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Export date: Sun Nov 1 1:48:02 2026 / +0000 GMT

Fame through failure

by BRIAN LOCKHART

It was May 26, 1975, when legendary daredevil Evel Knievel revved the engine on his motorcycle to get ready for his attempt to jump 13 buses at Wembley Stadium in London.

I was huddled around the television with my brother and dad to watch the attempt which was being broadcast live.

I remember my dad saying something like ?he'll never make it.?

Sure enough, Evel landed short, bounced off the motorcycle, skidded across the stadium, and was seriously injured ? again.

After watching this, I remember thinking, this guy is the worst daredevil in history.

A daredevil is someone who takes big, but planned risks and comes out in one piece, to impress the crowd and live to do it again another day.

Evel was known more for his crashes than his successes. If you ever want to see bones breaking in slow-motion, look up Evel's attempt to jump the fountains at Caesar's Place in Las Vegas. It was another failed jump.

Evel became famous for failure, and yet he turned that around somehow, to his advantage, and presented himself as the greatest daredevil on the planet.

He once boasted that he had broken over 200 bones.

Do you think if you're doing a job where you keep getting seriously injured, that maybe you're just not good at it?

It's surprising how many people have achieved fame through failure.

Eddie ?The Eagle' Edwards, was a ski jumper who competed in the 1988 Olympics in Calgary. He represented the UK.

The UK is not known for its Winter Olympic performances.

He managed to qualify for the Olympics as the only British entrant for the sport after competing at the 1987 World Championships.

However, he was terrible. It became a bit of a joke during the Olympics every time he was going to jump because he barely made it off of the jump and always landed short. I think people were expecting him to flap his arms to achieve some extra distance.

He finished dead last ? but he became famous because of his failure.

The International Olympic Committee made changes in qualifying after the Calgary Olympics so this wouldn't happen again.

Even so, you've got to admire the man's determination.

Tonya Harding was an American Olympic figure skater. Unless you really followed figure skating, it was unlikely you had heard of her prior to an event that became international news.

In 1994, Harding was involved in a scandal after her husband conspired with a friend ? a local halfwit ? to injure Harding's main

competitor in the skating world by breaking her knee.

This clown couldn't even get that right and ended up just giving her a bruise.

Harding was never known for being what they call a ?darling' of the sport. She had a rough upbringing, wore garish makeup, wasn't particularly cute, and because of her homemade skating outfits, the judges often looked down on her and gave her low marks for presentation.

She was an excellent athlete but was shunned by the skating world for not being Dorothy Hamill cute, and not having affluent parents.

She achieved international fame because of the attack on her competitor. In the end, she lost the right to compete and her career was over.

She didn't win a medal in the Olympics, and that was a forgone conclusion after what had happened. It probably cost her millions of dollars in endorsements ? but it made her famous.

A guy named Robert Overacker, achieved fame, for a least a few days, although he didn't live to read about himself in the newspapers.

In October of 1995, Robert decided to jet ski over Niagara Falls with a rocket-propelled parachute. He claimed his motivation was to raise awareness for the homeless.

The chute didn't open, and Robert's fame came from a single photograph of him leaping from his jet ski at the brink of the falls.

You would think his friends would have told him, his plan was just not a good idea.

Another man, named Jessie Sharp decided he could kayak over Niagara Falls due to his skill as an experienced kayaker back in 1990. He was so confident, he made a dinner reservation at a downstream restaurant for later in the day.

Jessie didn't wear a life jacket and chose not to wear a helmet because he didn't want his face obscured from cameras recording the event, so he would be famous.

The photo of him plunging over the cataract did indeed make him famous ? for a couple of days, and posthumously.

I'm pretty sure when he crested the brink of the falls and saw the house-size boulders below, his final thoughts were that his attempt was probably a mistake. His body was never recovered.

Some people just want to be famous, no matter what the cost.

If I ever became famous, I would hope it's for doing something right.