

Thomas Podruchny

It all started in 1979 when the late John Robertson – Founder orchestrated the inaugural run of the Manitoba Marathon. The Winnipeg radio stations were continually airing announcements of Manitoba's first marathon to be run in June on Father's Day.

I was 42 years of age, had played in every sport from an early age, was a relatively good runner and....."Why not a Marathon". So I embarked on a training program in early May of that year. My first pair of running shoes for which I invested \$5.00 didn't last two weeks. My next pair was a \$20.00 Puma and that was it. As the date of the race was nearing, I encountered alarming "family issues". My in-laws, my wife and two daughters tried hard to discourage me as they strongly felt that I "could die" in this grueling race. Well I assured them that I would only go for five miles at the most. On the day of the marathon I managed 18 miles non-stop. Nearing the 18 mile mark, Don Whitman (CJOB sportscaster) who was also in the race, announced at this point that he was ready to bow out and I decided that it was also good for me. It was not until the next day did I realize that one could walk at any point of the race. "I could have walked the balance of the distance". Hence my first marathon attempt stands at 18 miles.

Subsequently I began a year long training routine. In 1980 at the Manitoba Marathon I completed my first full marathon at a time of 3:47. In the ensuing years my finishing times shortened as in 1985 at age 48 I had a 3:27 time.

My most memorable marathon was the New York City Marathon in 1987.....no timing chip....no passing room for the first few miles....but finished in 3:43 holding a bagel that was given to me in the Bronx part of the route. The crowd noise was deafening from start to finish. At the finish line in Central Park, I leaped over a fence to meet my family who were there with our suitcases and raced to find a cab to go to the La Guardia Airport. Got there with five minutes to spare.

The number of marathons per year were gradually increasing from 1 to 3 to 5 to 10 to 18. I qualified for the Boston Marathon in 1992 at age of 55 with a time of 3:34 (one minute to spare). Ran in the 97th Boston Marathon in 1993.

The Marathoning Craze took me to places all over Canada and USA, 9 marathons in European cities and 1 in Tasmania.

In 2008 the Manitoba Marathon was my 100th marathon. It was a gala event as nearly 50 family members and friends were at the finish line, all carrying placards. This was followed by CJOB and CBC interviews. One note of memory took place on a May date in my 99th marathon in Fargo, ND where with about 50 yards to go and entering the indoor arena towards the finish line, I tripped over a projectile that sent me flying down hard. Four participating girls picked me up and forced me to the finish line. The Fargo Marathon organizers sent me a \$20.00 cheque to cover the cost of stitching my right upper cheek. This was one cheque that I have not cashed!

In September of 2008 my wife and I moved to Oakville, ON. Many, many, many marathons within a 300 mile travelling distance and temptation is high. To date I have done 336 full marathons as well as about 100 shorter races (5 km to Half Marathon). Since March of 2020 all my registered marathons were converted to “virtual” marathons. Fortunately I have an ideal 7 km training route so that six of these and a fraction gives me a marathon aided by a Garmin gps watch. Just recently I did the Virtual Boston Marathon.

I have been a participant in all of the Manitoba Marathons: 1979>18miles, 1980 to 2019>Full live marathons, 2020 to 2021>Full Virtual Marathons.

As I’m approaching age 85, when will this end? To date I’m successfully managing one to two marathons a month and I am registered to do the New York City Marathon in 2022. This date may be a turning point to drop down to shorter races.