

## AT 25...

*As Uncle John's Bathroom Reader reaches the quarter-century mark, we thought it might be fun to check out what some other famous icons were up to during their 25th year of life.*

### **A**LBERT EINSTEIN (1879–1955)

**Claim to Fame:** German-born scientist, considered the father of modern physics

**At 25...**Einstein was working at the Swiss Patent Office and was the father of a newborn son. While pushing Albert Jr.'s stroller through Bern, Switzerland, Einstein would often stop to scribble down mathematical notes. Those notes would form the basis for his theory of relativity.

### GEORGE W. BUSH (1946– )

**Claim to Fame:** 43rd president of the United States

**At 25...**In what the press later dubbed his “missing year,” 1st Lieutenant Bush was serving in the Texas Air National Guard, training to become a combat fighter pilot. As his 26th birthday approached in July 1972, Bush failed to show up for several weekend drill assignments, then skipped his annual physical. Result: His flight status was revoked and he never flew for the military again.

### OPRAH WINFREY (1954– )

**Claim to Fame:** “She’s Oprah Winfrey”

**At 25...**Winfrey had recently been fired from her first big TV gig, co-anchor of the 6:00 News at WJZ-TV in Baltimore. The other anchor, Jerry Turner, didn’t like sharing the spotlight and often belittled Winfrey. To placate him, station managers “demoted” Winfrey to an early-morning talk show called *People Are Talking*. Her co-host there, Richard Sher, was much more amicable, and Winfrey soon realized that delivering the news wasn’t for her: “I liked talking *to* people, not *about* them.” In 1979 *People Are Talking* became a hit and 25-year-old Winfrey began forming her TV persona. She stayed for seven years before moving to Chicago, where she launched her own talk show in 1986.

According to studies, work-related stress can be as bad for your health as smoking.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)**

**Claim to Fame:** Most celebrated writer of the English language

**At 25...**Shakespeare became a playwright. Though little is known about his younger days, it's generally agreed that he penned his first play, *Henry VI, Part 1* around 1590. That's also about the time that the ambitious writer left his home in Stratford-upon-Avon to seek his fortune in London.

**QUEEN ELIZABETH II (1926– )**

**Claim to Fame:** Constitutional monarch of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and several other countries for more than six decades

**At 25...**Elizabeth became Queen of England. On February 6, 1952, her father, King George VI, died, and the popular English princess ascended to the throne. She heard the news while she was in Kenya with her husband, Philip, as they were preparing to embark on a goodwill tour of Australia. Elizabeth rushed back to England, where she was instructed to choose a *regnal*, or ruling name. The new queen replied, "Why, Elizabeth, of course."

**HARRISON FORD (1942– )**

**Claim to Fame:** Hollywood's most bankable leading man in the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, starring in such roles as Han Solo, Indiana Jones, Rick Deckard (*Blade Runner*), John Book (*Witness*), and Dr. Richard Kimble (*The Fugitive*)

**At 25...**Ford was a struggling young actor in Los Angeles, living on a \$150-per-week contract with Columbia Pictures. He wasn't offered any good parts because powerful producer Jerry Tokofsky didn't like him; he called Ford "stiff and unappealing." Ford's one "big" speaking role in his 25th year was in the comedy *Luv*: After a Volkswagen Beetle backs into his convertible, an angry Ford jumps out, stomps up to the VW, says "Hi" to the lady driving, then punches Jack Lemmon in the nose. Bit parts like that didn't pay the bills, so Ford quit acting for a while and took up carpentry.

**HILLARY CLINTON (1947– )**

**Claim to Fame:** First Lady, Senator, and U.S. Secretary of State

**At 25...**Hillary Rodham graduated with honors from Yale Law

**Big eater:** An adult tiger can usually kill its prey with a single bite.

School. She stayed on at Yale as a research assistant, contributing to the seminal child psychology work *Beyond the Best Interests of the Child*. She also volunteered for the Children's Defense Fund, offering free legal services to child abuse victims. Also that year: Rodham turned down a marriage proposal from her boyfriend and future husband Bill Clinton.

