

## **It Will Be Spectacular**

**June Edit**

**by Dave Doroghy**

As I nervously sat in the ornate, plush boardroom of the Chateau Frontenac Hotel in Quebec City, my eyes were tearing from the thick smoke from expensive Cuban cigars. Six French-speaking multi-millionaires, all in their mid-fifties, surrounded me. None of them knew me or trusted me. A seventh millionaire would be joining us any minute. He and I had developed an elaborate secret scheme that, if successful, would result in our acquiring money from each of them for a worthy cause. I was 27 years old, scared, excited and anxious, and about to learn a real-life lesson on how the business world really works.

In the spring of 1985 a wheelchair athlete named Rick Hansen left Vancouver on a journey on which he would travel 24,901 miles through thirty-four different countries in a wheelchair. Rick's mission was to raise money for spinal cord research and, just as important, to make the world aware of the ability of the disabled. The tour raised over twenty-five million dollars in Canada and Rick Hansen, or the Man in Motion as he was called, became a national Canadian hero.

There's a story behind each one of the dollars raised. My story is about how millions of dollars were raised across Canada and how hundreds of thousands of dollars were raised in Quebec.

I originally became involved with Rick's tour in two separate roles. First off, I served as one of many volunteers getting the tour off the ground. At the time I worked as a junior account executive for a prestigious advertising agency in Vancouver called Palmer Jarvis. The agency's largest and most important account was McDonald's restaurants. When McDonald's became a major sponsor of the tour, I was assigned the task of raising funds throughout the McDonald's worldwide chain for Rick's tour, my second, and more extensive, involvement.

Rick and McDonald's was a McMarriage made in McHeaven. Rick was the perfect worldwide ambassador for McDonald's. He was young, bright, articulate and good looking. He was extremely well respected and well known in Vancouver. He came across very well on TV. Most of the countries that Rick planned

to visit on his wheelchair odyssey had McDonald's restaurants, and Rick's route generally followed the main highways and thoroughfares where the restaurants were located. Cameras followed Rick wherever he went, and part of his obligation to McDonald's was to visit their restaurants around the world. Before Rick left I remember helping him to sew bright yellow and red golden arches cloth patches onto all of his wheeling outfits. The patch would show up well on TV and garner the giant burger chain lots of exposure. McDonald's also provided Rick and the entire crew with McDonald's Gold Cards, which enabled them to eat for free at any McDonald's restaurant in the world. Very few people know that the Rick Hansen Man in Motion World Tour was largely fuelled on french fries and Big Macs.

My job, in a nutshell, was to get the McDonald's restaurants around the world fired up about Rick's visit. We developed promotional materials, brochures, videotapes and fundraising how-to manuals to spread the word. These were translated into different languages and sent to McDonald's restaurants around the world in the hopes that they would stage fundraisers for spinal cord research in each market. Unfortunately, in the busy world of frying burgers most of my efforts were ignored, and Rick went through countless McDonald's markets in foreign countries with little or no assistance. I remember one McDonald's owner in Washington state actually phoning me, downright annoyed that we had sent Rick to his restaurant. Rick was to make a brief stop there and, as it turned out, the restaurant was not wheelchair accessible. As the television cameras turned up to cover the visit, the entire initiative almost turned into a public relations nightmare.

Stationed in Vancouver as Rick and his entourage circled the planet, I was actually able to do very little to help. Despite best intentions, the McDonald's Canada sponsorship of the tour did very little to get the global corporate backing we had hoped for.

After more than a year on the road and with thirty-two countries behind him, Rick was about to return to Canada for the last leg of the tour. Fundraising efforts had not been successful. And although the support and the crowds were there in many parts of the world, the dollars did not follow. Hundreds of thousands of people came out to cheer Rick on in places like China, but very little money was raised. When Rick was about to return to St. John's, Newfoundland in August of 1986, the tour was in a deficit. The dollars raised were not even enough to cover operating expenses. Basically Rick was tired and broke and, in a

way, McDonald's and other sponsors had let him down.

George Cohon, the flamboyant and charitable chairman of McDonald's Canada, became aware of the disturbing situation and decided to do something about it. George was in Vancouver for Expo 86 and having lunch with a number of senior McDonald's executives and advertising agency people. It was this Vancouver group, under the leadership of the western Canadian president Ron Marcoux, that had originally initiated McDonald's sponsorship of the tour. The question came up: how could we get the entire McDonald's Canada chain to support Rick on his return from coast to coast? My name was suggested as the person who should be sent on the road for a year to wave the McDonald's fundraising banner for Rick in each Canadian city before he arrived. Rick's route was across the Trans-Canada Highway, a path rife with McDonald's restaurants. As we had learned by now, just mailing restaurants an information package on Rick wasn't working. An enthusiastic advance man was needed.

I still remember the phone call I received from my boss, the advertising agency's owner, George Jarvis. You have to keep in mind that at the time I was young and very, very junior in the advertising business. My job included monitoring the costs associated with designing french fry coupons, delivering posters to restaurants and accompanying Ronald McDonald on school visits. I clearly remember my phone ringing one day in the office at noon and George Jarvis asking me what I was wearing at the time. I told him that I had a suit and tie on. He told me that he might call me back. It seemed like a very strange call.

Twenty minutes later, he called me back from the expensive restaurant where he and George Cohon were and told me that I was going to be having lunch with the chairman of McDonald's. My stomach went into a tight knot.

Over lunch, Cohon told me to pack my bags, I would be leaving in five days and spending the next year on the road with Rick Hansen. The knot got tighter. Then he told me that our goal, and my responsibility, was to raise a quarter-million dollars nationally for Rick. Then the knot got so tight I could barely breathe.

Next thing I knew, I was on a nine-hour flight across the country to Saint John's, Newfoundland. I had to get there well before Rick arrived. I didn't know one person in Saint John's. And even worse, I didn't really know what I was going to do once I got

there or where I was going to stay. All I had was a list of phone numbers of McDonald's restaurants across Canada. That's all I had in my big, empty briefcase, this five-page list.

On the plane I had plenty of time to do the math. McDonald's had five hundred restaurants across Canada at the time. If we could raise five hundred dollars per location, we could hit the target. The permanent knot in my stomach relaxed a bit, until I realized that the amount of money raised per McDonald's restaurant worldwide up until now averaged zero.

