



## About Terry Fox and The Marathon of Hope

At the age of 18, Terry Fox was diagnosed with malignant osteogenic sarcoma in his right leg on March 9, 1977 after experiencing pain in his knee. Doctors were forced to amputate his leg 15 centimetres above the knee, a devastating blow to the avid athlete whose career as a basketball player had been shaped by grit and determination rather than raw talent.

The night before his leg was removed, Terry's basketball coach brought him in an article that featured Dick Traum, an amputee who had run in the New York City Marathon. It was then that Terry started dreaming of running a marathon.

During his time in follow-up treatments at the cancer ward in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, Terry witnessed suffering on a scale that shook him to his core. All around him, cancer reduced human beings into painfully wasted shells of their former selves. As a deeply compassionate young man, Terry could not forget the children who were given mere months to live by doctors, or the pain inflicted on patients by cancer and its treatments. Despite the stresses of his own treatments, Terry counted himself lucky; he had survived when the majority had not. He learned that research breakthroughs in treatment had come just in time for him, increasing his chance of survival from a dismal 15% two years previous to 50-90% in 1977. Yet despite its obvious benefits, Terry was shocked to learn that cancer research received little funding or public attention. It was then that he decided to run the *Marathon of Hope* to raise money and awareness for cancer research.

Two years after his cancer treatment, Terry began training for the Marathon. Fifteen months and 4,800 kilometres later, he was able to sustain a pace of 37 kilometres a day. When he announced to his family that he planned to run across Canada, they had their doubts about Terry's chances of achieving such a formidable feat. Nevertheless, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1980, Terry Fox dipped his artificial leg into the harbour in St. John's and embarked on a journey that would inspire and unite a nation. When Terry began his goal was to raise one million dollars for cancer research.

The Marathon started with little media attention or fanfare, as it seemed Canadians were doubtful that a single man – much less an amputee – could run all the way from St. John's, Newfoundland to Vancouver, BC.

But Terry's determination was dogged and his body initially proved capable of maintaining the brutal pace he set for himself. In weather conditions ranging from stifling summer heat to frigid snow, Terry ran an average of 40 kilometres a day using his characteristic hopping gait. Most of the time, he was running alone with only his single van trailing behind him on the highway. However, as Terry continued mile after mile, interest and support from Canadians grew, as did the donations to his cause. Small communities along his route banded together to raise thousands of dollars, and crowds of people were soon lining the highway near major cities to cheer Terry on and give donations personally. By the time Terry reached Southern Ontario, Canadians were pegging him as a national hero even as Terry steadfastly refused to consider himself as such.

However, after 143 days and 5,373 grueling kilometres, it was not Terry's spirit that finally failed, but rather his body. One the highway just outside of Thunder Bay, bouts of coughing turned into a pain in Terry's chest that even he could not ignore. Examination by doctors in Thunder Bay revealed that cancer tumors had reappeared in his lungs. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980, the *Marathon of Hope* came to an abrupt end. The nation was stunned and saddened. There were many offers, including one from the Toronto Maple Leafs, to finish Terry's run in his stead, but he refused them with the intention of recovering and completing the journey himself.

While the Marathon fell short of its final destination, Terry surpassed his goal by raising over \$24 million for cancer research, more than the \$1 Terry had initially asked from each Canadian. As Terry flew home to Port Coquitlam to undergo treatment, he pledged that he would fight the disease and asked only that others would continue his cause. Sadly, the treatments were unsuccessful and Terry passed away on June 28, 1981 just a month shy of his 23<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Canadians mourned the loss of a young hero, but they did not forget his message of hope or his dying wish to see the Marathon continue. Even as Terry received treatment for his cancer, Four Seasons Hotel president Isadore Sharp pledged that an annual run would be held in his name and efforts would not stop until a cure for cancer was finally found.

Thirty two years after Terry took his first strides out of the harbour in St. John's, dedication to his cause remains as strong as ever. Today, Terry Fox Runs are held all across Canada and all over the world to raise money for cancer research. The Terry Fox Foundation to date has contributed over \$600 million to help fund scientists and projects striving to find cancer cures.

**For more information, please visit: [www.terryfox.org](http://www.terryfox.org)  
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