

# The Walking Marine



Walking The Walk For Fellow Veterans



# 600,000 Steps (300 Miles) for our Veterans

Terry Sharpe, The Walking Marine

Media Briefing Book

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## Background On Event

Terry Sharpe, better known as The Walking Marine, is once again walking 300 miles to bring attention to Veteran's issues. Terry, at age 69, is walking from just outside his hometown of Summerfield, North Carolina to the White House in Washington DC to raise awareness of the current Veteran suicide rate, which stands at 22 per day – the equivalent of one Veteran committing suicide every 65 minutes.

6,500 former military personnel killed themselves in 2012. More Veterans succumbed to suicide than were killed in Iraq. In 2012, 177 active-duty soldiers committed suicide, conversely 176 soldiers were killed in combat. In other words, more soldiers committed suicide compared to being killed in action. In 2012, the study concluded that Army had the highest number of suicides compared to any other service branch. In 2013, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs released a study that covered suicides from 1999 to 2010, which showed that roughly 22 Veterans were committing suicide per day, or one every 65 minutes.

More than 69% of all Veteran suicides were among those 50 and older. Mental-health professionals said one reason could be that these men give up on life after their children are out of the house or a longtime marriage falls apart. Even though more older Veterans are committing suicide, it's difficult to predict what the toll of America's newest wars will be. A survey by the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America showed that 30% of service members have considered taking their own life, and 45% said they know an Iraq or Afghanistan Veteran who has attempted suicide.

Coming home from war, a six-month deployment on a ship, or simply transitioning from a life in uniform to a life without one, can be difficult and the various state and federal systems set up to deal with this transition and life after military services are unable to meet the need. The challenges of adjustment and transition, post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injuries, and physical disabilities, all need to be addressed especially as these things result in barriers to education, employment, health care, and overall individual well-being. Many of these needs are being met by a combination of different Veteran-serving nonprofits and VA support. Unfortunately, there are still gaps in the system.

## Event Overview

Terry Sharpe is walking 600,000 steps (300 miles) in July 2020 to draw attention to our Veterans and their needs. He will spend the month of July walking Highway 29 through North Carolina and Virginia culminating with his Walking into Washington DC on July 27 through the Capital Memorial Parks to the White House or Capital.

Terry's primary mission is to draw attention to the 22+ Veterans who commit suicide each day, but he also supports some terrific Veteran charities. Tax deductible donations raised through the website or Facebook will be used by Nine Line Foundation to directly support Veterans through their various programs and efforts.

Terry will begin his walk on July 1, 2019 with a short warmup walk. He will then walk approximately 14 miles each day, with a final day of walking from just outside Washington DC to the US Capital Building. The trip will be a total of 22 days, representing the number of Veterans who commit suicide each day. The final date of the walk will be July 27, 2020, also which provides for a few days in case of inclement weather or other issues.

Terry will be accompanied on his way by just a few to many Veterans and others who also wish to bring attention to this issue. While not officially sponsored by any Organization, Terry will be met along the way by American Legion Posts and other Veterans Service Organizations who will walk with him in city areas and provide support. Due to safety concerns, individuals who want to walk with Terry should plan to meet him as he enters Cities and Towns along the route.

This is an extremely arduous adventure for a 69-year-old Veteran, walking along Highway 29 has its challenges as well. Many parts of the route have very narrow shoulders (especially through the Manassas Battlefield Park), and not all drivers are polite enough to move to the far lane. To help Terry and ensure he is safe, a few special supports will be walking with Terry or driving support vehicles to help.

## Press Announcement

In order to bring awareness to the 22 Veterans per day that commit suicide, Terry Sharpe (better known as The Walking Marine) is walking 22 days straight a total of 300 miles. His journey begins July 1, 2020 just outside his home town of Summerfield, NC and will end on Monday July 27, 2019 at the United States Capital in Washington, DC. Terry will be walking along US Route 29 (Lee Highway) and will be joined along the way by many others.