My first job in Newfoundland was to meet with the restaurant owners from that province and have them collectively agree to a regional fundraiser. Although Rick was well known in British Columbia, no one in Newfoundland was really aware of who he was. To help with my promotional efforts, the advertising agency in Vancouver had couriered to me a promotional videotape on Rick, along with some posters.

McDonald's organizes its advertising across the country by developing small groups of restaurant franchisees, called co-ops. These co-ops are determined geographically by TV markets. The broadcast area of the dominant TV stations, or its "footprint", is usually the same area as the regional McDonald's co-op. The co-ops vote autonomously on local advertising and public relations programs that they collectively fund as a group. In other words, twenty restaurants in a geographical region will vote on selling hamburgers for 99 cents or something like that, and then convert all of their advertising to support it. In most cases my strategy was simple. Find out where the power lies within each advertising co-op, and pre-sell that restaurant owner on Rick Hansen. Usually the guy who owned the most McDonald's restaurants was the most influential person in the co-op, since he had the most votes.

The guy who owned five restaurants in St. John's was Keith King. He was vaguely aware of McDonald's sponsorship of "that guy in the wheelchair" and agreed to meet me. I think he was aware that McDonald's chairman, George Cohon, was backing this initiative and, owning the first store on Rick's route, he knew he had to do something. We kicked around some fundraising ideas and settled on the concept of his store selling Rick Hansen buttons for the three weeks leading up to Rick's arrival. It was a simple but good idea. With his commitment established, I had my first Canadian fundraiser in place. The St. John's McDonald's advertising co-op consisted of only nine restaurants. Keith King

owned five; the other four stores, owned by four different individuals, would have to go along with the plan. In the co-ops, the majority rules. I helped all the McDonald's owners design and place the order for the Rick Hansen buttons, supervised the production of a radio commercial and got some posters printed to support the fundraiser. It was August 17 and Rick's arrival back into Canada was slated for August 25. Great, nine restaurants organized, with another 491 to go. I had only two concerns: would anybody care that Rick Hansen had arrived back in Canada, and would the buttons sell?

That was basically how part of this crazy, peripatetic, never-been-done-before job worked. Organize a fundraiser in one market, then move west on to the next market and do it again. I would often ping-pong in and out of cities going to where-ever I was needed. Start at the Atlantic Ocean and when you hit the Pacific Ocean, you're finished. And if the tour was a success, your job back at the advertising agency might still be waiting for you.

Another part of the job was to go back to the market where you organized the fundraiser to help organize the cheque presentation to Rick when he passed through. The last part of the job was communications-related. Letting Rick know what McDonald's was doing, letting the McDonald's big-wigs in Toronto know what Rick was doing. Letting the western Canadian McDonald's head office know what Rick and the eastern stores were doing. Issuing press releases and advising Rick's office in Vancouver of fundraising progress. I even published a monthly newsletter that went to every store manager in Canada, updating them on what was happening in the field with Rick and the tour. I had strong corporate support from a wonderful woman named Maureen Kits, who worked at McDonald's headquarters in Toronto. Maureen was McDonald's national director of PR and she helped me steer clear of the politics and internal friction that accompanied a project of this scope. McDonald's western Canadian president, Ron Marcoux, was another big supporter who believed in Rick and me and did everything he could for the tour to succeed.

In a nutshell, my most important job was to pre-sell Rick. Or, as I liked to call it, smile and dial. I'd drive into a new town in my rental car. Get the name of the local McDonald's owners from my list, find a pay phone (this was before the days of cell phones) and try and get an appointment with them. At first some refused to see me. Then it got easier. All of my meetings were in the

lobby of a McDonald's restaurant, usually over a cup of coffee. I tried to avoid lunchtime meetings, because they meant I would have to repeatedly, every day, eat McDonald's food. Most of the owners were pleasant enough and aware of their obligation to support this initiative in some way. But like everybody, they were busy and had limited charity budgets, and some disabled guy from Vancouver wheeling through their market wasn't always a top priority. I soon found out that what was important to me wasn't always all that important to them.

We came up with dozens of half-baked fundraising ideas and the stores became a testing ground. The beauty of the McDonald's system was that if something worked well in one market, we just rolled it out in another market. Selling buttons, bumper stickers, T-shirts and decals were all run-of-the-mill fundraisers that worked well enough. In some markets we would proclaim a certain day "Rick Hansen Day" and donate a dollar from every Big Mac sold to Rick. In New Brunswick we developed the concept of selling a certificate that represented a mile of Rick's journey. Oh, excuse me, a McMile of his journey. You have to remember that this was McDonald's and we had to McMarket McEverything. Some restaurants held Hansen for Hansen Dance-a-thons; others organized wheelchair basketball tournaments with local celebrities. Car washes, jog-a-thons and raffles were all great ideas that kept the money rolling in. One restaurant in Red Deer, Alberta even built an outdoor skating arena in their parking lot and raised money through it.

One of my favorite fundraising gimmicks was the Red McCarpet. We found a supplier that sold these gigantic thousand-metre rolls of thin red plastic catering tablecloth. If you have ever been to a large, low-budget Italian wedding, you will know the type of disposable red tablecloth I am talking about. We built two portable wooden dispensers for these rolls and ran promotions where we invited people to come into their local McDonald's to donate a dollar and to sign their name with a felt pen on the "carpet." When Rick reached each market, the tablecloth carpet would be rolled out from the front door of the restaurant onto the street. Rick rolling over thousands of signatures created a perfect newspaper photo opportunity or TV news clip. We billed it as the World's Longest Red McCarpet and got plenty of mileage out of it.

