

▶ **CLICK HERE TO NOMINATE
YOUR TEACHER OF EXCELLENCE**

Contact Subscribe Today's Paper Reader Services Advertise with Us Select a Site

Search

Post-Tribune

Ben Franklin's story is focus of one-man show

Like Tweet Share 

By Annie Allemann For Sun-Times Media August 16, 2012 11:20AM

A new play seeks to remind audiences that America most likely would not be a country without the help of one man.

Thomas Kelecus of Lake in the Hills wrote, produced and stars in "Born British, Died American." He is presenting the play at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday and at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Steel Beam Theatre in St. Charles.

Peppered with drama and humor about how our country came into existence, the play, which took two years for him to write, tells the story of the life of Benjamin Franklin.

"A lot of people know about Ben Franklin, but their information is fragmented; meaning, 'Yeah, we know he signed the Declaration of Independence,'" he said. "While we were fighting the war in the colonies and Congress was trying to form a new nation, he was in France gaining an ally and finding finances to bring our country into world existence."

Kelecus began to form a timeline of Franklin's life. His inspiration came not from a book or movie, but from his own fireplace. What if Ben Franklin were to sit by a fireplace and tell the story of his life to a friend? It is limited to Franklin's patriotism and his involvement in bringing the U.S. into existence.

"It's been a phenomenal story, in terms of him and what he really did. In most cases it does surprise people," he said.

He and his wife Chris have produced the play in two other locations. Audiences have told him it is interesting and lively.

He hopes that people learn some of the interesting facts about America's history and gain greater insight and appreciation into the struggle that led to America becoming a country.

"The real fight started right after the (signing of) the Declaration of Independence," he said. "The actual revolutionary war and Franklin going to France continued on after that. I want people to know that there was a lot more past the Declaration of Independence. There was eight more years of struggle. We were against all odds of ever succeeding and becoming a country. We should not have succeeded. No one else has done this before — break away from the mother country and form a new nation, and we did it."

He likens the play to hearing an audio book read on stage, he said, because the sets are simple, there's not a lot of blocking and there's no music. The play is appropriate for children and adults.

"People are looking for a revival of hearing history again, because it's not talked about as much," he said. "It's an intimate story. So many things fell into Ben Franklin's path, it wasn't even funny. You can see that he was meant to be the person to help bring our country independence."

Like Tweet Share 