



Canada Day 40km March

I had nothing planned for Canada Day but to get caught up on admin and website work and clean the apartment, and maybe take in a fireworks display later that evening, but the day before, a good friend of mine invited me to join in on a 40km march he was planning in Halifax - starting at 6AM! After pondering my fitness levels carefully, and the time I'd have to get out of bed to get ready to travel to the city, I decided to take part. I turned in for the night shortly after midnight, and was on the road to Halifax by 4:45AM. I had never walked such a distance before, so I was looking forward to seeing the outcome, good or bad. The morning was overcast and drizzly, but considering how hot it would be with a blazing sun, this was welcome weather. Arriving at CFB Windsor Park on time, I met up with Jeremy and Deana - both military, and experienced marchers - and we set out. The route we were walking stretched from Windsor Park to Hartlen Point and back again - 20km each way. When Jeremy stated that he had already walked this route twice over the weekend, I wondered if I was way in over my head, especially considering that both he and Deana had just taken part in the Bataan Memorial Death March in the New Mexico desert (<http://www.bataanmarch.com>) a couple of

months prior, and were in training for two marching events in Belgium happening this summer: the gruelling International Four Day Marches Nijmegen (<http://www.4daagse.nl>) and the scary 100km-in-24-hours Dodentocht (<http://www.dodentocht.be/en>). It was soon obvious to me that I was in the company of two hardcore marching machines. So, I intended to give it my best and try not to embarrass myself, and not use the cab fare in my wallet unless I absolutely had to. I knew this would be a challenge for me - but I wanted this learning experience, and learn I did. We crossed the MacDonell bridge, proceeded through downtown Dartmouth and made it to Shearwater by approximately 8AM - walking just over 5km per hour. We stopped for coffee at a Tims along the route, but my fingers were like sausages from all the blood pooling in my hands from the hiking, and I clumsily knocked my coffee to the floor. My heels were hurting a bit by this point, but my toes felt ok (I had put some petroleum jelly on them to minimize friction before putting on my boots at home).



L to R: Deana Sharpe, Jeremy Blackburn, Don Crowell

We pressed on through to Eastern Passage, and followed the Shore Road down to the Hartlen Point Forces Golf Club, the halfway mark of the march. At this point, Jeremy was doing fine, despite the heavy pack he was carrying, Deana was faring well, but as a protective measure covered her heel with a bandage. I took off my boots and socks and discovered blood blisters had formed on both heels. I should have taken advice from Jeremy to treat them right away, but I didn't want to go to the trouble then (big mistake). We set out on the return trip, and by Eastern Passage my feet were on fire, and my hips were getting sore, too. When you hike as part of a group, you are more motivated to continue. If I had been alone on this march, I would



have probably lost my will to keep going at the golf club after discovering the blisters. By the 30km point, each traffic light we stopped at was a blessing, a brief respite from the pain involved with taking each step. The temperature seemed to be rising, too. Uphill climbs seemed to be easier on me, but downhill inclines put more stress on my hips. Oddly enough, I was not tired; if I could have snapped on two new feet, I'd have been good to go. Somehow, we made it to the bridge, which proved to be much, much longer than it was at 6:30AM. And Windsor St. never seemed to end. Finally, back at the parking lot, I removed my boots and socks only to discover my left-foot blood blister now stretched from my heel to halfway up my foot! Seeing this triggered a nausea wave, partially brought on by a touch of heat exhaustion. **SEE PAGE 2**



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Happy Canada Day!

Homegrown Canada Day Trivia

1. What is the largest island in Canada?
2. What is the longest bridge in Canada?
3. Who was the first woman elected to the House of Commons? In what year was she elected?
4. In what city was Canada's first post office opened? What year?
5. What act of British Parliament created the Dominion of Canada on July 1st, 1867?

(Answers at bottom of page)

Another great resource for finding places to go here in Nova Scotia:
<http://www.trails.gov.ns.ca/>

Outdoorosophy

"Me thinks that the moment my legs begin to move, my thoughts begin to flow." - Henry David Thoreau

"When you have worn out your shoes, the strength of the shoe leather has passed into the fiber of your body. I measure your health by the number of shoes and hats and clothes you have worn out."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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- I've never cancelled a Scotian Hiker outdoor event despite bad weather forecasts, but when the outlook is calling for a 100% chance of pain, I am forced to. My feet are still in rough shape from the Canada Day march, and I need them to heal in time for the Cave Crawl on July 11. I am rescheduling the July 4 Gypsum Cliff hike for Sunday July 12. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Wave goodbye to stress.

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Canada Day 40km March continued...

Entirely my own fault, I neglected to drink enough water during the march, so I quickly grabbed a bottle from my pack and downed some water, and a Snickers bar too, to keep from passing out. I laid back on a grassy spot and waited for the nausea to pass. An MP drove up and asked us our business; Deana explained that we had just finished a 40km march as she was in training for the Nijmegen, and I showed him my left foot which made him smile - not a cruel smile, but a knowing smile, it seemed. Jeremy, who had gone back to his quarters earlier, came back down and expertly treated a couple of my major blisters (made use of the sterile blade in his blister kit; I filmed it, but I'm not sure if I'll post the video because of my ugly toes) and patched them up nicely. After 8.5 hours, the day was now done, and I had accomplished a 40km march, something I had never done before. Despite the lingering pain in my feet, I would not trade the experience for anything, and I have certainly not been deterred from attempting another one. In fact, I hope to take part in future long marches to toughen up for the Dodentocht. I have learned some valuable lessons: drink LOTS of water, and not just at break time, but all along the way; wear the right footwear, else risk painful blisters; treat blisters sooner rather than later; stretch your muscles during the march, after you've warmed up, and checking the distance left to travel is like watching a clock on the wall. AND - if you ever need to assemble a marching team, you want Jeremy and Deana on it, without a doubt. Favourite quote from the march: "Pain is weakness leaving the body." ;) I can't think of a more appropriate way to spend Canada Day - seeing a little bit of Canada in the company of two dedicated members of the Canadian military. Thanks to my marching mentors for a memorable day! :) *More pics on the SH Facebook profile.*

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