

Terry Fox – Inspired and Inspiring

Terry Fox – who is this person whose legacy lives on almost 40 years? Terry was the 22-year-old who tried to run across Canada 35 years ago on an artificial leg. Terry's aim? To raise money for cancer research. This Canadian hero has had more impact than he could have possibly imagined!

■ Early Life

Terry was born in 1958 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the age of 10, he moved to Coquitlam, BC. He was an enthusiastic athlete, enjoying soccer, rugby, and baseball. His passion, though, was for basketball. Even though he was one of the least skilled on his school teams, he worked really hard and even dedicated his summers to improving his play. He only played one minute of game time in grade 8, but by grade 10 had worked his way to a starting position. With his parents behind him, after high school, he headed off to Simon Fraser University to become a physical education teacher.

■ How It All Started

Terry was only 18 when he learned he had bone cancer. After a car accident in November of 1976, he developed knee pain that would not go away. He tried to ignore it but it continued to get worse. By March of 1977, he was diagnosed with cancer and told he would need to have his right leg amputated.

The 1977 night before his right leg was amputated 15 centimetres above the knee, his basketball coach visited, bringing with him a magazine article about an amputee who had run the New York Marathon.

After reading it, Terry decided he would challenge himself, too. He would

conquer his disability. Then he looked around the cancer ward. “There were faces with the brave smiles, and the ones who had given up smiling,” he wrote.

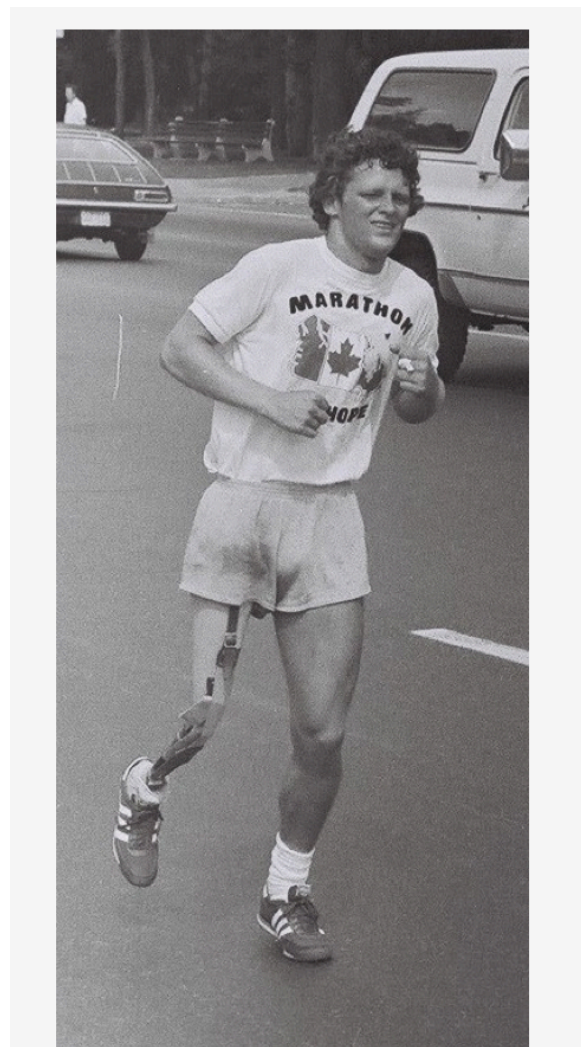
He realized he wasn’t the only one with cancer. There were others who were even less fortunate. Suddenly he came to the realization that he didn’t want to run just to challenge himself. He wanted to do something to help others who were battling this cancer, too.

“Somewhere the hurting must stop,” he wrote. “I was determined to take myself to the limit for the cause.”

Less than two years after his amputation, Terry started training for his Marathon of hope, a cross-Canada run to raise money for cancer research and awareness. During his training, he had run over 5000 kilometres.

- **Marathon of Hope = A Marathon a Day**

Terry’s ‘Marathon of Hope’ began on April 12, 1980 when in Newfoundland, he dipped his leg into the Atlantic Ocean. From there, he started running. For 143 days, he ran a marathon (about 42 kilometres) every single day.



Terry Fox in Toronto during his Marathon of Hope cross-country run (July 1980)

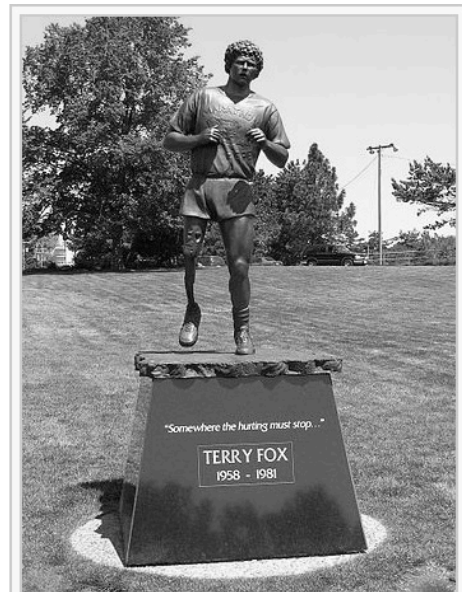
■ Terry's Run Ends

Sadly, Terry could not complete his goal of running across the country. In September of 1980, his Marathon of Hope came to a stop. Why? His cancer had returned and he could not continue. He had run 5373 kilometres and almost made it to Thunder Bay, Ontario, before he had to fly back to B.C. for treatment. In that month of September, amazing things happened. One of the heads of the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts committed to organizing an annual fundraising run. CTV television organized a five hour telethon that raised \$10 million. Terry became the youngest person to be awarded the "Companion of the Order of Canada" award. More awards followed.

■ The Dream Continues On

In February 1981, five months before his death, Terry reached his fundraising goal. It was \$24.17 million – one dollar for every Canadian in Canada at that time. But that amount was just the beginning.

Over the years, nearly \$700 million has been donated in his name for cancer research. Tributes have gone up across the country to remember this Canadian hero whose quest lives on.



Terry Fox statue in Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, British Columbia

- **Terry Fox Run**

Much of this money has been raised through the Terry Fox Run. This annual event takes place on the second Sunday after Labour Day. In B.C., this day is now known as ‘Terry Fox Day.’

- **Taking On Cancer**

Money raised through the Terry Fox Run goes to cancer research. It allows scientists from across the country to learn more about this disease and its treatment. What causes cancer tumours to grow? How can we stop that from happening? What treatments work? The research they’ve done is already saving lives, and Terry’s cause has now been taken over by others – millions of ordinary Canadians.