

# Around the world for a good cause

The greatest boon to the pursuit of fundraising for charitable causes has had to be the advent of the suffix "a-thon."

Originally a part of the noun marathon, it can now be tacked onto just about any verb to denote another kind of epic struggle — one to raise cash.

We've heard of walk-a-thons, bowl-a-thons, swim-a-thons, skate-a-thons; the list goes on. Most are one-day events in which participants collect pledges based on the number of times they can perform a set task, or travel a defined distance.

This is the story of a Mississauga man's participation in another kind of "a-thon" — one which will be his life's work for 3½ years and has the potential to raise millions of dollars for research into diseases which afflict young people, including Spina Bifida, Muscular Dystrophy and Multiple Sclerosis; to fund a water project to halt the encroachment of the desert in East Africa; and to support the maintenance and replanting of the world's forests.

Gary Flynn is preparing to join a group of British sailors on a double-circumnavigation



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whistle-stop tour of the globe aboard a 50-foot ocean-going catamaran. The expedition, dubbed the Bow Voyage for its figure-8-shaped route, will travel more than 100,000 miles and will take the five-man crew to more than 125 ports of call.

Flynn, who was raised in Newfoundland, but considers himself something of a global citizen, having lived in Australia and Florida, recently took up residence in Mississauga where he can be close to some of the country's largest corporations.

He says he's hoping to generate interest in the project by latching on to a major corporate sponsor who will help pay advertising

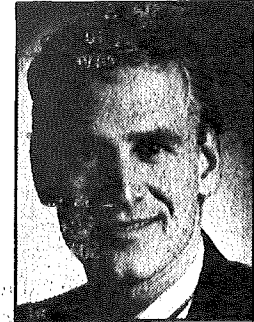
costs. And he's also on the prowl for anyone willing to contribute any amount based on miles travelled between ports.

That's where the sail-a-thon concept kicks in. Flynn has printed up a route chart listing distances from the start in London, England, to each port along the way. For example, the first leg is one of 125 miles to the Channel Islands. After that, it's on to Brest, France; a total of 250 miles from London.

If you wanted to sponsor the expedition as far as Brest, at one cent per mile, your contribution would be \$2.50. If that one-cent donation was to apply to Tahiti, you would pay \$165.90; to Prince Edward Island, \$425.55; to Vladivostok, USSR, 709.05; to Istanbul, Turkey, \$948.55; or all the way back to London, \$1,020.40.

It's the allure of the penny-per-mile which Flynn hopes will turn the trick. "A thousand dollars is not a large amount of money to a major corporation," he says. "But as the project is designed to involve a lot of people, it could generate millions in pledges."

Flynn says he hasn't met the expedition's



**GARY FLYNN**

master, Ken Ballard, or any of the other members of the crew. But he says he has confidence in their abilities. He says Ballard has taken great care to prepare for the perils of foul weather, night sailing and health hazards they might face in tropical climes.

Flynn says the voyage will offer challenges he's never before endured; but adds he's not worried. "It's like highway driving. You just can't afford to take your eyes off the wheel."

Despite its allure, and its dangers, Flynn says the trip is really nothing but a means to an end. "It's just a way to create some hope. And hope leads to faith," he says.

If you're interested in supporting Flynn's project, you can write to him at 694 Carrying Place, Mississauga L5C 3W6.