

A Legacy that Touched the Heart of a Nation

Featuring Terry Fox

Athlete Article



The very name Terry Fox evokes emotions and images that have endured in Canada and around the world for a quarter of a century. Children who were not even born when Terry began his run across Canada, know him as the hero they run for every year at their school or in their community to help Terry's dream stay alive; to find a cure for cancer. People who knew Terry and those who witnessed his journey are forever moved by this great Canadian Hero. Terry's legacy has endured for 25 years now and it is this quality that makes Terry and his Marathon of Hope so unique. Terry possessed many of the great qualities that we see in today's heroes and many of our Olympic athletes; characteristics such as

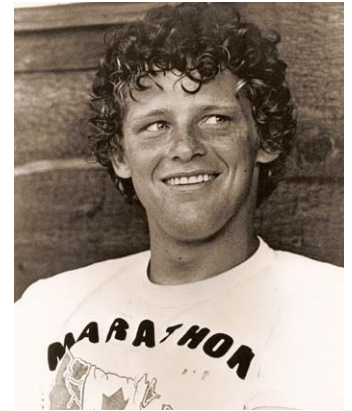
perseverance, sacrifice, commitment, vision, passion, and determination. But Terry had some very unique qualities, he did not strive for public attention or awards, he was working for a cause, he wanted to see cancer beaten. His honesty, humility, courage, and bravery, his ability to dream and have hope, to tap in to his inner strength day after day for something he believed in.

This was not about winning a race, or getting to the podium, Terry was training for his dream, his mission, to have the stamina required to complete his journey and end the suffering of those with cancer. Every year people worldwide replicate Terry's accomplishment in their own small way by participating in a Terry Fox Run and help to keep the dream alive through their own community or school run.

Terry has received much recognition over the years for his efforts and vision, but Terry was humble and did not seek this type of attention. Just as his message to his family was clear, the mission to raise funds for cancer research was to remain pure, with the people continuing to carry the message forward. Terry did not want the Marathon of Hope to be about commercial gain or logos, he just wanted to raise money for cancer research and help others in a selfless manner.

Remember this was Terry's dream and the family and the foundation continue to honour that wish, accomplishing the fundraising clean and pure, no sponsors, no logos, just the dream turned reality, striving for a cure in the future. All the recognition Terry has received is through the efforts of others wanting to help complete the mission that Terry could not. Books, coins, stamps, movies, collections, statues and monuments, a school named after him, a theatre, a laboratory at the BC Cancer Agency, and of course the annual

runs have all been about honouring Terry and his mission and have succeeded in keeping his dream alive. Terry set the wheels in motion and Canada and the world have picked up the ball and run with it. Canada and its people want to keep the spirit of their national hero, alive and finish what Terry started 25 years ago.



This is the community working at its finest, the people helping the people one dollar at a time. During his last Christmas on earth, when Terry realized the treatments were not working, he commented: "Even though I die of cancer my spirit won't die and that should influence a lot of people". I think Terry would be very surprised and pleased to see just how much influence he had and how much his Marathon of Hope inspired a nation and the world.



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Terry was no doubt the driving force behind the Marathon of Hope; he had the daunting task of running a marathon every day for 143 days and the desire to see his goal accomplished. But efforts like this are rarely a solo journey, there is always a team in the background, assisting that person and looking after their needs so they can do what they have to do.

In this case there was Doug Alward, Terry's friend since grade 8 and an essential part of the Marathon of Hope. Doug drove the support vehicle, made sure Terry had food and water, washed his clothes, marked the mileage, handled donations and did what needed to keep the Marathon of Hope moving. Terry's brother Darrell joined the Marathon of Hope in New Brunswick, two young brothers with a special bond travelling across Canada hoping to make a difference. Darrell joined the journey a couple of months after it began, as a peacekeeper of sorts, trying to keep a sense of calm in the exhausting and stressful environment of travelling across the country on this tireless mission.

