

## My Running Journey

### Ed Toews

My running journey actually began in the spring of 1979. Through the local newspaper, the Tribune, I had read about a race called the Trib Run For Fun which was a 10K race held on May 6, 1979 in the Assiniboine Park. I had been doing some casual running before that, and not having any opportunity to train properly, I thought I would give the race a go. I had no idea what to expect and even after I finished, I had no idea how I did because the timing equipment had a malfunction and they could only give an approximate time so I may have finished around 47 minutes. It was a cool rainy morning but I enjoyed myself all the same. I kept training and had the bright idea to try my hand at a full marathon. It was the first edition of the Manitoba Marathon run on Sunday June 17, 1979 and run on a very sunny route. Unfortunately, due to lack of training and just an overall lack of knowledge about running, I dropped out at mile 13. I never had the opportunity to run the stretch from Headingly to the Winnipeg Stadium around Polo Park where the finish was.

That was the start to my running and I took a break for the next 31 years while we raised a family, three wonderful daughters. In 2010 our youngest daughter Stephanie came to me one day and asked me if I wanted to go for a little run. Stephanie had already run the Manitoba Half Marathon in 2009 with our oldest daughter Jennifer so she was getting in shape to do some other local races and was in pretty good shape already. I had just finished another season of refereeing basketball and thought I was in pretty good shape. We managed to run a block and walk a block, run a block, walk a block and this went on for about two miles and I was happy to be done that first “run” without throwing up. We did this for the next number of weeks and finally got to a point where I didn’t feel like I wanted to pass out anymore. So, not one to pass up a good challenge, we found a 10K race that we thought we could run together, it was the Air Force Run on May 30, 2010. The day was cool and rainy and my time was just over an hour, but it didn’t matter, I was hooked. That year I ran another nine 10K’s and one 5K. As far as I was concerned running 10K’s and 5K’s was just fine and I thought that running a Half or even a Full was for crazy people. Famous last words, right?

In 2011 I ran a total of 18 races, and you guessed it, I ran my first half, and in under two hours to boot. Another thrill for me was that my wife Heidi decided to take up running to improve her health and fitness and this truly made running a family affair. As all five of us traveled and ran races together, or ran our own races, we were all at the races together, and the next week we could talk about the thrill of finishing our own events.

In 2012 I managed to run a total of 20 races with six of them being half marathons. It was this year that I also ran my first international race in Germany, a 16K race and had the privilege of running it with our middle daughter Wendy. In the first three years I'm not sure that I ever ran a race alone. Running had become a family affair which included not just running, but traveling, as well. Just to round out the year I was able to run my first marathon and complete the circle of doing all of the distances. Running the Queen City Marathon in September of 2012 was life changing and my first question after finishing the marathon was, "Which marathon I should run next?". Don't get me wrong, I suffered mightily, but I think what I really appreciated about the race is that I set a goal to finish what I couldn't do in 1979 and now I had achieved the goal of completing a marathon.

One of the greatest achievements in all my years of running took hold of me in 2014. By then I had been completely hooked on running marathons and I thought it would be great to challenge myself and see how many I could run over a length of time. I also thought that just maybe I could attach a purpose to it so I came up with a plan that in 2015 that I would attempt to run 15 marathons in 15 months. Running for a purpose also gave me the idea that I wanted to run for the homeless and I approached Siloam Mission to bring in funds and awareness to this organization over the 15 months. The challenge would start on April 12, 2015 with the start of my vacation in Europe, where I ran in the Vienna City Marathon, and finish Sunday June 19, 2016 with the Manitoba Marathon. I'm not sure what happened, but the challenge grew to 20 marathons and then ended up at 29. It would have been 30, but one of the later marathons that I had signed up for cancelled (I wasn't disappointed). It was an exhausting journey but was such a positive one and the support along the way was overwhelming. I'm sure that I could have written a book just on the wonderful people I ran into. In all, it is hard to put a number on the funds that were raised through Run Ed Run because it never really stopped as people became supportive of Siloam Mission and continue to be involved in the organization long after I was done. I am still humbled by the generosity and support of people who partnered with me.

The favorite race that I ran was in Switzerland called the Jungfrau Marathon on September 8, 2018. It was on another trip to Europe that I planned to run this race which I'd had my eye on for a number of years. The lead up to the race started the year before when I developed a knee problem and was scheduled to have surgery in 2020; it's a very long process. So just before we are scheduled to leave I got a cortisone shot for that knee and I knew that my walk was fast enough to keep ahead of the sweepers. Walking didn't bother my knee. The race is simple, it's flat for the first 25K (sort of) and then you go up a mountain about 4133 feet for the next 17K. They also have very stringent cutoff times with the last one being 2K from the finish. It was a beautiful morning to start the race, clear and cool. I started walking fast and within 15K was passed by the sweepers. Not

sure if my knee would be able to let me run I gave it a try and sure enough I managed to catch the sweepers and stay ahead of them until I had to start climbing at 25K (thank you cortisone). From there I was in my element and managed to make both cutoffs and finish in 6:37. It was an epic mountain top experience, quite literally.

Running has really been a few things for me. It is something that the family is passionate about and has been something that has really brought us together. Add traveling to that and yes, we are that family that plans our vacations around running. When I was running Run Ed Run for Siloam Mission, I was able to connect with our daughters traveling to races, whether it was Jennifer and I going to Kansas City or meeting Wendy in Victoria, or Stephanie in South Carolina and Tennessee, these times were all very special to me. The people that we have met at races when we traveled have become friends, and it is a lot of fun meeting up no matter where we travelled, we would always run into someone that we knew.

To date I have run 65 marathons in 24 different states, six different provinces and about ten different countries. Some of the European countries that we have done races in were Italy, Germany, Chechia, Hungary, Switzerland, Poland, and Slovakia. Each one has a very special story.

I have been asked what the worst race is that I have ever done, and to be honest I don't have any. The closest I can come to that is probably the races I didn't get to run because of injury or the pandemic. I have had to cancel out of races such as Chicago, Las Vegas, Jerusalem, Barcelona, and Rotterdam, the last three because of the pandemic, but I will be back, you can count on that.