Back to Rick's arrival into Canada and our button campaign in St. John's, Newfoundland. Rick's point of entry back into the country was at Cape Spear, Newfoundland, fifty kilometres

outside of St. John's. It's a rocky piece of land that juts out just far enough into the Atlantic Ocean to be proclaimed the most easterly part of Canada. In the end, the residents of St. John's warmed up to Rick and bought into our button promotion. The nine McDonald's restaurants in that market sold a grand total of about six thousand buttons for a buck apiece. The buttons cost fifty cents each to produce. Once we backed our costs out, it meant that the nine stores raised about three hundred dollars per store. Hey, we raised \$2,700 , we'll take it! But then something extraordinary happened. Keith King decided that he would match the money raised with a personal cheque. I guess it wasn't that extraordinary when you remember that almost all of these McDonald's owners were millionaires. But it was extraordinary to me. The four other restaurant owners in St. John's quickly followed suit, and before we knew it, we had doubled our total, raising over six hundred dollars per store! You do the math. With five hundred McDonald's restaurants in Canada, if we could maintain that fundraising level, we would raise three hundred thousand dollars and I could keep my job at the ad agency. I actually lay awake at night thinking that if we didn't hit our fundraising target, I would become a national marketing donkey and may not be welcomed back at Palmer Jarvis on the other side of the country. At any rate, everyone was pleased with our fundraising efforts in our first Canadian city.

Down the road in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, the McDonald's teamed up with the local radio station and held an on-air pledge drive the weekend before Rick was scheduled to arrive. It raised \$540. Not to be outdone by his St. John's counterparts, the McDonald's owner-operator in Corner Brook wrote a personal cheque for \$260 to top up the total. Not only was a matter of personal pride at play here (upstaging the McDonald's down the road), but round numbers look best at big cheque presentations. When Rick hit Corner Brook, the local McDonald's burger baron handed him a giant cheque for eight hundred dollars. Gander, Newfoundland held a jog-a-thon and in Grand Falls they auctioned off a Rick Hansen signed T-shirt. In each market where I helped organize an event, the total raised for each store inched up. By the time we left the "Rock", as Newfoundland is called, we had averaged \$841 per store.

It is important to stop here and re-emphasize the competitive nature of the McDonald's system. The whole chain is built on exceeding sales numbers and breaking records. The stores are very competitive with one another. If you own the highest-volume store in your city or area, it comes with a large degree of profile

and status. Each region and province also competes against the other regions to outdo each other in terms of food sales. Highest-grossing lunch hours, highest average purchases, busiest drive-thrus and most customers served in an hour are all highly sought-after records. McDonald's has developed a very, very competitive national system.

So, as the stores in Newfoundland were doing well raising money for Rick, I made sure that the stores in Nova Scotia knew about it. After leaving Newfoundland, I based myself in Halifax for a week and toured the province. I drove throughout the region spreading the word on what had been accomplished across Cabot Strait. I was effectively throwing down the fundraising gauntlet and challenging the Nova Scotia McDonald's to rise to the challenge.

And they did. By the time we made it through Nova Scotia, the twenty-three stores in that province had raised an average of \$910 each. Again the franchisees were topping up the totals with their own money. This time it was done not so much as a gesture to help Rick, but more as a way of ensuring that they exceeded the totals of other stores in the previous province. For the twelve days that we wheeled through Nova Scotia, each day we broke a record for the most dollars raised by a single McDonald's restaurant. The Maritime restaurant owners had healthy egos and even healthier bank accounts. Burger sales were good. They also were beginning to recognize the significance of the tour and what Rick Hansen was trying to accomplish.

Prince Edward Island had only two stores at the time, but between the two of them they raised over three thousand dollars. The McDonald's owner from Prince Edward Island totally backed the initiative. When he heard I was planning a visit, he even offered to come and pick me up in his private plane and fly me to Summerside.

In October we rolled into the final Maritime province, New Brunswick, and by now the owners of the restaurants couldn't wait to see me. I'll never forget another restaurant owner named Jim Roberts from Grand Falls, New Brunswick, who invited me over to his place for dinner one night to meet his family. This guy lived directly across the street from the restaurant he owned and could view the efficiency of his drive-thru from his dining room. Although he seemed preoccupied over dinner, keeping an eye on the service times in the take-out window of his restaurant, he still caught the gist of my pitch.



I swept through New Brunswick, evangelically spreading the news of Rick's arrival. Well before he entered the province, every McDonald's restaurant was busy raising funds for him. Wrapping up my Maritime pre-selling tour in Fredericton, I made a quick trip back to Halifax for a cheque presentation ceremony on the steps of City Hall before boarding a flight to Montreal.

I had been warned that interest in Rick Hansen in Quebec was low. Some people went so far as to say it would be impossible for us to raise any money for the Man in Motion Tour in that province. Another Canadian hero, Terry Fox, had gone through the province in 1980 virtually unnoticed. Steve Fonyo, who followed in Terry's footsteps, also had very little success in the fundraising department in Quebec. Someone told me that the people of Quebec donate most of their money to the church. An unknown Anglophone wheeling through La Belle Province was going to be a tough sell.

With this in mind, the tour did three things right in Quebec that maximized our fundraising efforts. Rick deserves a lot of credit for conducting his media interviews in that province in French. Although he was far from fluent, I believe the effort that he made helped to endear him to the hearts of the Quebecois. Secondly, Rick wheeled through Quebec with a well-known local wheelchair athlete named Andre Viger, from Sherbrooke. This not only raised Rick's profile, but it also localized our promotional efforts. Although many people in Quebec had never heard of Rick Hansen, they knew Andre Viger. Teaming the two athletes together was a smart move.

The third thing we did right was an idea conceived by the executives at McDonald's Quebec advertising agency, Cossette Communications, well before Rick actually arrived in the province. Through my contacts in the ad business, I arranged for a meeting with the Cossette Communications ad executive who handled the McDonald's account. Like me, he knew we needed a special hook to succeed in Quebec. His idea was to somehow tie Rick into the hottest cultural and social phenomenon in the province, hockey. Hockey is not just a game in Quebec; it is a religion. It just so happened that Cossette Communications also handled the advertising for the Montreal Canadiens. The hockey gods must have been looking down on Rick Hansen that day because, as fate would have it, on Saturday, October the 18th, as Rick was going to wheel through Montreal, the Quebec Nordiques were scheduled to play the Montreal Canadiens, a

game that was scheduled to be broadcast on Hockey Night in Canada. The idea was to stage a province-wide fundraiser before Rick arrived in Montreal and then have Rick drop the puck at the Forum, followed by a cheque presentation on behalf of all of the McDonald's in the province.

As we worked out the details of the promotion it got even better. In arranging for the puck drop presentation with the two teams, the agency was able to bring the teams on as co-sponsors of the event. The fundraising idea for Quebec was to sell baseball caps featuring the Montreal Canadiens logo and the Quebec Nordiques logo, combined with the tag line "We're with you, Rick" in French. It was a great hook. Through Rick's association with the two teams, he gained instant credibility, recognition and acceptance. Having Rick drop the puck at the game was a great publicity stunt that tied in with the fundraiser. Brilliant idea. But that's what ad agencies are paid to come up with , brilliant ideas.

