

Marmalade Through a Concrete Wall—The Story of Nick Evans

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Nick Evans couldn't sink. Plain and simple.

It was a peculiar trait to have. It was first discovered when, after accidentally burning herself with the kettle, his notoriously short-fused mother took her anger out on her poor son by throwing him into the local river. To her surprise, he didn't drown as she had hoped but floated as a well-made canoe would be wont to do. She quickly fetched him from the river and brought him home. Curiosity running through her for a shortcut, she drew a deep bath and tried with great strength to shove him underneath, but it was impossible. She excitedly rang her husband who rushed home from work. He tried and tried to shove him down underneath the surface of the water but he wouldn't budge. He would later recall in a retrospective interview with a well-renowned newspaper that it was like trying to shove a jar of marmalade through a concrete wall. This quote became Nick's legacy.

His parents were both excited by the discovery and rang the local paper. A reporter and a photographer arrived and were invited to try and drown the child themselves. Without hesitation, they gleefully rushed to the bath and stood on the child who just lay there floating in all man-

ner of confusion. The reporter was in awe.

The story made the cover of the local newspaper and almost overnight, the barely-a-year-old Nick was turned into a national celebrity. He was on the cover of every magazine and was dubbed the “unsinkable child” by one journalist. Far and wide, people were invited and, in exchange for a small fee, were allowed an attempt to drown the poor child. Alas, none even came close.

It wasn't long before large network television production companies approached the family with a concept for a reality show. Nick's mother and father, who had fallen on hard times ever since the local typewriter factory had shut down, were eager to exploit their child's newfound celebrity. And so, *TitaNick – The Unsinkable Boy* was first televised at 8:00 pm on Monday the 13th of September, 1994 on Channel One. The reality show, the first of its kind, followed the family as they attempted, through various means, to try and drown their child. The first episode focused on the family tying their child to the bottom of an Olympic swimming pool using steel chain and slowly filling the water up. It received twenty million viewers.

To everyone's amazement, the water just wouldn't fill up past the length of the chain when extended fully. The fire engines arrived with gallons of water in an attempt to force the water up but they were left dumbstruck. It was said that all of the firemen were left so shocked by this news that they were unable to perform for their respective partners for the next six months. Such was the shame. Not even going down the pole could excite their poles.

He was an overnight sensation. Everyone was talking about Baby Nick, and those who didn't talk about him were considered outcasts. These people were so chastised by their family members and colleagues that television sales went up by 349%. They had to see what would happen next. The second episode was even more daring than the last. Here, the child was strapped to the side of a decommissioned cruise

liner as it was slowly rotated onto its side. However, the effort was all for nought as the ship simply could not be shifted. The episode brought in fifty-two million viewers and a further ten million viewers on its Thursday night repeats.

The following week's episode brought in twice the previous viewership, a whopping one hundred million people worldwide. A popular comedian joked that it was ironic that this unsinkable child was the only thing keeping the television station afloat. Some people laughed, however it was widely agreed that this joke was so unfunny that he subsequently lost all of his fanbase and never worked in comedy again. He showed up on an episode of *Celebrities That You'd Be Surprised To Learn Are Still Alive*, fifteen years later. Unfortunately, by that time, he actually was dead.

In the third episode, it was theorised that if the child was brought to the bottom of the ocean in a submersible of some kind and then released through a hatch, the time that it would take for the infant to reach the surface would surely drain his body of enough oxygen that he would finally drown. Naturally, there were some critics of this plan but they were quickly silenced by the overwhelmingly enthusiastic scientific community who were eager to see if the child would drown. The plan seemed fool-proof.

The television station no longer cared about the rising budget as advertisers were paying millions for just a thirty second timeslot in the ad-breaks. Baby Nick was now the face of Microsoft computers. Happy Meals from McDonald's now came with a toy of a dead child with the words, "Drowned" written on its forehead.

And so, the child was taken in a boat to just above the Mariana trench, the deepest part of the ocean. He was then placed in a submersible and was lowered over the side of the boat. The submersible was initially intended to be piloted remotely by television personality Jeremy Clarkson, who hoped to accomplish a lifelong dream of drown-

ing a child. However, the insurance companies would not allow this, as the producers declared that the submersible was a rather expensive vehicle and would require a professional. Clarkson subsequently broke one of the producers' sternums in a fit of anger.

The submersible seemed to go down a few feet at first. The crew cheered as they believed their efforts would pay off and they would finally witness the child drown. However, as the submersible reached a depth of just three metres, the engines of the once-thought-indestructible submersible shattered and the vessel shot back up to the surface.

The production team was dismayed but the audience at home lapped it up. Fanclubs were started. College societies were formed. People began to wear t-shirts with the slogan "Will Nick Sink?" Bookmakers were receiving bets worth millions on whether or not the child would drown. Nobody had ever seen anything like it. Other production companies were attempting to create their own copycat shows but were unable to find anything else that had such an aversion to sinking. The closest they came was finding a Puerto Rican child that had similar traits. However, it was revealed the child was concealing a safety buoy in his left eardrum.

The fourth episode was watched live by an estimated 300 million worldwide. It was said that some districts quite literally shut down for the hour that the program was on. Such was the anticipation to finally see the child drown. This episode was its most ambitious yet. The production crew had hired out an orca from a local whale leasing firm. Orcas are known for both the great depth of their dives and their sheer strength. The plan was to attach young Nick to the side of the whale and film it as it dove underwater.

The parents of the young Nick Evans watched on with pride as their boy was strapped to the side of the killer whale and released into the Arctic Ocean. There was some concern that, while the boy was special, he was still not impervious to the freezing arctic waters. However, a

local paediatrician, who was an expert in such matters, highlighted that children under the age of two can't die due to hypothermia as they have not developed the ability to feel heat. This doctor was later found to be a complete fraud.

It all seemed to be going well. The live footage showed the child placidly strapped to the back of the whale. Disaster struck after twenty minutes when it was observed that the orca's blowhole was obscured by some of the ropes that were holding Nick secure. If the whale were to go for a deep dive, it would surely not survive when it breached the surface for air.

Panic ensued in the production team and they attempted to cancel the footage but it was too late. The orca attempted to breach the surface but could not remove excess water and subsequently died. This would have not have been so controversial if it had not been for the release of the film, *Free Willy*, the year prior. The public's adoration of orcas was quite potent and they simply could not bear seeing such a beloved whale drown. A child was one thing but an orca was a step too far.

The show was immediately cancelled and the public's intense interest in seeing young Nick Evans drown was quenched. Instead of the family being associated with the drowning of a child, they became associated with the murder of an orca. The media, those loathsome crones, twisted the story and framed Nick Evans as intentionally murdering a beloved whale. The public lapped it up like an Alsatian finding a puddle on a hot day. His parents chose to distance themselves from their child in an attempt to curry favour with the public.

And so, Nick lived the rest of his life surrounded by this intense hatred from which he never recovered. An attempt to change his name in 2012 only attracted further odium.