

Advice to a (Bored of Cross-Purposes) Young Man

Died, age 20; buried, age 60. The sad epitaph of too many Americans. Mummyfication sets in on too many men at an age when they should be ripping the world wide open. For example:

Many people reading this page are doing so with the aid of bifocals. Inventor?

B. Franklin, age 75.

The presses that printed this page were powered by electricity. One of the first harnessers?

B. Franklin, age 41.

Some are reading this on the campus of one of the Ivy League universities. Founder?

B. Franklin, age 43.

Others, in a library. Who founded the first subscription library in America:

B. Franklin, age 25

Some got their copy through the U.S. Mail. Its father?

B. Franklin, age 47.

Now, think fire. Who started the first fire department, invented the lightning rod, designed a heating stove still in use today?

B. Franklin, ages 30, 44, 34.

Wit. Conversationalist. Economist. Philosopher. Diplomat. Favorite of the capitals of Europe. Journalist. Printer. Publisher. Linguist (spoke and wrote five languages). Advocate of paratroopers (from balloons) a century before the airplane was invented. All these until age 84. And he had exactly two years of formal schooling. It's a good bet that you already have more sheer knowledge than Franklin ever had when he was your age.

Perhaps you think there's no use trying to think of anything new, that everything's been done. Wrong. The simple, agrarian American of Franklin's day didn't begin to need the answers we need today. *Go do something about it!*

Tear out this page and read it on your 84th birthday. Ask yourself what took over in your life, indolence or ingenuity?

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