

- How statistically normal about
- Why is he a hero?

Terry FOX

The mystery of why Terry Fox put himself into the vault of so much pain is unknowable. Terry Fox, a teen-ager endowed with fond parents, superb reflexes, handsomeness, newly crowned as his high school's athlete of the year, has a sore leg one day and three days later is mutilated, his leg cut off just above the knee. His high hopes for what Terry Fox was, a marvelous athlete, and what Terry Fox would become, something associated with sports, stopped cold. The Terry Fox he was played basketball from a wheelchair; the Terry Fox he would become wasn't clear.

How does one handle such a savage blow to self-image? One way is to deny that anything has changed. One leg is not less than two; it is more. He'll prove it. He'll run across the country in jogging shorts flaunting that declaration. He will persevere in being Terry Fox, an undiminished, unquenchable Terry Fox.

The other aspects of what was called the Marathon of Hope are real. The goal of raising money for cancer research already has realized more donations than any single effort in the Canadian Cancer Society's history. Also, Terry Fox achieved massive attitudinal change toward amputation. Also, he showed that cancer, however brutally it treats the cringing flesh, can't defeat the spirit.

The central truth, however, is that a youth wanted back the cards he had been dealing with in the beginning—all those winning cards. He wanted to feel two-legged again, an obsession that took him 5,000 km and then beyond the edge of endurance.

Fixed in our memory is the sight of the one-legged youth, his face drained, hopping mile after mile on that punishing pavement. His quest grips us, his search for wholeness is a spiritual longing deep in us all. He asserts that he is unique. He has wonders locked within. He is more than you can see. He is not a wounded boy on an overcrowded planet. He matters.

People wept to see him run. They wept for his pain; they wept for his foolish pride. They wept with pity. And they wept most of all for envy to be like Terry Fox, wholehearted and unashamed. They longed to care that much, about anything. And to go for it. All out.

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