

## Fame After 40

Some people **moan about** their 40<sup>th</sup> birthdays as if their best years were behind them. But there are a significant number of famous and successful people who didn't really **come into their own** until their 40s, 50s, or even older.

If you're turning 40 – or if you've already passed that **milestone** – don't **despair**! You could be **on the cusp of** an exciting new chapter in life. Let's learn about a few **phenomenal** achievements made by **folks** over 40.

### Stan Lee

Everyone knows Spiderman and the X-Men – but how much do you know about the man who came up with these legendary characters? Stan Lee **penned** his first **hit** comic book when he was **just shy of** his 39<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had already been in the comics business for twenty years, and although he **had a knack for** writing, none of his comics had **caught on**.

### Vocabulary

**come into their own** = finally get recognition and success

**milestone** = a point or mark of significant progress on a journey or in a process

**despair** = become very sad and hopeless

**on the cusp of** = at a point in time that marks the beginning of

**phenomenal** = incredibly great

**folks** = people (informal)

**penned** = wrote

**hit** = successful (informal)

**just shy of** = just before

**had a knack for** = had natural skill in

**caught on** = become popular

At the time, he was thinking of quitting the business entirely, so he **had nothing to lose** – and he decided to experiment with a new approach, creating superheroes with complex personalities and flaws. This group of characters – the Fantastic Four – **catapulted Lee to success** and led to the creation of the entire Marvel Universe. Today, Lee is in his 90s and continues to make **cameo appearances** in films.

## Henry Ford

The car is a **ubiquitous** part of our daily life – and the man who invented it spent fifteen years on its development. Ford came from a family of farmers, but he **despised** farm work and became an engineer instead. With **backing** from investors, Ford successfully created a self-propelled vehicle – but this revolutionary invention was not popular **right off the bat**.

The landmark Model T was launched in 1908, when Ford was 45 years old. He **fervently** promoted the car in newspapers and through a network of independent **dealers**, and by 1918, half the cars in America were Model Ts.

## Vocabulary

**had nothing to lose** = there were no negative consequences to taking a risk

**catapulted Lee to success** = made him successful very quickly

**cameo appearances** = a brief appearance in a very small part of a movie

**ubiquitous** = appearing to be everywhere

**backing** = support

**right off the bat** = immediately

**fervently** = intensely and passionately

**dealers** = people who sell something produced by others

## Charles Darwin

Darwin is one of the most influential figures in scientific history. He was passionate about natural science and mostly **kept to himself**, devoting years to his research on **wildlife** and **fossils**. **Mired in work** and under pressure from his publisher to deliver, Darwin developed **myriad** health problems. Despite this, he was able to **put the finishing touches on** his theory of natural selection, and his **landmark** work, "On the Origin of Species," was published when he was 50 years old.

## Julia Child

She is one of the most famous celebrity chefs, **renowned** for making the art of French cooking accessible to the American public. However, she wasn't always a culinary **virtuoso** – her early career was spent in advertising, and she also did a **stint** in the military as a research assistant. Her husband introduced her to fine French cuisine, and she later studied cooking in Paris. Child's 726-page **masterpiece**, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking," was published in 1961, when she was 49 years old. She went on to star in multiple

## Vocabulary

**kept to himself** = was introverted; didn't have much contact with other people

**wildlife** = animals in nature

**fossils** = skeletons of plants/animals that are preserved in rock

**mired in work** = having a LOT of work; too much to handle

**myriad** = many and various

**put the finishing touches on** = finally finish the last details

**landmark** = important in history

**renowned** = famous

**virtuoso** = expert

**masterpiece** = an excellent work

television programs and publish numerous books.

## Harland David Sanders

Sanders had a fairly **unremarkable** career that included army service, manual labor, and a **short-lived** career as a lawyer that ended after a courtroom **brawl** with his own client. He was fired from several jobs and opened a few companies, most of which failed. Sanders eventually opened a restaurant serving chicken and other meals, but tourism **dried up** during World War II and the place had to close.

At the age of 62, Colonel Sanders began to **license** his fried chicken recipe to other restaurants. The first one experienced a **boom** in sales, 75% of which were thanks to Sanders' **crunchy**, delicious chicken. Within ten years the Kentucky Fried Chicken **franchise** had expanded to over 600 locations and Sanders sold the corporation for \$2 million.