But a brilliant idea is one thing and the execution of the idea is another. That's where I came in. Now it was my turn to go back out on the road all over Quebec and sell the idea of running this baseball cap fundraising promotion to the McDonald's owners. As with the buttons, the key was in getting each owner to commit to pre-ordering a large number of baseball hats. The hats cost a buck to produce and we planned to sell them for two dollars each.

Soon after developing the concept with the ad agency, I learned that all of the McDonald's owners in the province would be having a quarterly provincial co-op meeting the following week in Montreal. All of the co-ops would be together in one room for me to make my impassioned plea to them. I remember calling the regional Quebec McDonald's advertising manager, Michel Labelle, to request a spot on the meeting agenda.

Back at my hotel in the Maritimes I got ready for the meeting by preparing a twenty-minute slide show that reviewed our fundraising success to date. My presentation was complete with motivational beauty shots of Rick on the road, combined with a tear-jerking video. This was a big pitch for me, and if I could convince the 125 restaurants in Quebec to order eight hundred hats each, the fundraising juggernaut we had created in the Maritimes would continue to gain momentum.

I flew back into Montreal on September 16th and went straight to the hotel with my slide trays and videos. Michel Labelle met me

in the lobby and explained that they had a jam-packed, tight agenda and I would have to keep my presentation to under five minutes. Sales were down in the region and the provincial co-op had important issues to consider, so "keep it short" was the message. Since I had prepared a twenty-minute presentation, the direction to cut it short was very disappointing. At one point half-way through the meeting, Michel came out and advised that there might not be enough time for my presentation at all. It became apparent to me once again that what was important to me wasn't all that important to them. I had a tough sale to make.

I was pushed to the very end of the agenda, and finally at 4:45, after the group had been meeting for most of the day, it was my turn to make my important pitch in the stuffy, crowded hotel meeting room. I gave it my best shot, but could clearly tell that the group was fading fast. They were totally uninterested in me or Rick. Their dismal level of attention could be described as perfunctory at best. The entire meeting up until that point had been in French, so it was unclear to me exactly how many people in the group could even understand what I was saying. After concluding my abbreviated presentation, I mustered all the conviction and passion I had and asked each restaurant to pre-order eight hundred hats.

Michel asked me to leave the room to allow the group to vote on my request. When I returned, I was informed that the Quebec provincial co-op fundamentally supported the Rick Hansen/Montreal Canadiens/Quebec Nordiques cap promotion. Furthermore, each restaurant was prepared to order and sell one hundred hats. I was crestfallen.

I put on my best diplomatic happy face and thanked the group with my best merci. I told them that I would look forward to seeing them again when Rick dropped the puck in the Forum. Then I left the meeting and went to the hotel lobby, where I sat down and tried to figure out where I went wrong. The promotion was sound, the pitch was OK. Short, but OK. But I didn't make the sale. One hundred caps per store meant that we could only raise a maximum of one hundred dollars per store. We were about to take a giant backwards step in our fundraising efforts.

When Michel got out of the meeting, he saw me sitting alone in the lobby feeling sorry for myself, and he came over to talk to me. He explained that while I was out of the room the debate was heated. At one point, the co-op was going to pass on the promotion altogether and not even participate. He told me that I

should feel good that I had accomplished the participation of every restaurant in the province in the program. I explained my disappointment in the level of commitment and the measly cap order. I went on to tell him that we were sunk if we were to lose the fundraising momentum that we had worked so hard to create up until now. Heading into Ontario we needed to be building up steam, not losing it.

Michel understood where I was coming from. Then he came up with what he described as a "long shot" of an idea that might give me a second chance. He explained to me that the fourteen McDonald's restaurants in Quebec City were very influential. And although they were part of the provincial co-op, they often ran promotions independently. A man named Yves Simard owned seven of the restaurants in Quebec City, and during the meeting Yves had been very vocal in his support of Rick Hansen. As luck would have it, the Quebec City mini co-op was meeting the following week. If Yves would allow me on the agenda of their co-op meeting and if we could get the Quebec City owners to increase their hat order, then possibly the whole provincial co-op might reconsider their position. It was worth a try.

After the long, controversial co-op meeting Yves Simard was still in the hotel lobby relaxing over a glass of red wine. Michel introduced me to him and I liked him right off the bat. Certain guys just exude success, and Yves was one of them. Stylish, smartly dressed and full of life, enthusiasm and confidence, with that wonderful French flair and passion, he must have been in his mid-fifties, but after I spoke to him for a few minutes he seemed much younger. I could tell that he was the kind of guy who, when he set his mind to something, would make it happen. Yves was the only guy in Montreal as pissed off as I was about the Quebec provincial co-op not agreeing to order eight hundred caps per store. In his thick French accent he told me, "This Rick 'Ansen seems like a great Canadian 'ero and I can't believe the rest of those dummies in there wouldn't back him 100%." His comments gave me the perfect opening to invite myself to his upcoming mini co-op meeting to see if we could increase the hat order in the fourteen stores where he had a sphere of influence. The meeting was scheduled for September 25, and as you'll see, turned out to be a pivotal point for the success of the rest of the tour.

Yves was just one of many interesting McDonald's owners I met in the year I spent as Rick's advance sponsorship man across Canada. A few months later and further down the road in

Kingston, Ontario, I would meet another McDonald's owner-operator named Rick Hession. (Rick Hession and Rick Hansen is confusing, I know, but stay with me.) Hession owned three restaurants in the area and was the young superstar of the system. From coast to coast, all the other McDonald's owner-operators knew about Hession. Larger than life, Rick Hession wasn't about to let Rick Hansen wheel through his market without outdoing every other restaurant in the country. This guy was a real player. He had a chauffeur drive him among his three McDonald's restaurants in a special van with an office built in the back so he could maximize his time. His stores led eastern Canada in overall sales. He held every prestigious McDonald's award that existed and was named franchisee of the year twice. He was a millionaire by the time he was twenty-five. To boot, he was a fitness freak. I remember going jogging one day with Rick Hession to get to know him. When I told him I was training for a twenty-six-mile marathon at the time, he responded, "Great, I am training for a hundred-mile endurance run." He then looked at me and said, "This is where we separate the men from the boys," and took off in a sprint.

