

JULY 4, 1776

Ben Franklin
Philadelphia, Pa

Dear Benji,

Why haven't I heard from you? You know I worry. If you had time to sign all those declarations, while you had the quill out couldn't you drop me a line?

Sure I received your thank-you note for the Chinese urn I sent, but I was hoping for a real letter. Not that your letters are always so cheerful, believe me. Why do you still resent being one of 15 children? So you had to wear hand-me-downs. So? ...So your sister isn't that much bigger than you.

If you're so smart why didn't you tell your father that an ounce of prevention was worth well... Never mind.

Benji, there are a couple of things I want to talk to you about and as your mother I have a right. My friend said you were seen in Congress last week wearing those stupid little spectacles. Are you aware that all the young girls are wearing them now and they call them Granny Glasses? Are you a girl, Benji? Are you a granny? No! So stop it!

The same friend mentioned she saw you flying something in the sky that looked like underwear. Honestly, Benji, can't you at least do that in the privacy of your own backyard? You're lucky they don't put you away. Speaking of luck, you are pushing yours. Everyone here knows about your little escapades and if you are not careful, your wife-what's her name-is sure to find out.

I've learned about the new one, Penny Worthington.

Benji, listen to your mother, I am telling you for your own good. The next time you are with her and you hear your wife approaching, you'd better hide here in in the urn. Believe me, a Penny urned is a Penny saved.

About the stove you shipped. You know I am proud you made it yourself, but I find I get more use from my Hibachi that I got at Home Depot. It was a nice though and in return I'm sending you a hair dryer, Benji, and a picture of an artichoke. It will help you disguise the bald

spot you're always kvetching about. It's easy. After you wash your hair, you blow it dry and brush it all toward the front. At first you'll feel like an artichoke, but once you grow used to it, you'll look smashing.

Speaking of smashing, that's exactly what I wanted to do to your nose after I read your latest remark, "When man and woman die as poets have sung, his heart's the last that moves her last.. the tongue." That was so typically choov...chauvin.. shavinis-well you know what I mean. One more slur like that and you'll have to change the name of your almanac to "Poor Bennie's." By the way, thee is no k in the word almanac, sweetheart.

I guess I am sounding a little angry but you know I don't mean it. You are my son and I am getting a little concerned. You're always coming out with those silly little expressions for no apparent reasons. What in the world does, "Snug as a bug in a rug mean" mean. You pull those statements out of the air when no one's even talking to you. And if you say "Time is money, time money" one more time, you'll get smacked in your printing press.

Mostly I suppose, I am worried about your instability. Look, you've been a candlemaker, a printer, and editor, and inventor, a scientist, a philosopher, a statesman...I mean, how do you think that looks on your employment application?

Frankly Benji, I think you need help...which is why I am writing. I just heard about a wonderful therapy group. I am sure you will benefit from it. In fact a couple I heard of there are in even worse shape than you, believe me ,so you needn't be shy.

One of them is a women called Marie Curies. She insists on being called Madame, of all things. Anyway, her husband persuaded to go to the group because she can't cook worth a darn. He says every time she goes into the kitchen he hears pots rattling and things bubbling on the fire, but when he asks what's for dinner, she always says... *Nothing!* It is literally driving him nuts and he's thinking of going for therapy as well.

Then there is a man named Morse there. What a nervous character! He can sit still for a minute without tapping his fingers-on tables, chairs, anything he gets is hands one. Just don't sit next to him.

All in all, I think the group would be good for you. Listen, Beji, I only want you to find yourself -to be happy. Perhaps if you listen to your mother, you'll amount to something.

Most of all, remember what you yourself told me, "If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it from him..." Need I say more? Remember to keep warm.

Love Mom.

New resident Jan Marshall is an author and humor columnist for grownups and aspirational books for children.

For further information check www.authorjanmarshall.com