Terry will begin his route each morning at approximately 6:00 AM and then end each day after he reaches his 14 mile mark for the day (usually between 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM depending on weather and other factors). A Support Vehicle (one of several that will be festooned with flags and signs) will usually leap-frog ahead of Terry along the way. The Support Vehicle will be carrying supplies, safety equipment, and personal items for Mr. Sharpe. They will also have copies of media material for anyone who wants to know more.

Terry will be working with local coordinators to arrange to attend events at 5:00 PM each day if requested. If your group wants to sponsor a "Meet-and-Greet" for Terry in your local area along the route, please reach out to the local coordinator for the event or use the website/Facebook to send a message.

Anyone who wants to help bring attention to the issue is welcome to walk with Terry or stop by to cheer him on and shake his hand. It is suggested that if you want to meet Terry or join him on the walk, you can look for one of the support vehicles which should be in a safe place to stop and talk. Details on the walk, current position, and other important information can be found at [www.walkingmarine.com](http://www.walkingmarine.com). The contact link on the page will help you reach out to Terry and his team.

Terry is also walking to raise money for Nine Line Foundation. Tax deductible donations raised through the website or Facebook will be used by Nine Line Foundation to directly support Veterans through their various programs and efforts.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why are you doing this?

A: As a Marine you know it is your duty not to leave a man behind. As a Country we are leaving many good men behind by not helping them with their struggles and allowing them to get to a point where they think suicide is the answer. We must do a lot better to help our Veterans, especially those who are suffering the most.

Q: Is this politically motivated or a partisan issue?

A: No, this is not a partisan issue. You cannot blame any one political party or government official for this. It is something that everyone needs to come together on and make sure the men and women who have served our Country to protect its freedoms are taken care of.

Q: What advice can you give to those Veterans who are contemplating suicide?

A: You are not alone and your fellow Veterans are here for you. You owe it to those who could not return or who could not soldier on to live the life they wanted to live. You owe it to your brothers and sisters in arms to seek out help and to overcome the challenges. With the plethora of social media and other contacts, reach out to your comrades and ask for help. It does not make you weak to ask, it is the mark of a strong person to ask for help.

Q: Are you walking back home after you are done?

A: Probably not going to happen. At 69 years old, walking 300 miles is a lot. So, I will probably have someone drive me back home.

Q: What do you think is the root cause of these Veteran suicides among the younger Veterans?

A: I am not a psychologist, but I personally believe this is due to PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). Sometimes the VA just gives you medication to just give you medication. We've got these young boys going back to the battlefield three, four, five times and that's too much. It takes a toll on them.

Q: What do you think is the root cause of the suicides among the older Veterans?

A: Again, I am not a professional, but the older Veterans (especially the Vietnam Veterans) came back after seeing the horrors of war to a Country that seemingly did not care. They came back to a public that called them baby killers. Many struggle upon their return to put the memories behind them and they have tucked them deep down inside. Then they encounter a life changing event (empty nest, divorce, serious illness), and then all of those old feelings suddenly resurface on top of what they are currently going through. They have not talked about their problems for so long that they do not seek out help and think that ending their life is the way to take care of everything.

Q: What would you tell the older Veterans who are contemplating suicide?

A: DON'T DO IT!!! You have done so much for so long and you have so much knowledge to share to help the younger Veterans and others. You have the wisdom of many years and you now have the time and ability to help so many other Veterans. Call your local Veterans organization and get some help. They have benefits counselors who can help you with getting your disability benefits and medical help you need. There are also fellow Veterans who have gone through or are going through what you have. You would be surprised at what a difference you can make in the lives of the younger Veterans by sharing your experiences in a group setting, whether at an informal gathering or in peer counseling groups.

Q: Are you camping out along the way?

A: No. I am a little too old for that. I have made some very good friends along the way, and they are helping me with lodging. We also have a coordinated effort to help with hotel lodging along the way and once I get to Washington DC.

Q: Is it really safe for you to be out here walking?

A: A lot of the walk is dangerous. The shoulders are pretty narrow and many times I wind up walking in uncut grass where you cannot see the hazards. The safest way for me to walk is against traffic, and that means going north on Route 29 southbound. Hopefully they will see us and move to the left.