He was really into cycling too. And, you guessed, he owned a really expensive bike. Actually he owned three bikes. It didn't take long for him to let me know that his primary racing bike was worth over four thousand dollars. That's twice as much as what my car at the time was worth. His other bikes were really expensive too. The reason I am telling you all this is because Rick Hession really wanted to spend a day cycling alongside Rick Hansen. My job was to make the arrangements as Rick One (Hansen) wheeled through the Kingston area to hook him up with Rick Two (Hession). This wasn't an unusual request and I had made many other arrangements like this during the tour. Since Hansen was always moving, it was a good way to have him meet some of the McDonald's sponsors along the way. It was usually pretty simple to arrange these mobile rendezvous. At least, up until then it was.

Hession kept on explaining to me how it would be so great wheeling with Rick Hansen because he owned this really great bike. It was so light, with a modified gear changer, especially custom built to fit him. He wanted me to join them so that I could take pictures of them together, using his really expensive camera. "Don't worry, I have another customized bike for you too," he told me.

The funny thing to me about all this bragging was, as I told

Hession a few times, that Rick Hansen wheeled at about only seven miles per hour. It really wasn't necessary to bring out all of his Tour de France gear. Besides, we kept a couple of perfectly good old extra mountain bikes for guests on a rack on the back of Hansen's motor home. Hession didn't listen and kept on telling me how his cycling training was going for the big day in November when he was going to accompany Hansen.

Don't get me wrong, Hession was actually a pretty good guy. Just over-zealous about everything! But it was a good thing for us that he was. By the time Rick Hansen reached Ontario, Rick Hession's three restaurants in Kingston, Napanee and Brockville had raised more money than any restaurants in the system. Gee, what a surprise.

The evening before Rick Hansen arrived in Kingston, I got a call late at night at my hotel room from Rick Hession. The arrangements that Hession and I had agreed to were pretty straightforward: start the day at 6 a.m. with his chauffeur picking me up at the hotel. As I answered the phone, I wondered what Hession wanted. I soon found out that there were two things. First off, he was monitoring the weather for his big ride the next day and wanted to tell me that because there was a chance of rain, he had gone out and bought some special light-weight Italian rain tires for our bikes. What a waste of time and money, I thought. Secondly, he wanted to send his chauffeur over to the hotel that night to measure my inseam so they could get my bike set up just right. Talk about much ado about nothing. We were going for a simple, slow bike ride on a gentle country road on a damp fall day, something I had done dozens of times before with no preparation whatsoever on a beat-up old mountain bike that belonged to the tour. Why all the fuss? Oh well, I was there to keep the McDonald's sponsors happy, so if he wanted to send someone over to measure my leg, who cared?

At quarter to six the next morning Hession called from the hotel lobby, where he and his driver were both waiting for me. When I got down there I had to contain my laughter. He had all the super-expensive bike racing gear on. A brief description from head to toe: Helmet, complete with rear-view mirror on a wire. Expensive Vuarnet sunglasses. Colourful, tight-fitting European racing jersey covered with Michelin and Fiat logos. Padded-crotch black spandex racing pants. Special Italian bike racing shoes. I felt so inadequate in my sweat pants and Rick Hansen T-shirt.

The driver dropped us off at the intersection of two country roads, where Rick Hansen was scheduled to wheel by in half an hour. While we waited, Rick Hession kept on making all these unnecessary adjustments to our bikes. He was driving me crazing fussing over everything. He changed the height of his seat three times. On his final adjustment to the seat he cranked the Allen wrench so hard that he stripped the nut. When Rick Hansen finally wheeled by we couldn't even cycle alongside him because Hession had broken the seat on his bike. No worries. He called his driver on the radio phone to bring another bike.

Finally we caught up to Rick Hansen and things went well for a few hours after that. The two of them hit it off and chatted as they wheeled. Rick Hansen was always comfortable, humble and relaxed when he met McDonald's owners. Besides, I am sure they would have had a lot to talk about with Hession explaining the success of his local fundraising. I cycled ahead with Hession's fancy camera, photographing the two of them slowly travelling down the road together. I remember later seeing one of my shots of the two of them, blown up in the lobby of Hession's restaurant.

Later that afternoon Hession told me he wanted to make a slight adjustment to the chain on his bike. I think it wasn't tight enough for him or something and he had to take a couple of links off it. He asked me to give him a hand and suggested we whiz ahead on our bikes and do it down the road. The plan was that while we made the adjustment to his bike Rick Hansen would naturally catch up in his wheelchair. But when we sped off, Hession's back bike tire blew. The special Italian rain tires he had installed the night before were very light-weight, hence very thin. It never rained anyway. I'll never forget standing on the side of the road watching Hession repairing his tire as Hansen slowly wheeled by.

By the time he made the tire repair and adjusted his chain and caught up to Hansen, it was almost time to call it a day. If we had just used the old bikes on the back of the motor home, everything would have been so much simpler.

Say what you will about Rick Hession's eccentricities, I will admit he was one hell of a promoter and fundraiser. By the time Rick Hansen wheeled into the Kingston region, there was a gigantic cheque for waiting for him. Hession's one store in Kingston alone had raised over ten thousand dollars selling yellow Rick Hansen ribbons. His stores in Napanee and Brockville had raised about

five thousand dollars each through donation boxes and button sales, and Hession topped up the total with a personal contribution of his own for seven thousand dollars.

