

Thank you Terry Fox

By Sarah Sobanski

Thursday, Sept. 29 and Bird's Creek Public School wraps up the last of Terry Fox runs in the Hastings Highlands - where did September go?

Every year for 30 days, people from all over the world band together to fight cancer because of one extraordinarily brave Canadian. The Terry Fox Foundation calls it "the ultimate autumn tradition."

The Terry Fox Run took place in over 800 communities in Canada this year. It was hosted in Chennai, India; Hampshire, England; Paris, France; Sapporo, Japan and many other places internationally organized by everyone from members of Canadian embassies to individuals looking to make a difference.

For me, Terry Fox has always been the 21-year-old who trekked from St. John's, Nfld., to Thunder Bay, Ont., with bone cancer. He's always been the man in whose honour money is raised for cancer research. Terry Fox and cancer research are two sides of the same coin.

It has since come to my attention, that this is not the case for everyone. For many people still around today, Terry Fox is not an intangible myth. He was a man before he was a legend.

"It was dark, 4:30 [a.m.] or 5 [a.m.] or maybe 5:30 [a.m.], and he was coming down Hwy 2 on that hill before Thicksen Road [in Whitby]," explained my mother when I asked her if she had seen Terry Fox. She was 16 when he ran his Marathon of Hope. "I was a teenager, it was hard to get up that early.

"There were 20 people on the street. All of the sudden we could see him in the distance behind a car that was coming really super slow. As soon as the car got out of the way then people started cheering and they're going, all right Terry, Terry yay."

I asked her what he was like, what he seemed like.

"He smiled and waved at people but he didn't say anything. He probably, you know, didn't have the breath right. He didn't stop either. He just kept going. He had probably just started, it was so early in the morning," she remembered - as you might imagine, being a morning person doesn't run in the family. "For 5:30 [a.m.] in the morning people were wide awake. It was really cool. It felt like you were a part of something."

On Sept. 1, Terry Fox finished his run after his cancer spread to his lungs. That's 143 days and 5,373 kilometres later.

I heard on the radio sometime over the course of this month that something like this had never been done before. Running to raise money for cancer awareness, or to fundraise, wasn't a regular occurrence. That seems strange to me. I'm not even a runner and I've chased the cure before - both with the Terry Fox Run and CIBC's Run for the Cure. I can't think of someone off the top of my head who hasn't participated in a walk or run for a cure.

It's humbling to remember Terry Fox as a person. It's humbling to imagine what he must have been going through - from thinking about things like [individual critical illness insurance](#) and how he wanted to go about the remainder of his days - and how incredible he really was. It's humbling to remember that cancer touches each and every one of us.

The fall before last, one of my dearest friends was diagnosed with cancer at 21-years-old - the same age as Terry Fox when he died, though he was diagnosed at 18. I don't think it's news you can prepare for.

Without going into detail, the first thought for my friends and I who were close to her, was to donate money to cancer research. Now a bunch of 20-somethings just out of school digging around for everything they hadn't put into student loans wasn't much, but it was something. It's Terry Fox who gave us that instinct.

According to the Terry Fox Foundation, the Terry Fox Run has raised over \$650 million worldwide for cancer research. That's not including the countless runs and ideas he has sparked that have led to more across the globe. That's not including a financial quantity for the hope he has inspired.

On behalf of my great grandmother, both of my grandfathers, two of my aunts, my uncle, my mother, my dad's best friend, my best friend and all of the people who love and care about them, thank you Terry Fox. Who knows where any of us would be today without your leadership and your dedication to finding a cure.