#### **WARREN BUFFETT (1930– )**

**Claim to Fame:** American business mogul

**At 25...**Buffett made his "\$50-billion decision." The young investor was so adept at the intricacies of finance that he was offered a prestigious job in New York by his mentor, Benjamin Graham. But Buffett politely declined, opting instead to return home to Omaha, Nebraska, and support his young family as an unemployed investor. "Although I had no idea, age 25 was a turning point," he later told *Forbes* magazine. "I was changing my life, setting up something that would turn into a fairly good-size partnership called Berkshire Hathaway. I wasn't scared. I was doing something I liked, and I'm still doing it."

#### **CONDOLEEZZA RICE (1954– )**

**Claim to Fame:** U.S. Secretary of State from 2005 to 2009

**At 25...**Rice had already been in college for a decade, having enrolled at 15. (She was so smart she skipped the first and seventh grades.) In 1980, 25-year-old Rice was working on her Ph.D. in political science at the University of Denver. She'd recently broken up with her fiancé, Denver Broncos star receiver Rick Upchurch, to focus on her studies. But Rice, a registered Democrat, was having a political identity crisis and found herself disagreeing with many of President Carter's foreign policy decisions. Two years later, she switched parties and rose to the top of the GOP (but never did get married).

#### **DONALD TRUMP (1946– )**

**Claim to Fame:** Business mogul and reality TV star

**At 25...**After deciding not to attend film school because he felt he could earn more money in real estate, Trump moved to Manhattan "practically broke" as he described it (despite his father's real estate fortune). But Trump had bigger dreams and saw Man-

It would take 5 years of non-stop viewing to watch every video uploaded to YouTube today.

hattan as a huge business opportunity. The young man (who even then had puffy hair) talked his way into elite social clubs and made friends with some of New York's most influential people. With financial backers, 25-year-old Trump convinced the cash-strapped City of New York to grant him a 40-year tax abatement to turn around the struggling Commodore Hotel. He later fixed it up, renamed it the Grand Hyatt, and was well on his way to becoming New York's most famous real estate tycoon.

#### **JACKIE ROBINSON (1919–72)**

**Claim to Fame:** Hall-of-Fame baseball player who became the first African American of the modern era to play in the Major Leagues

**At 25...**Robinson was already well-known for his stellar athletic career at UCLA, but he'd been drafted to fight in World War II. Rising to become one of the few African-American officers in the U.S. Army, Robinson was a 2nd lieutenant of the 761st Tank Battalion (the "Black Panthers") stationed at Camp Hood, near Waco, Texas. Shortly before his unit was to depart for Europe, Robinson boarded a bus going from the base hospital back to his barracks. The white bus driver, Milton Reneger, ordered Robinson to sit in the back of the bus. Robinson refused. After arriving at the base, Reneger called over two MPs and had them detain Robinson. During the interrogation, a white officer used a racial slur, and Robinson threatened to "break in two" anyone else who dared call him that. Not long after, he was charged with disorderly conduct and public drunkenness (even though he didn't drink). So instead of leaving for Europe, Robinson was court-martialed. After a contentious trial that drew lots of press, an all-white panel of officers voted unanimously to drop the charges. Robinson never did see combat and was honorably discharged in November 1944. A few months later, Brooklyn Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey hand-picked him to become the first African American to integrate the big leagues.

#### **TINA FEY (1970– )**

**Claim to Fame:** Emmy-winning TV writer and actress

**At 25...**Fey was waiting for her big break. Her dream was to get hired by *Saturday Night Live*, and she knew the best way to do that was to join the Second City improvisational comedy troupe in

The Harry Potter books have been translated into ancient Greek.

Chicago. So during the days, she was a receptionist at the YMCA, and at night she performed with Second City. In 1995 the *SNL* scouts came to Second City. “We were like puppies,” she recalled. “Pick me! Pick me!” But Fey didn’t get picked. Her friend Adam McKay did, and became head writer. Two years later, producer Lorne Michaels was looking for new writers; McKay told him to check out Fey. In 2000 she became the first female head writer in *SNL*’s history.

