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# From Far and Wide

## OUR DRIVE ACROSS CANADA

As we make our way back to the vehicle, my heart starts to sink. The trunk is open and a door ajar. I knew this would eventually happen. As Carsten rushes to the trunk, I think back to seven days ago....

His grey Volkswagen Jetta pulls up on the suburban street in front of my parents' house in Maple Ridge, B.C. A beautiful mid-August morning in 1997, Carsten and I are starting our journey across Canada. I was very excited—what a great character to be spending the next ten or so days driving with. Other than a small trip to Montreal the year before with friends to see my favorite team in one of the last games at the Montreal Forum, I had not been to any other provinces. Quebec City was his ultimate goal for studies while I was going to be flying overseas from New York—my first passport stored safely in my luggage.



Carsten was one of my first roommates while going to Simon Fraser University four years earlier. We lived with two other guys. Dave and Gurdev, in a house in Coquitlam. Dave, who I knew as a teammate on the Track and Field team, invited me to live with them. Carsten and I connected right away as he was also an avid runner. We would often do 10 km runs that ended with going up the steep hill of Thermal Drive before turning off to our place on Park Crescent. Every time we ran that portion, I saw the plaque marking Rick Hansen's tour. If he could go up in a wheelchair, I certainly could without one.

I recall the time Dave, Gurdev and I came home from an evening out

to find the front door unlocked and no one home. We were first worried about our stuff and if anything was stolen. Then we were worried about what happened to Carsten until he appeared at the front door in sweat, having just run his own “Man in Motion”. We angrily reminded him that the last one out has to lock the door, but his view was that everything is fine.

“No one’s going to ‘break into’ a home where the door is unlocked,” he snapped back.

This was a bone of contention between all of us for the remainder of the semester. Another time, I was on my own as Carsten, Dave, and Gurdev had gone out to see a movie. Before getting back to my studies, I thought I would fuel up with a quick dinner of perogies and cottage cheese and then do a run. Carsten and Dave were faster than me and I thought this was a chance to get in some extra training. After the meal, I removed the garbage lid and scraped away what was left in the pan. Then I quickly headed out with my Saucony running shoes, making sure to lock the door. Upon returning, there was a strange smell, like something was burning. I ran to the kitchen and the garbage lid was melting on the oven element surrounded with black smoke—I had left the element on. I quickly removed the lid and stuffed it in the back yard. Over the next few days, questions came up as to where the garbage can lid was.

“Maybe Carsten didn’t lock the door again and someone came in and stole it,” I said with a smile.



As Carsten gets out of the car, I help manoeuvre his luggage and his sister’s precious guitar, so I could fit my suitcases and backpack in the trunk. After giving my parents a hug, we were on our way. Always being the idealist, I was surprised to hear he still had his theory that people really didn’t need to lock their doors. Apparently this applied to vehicles too. He felt that lots of crime and theft occur because of the barriers we put up to stop it. It was hard for me to argue, I mean, he was well on his

way to completing his Masters in Criminology. So we made a compromise, we'd alternate between locked and unlocked doors at each stop along the way. And thus began our travels across this great, beautiful and stunning country.

Our first stop was in Banff where we set up a campsite and went on a small hike. We were surprised how easy the hikes were in comparison to the guide book. The picture of Moraine Lake on the \$20 bill does not do justice to what we saw. The peacefulness didn't last by the time we went to bed however, as we had to listen to someone cranking Bob Marley into the wee hours. Carsten has hated Bob Marley tunes ever since. By early morning, we were off and on our way to Calgary.

After an evening playing pool in Calgary, our next stop was Regina where Carsten had some friends. We continued to switch locking the door or not at each stop. Whenever it was "his turn", I felt a little nervous. However, the stunning horizon underneath the blazin' sky distracted me. Somehow we got lost in the Regina countryside but eventually found our way.

On to Winnipeg where we visited Fort Garry which used to be a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. We enjoyed the simpleness we felt in Winnipeg and ended up staying two nights. To make up time, we decided to drive straight from Winnipeg to Toronto without stopping. Carsten had to be in Quebec City in time to start his studies. As the day turned to night, we traded stories of our days as roommates along with deep philosophical conversations on life. About 2 a.m. somewhere around Thunder Bay, I suddenly wake up to industrial music, and notice Carsten half asleep while driving. Time to switch. Unfortunately, our attempt in the middle of the night to find the Terry Fox memorial was not successful. We probably went right past it. So I drove on with my own thoughts as Carsten slept.

Little did I know that Terry Fox would become a big inspiration to me seven years later. In March 2004, I was diagnosed with a devastating brain cancer—glioblastoma multiforme (GBM). Average survival, even

with aggressive treatment, is less than one year. I had to push myself on a daily basis just like Terry. The following year, my twin brother Noam gave me the replica Terry Fox shoes sold to raise money for cancer research. Knowing this hero had run a marathon a day twenty-five years earlier, I thought to myself, I can certainly do it once. So wearing my Terry Fox shoes, I trained over a few months and then ran my first full marathon in Iceland.

A couple years later, on a small road trip, I stopped at Mt. Terry Fox beside Jasper National Park. There were panels of information on his story and looking at this kind of made up for missing his memorial in Thunder Bay. I now wear the replica shoes at every annual Terry Fox Run and as I circle around Stanley Park in Vancouver, I have time to meditate on what he had done. Thinking of powerful moments from his past and mine gave me strength in the present. I had to soldier on—only I knew what must be done.

After driving through the sunrise that reflected over the Great Lakes, Carsten and I finally got to Toronto. We met our old roommate Gurdev, who was now working on a degree in Naturopathic Medicine. We laughed as we shared stories of our time living together. Soon after we made a brief stop in Ottawa giving us the chance to visit the Parliament Buildings and Rideau Hall. I was feeling proud to soak in our Canadian heritage, but I was excited about Montreal.

When we stopped in Montreal, it was “Carsten’s turn”—the car doors would be unlocked. After coming back from lunch we noticed the back trunk of the car was ajar and when we opened it, things were ruffled and messed up, and stuff was missing. We had been broken into. Well, not really as the doors were unlocked. My flight from New York was only days away and I had left my passport in a bag in the trunk. We slowly realized that while many things were stolen, including the special guitar and his running shoes, it was all of Carsten’s belongings. During the drive, our bags became quite mixed up in the trunk, but all my belongings were still there, including the bag with my passport. Now I felt

relieved. I made sure the big smile I felt didn't appear on my face. My point was made. He wanted the doors unlocked. I wanted them locked. For me, thieves were not welcome whereas he was inviting them. I never did tell him that they did actually take one thing of mine, my Sarah McLaughlin CD that was in the player in the front of the car. I made sure not to voice this and followed him to the police station to file a report. Then, when we got back, we had a parking ticket. Carsten, of course, was very upset and just wanted to get out of Montreal.

So we made our way to Quebec City right away. After a quick shopping trip to replace some of Carsten's things, including his underwear, we headed to the old city to stay in a hostel. We met a mutual friend who happened to be there, Lindsay, and we all had a nice poutine dinner. Early the next morning, we parted ways. Carsten would be beginning his studies while I took the train back to Montreal. I thought to myself that now I really could enjoy the city. I took a tour of the new rink my beloved Canadiens were now playing in and visited the artistic district.

The next day I took the train to New York to begin my next adventure. While my luggage was stored in the compartments underneath, I made sure my passport was in my pocket and with a smile, I wondered if Carsten was now locking the doors of his car.