**Failure to Famous**

## The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. (St. Mark 12:10)

## Woody Allen, Academy Award-winning writer/producer/director, flunked motion picture production at New York University and the City College of New York and failed English at N.Y.U. (The Best of Bits & Piece s, p. 60)

**Who flunked first and fourth grades yet went on to become an astronaut? Ed Gibson. (Glenn Van Ekeren, in The Speaker's Sourcebook, p. 355)**

**P. T. Barnum -- first three businesses failed. (*World Features Syndicate)***

**As a student at Tampa, Florida's, Jefferson High, Fred McGriff didn't make the cut when he first tried out for baseball. This natural first baseman finally made the squad though -- and was drafted straight out of high school by the New York Yankees. Even with a $20 million four-year deal with the Atlanta Braves, McGriff is still considered humble to a fault. He once told Sports Illustrated he wanted to be remembered for “being consistent.” *(Lorrie Lynch, in USA Weekend)***

**Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884) the Austrian botanist who discovered the basic laws of heredity, never was able to pass the examination to become a full-fledged teacher of science.  
(Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Weird Inventions and Discoveries, p. 67)**

**Early business problems:   
H & R Block -- handbill delivery service failed  
William Colgate -- first soap business failed  
Rowland Macy -- first dry goods business failed  
Birdseye Foods -- failed first time  
F. W. Woolworth -- first store failed  
Gail Borden -- first three businesses failed, including two condensed milk businesses. *(World Features Syndicate)***

**Cheers was almost canceled when it finished seventy-seventh, or dead last, in the ratings after its first week on the air in September 1982. After surviving cancellation, it went on to become one of the most successful sitcoms of all time, airing until May 1993. *(Don Voorhees, in The Perfectly Useless Book of Useless Information, p. 100)***

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**Winston Churchill did not become prime minister of England until he was 62, and then only after a lifetime of defeats and setbacks. His greatest contributions came when he was a senior citizen. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business , p. 250)**

**As a teenager, British leader Winston Churchill failed the entrance exams to the Royal Military Academy -- twice. (He made it on the third try, and the rest is history.) *(Bob Fenster, in They Did What!?, p. 16)***

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**Discussing her early career as a would-be stage actress at England's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, “Dynasty” star Joan Collins reveals that her first report card there contained a rather ironic assessment of her talents. It read: “Joan has a good personality and lots of stage presence. But she must try to improve her voice projection or she will wind up in films and TV, and that would be a pity.” (People Weekly)  
Turn On, a television series hosted by Tim Conway, proved to be a turn off. It premiered on February 5, 1969, and was cancelled the same day. (Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 88)  
  
Gary Cooper wore his best suit to a tryout for a western movie, but suspicious producers thought the big actor was a dude and made him prove he could ride--and fall off--a horse. He went on to a career that culminated in the classic High Noon, but before he made it big, Coop was fired and rehired by the movie bosses seven times. (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 8)  
Twenty dollars a week was all the salary Joan Crawford drew in her first job on the stage. She was a dancer in a road show which closed two weeks after it opened. (Sunshine magazine)**

**Edison knew 1800 ways not to build a light bulb. One of Madame Curie's failures was radium. Columbus thought he had discovered the East Indies. Freud had several big failures before he devised psychoanalysis. Rodgers and Hammerstein's first collaboration bombed so badly that they didn't get together again for years. The whole history of thought is filled with people who arrived at the “wrong” destinations. (Bits & Pieces)**

**Neil Diamond was on his way to becoming the first member of his family to graduate from college when he dropped out in his senior year to take a songwriting job with a music-publishing company. “It was a chance to step into my career,” he explains. The job lasted only four months. Eventually, he was fired by five other music publishers. “I loved writing music and lyrics,” he says, “and I thought, ‘There's got to be a place for me somewhere.’” After eight years of knocking around and bringing songs to publishers and still being basically nowhere, I met two very successful producers and writers, Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, who liked the way I sang. “They took me from being a guy with a guitar to a guy who could make real records,” he adds. (Claire Carter, in Parade magazine)**

**Less than a month before I met Walt Disney, his feature film Alice in Wonderland flopped at the box office. “Alice doesn't have heart,” Walt told me frankly. “You felt for Snow White. You don't for Alice.” I learned later that the film's failure was a heavy blow to Walt because it convinced his brother Roy that this was a bad time to use studio money to build a theme park. The park had been Walt's dream ever since his daughters were little and he had taken them to amusement parks and zoos. Counting those days among the happiest in his life, he wanted to design such a place for other people's enjoyment. *(John Culhane, in Reader's Digest)***

**Clint Eastwood was once told by a Universal Pictures executive that his future wasn't very promising. The man said, “You have a chip on your tooth, your Adam's apple sticks out too far, and you talk too slow.” (Ed Lucaire, in Celebrity Setbacks)**