#### **GROUCHO MARX (1890–1977)**

**Claim to Fame:** American humorist, game-show host, and movie star

**At 25...** Julius Marx (his real name) and his brothers were just coming into their own as a comedy team on the vaudeville circuit. They’d started out as a musical troupe but found that crowds were more entertained when the brothers cracked jokes and insulted each other. This was a couple of years before Groucho donned his fake mustache and eyebrows. But he did have one thing: a catchy name. A year earlier, the Marx Brothers were playing in a poker game with comedian Art Fisher. In those days, many vaudevillians took on stage names that ended with “o,” so as Fisher dealt each of the brothers a card, he gave them their new names: Leonard, the oldest, became Chico (he was a “chicken chaser,” slang for a womanizer); Adolph became Harpo because he played the harp; Milton became Gummo because he liked to wear gumsoled shoes; and Julius became Groucho because he was “stern and serious.”

#### **J. K. ROWLING (1965– )**

**Claim to Fame:** Creator of the Harry Potter books, which sold 400 million copies and were adapted into the highest-grossing film series of all time, making her the only author to ever become a billionaire

**At 25...** Joanna Rowling was a research assistant for Amnesty International. During a four-hour delay on a crowded train from Manchester to London, a story popped into her head “fully formed” about a boy wizard and his adventures at a wizard school. Rowling scribbled down a few notes and then started writing in earnest when she arrived back at her flat in London. Later that same year, Rowling’s mother died. To deal with the loss, she decid-

**Early birds:** Waterfowl chicks can communicate with their moms before they hatch.

ed that in her book, Harry would also lose his mother. “I thought I’d written something that a handful of people might quite like,” she recalled.

#### **BARACK OBAMA (1961– )**

**Claim to Fame:** 44th president of the United States

**At 25...**In 1986 he was working as a community organizer in Chicago’s poverty-stricken South Side. The recent Columbia University graduate had arrived there a year earlier after becoming bored with his job at a New York financial firm. He had two main goals in Chicago: 1) to try his hand at public service, and 2) to immerse himself in an African-American community. He’d been raised by his white mother in a white neighborhood, and wanted to connect with his roots. Serving as director of the Developing Communities Project, Obama tried to help low-income people find jobs, affordable housing, and get into college, and urged them to put pressure on City Hall to hire more police, fill in potholes, and remove asbestos from public housing projects. But it was an uphill battle, and, as he later recalled, “Victories were few.” He soon realized, “I just can’t get things done here without a law degree.” So in 1988 Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School

#### **FRANK SINATRA (1915–98)**

**Claim to Fame:** American crooner

**At 25...**Sinatra became a household name and changed the music industry forever. After signing on as a singer in Tommy Dorsey’s big band in 1940, Sinatra became the biggest draw. He toured the nation and appeared in his first full-length feature film, *Las Vegas Nights*. By May, Sinatra was the #1 singer in both *Billboard* and *Down Beat* magazines. “You could almost feel the excitement coming up out of the crowds when he stood up to sing,” recalled Dorsey. “Just a skinny kid with big ears. I used to stand there so amazed that I’d almost forget to take my own solos.” Sinatra’s success proved to record-label executives that teenagers—especially girls—would buy records, which had, up to then, been marketed exclusively to their parents. A few weeks before Sinatra’s 26th birthday, in December 1941, the United States entered World War II. He was drafted, but a congenital ear-drum injury kept him out of the military.

Chuck Norris invented his own martial arts style: Chun Kuk Do—“The Universal Way.”

**NAPOLEON BONAPARTE (1769–1821)**

**Claim to Fame:** French military and political leader who ruled France and conquered much of Europe in the early 19th century

**At 25...** Napoleon was already a general known for his uncanny mastery of battlefield strategies. But he wasn't as deft in the battlefield of love. Engaged to Désirée Clary—the daughter of a wealthy silk merchant in Marseille, France—Napoleon was ready to tie the knot for the first time. That's when the 25-year-old general met a beautiful woman six years his senior named Josephine de Beauharnais. Napoleon was smitten, and left his bride-to-be for Josephine. (Désirée moved on and later became the Queen of Sweden.)

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A kitchen faucet would need to be turned on for at least 45 years to equal...