

## C3 Alumni Mark Herbst recognized by Princess Margaret Cancer Centre as top fundraiser

**By Riley Murphy**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Caledon's C3 Canadian Cross Training Club Alumni Mark Herbst has been recognized at Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital for being the single biggest individual fundraiser through his D.I.Y fundraiser.

Herbst recently donated almost \$70,000 to cancer research after biking around the world.

In his attempt for a Guinness World Record as the oldest person to circumnavigate the world by bicycle, Herbst cycled 30,000 kilometres around the world. He did this to raise money for cancer research in honour of his late wife, Jackie, who he lost in 2021 after she was diagnosed with squamous cell cancer.

Over 11 months, Herbst cycled through 25 countries, often spending more than 8 hours a day on the road, covering over 100 kilometres.

Herbst began his journey in Bangkok in January of last year and returned to that very spot this past December.

?It was pretty bizarre, actually, the finish. I had to ride back to the exact same place I started from, and I was on my own this time; there wasn't anybody to see me off,? laughs Herbst.

He says it wasn't until the next day, at his hotel, that it truly set in what he had just accomplished.

?It kind of hit me that, Oh my god, I just actually rode around the world,? Herbst recalls.

He is currently writing a book detailing his journey, and he shared that the trek itself was a logistical nightmare.

Herbst would wake up every day at 6 a.m. First, he'd listen to hear if it was raining, then pack up his stuff and set out for the day, often riding between eight and 12 hours each day.

Then, when all was done, Herbst would yet again have to find a place to stay, something he said was quite challenging, before unpacking his stuff and preparing to do it all again.

?I'd get my dinner together, and then I'd start looking at the logistics for the next day. I was travelling anywhere between 100 to 120 kilometres a day, so the first thing I would do is say if I do 120 kilometres tomorrow, where am I going to be, and usually you're not going to be anywhere.?

Herbst explains that he often had to travel even farther to find somewhere to stay for the night.

His bedtime routine included planning for food and water, service, heat, and the climb for the next day, then he'd have to log everything for Guinness and finally call it a day.

In every country he was in, Herbst encountered his own version of angels. He explains that, even when people would have nothing themselves, they would often invite him in for dinner.

During his time in Australia, a fan even wrote to him, saying they were out of town and that he could ?make himself at home.?

Never been the type to accept help before in his life, Herbst said that completely changed on his journey.

‘It’s just that I needed these people, I needed to accept their generosity, or I wouldn’t have made it,’ he says.

Oftentimes, the mental load was extremely challenging, he says, adding that it was much harder than he had ever anticipated.

But every day, he would get up and go.

Although he had many fun moments on his journey, he recounts a time when a stranger heard what he was doing, invited him to stay at their house, and took him lawn bowling.

‘I’ve never gone lawn bowling before. So sure. Yeah, I’ll do that,’ he laughs.

He continues to reflect on the kindness of strangers who got him through these times, like during the 40-degree heat, when a police officer checked on him daily during one of Herbst’s stretches of kilometres and brought him food and water.

Now back home safe and sound, Herbst is enjoying the simple pleasures of life again, like not setting his alarm and knowing where he’s going to sleep every night.

Already eager to get back on his bike, he’s now training for the Paris to Ancaster Bike Race in April.

For future trips, Herbst says he’s going to take them at a more leisurely pace, taking in the sights around him a little more than he did on his recent trip around the world.

‘Every country has something gorgeous about it,’ he says. ‘I saw so many incredible things.’

When Herbst began his journey, he set out to raise \$30,000, and as he got closer to the finish line, donations kept growing, bringing him to over \$67,000 today.

His original goal was to raise money for cancer research in each location, with that money staying in each place. But, as logistics made it nearly impossible, Herbst chose Princess Margaret to raise the money for.

He explains that they are among the top five research hospitals in the world, and that each research facility shares its data with the others.

‘This is something that is going to benefit everybody in the world that is touched by cancer. They may do something at Princess Margaret, and then somebody in Italy is doing a line of research and uses that data from Princess Margaret, and then they come up with something incredible that’s going to help people,’ says Herbst.

‘I wanted it to be worldwide. I wanted to speak to everyone, and cancer certainly does,’ he continues. ‘Two out of every five people in their life are going to be diagnosed with cancer. That’s insane. Twenty million people this year worldwide will be diagnosed with cancer.’

He describes being recognized by Princess Margaret as ‘icing on the cake,’ saying it completely surprised him.

It’s just like Herbst always to set a new goal for himself, and he hopes to have his book detailing his adventure out by next Christmas.

‘I wanted to write a book since I was in high school. I always wanted to do that. But I never had anything to write about. So this is a

great opportunity because it's obviously something very close to me, and I hope it resonates,? he says.