The first Hession McDonald's restaurant that Rick Hansen wheeled into in the region was the outlet in Napanee. The manager of that store had constructed a gigantic six-foot hamburger flipper out of sheet metal, and on the long metallic flipper portion of the prop he engraved graphics to make it look like a cheque for twenty-seven thousand dollars. Rick's one-kilometre wheel through Napanee was the biggest event to hit that community in decades. And of course the focal point of the event was the cheque presentation at Rick Hession's McDonald's. Hundreds of excited Napanee residents showed up, along with the local media. A makeshift stage was built outside the restaurant, where Rick Hession and his manager unveiled the gigantic hamburger spatula promissory note for twenty-seven thousand dollars. Everyone in the crowd went wild, because essentially it was the community, each and every one of them, who had contributed the money. It was their combined efforts that were being recognized. Rick Hession and his McDonald's restaurant were merely the catalyst that allowed this small town to express their admiration and gratitude to a great Canadian hero. The mayor was there onstage, joined by a local fourteen-year-old girl who had been injured recently in a car accident and was still in a wheelchair. The presidents of the service clubs were there too. Kinsmen, Kiwanis, the Telephone Pioneers, they were all represented. Dozens of people with different disabilities were also on hand. The cheque presentation was a big success. All the residents of Napanee could be proud of the role they played in recognizing and supporting Rick Hansen. The next day, of course, the front page of the local paper featured a large picture of Rick Hession presenting Rick Hansen with the twenty-seven-thousand-dollar promissory note shaped like a giant hamburger flipper.

This spectacle was repeated again at Rick Hession's McDonald's restaurants in Brockville and Kingston. The two Ricks were constants. Insert new mayor, new restaurant manager and new service club presidents. The same spatula was unveiled and featured on the front page of each local paper in the three towns where Hession had outlets.

As a matter of fact, this same successful formula repeated itself across Canada at hundreds of McDonald's restaurants. The formula was so successful that it created a bit of a problem.



McDonald's liked the limelight and got into the habit of presenting the same cheque over and over again. Rick Hession's three McDonald's had collectively raised twenty-seven thousand dollars, but presented the same combined twenty-seven-thousand-dollar cheque on three different high-profile occasions. I remember Rick Hansen asking me if McDonald's in Kingston, Napanee and Brockville had raised a total of twenty-seven thousand dollars or eighty-one thousand dollars (three times twenty-seven). Of course, the honest answer was twenty-seven thousand dollars.

As the tour headed west, this creative accounting became an issue. McDonald's restaurants kept on presenting the same cheque over and over again. Many individual stores would do multiple cheque presentations. There was always a presentation at the store first. Then the store owner would present the same cheque again at a banquet or civic event away from the restaurant. To further complicate matters, when Rick reached a provincial capital, a cheque presentation usually took place on the steps of the provincial legislature. McDonald's regional supervisor was always there to present a cheque that represented all of the money raised from the stores in the province. Of course, this wasn't an incremental cheque, but another retread presentation representing all of the other presentations already made. When Rick finally reached Toronto, George Cohon, the president of McDonald's, had a huge cheque made up that represented all of the money raised in Canada through McDonald's restaurants so far. The humongous cheque was presented to Rick four times: at Toronto's Nathan Phillip Square, at the steps of the Toronto legislature, and at two different banquets. McDonald's deserved recognition for their hard work in raising funds and their commitment to Rick. They truly did an outstanding job right across the country, and for all the right reasons, but sometimes it just got a bit out of control.

Another funny and similar story involved a huge white and blue banner, thirty feet wide and five feet high, that McDonald's had produced to hang on the mansard roofs of their restaurants. The banner read "We're with you, Rick" and featured a couple of golden arches positioned on either side of the slogan. It was printed on heavy vinyl stock and had ropes to tie it down. As I mentioned before, Rick's route across Canada closely followed the Trans-Canada Highway, a route dotted with hundreds of McDonald's. Every time we pulled into a new town and wheeled into a McDonald's restaurant, the banner welcomed Rick and the

hundreds of onlookers who showed up to greet the Man in Motion. One day when I was cycling alongside Rick, he asked me, "How many banners did you guys produce? You must have a hundred of them!"

What Rick didn't know was that there was only one banner. After Rick left each market, I would circle back to the restaurant. The restaurant manager and I would pull out a ladder and I would climb onto the roof to retrieve the sign. Then I would roll it up, stick it in a box and drive it over to the local Greyhound bus depot. I would make sure it got onto the next bus destined for the next town the tour was wheeling to. At that other end, the McDonald's manager would pick it up from the bus terminal and put it up on the store's roof the day before Rick arrived. By the time the banner reached Vancouver, it was tattered and torn and I had become an expert on filling out Greyhound bus waybills and knowing the best way to climb to the top of McDonald's restaurants. Who says I didn't have a glamorous job?

Back to that important meeting in Quebec City. It was the end of September and I had left Rick Hansen in Fredericton, New Brunswick and travelled on my advance man mission to Quebec. Rick was scheduled to arrive in that province in two weeks and I had to salvage what was beginning to look like a lacklustre fundraiser.

One of the wonderful things about the tour for me was going to bed every night in a new city. And Quebec City in the fall has to be one of the most beautiful places in the world. It was snowing lightly the evening I arrived and the Hotel Frontenac seemed like a magical castle. After I arrived, Yves Simard invited me to his luxury apartment at 3 Rue Famille for a drink. His wife, Becky, a beautiful woman fifteen years his junior, joined us for dinner. I recall having a lovely evening full of engaging, lively and interesting conversation.

The next morning we met for breakfast in the hotel to discuss and develop a strategy for that day's co-op meeting.

Over breakfast Yves explained to me that the Quebec City co-op was among the most respected and highly regarded group of restaurants in Canada. One of the top-grossing restaurants in the country was in this small Canadian city. He owned it, of course. He pointed out how they had introduced several new product concepts and launched many never-been-done-before promotions into the system, here in Quebec City. He took the

credit for being the leader of this, the cutting-edge burger marketing think tank.

When the conversation turned to the Man in Motion World Tour, I sensed that he strongly believed in Rick, that he wanted to share in the dream. The impassioned presentation I had made three weeks earlier in Montreal had made an impression on him. More important, it was clear that with Yves Simard's belief in Rick, combined with his reputation, we could turn around the lethargic attitude of the rest of the McDonald's owners in the province.

Yves realized that the order of one hundred caps per store was pathetic. He had even ribbed the provincial co-op, accusing them of being cheap turkeys for opting for such a safe and low number. Apparently years ago a similar fundraiser had backfired and many of the licensees were left holding the bag for unsold promotional merchandise. He also mentioned to me that sales in the region were in the tank and that for that reason Rick couldn't have picked a worse time to wheel through Quebec. All that being said, Yves believed that if the individual store owners really got behind the promotion, it was realistic that each store could sell seven hundred caps. He told me that during the meeting he would table a motion that each restaurant in his co-op increase its order ten-fold, from a hundred caps per store to a thousand caps per store. He predicted that we needed to introduce a bigger number to the meeting to allow the other owners some wiggle room to negotiate his motion down to the seven hundred he hoped for. This guy knew how to get a deal done!