## Anna Mary Robertson Moses

“Grandma Moses” was a famous artist who began painting **in earnest** at the age of 78. In

### Vocabulary

**unremarkable** = there was nothing special or notable about it

**short-lived** = lasted a short amount of time

**brawl** = physical fight

**license** = let other people use in exchange for payment

**boom** = great and sudden increase

**crunchy** = hard, makes sounds in your mouth as you chew it

**franchise** = network of stores or restaurants

**in earnest** = with serious intent

her youth, she was a live-in **housekeeper** for wealthy families, one of which noticed her interest in art and purchased chalk and wax crayons for her. Later, as a housewife, she enjoyed decorating her home with **quilts** and **embroidery**.

When she developed **arthritis**, her sister suggested that painting might be easier on her joints. This **spurred** the beginning of her painting career in her late 70s. She then produced over 1,500 **canvasses** - which initially sold for \$5, then later for \$10,000, and recently for 1.2 million. She painted scenes of **rural** life, which are described as simple and **light-hearted**.

## Vocabulary

**housekeeper** = someone who kept the house clean and took care of chores around the home

**quilts** = blankets made by putting together pieces of fabric

**embroidery** = decorative sewing

**arthritis** = a disease that makes your joints painful

**canvasses** = paintings (the word "canvas" is the material on which the artist paints)

**rural** = outside the city, in areas with little population

**light-hearted** = amusing, optimistic, happy

## Comprehension Questions

*True or false according to the article?*

1. Stan Lee's hit was the first comic book he'd written
2. Lee's superheroes were portrayed as imperfect
3. Lee is still active in the film industry
4. Henry Ford came from a family of engineers
5. The car's success was largely thanks to Ford's marketing efforts
6. Darwin was so stressed about his book that he got sick
7. "On the Origin of Species" was released after his death
8. Julia Child had trained as a cook since she was young
9. She later became a TV star
10. Harland David Sanders had a number of successful businesses
11. He continues to run the company today
12. Grandma Moses came from a wealthy family
13. She mainly painted portraits

## Discover New Words

Choose the best definition for the vocabulary word in **bold**.

1. Some people **moan about** their 40<sup>th</sup> birthdays as if their best years were behind them.
  - a. complain about
  - b. look forward to
  - c. think too much about
  
2. Ford came from a family of farmers, but he **despised** farm work and became an engineer instead.
  - a. didn't understand
  - b. failed to learn
  - c. hated very strongly
  
3. However, she wasn't always a culinary virtuoso – her early career was spent in advertising, and she also did a **stint** in the military as a research assistant.
  - a. active combat position
  - b. required time
  - c. short period of service
  
4. Sanders eventually opened a restaurant serving chicken and other meals, but tourism **dried up** during World War II and the place had to close.
  - a. decreased and disappeared
  - b. had a lot of risks
  - c. was prohibited
  
5. When she developed **arthritis**, her sister suggested that painting might be easier on her joints. This **spurred** the beginning of her painting career in her late 70s.
  - a. celebrated
  - b. delayed
  - c. encouraged

## Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three are not used.

<b>brawl</b>	<b>did a stint</b>	<b>moaning about</b>	<b>renowned</b>
<b>caught on</b>	<b>have a knack for</b>	<b>myriad</b>	<b>right off the bat</b>
<b>despair</b>	<b>in earnest</b>	<b>nothing to lose</b>	<b>rural</b>
<b>despise</b>	<b>light-hearted</b>	<b>on the cusp of</b>	

1. Why don't you do something constructive instead of just \_\_\_\_\_ how bad things are?
2. If the plane's pretty empty, why not ask for an upgrade to first class? We've got \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The war has dragged on for so long with no end in sight, and the population is in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Now that you've graduated from high school, you're \_\_\_\_\_ a real adventure in self-discovery.
5. Randy got his nose broken during a \_\_\_\_\_ at the local bar.
6. She's a very successful investor; she seems to \_\_\_\_\_ identifying good potential opportunities.
7. The band has recorded a number of decent songs, but their music still hasn't really \_\_\_\_\_.
8. He's a \_\_\_\_\_ human rights activist who has worked on a number of high-profile cases.
9. They have electricity in the \_\_\_\_\_ areas, but cell phone coverage is spotty.
10. My dad's a gymnastics instructor, and he actually \_\_\_\_\_ in the circus when he was younger.
11. When I started my new job, I was given a very important project \_\_\_\_\_.
12. We've been talking about buying a house for a long time, but now we're starting the search \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Answers**

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. False
2. True
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. False
11. False
12. False
13. False

### **Discover New Words**

1. a
2. c
3. c
4. a
5. c

## Vocabulary Quiz

1. moaning about
2. nothing to lose
3. despair
4. on the cusp of
5. brawl
6. have a knack for
7. caught on
8. renowned
9. rural
10. did a stint
11. right off the bat
12. in earnest