**Thomas A. Edison (1847-1931) America's most prolific inventor, was granted 1,093 patents by the U.S. Patent office, more than anyone else --yet they included such duds as a perpetual cigar, furniture made of cement and a way of using goldenrod for rubber. (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Weird Inventions and Discoveries , p. 36)**

**Paul Ehrlich, the German bacteriologist, always performed badly at school, and he particularly loathed examinations. He had a flair for microscopic staining work, however, and this carried him through his education despite his ineptness at composition and oral presentations. He eventually used his talent with the microscope to develop the field of chemotherapy, and he was awarded a Nobel Prize in medicine in 1908.  
(Wallace/Wallechinsky, in The Book of Lists, #2)  
Albert Einstein did poorly in elementary school, and he failed his first college entrance exam at Zurich Polytechnic. But he became one of the greatest scientists in the history of the world. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 137)  
If starting your own business is what you'd like to do, please note that studies at Tulane University suggest the average entrepreneur fails 3.8 times before making it work. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Hope, can be increased and fears decreased when you keep in mind that failure, like success, is never fatal. God always has new experiences and surprises in store for us. Often what appears to be the end is, in the hands of God, a new beginning. (Victor M. Parachin, in Unity magazine)  
William Faulkner failed to graduate from high school because he didn't have enough credits. He bummed around the United States and Canada, enlisting in the Royal Canadian Air Force, trying to get into a university and later working as a postmaster until he was fired for reading on the job. He then tried writing and had five books finished by 1930 but failed to earn enough money to support a family. But he kept going and became popular in the mid 1930's. He eventually received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1949. (Ripley's Believe It or Not!: Book of Chance, p. 37)  
Malcolm Forbes, the late editor-in-chief of Forbes magazine, one of the largest business publications in the world, did not make the staff of ThePrincetonian, the school newspaper at Princeton University. (The Best of Bits & Piece s, p. 60)**

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**Henry Ford failed and went broke five times before he finally succeeded. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business, p. 250)**

**Walt Disney was fired from one of his first jobs, and both Disney and Henry Ford saw ventures end up in bankruptcy before they made it big time. *(Patricia Sellers, in Reader's Digest)*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*  
Past performance is usually a pretty good indication of a man's future potential--but not always. In 1860 a thirty-eight-year-old man was working as a handyman for his father, a leather merchant. He kept books, drove wagons, and handled hides for about $66 a month.  
Prior to this menial job the man had failed as a soldier, a farmer, and a real estate agent. Most of the people who knew him had written him off as a failure. Eight years later he was President of the United States. The man was Ulysses S. Grant. (Bits & Pieces)**

**The pilot for Happy Days was turned down by ABC but used in the anthology series Love, American Style. George Lucas liked Ron Howard’s portrayal of Richie Cunningham and cast him in the blockbuster movie American Graffiti. After the success of the movie, ABC bought the show. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 12)**

**In World War II, the army classified thirty-three-year-old Joe Rosenthal as 4-F because he had one-twentieth normal vision, but he followed the fighting anyway as a war photographer. When the U. S. invaded the island of Iwo Jima under heavy Japanese fire, Rosenthal was there wearing his thick glasses and carrying two spare pairs.  
At the top of Mount Suribachi he caught the greatest picture of the war--five marines and a navy corpsman raising the Stars and Stripes. Rosenthal became an immediate celebrity and his picture won the Pulitzer Prize. The flag-raising appeared on a three-cent stamp and broke all records for first-day-issue sales. On November 19, 1954, a seventy-five-feet-high sculpture of the raising was dedicated at Arlington National Cemetery. (John & Claire Whitcomb, in Oh Say Can You See , p. 101)**

**One November night, Michael Jordan and I found ourselves alone, and he told me about being cut as a sophomore from his high-school basketball team in Wilmington, N. C. “The day the cut list was going up, a friend -- Leroy Smith -- and I went to the gym to look together,” Jordan recalled. “If your name was on the list, you made the team. Leroy’s name was there, and mine wasn’t. I went through the day numb. After school, I hurried home, closed the door to my room and cried so hard. It was all I wanted -- to play on that team.” *(Bob Greene, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Who flunked the first grade and went on to become attorney general? Robert F. Kennedy. (Glenn Van Ekeren, in The Speaker's Sourcebook)**

**Actor, writer, director, and producer Michael Landon, an all around television wizard, wasn’t such a wiz academically. In his Collingwood, N.J., high school class, Landon reportedly graduated 300th out of a total of 301 students. *(Jack Kreismer, in The Bathroom Trivia Book, p. 57)***