With our sound plan in place, it looked as though we might salvage the Quebec fundraising promotion. Then, just before leaving the breakfast table, Yves asked me in his thick French accent if there was anything else he could do for me. I figured if you don't ask, then you won't get. So I explained to him how in the Maritime provinces not only had the McDonald's restaurant owners conducted successful promotions, but on top of that they went the extra mile and wrote personal cheques to the Rick Hansen Man in Motion World Tour. The personal contributions had really helped to fuel the fundraising success to date.

Yves ruminated on the proposition. He stared upwards for almost twenty seconds, thinking without uttering a word. Then he said, "I have an idea." He stared at the ceiling for another ten seconds, then shouted out in a deep loud voice, "I have an idea and it will be spectacular!" That certainly got my attention.

He told me that to squeeze any personal dollars out of these tightwads he would have to do something very dramatic during today's meeting. Something truly spectacular! He needed to get their attention and shame them into contributing. His idea was that, after the increased hat order was approved in the meeting, he would ask me if there was anything else that he could do. I would explain, as I had just a few minutes ago, how the Maritime store owners had made personal contributions in addition to their fundraising commitments. Then in a dramatic fashion he would stand up in the middle of the meeting, pull out his chequebook and pen and write me a personal cheque right on the spot. Right there in the meeting with all those other guys watching. While he was explaining the scheme to me I could sense how excited he was. I was learning more and more about Yves Simard, and I liked it all. Not only was this guy a smart and compassionate businessman, but he was a bit of an actor too. Near the end of his description, for the third time he told me, "You just wait and see, Dave. It will be spectacular!" While he spoke, to give his point added punch, he reached with his right hand into his left inside jacket pocket for his chequebook.

But his chequebook wasn't there. He swore in French and told me that he had left it at home. I didn't miss a beat, and within two seconds of his cursing I had reached into my briefcase and pulled out my own personal chequebook. I told him, "Just use mine, the guys in the meeting won't know the difference." He gave me an incredulous look, smiled, grabbed the chequebook and said, "You're right, let's go."

As we headed out of the restaurant, he stopped abruptly and said, "Wait a minute." He told me it was very important that we didn't enter the meeting room together; otherwise the rest of the group might suspect that we had been scheming. He told me to go ahead without him and he would make his grand entrance alone a few minutes later.

The meeting room was a small pulpit jutting out of the roofline of the Hotel Frontenac. It had a thick dark-green carpet, ornate pale yellow walls, a fancy silver coffee service and beautiful old oil paintings that looked as if they had come out of the Louvre. The view from the windows was of the sun rising over the Saint Lawrence River, emphasizing the fresh snow on the oxidized copper roof. The characters in the room all looked as if they had come out of an old black-and-white Humphrey Bogart movie. There were seven men, seven rich men, all in their late fifties or

early sixties. Their craggy faces were full of character. The room was full of thick cigar smoke from these French-Canadian burger barons. They spoke to one another in French and barely acknowledged me when I entered the room. One of them remembered me from the meeting in Montreal and came over to introduce himself. He told me that the meeting would begin as soon as Yves arrived. He asked me if I had seen him. I wouldn't blow Yves's cover and said no, I hadn't.

Certain people light up a room when they walk in and Yves was one of them. It was obvious that these hard-assed, astute business guys respected him. He worked the room, spread his charm and then sat down and called the meeting to order. In contrast to the meeting in Montreal, here the Rick Hansen initiative was the first thing on the agenda. Yves provided me with a gracious introduction in French and English and asked for an update on the tour. I reviewed the cumulative and provincial fundraising totals, talked about how many miles Rick had wheeled to date and related some success stories from the road. Then I previewed a French TV commercial that had been developed by McDonald's Quebec ad agency to launch Rick's tour in that province. Finally I asked them to reconsider increasing the number of hats per store that they had ordered.

A lively debate immediately ensued. The language switched between French and English. Usually the discourse would start in English and then, when it got more spirited, it would switch to a combination of English and French and when it became downright argumentative and overheated it would change to all-French. So in other words, when it got really good and everybody was yelling at each other and waving their arms in the air, that was when I could hardly understand what they were saying. I could kind of make out when one man said that his sales were in the toilet because of the recent failed Happy Meal promotion and he thought they should pass on running the Rick Hansen cap promotion altogether because it would interfere with the advertising campaign planned for double hamburgers. One of them, who looked like a French Alfred Hitchcock, barked out in broken English that he still had thousands of Children's Hospital lapel pins left over from an ill-conceived fundraising campaign from the year before. They kicked around the concept, discussing the pros and cons for twenty minutes, and when he felt that they had had enough time to review the matter Yves spoke.

"All right, enough said. I am looking for a motion from the floor to

increase our hat order for the Rick Hansen fundraising promotion from one hundred caps per store to one thousand caps per store." There was silence. Since Yves was the president of the mini co-op and standard Roberts Rules of order prevented him from introducing a motion, he needed it to come from the floor.

Once again he repeated himself and in a sterner, more forceful voice asked for a motion from the floor. Once again, silence. Then he slowly stood up. As he was speaking he stared each one of his colleagues in the eye. He said, "This guy Rick Hansen is out there in the freezing cold right now wheeling toward Quebec City. He is pouring his heart and soul into what he believes is right. He is wheeling seventy-five miles each day to make a difference. He is a hero! He is a bloody Canadian hero and I won't allow him to wheel into Quebec City without the full support of each and everyone damned one of you!!! It simply cannot happen. The opportunity to get behind something so special only happens once in a lifetime and we can't let this one pass us by, I won't allow it to happen. Not in our co-op. Not in our back yard. A hero is coming to Quebec City and we need to give him a hero's welcome. Now, I want a damned motion from the floor, and I want it now."

