

## ORDINARY CANADIANS:

by Laurel Pardy

People need heroes. Give them an opportunity and they will throw the mantle of heroism around any likely, or unlikely, contender. The trouble with modern heroes is that media-induced familiarity reveals their human frailties. The public is doomed to be disappointed by feet of clay if time and distance do not blur the rough edges of reality. And pity the poor hero — with such demands for success and purity, one can only fail to meet expectations.

Instead of deploring the lack of noble heroes and heroines, let us warm ourselves in the glow of ordinary people who persevere against incredible odds, who live a life of quiet service and who try to leave the world a better place. Unsung, unknown and uncounted are thousands of men and women whose ingenuity, efforts or service mark them as potential heroes. From time to time, fortunately, the public discovers these non-heroes.

Canadians do not lack for such persons, either now or in the past. Some have been remembered by history: Father Brébeuf, Louis Riel, Billy Bishop, Wilder Penfield, Lester Pearson. Whether **Naomi Bronstein** and **Sandra Simpson**, **Terry Fox** and **Steve Fonyo**, **Marc Garneau** and **Wayne Gretsky** will become part of tomorrow's common historic memory remains to be seen. Some will have their day in the sun and be forgotten, but not because they lacked the right stuff.

### A PRIVATE EVEREST

There is something exciting and charismatic about individuals who set a near-impossible goal and then pit strength, endurance and courage against it. They draw people to cheer, inspire hope and generate sympathy. Two such people are **Terry Fox** and **Steve Fonyo** who set out to beat the odds on cancer and run across Canada on a journey of hope.

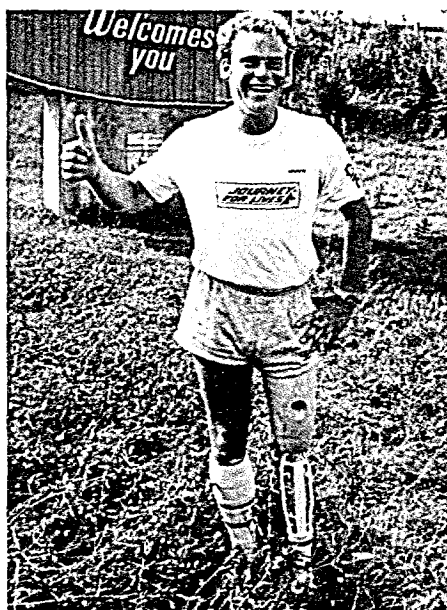
Handsome, articulate and winsome, Terry Fox had the power to touch Canadians. People opened their hearts and their pocket-books. He died a month short of his 23rd birthday, June 28, 1981, having raised \$23.1 million for cancer research, but having completed only part of his cross-country run. He is buried in an unpretentious municipal cemetery in Port Coquitlan, B.C. There are grander memorials along the route he ran, but here come visitors to leave mementoes, prayers and money; and gain a touch of his courage and hope.

Steve Fonyo was born in 1965, lost a leg to cancer at 12, and was 15 when Terry Fox had to quit his run in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Inspired by Fox and deeply affected by the suffering of other young cancer patients with him in hospital, Steve decided to try his own cross-Canada marathon.

For months he ran in snow, rain and sun but could not outrun the shadow of his predecessor. Slightly stocky, blunt spoken, a stubborn high school dropout, Steve Fonyo did not capture the affection of Canadians until he rammed his grit and courage down their throats. He has their attention now, though, and thousands will rejoice when he reaches mile zero on the Trans-Canada Highway this month.

*Note: Fonyo completed his 7 924 km run on Wednesday, May 28th, 1985.*



Steve Fonyo

### MONEY DOES NOT A WEALTHY MAN MAKE

Mother Teresa's work among the poor and dying of Calcutta has inspired many to charitable deeds. Among these are Toronto dermatologist, **Andrew Simone** and his family. Life in the professional lane, expensive cars, long vacations and multiple residences could not provide the satisfaction with their lives they thought should be there. So, in 1973, in their mid-forties, the Simones decided to live a life committed to acts of brotherly love.

They began by giving money away to troubled families and charities. But that was not enough. Away went the cars, the television sets and the fancy clothes; no more vacations and life in the social set. Instead, every cent that did not go for food and clothes for themselves and their 14 children went for food for their bigger family.

Food and drug companies now donate supplies; a close coterie of friends helps pack crates for shipment; the children walk instead of ride to save money and pay all their own tuition. He and his wife are national treasurers of the Canadian Branch of the International Association of Co-Workers of Mother Teresa, but seek no fame nor outward recognition of their philanthropic activities.

### HOSTAGE OR HERO

**Martin Overduin**, 30, of London, Ont., is a pilot and a missionary. He lives and works in Kenya, East Africa, where he flies eye surgeons to remote locations as part of the efforts by Sight by Wings, Inc., to reduce the incidence of blindness. In March, 1985, he and four others were captured and held hostage by Sudanese rebels. To save the life of an injured Ethiopian woman, he persuaded the rebels to allow him to fly her out to hospital. The agreement was that he would return within a set time, or they would shoot the other four hostages. Martin returned, putting his own life in danger again, rather than increase the risk to the lives of the others. After 15 days they were released, and Martin Overduin was surprised to find himself greeted as a hero. In his eyes, there had been no other choice.

### CHRISTMAS IS FOR GIVING

As a child in Hamilton, Ontario, **James Lomax** spent much of his life in and out of hospitals. The high point of the year was the annual visit from Santa Claus, and he vowed that he himself would be Santa Claus someday. At the age of 15 he started "Operation Santa Claus" with an old costume and a \$5 bag of candy left over from Hallowe'en. By 1982 he was distributing a minimum of \$100 000 worth of toys, food hampers, money, flowers and other items to area hospitals, mental institutions, homes for the aged, homes for the handicapped, the needy and others.

He takes his entire vacation (the last two weeks in November and all of December), from his job as a steel worker, to devote his time to being Santa Claus. Most of the money comes from individual donations; all of it goes toward gifts. Mr. Lomax and his family have never owned a car, or taken a vacation, all the extra cash goes towards fulfilling his lifelong dream of playing Santa Claus in the most real sense.

His efforts have been rewarded with numerous awards for good citizenship and membership in the Order of Canada.