**When he was 22, he failed in business. When he was 23, he ran for the legislature and lost. When he was 24, he failed in business again. The following year he was elected to the legislature. When he was 26, his sweetheart died. At the age of 27, he had a nervous breakdown. When he was 29, he was defeated for the post of Speaker of the House in the State Legislature. When he was 31, he was defeated as Elector. When he was 34, he ran for Congress and lost. At the age of 37, he ran for Congress and finally won. Two years later, he ran again and lost his seat in Congress. At the age of 46, he ran for the U.S. Senate and lost. The following year he ran for Vice President and lost that, too. He ran for the Senate again, and again lost. Finally, at the age of 51, he was elected President of the United States. Who was this perpetual “loser”? Abraham Lincoln. (Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 74)It's an historical fact that Carl Linder, the 1919 winner of the Boston Marathon, was rejected for military service because of flat feet. (L. M. Boyd)**

**When Mickey Mantle graduated from Commerce High (Oklahoma) in 1949 he was not voted “Most Athletic." That's right, the man who possessed the greatest combination of power from both sides of the plate (he hit the longest home run in major league history, 565 feet in 1953) and speed (some experts suggested he could have won a track medal in the Olympics) lost out in the voting to his best friend, Bill Mosley.  
(Jim Kreuz, in Baseball Digest)**

**Gregor Mendel, “the father of genetics,” twice failed the certification exam to become a high-school science teacher. *(Harry Bright & Jakob Anser, in That’s A Fact, Jack!, p. 8)***

**The first collaboration of the great musical team Lerner and Loewe (My Fair Lady), was a 1942 farce called “Life of the Party.” It ran a total of one performance. Although Frederick Loewe was from a prominent Viennese musical family, when he came to the United States to achieve musical fame, he wound up out west prospecting for gold and working as a cowboy. *(Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It's a Weird World, p. 60)***

**Napoleon finished near the bottom of his class at military school, yet became one of the leading military men of all time. (Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell , p. 138)  
  
Lord Laurence Olivier is acknowledged by many critics as the greatest actor of the 20th century. However, his debut as an actor was less than auspicious. His first professional role was that of a policeman in a play called The Ghost Train. At his first entrance -- the very first time he had ever set foot on the professional stage -- he tripped over the door sill and fell headfirst into the floodlights. (Paul Stirling Hagerman, in It’s a Weird World)**

**Devotees of Elvis Presley will tell you their hero tried to join his high school glee club but was turned down. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Didn’t President Ronald Reagan once do a song-and-dance comedy routine in Las Vegas? For two weeks in 1954, yes. At the Last Frontier Hotel there. Wasn’t what he did best. It didn’t go over. *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 169)***

**The poet Carl Sandburg flunked out of West Point, according to the record, because of deficiencies in English. (L. M. Boyd)**

**The first Sony product was a rice cooker – which tended to short out, catch fire and emit electrical shocks. (David Hoffman, in Little-Known Facts about Well-Known Stuff, p. 57)**

**Captain Kirk and the intrepid crew of the USS Enterprise set out to “boldly go where no man has gone before” when “Star Trek” premiered September 8, 1966. Poor ratings got the spacey TV series canceled after three seasons, but fervent fans – known as Trekkies – and their dollars propelled it to cult status through syndication, four spinoffs and ten movies. *(Chai Woodham, in Smithsonian magazine)***

**In 1957, Toyota first came to the United States with an unfortunate little car called the Toyopet. It was so far off the mark that Toyota virtually withdrew from the U.S. car market, keeping its name alive by selling small numbers of an off-road vehicle called the Land Cruiser. Toyota then intensely studied the market for several years, not returning in full force until 1965, when it introduced the Corona. The 5,400 cars sold that year were just the beginning. In 1989, Toyota sold 620,000 cars and 330,000 trucks in the United States and was the leading import nameplate in car, truck, and combined sales for the eighth consecutive year. (Joe Griffith, in Speaker's Library of Business)  
  
 Liv Ullman, two-time Academy Award nominee for Best Actress, failed an audition for the state theater school in Norway. The judges told her she had no talent. (The Best of Bits & Piece s, p. 60)**

**The pharmaceutical company Pfizer Inc. sells about nine Viagra pills every second. Before the “little blue pill” became one of the most recognizable prescription drugs ever, it was a bust as a treatment for hypertension and angina. The scientists at Pfizer were ready to give up on the drug when they observed an unusual side effect during a toleration study. *(Harry Bright & Harlan Briscoe, in So, Now You Know, p. 162)***

**Raquel Welch, sex symbol of the 1960s and ‘70s, auditioned for the part of Mary Ann on “Gilligan’s Island,” but was passed over in favor of Dawn Wells. *(Samantha Weaver, in Tidbits)***

**James Whistler, whose mother got famous in that rocking chair, flunked out of West Point for failing a chemistry exam. “Had silicon been a gas,” he was to say, “I would have been a major general.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Frank Woolworth labored to save his first $50, and then saw three of his first five chain stores fail. (Glenn Van Ekeren, in Speaker's Sourcebook II)**

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