There were also all those who made a difference in Terry's life prior to his journey down that long stretch of road; the support of his family, his grade 8 teacher Bob McGill; his high school principal Fred Tinck; Terri Flemming his coach who gave Terry a copy of Runner's World magazine with a story about Dick Traum, the first disabled athlete to compete in the New York Marathon; Rick Hansen his friend, who recruited Fox to his wheelchair basketball team just weeks after his amputation. There was Stan Stronge, founder of wheelchair

sports in BC, mentor, and counsellor who was a big factor in the lives of both Terry and Rick, as well as Eugene Reimer (lesson one - Olympians) and put wheelchair sports on the map for BC athletes.

Rick Hansen who is also profiled in the Hero in You program (History and Heroes- lesson six) and a good friend of Terry's comments "Terry taught us that failure is not having the courage to try". Terry exemplified courage.

You might think that Terry touched the hearts of many Canadians, but Terry's legacy is far reaching and goes beyond the borders of Canada. The Terry Fox Foundation itself is bewildered by the Run's popularity and points out that in Cuba last year over 3000 runs were organized, and there are similar stories out of India, Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates proving that Terry has really united the world to help cure cancer. Terry was just like you and me in many ways, a regular person, going to school, playing sports, hanging out with friends and family, working summers, but when cancer stuck he began to look at things differently. Terry was always focused and determined no matter what he tackled, but cancer brought out that part of Terry that contained his inner strength and courage.

We all have this ability and sometimes it takes extreme circumstances to make ourselves recognize these qualities, but they are there. Terry dug deep in the face of adversity and found the strength and determination he need to accomplish his goal and in his short life and without intention became a true Canadian hero whose legacy will live on through all of us.

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Fun Facts

Terry Fox

- As an athlete and student, Terry's initial prospects were not very encouraging. He was compact, devoid of talent, but crazy to prove himself worthy as a runner, basketball player and first-class student. He worked hard, made the Honour Roll and the basketball and track teams proving that with hard work, commitment and perseverance he could accomplish anything and he did.
- After losing his leg, Terry was recruited to play wheelchair basketball with Rick Hansen. (see lesson six History and Heroes for Rick's story). Two years after his operation, Terry started a running program. The first mile he ran in the dark, so no one could see him. Throughout his training Terry did not tell his family what he was up to. He claimed he wanted to run the Vancouver Marathon.
- Terry changed people's attitude towards the disabled, and he showed that while cancer had claimed his leg, his spirit was unbreakable. Certainly, he showed there were no limits to what an amputee could do.
- For 5,373 kilometres and 143 days, Fox battled wind and snow, then stifling heat and pain, before having to stop outside Thunder Bay, Ontario, because of a recurrence of cancer that eventually took his young life.
- While Terry accepted donations of food and lodging during his run, he was wary of being exploited by companies attempting to blur the line between charity and corporate self-interest. He wore a plain white T-shirt with a silk-screened "Marathon of Hope" message across the front, a pair of grey, non-descript shorts, and scuffed-up Adidas with plastic goo smeared on the underside to extend road life.
- Adidas donated the shoes, but Fox wouldn't wear the company's logo. No part of him was for sale.
- The first Terry Fox Run was held in September 1981 – more than 300,000 people walked or ran or cycled in his memory and raised \$3.2 million.
- Terry's parents, Betty and Rolly Fox, keep Terry's diary of the run along with the glass gallon jug he filled at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean as mementoes from Terry's journey while other items are in storage or on display at the BC Sports Hall of Fame and Museum
- Just before he began his two-year, round-the-world tour for spinal cord research in 1985, Hansen was given a small statue or maquette of Terry by his parents, Betty and Rolly Fox. The maquette is a replica of the 2.7-metre (nine-foot) bronze statue just outside Thunder Bay that marks the aborted end of Fox's run. The miniature is kept on Hansen's desk as a motivating symbol in his personal and professional life. "I took that statue all around the world with me," he says. "Whenever I felt like quitting, Terry was there for me."
- So much has been done to help us remember Terry Fox; books, movies, coins, stamps, statues, monuments, schools, theatres, a mountain, but really Terry's legacy lives on because of who he was and what he did and the fact that the annual keeps Terry's dream alive in all of us for the great hero that Terry was.