He banged his hand down on the table and sat down. There were ten seconds of silence and then all hell broke loose. More shouting at each other in French, finger pointing, more table banging. They all yelled at each other for about five minutes until finally it stopped. Yves looked over to me, smiled and said, "It's done. The Quebec co-op has unanimously agreed to order seven hundred caps per store to support one of Canada's greatest heroes, Rick Hansen." I diplomatically thanked them all on behalf of Rick, and told them that with their increased cap order I now planned to go back to the Quebec provincial co-op to have them reconsider upping their order. We discussed the dates that Rick would be in Quebec City and the date that he would drop the puck at a hockey game in Montreal. Then as I was wrapping up and about to leave, Yves gave me a nod and a little wink. The stage was set and it was time for him to do something spectacular.

"So, Dave," he said, "on behalf of the Quebec City co-op, I would like to thank you for coming to our meeting and introducing us to this unique opportunity. We look forward to seeing you again when you come back to Quebec City for the cheque presentation at my store. Before you go, is there anything else that we can do for you?" A little secret smile emerged from the side of his mouth

as he asked the question. I said, "You have all been great. As a corporation, McDonald's has done an outstanding job." I pointed out that as individuals all of the McDonald's owner-operators across Canada had really risen to the challenge, some even going as far as to write personal cheques to really back their commitment to the Rick Hansen Man in Motion World Tour.

That was my cue to Yves to take centre stage again. He stood up and pulled my chequebook out of his inside jacket pocket. Then he leaned over the desk and with his gold Cross pen started forcefully writing a cheque out. No one spoke. They just watched in silence as Yves filled out the numbers, date and his signature on the cheque. Still no one spoke. He walked across the room and, as he was handing me the cheque, said, "I don't know about you guys, but there is not enough that I can do for this great young man. I am giving Rick a personal cheque for five thousand dollars: one thousand dollars for each of my restaurants." He handed me the cheque, a cheque that no one knew was on my account. Then he stared me straight in the eye, shook my hand and sat back down at his seat.

And it worked. It really was quite a spectacular performance. It didn't receive applause or an ovation, but I knew it was spectacular because it worked. The seven other men around the table started to pull out their own chequebooks. Four pulled out their pens and chequebooks and started writing. The cheques were for one or two thousand each, depending on how many stores they owned. The three men in the room who did not have their chequebooks with them told me I could count on them to send their donations in.

I stuck the all the cheques in my pocket and didn't look at what was actually written on them until I got on the plane for the flight back to Fredericton. The actual cheque from Yves Simard is photocopied at the front of this story and, as you can see, where you are supposed to write in who the cheque is payable to, he wrote "How about that."

Well, how about that? From that meeting we had fourteen thousand dollars in personal pledges from the McDonald's restaurant owners in Quebec City. The order of seven hundred hats per store turned out to be not enough in the end. By the time Rick arrived in Quebec City, many of the stores had sold out of the hats and were ordering more. Between the hat proceeds, money donated from collection boxes at McDonald's counters, a car wash organized by some of the crew kids from Yves's

restaurant and the personal store owner donations, we raised over thirty-five thousand dollars in Quebec City. That was about \$2,500 per store. Thanks to the leadership of the stores in Quebec City, McDonald's head office in Montreal revisited the hat order for the rest of the province and upped the total to five hundred per store. We managed to maintain the momentum that we had built in the Maritimes right the through the province of Quebec. Yves's actions in the meeting, or more specifically the instant he pulled out my chequebook, really turned out to be a defining moment in McDonald's fundraising efforts for the tour. And by the way, Yves cheque and those of the three other McDonald's owners arrived at head office the next week.

Rick dropped the puck at the Canadiens vs the Nordiques at the old Montreal Forum. As he was introduced and wheeled onto the ice, he received a standing ovation that lasted ten times longer than all the silent pauses in the Quebec City co-op meeting combined. I remember my eyes filling up with tears as the crowd went wild with enthusiasm and adulation for this Anglophone from Vancouver. I truly felt that he did more for Canadian unity by wheeling through Quebec than all of Pierre Trudeau's exchange programs, cultural grants and government initiatives combined.

Of course, McDonald's were on hand at centre ice to present Rick with the money raised in the entire province. It totaled over \$130,000.

The success in Quebec spurred on more success in our most important market , Ontario. We knew that Toronto would be a tough city to crack, a make-it or break-it proposition. The larger the city, the harder is to get people's attention. Rick went through New York and most of the cities in the Eastern Seaboard unnoticed. However, when we got to Toronto, the fundraising juggernaut that we had created grew to unimaginable proportions and couldn't be stopped. Over ten thousand people came out to Nathan Phillip Square in Toronto to welcome Rick on November second. Just four months earlier in the States, hardly anyone was coming out to see Rick. Now we were faced with crowd control issues. Rick sat low to the ground in his chair and, as excited fans aggressively tried to get a look at him, there was the ever-present danger of the crowd's pushing and shoving getting out of control and someone getting crushed.

The mayor of Toronto proclaimed the next day Rick Hansen Day and McDonald's donated one dollar from every Big Mac sold to



Rick. By this time, stores in Ontario were raising five to six thousand dollars each through a wide variety of sure-fire, road-tested fundraising ideas.

And it only grew and grew from there. Rick wheeled through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in the dead of winter. In temperatures that sometimes went below minus thirty, he was out there day in, day out, wheeling straight into a harsh wind. The Rocky Mountains were another steep, almost impossibly monumental challenge that Rick overcame. I believe the adversity Rick faced in western Canada, the harsh weather and unforgiving landscapes, only made Canadians love him more and back him with stronger resolve. And they showed their love by donating more and more money. By the time we reached Alberta and B.C., most individual McDonald's stores were raising over ten thousand dollars each. Some of the high-volume stores were raising as much as thirty thousand dollars each. By the time we made it to the finish line in Vancouver on May 22, 1987, the McDonald's system had raised over two million dollars for Rick. Altogether, the Man in Motion World Tour raised over twenty-five million dollars for spinal cord research and rehabilitation and wheelchair sports. Needless to say, when it was all over they gave me back my job at the ad agency and the story had a happy ending for me. I was on the road for almost a year, and it was one of the most gratifying and exciting years of my life.

Eighteen years later, when I reflect back on the tour I realize the success we achieved collectively was made up of thousands of smaller defining moments. Rick's tremendous charisma, strong character and positive attitude drew out the best in all of us. His leadership helped us to make the right decisions in countless defining moments. His strength and determination encouraged us to embrace those defining moments and make the right decisions, empowering us to reach for the impossible. And on that cold winter day in 1986 at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City, the impossible was truly spectacular!