

# Real live ideas... from real dead people

by Rix Quinn



**W**hen I went to high school, the counselor told me if I took Physical Education classes all day, I'd never graduate. That meant I'd need to take three history courses.

Most of those semesters began with Neanderthals, a tribe so hairy they could braid their backs. By spring, we'd advance to "modern times," which meant about 1938.

I didn't pay much attention then, but I wish I had. Because we can still learn from historical figures, no matter where they are today. Like, for instance...

## SOCRATES

This Greek philosopher believed that wisdom and knowledge built character. The more a person knew, the less likely he'd make a bad decision.

Socrates continually questioned his countrymen about their beliefs, suggesting they base ideas not on opinion, but on knowledge. The great man's search for truth riled some officials, who sentenced him to death by drinking hemlock.

His last question, "Is this stuff poi-

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Above: 36" Economy tow model, fully equipped on Yazoo-Kees® ZTR®

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## Real live ideas...

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son?" was sadly answered "yep."

The lesson: To find a customer's real need, you've got to ask a few questions. But don't ask too many.

### KNIGHTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Do not confuse this with "middle-aged knights," because back then people rarely survived past about 37. And that's only if they worked out at a health club, and avoided people with the plague.

But crusading knights — who often encountered highway robbers— created a unique currency we still use today.

They simply engraved their rings with their coats-of-arms. Merchants kept a master list of these insignias, and billed them accordingly. That way, they got paid quickly...probably by over-knight mail.

The lesson: Offer your customer a variety of payment plans.

### LEONARDO DE VINCI

Some claim this Renaissance figure was the brightest human who ever lived. Unfortunately, we cannot prove this, because his high school did not give SAT tests.

Leonardo excelled in more fields than a hyperactive farmer. He painted...he sculpted...he studied astronomy and anatomy. He's often credited with drawing the first bicycle, the first airplane and the first helicopter. Were he still alive today, he'd probably have more frequent-flyer miles than anybody.

The lesson: Whenever Leonardo had an idea, he'd write it down in a notebook. You can do the same...and your next idea could change the world.

### WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

Ole Tippacano. You remember him, don't you? The former President? Remember what he did in office? Mainly, he just died.

When he got elected in 1840, he crafted a tonsil-busting, three-hour-long speech; bad idea. He spoke on a rainy day...caught pneumonia...took a turn for the worse...then took a turn into the cemetery. That's how he became an ex-president.

The lesson: When you're ask to speak at a social or civic club, make it short and sweet. Whose speech do you remember best? Harrison's...or Lincoln's three-minute Gettysburg Address?

*Rix Quinn specializes in marketing and sales ideas. He'd love to hear from you...and to hear marketing problems you'd like him to discuss. E-mail him at rquinn1@airmail.net.*

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