of looking at me, then at you, then at me again. I saw Polly wink at her mother once. Now I understand why. If only I could tell the boys at school, Drummond, Campbell, that I, too, have a family. I was always the one without letters, without visits. They made fun of me.

--Now they'll know better. Are you happy Temple?

--(after a long pause) Yes, sir.

## FRANKLIN THE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL DROP-OUT,

A.M., LL.D., D.C.L., F.R.S.

by Max Hall

For a lad with about two years of formal schooling, Benjamin Franklin received a surprising amount of academic recognition. No other person of his time, on either side of the Atlantic, was so lavishly decorated by the intellectual establishment.

In 1753, when he was 47 years old, Harvard College gave him an honorary Master of Arts degree. Six weeks later, Yale College did the same. The diplomas, of course, were in Latin. They resoundingly called him (in sentences whose grammatical structure required the accusative case) Benjamin Franklin. And that was an interesting distinction for one who, writing as Mrs. Silence Dogood a long time before, had satirically promised to include now and then "a sentence or two in the learned languages, which will not only be fashionable, and pleasing to those who do not understand it, but will likewise be very ornamental."

Later in that same year (1753), the Royal Society of London awarded him its Copley Gold Medal, a coveted annual prize that had never before gone to anyone outside of Great Britain. In 1756,

the College of William and Mary conferred on him another honorary A.M., calling him Benjaminum thus transplanting him--for reasons unknown but unquestionably ornamental--from the third to the second Latin declension. At about the same time, the Royal Society elected him to membership by a remarkable unanimous vote and thereby gave him the use of the magical initials F.R.S. (Fellow of the Royal Society). Three years later, in 1759, the University of St. Andrews, in Scotland, made him Doctor of Laws, and he has been known ever since as "Doctor Franklin." In 1762, he received the degree of Doctor of Civil Law from Oxford University. The two British universities called him Benjaminus Franklin (second declension, nominative, very ornamental). Eventually more than twenty scientific and scholarly academies in seven countries admitted him to their hodies of hodies.

To Americans more than two centuries later, the most impressive thing about these honors is the nature of the achievements by which he won them. The mere fact that Benjamin Franklin was honored is not astonishing, for everybody

knows that Franklin became a famous figure, and famous figures get honored. But consider for the moment what these distinctions were not given him for.

They were not given to him for being a patriot, a diplomat, or a Founding Father; all those were unimagined in the 1750s. They were not given to him in return for philanthropy, as some honorary degrees have been given. They were not given to him for being a printer, a newspaper proprietor, or an almanac-maker. They were not given to him for founding a library, a fire company, a hospital, the American Philosophical Society, or the University of Pennsylvania. They were not given to him for writing an autobiography.

On the contrary, the highly schooled scientists and scholars of Europe and North America honored the unschooled Franklin precisely because he was good at doing what highly schooled scientists and scholars are supposed to do: observe, theorize, investigate, discover, add to the sum of knowledge. They honored him mainly for his advancement of knowledge about electricity-- and not just for his kite-flying, which took place after his



## FUTURE FRIENDS EVENTS

**April 24, 1992:** 8:00 a.m. - 9:30, The Franklin Institute's Board Room Executive Committee to elect new officers.

**April 24-25, 1992:** For the Third Annual Benjamin Franklin Tour, you are invited to join us to visit sites not previously viewed. On Friday, April 24, we will travel to The College of Physicians of Philadelphia Mutter Museum to learn about Franklin's association with Thomas Bond and how Franklin descendants were involved with the college; The Philadelphia Museum of Art's American

Art Wing to see a variety of historic images of Franklin in different mediums; Bartram's Garden for lunch and a view of the garden of Franklin's colleague and friend John Bartram; Fireman's Hall to see the fabulous early fire fighting equipment and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania featuring a variety of Franklin artifacts. We will then return to The Franklin Institute to see Meredith Martindale's "Citizen of Two Worlds".

On Saturday, we will explore historic New Jersey and Staten Island to visit Wil-

liam Franklin's home, The Proprietary House for a tour and lunch, then onto St. Peter's Episcopal Church where William Franklin worshipped. Our last stop will be Staten Island's Conference House, where the only peace conference of the Revolutionary War was attempted. The tour price includes transportation, lunch, and admission. Please register by April 15, 1992.

**September 25-26:** Friends Meeting and Tour of Boston. [BT]

## GRAMMAR-SCHOOL

fame had swept the strongholds of intellectual enterprise.

The question arises: How could it happen? What enabled Franklin to overcome his lack of formal training?

The answer is that Franklin possessed herculean amounts of two qualities whose importance may not be sufficiently recognized in the educational system of today. These qualities are: 1.) his curiosity and 2.) his writing skill.

I do not pretend that these two explanations provide a complete analysis of

Franklin's character or that they are the only keys to his legendary effectiveness in a large number of fields. He had a quick mind; a lot of ambition; a lot of industriousness; a high degree of manual skill; boldness to the point of recklessness (some would add ruthlessness); a gift for friendship, that is, for not only winning friends but keeping them; a consistent leaning toward democracy and civic improvement; and, along with these and other traits, a mischievous streak that made him America's first important

humorist. But his academic laurels are more directly traceable to his eagerness to know and his ability to write.

(to be continued)

Max Hall, a free-lance writer from Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the author of *Benjamin Franklin and Polly Baker* and is the former Social Science Editor of Harvard University Press. An earlier version of this article appeared in *Harvard Magazine*, May 1975.

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