Q: What can others do to support you?

A: They can hit my website or Facebook page and become a member. They can share the Facebook and Website information with their family and friends. They can coordinate with our webmaster for support along the way (see the chart on our website showing where I need help with lodging along the way). Most important, they can rally at the starting and stopping points to help us draw attention to the cause. They can coordinate with their local contacts to help plan a "Meet-and-Greet" to get the word out to others. They can also contact their local media outlets and get them to come out to the events.

Q: What can others do to support the cause?

A: They can write articles to their elected officials and to their local news outlets. They can cross post information about our website and Facebook page on their own pages. Those on the route can call their local officials and get out the folks to rally for the 22 Veterans a day that commit suicide. Everyone can also contact their local American Legion, VFW, DAV or other Veterans Organization who will gladly accept donations and ensure the funds go to actual Veteran causes.

Q: Are there any plans along the way that have already been made?

A: Stopping/Starting points along the way are encouraged to work with support coordinators through the Website or Facebook page. Several of the Cities are already making plans to have receptions for Terry or have crowds meet him as he walks into town.

Q: How can I find out about the plans in a particular City or Town?

A: Ask to join the Walking Marine Facebook page and check the website to keep informed on the plans at each location. There will be a coordinator for each of the areas who will be making sure the events are coordinated with all that want to participate.



## Other's Speaking Points

### Allen Brown, Summerfield, NC

I am supporting Terry on his mission because I have firsthand experience with PTSD and attempted suicide. I was in Vietnam the same time as Terry serving in Lima 3/5 and was also discharged as a Lance Corporal. This is a cause that strikes close to home for me that can no longer be ignored.

My suicide attempts were products of the guilt of surviving war, while many of my friends and fellow soldiers did not come home. In addition, other horrifying war memories often have been enough to push me to that feeling of hopelessness and despair, where I believe I had no other choice but to take my life to end the pain. The horrors of war also played a role in the depression and despondency I experienced.

I know the feeling that these men and women go through. There is more to war than people realize. It isn't just going into battle and shooting. We went three or four days without anything to eat. Imagine what it's like being hot, being hungry, being scared and never knowing when it's a booby trap or an ambush. I had dysentery a majority of the time and not being able to stop to go to bathroom resulting in soiled clothes to the point the clothes would rot off my body. Despite the atrocities of war, the worst part was how Americans treated Vietnam Veterans when they returned to the United States.

I have been very lucky along the way and people have helped me. Due to my war wounds I am no longer able to walk the whole way with Terry, but I will be right there with him providing the support and safety vehicle for the walk and trying to keep my battle buddy safe along the way.

### Ken Wilson, Piney River, VA

On October 11, 2013, my son, Allen Wilson, became one of the 22+ veterans who commit suicide every day. About a year ago I participated in a ruck to bring awareness to this awful epidemic, and that is where I met Terry Sharpe. I'm not sure if I even talked to Terry on that first day but I began to follow him on Facebook, and soon I made it a point to meet up with him whenever possible.

The suicide issue is big with Terry but it isn't his only cause. Terry does whatever he can to stand up for all Veteran's issues. He could very easily say "I've done my part, I don't owe this country anything." but that isn't Terry. And while Terry is overflowing with Marine Corps pride, if you have ever put on a uniform from any branch, you are Terry's brother. Although if you weren't a Marine you may end up being the brother that gets picked on, but he won't let anyone else mess with you.

Terry is dedicated and determined to the point of stubborn. The question was "Why do I support Terry Sharpe?" The answer is: I don't, Terry Sharpe supports me.

### **Carroll "Ziggy" Levison, Warrenton, VA**

I am supporting Terry to help bring attention to the plight our Veterans suffer and the lack of outreach. I lost my stepfather to the VA because they did not treat his cancer in a timely manner. I have continued my own daily struggles with severe pain from injuries while in military service which on some days is totally debilitating. My son suffers from PTSD and TBI from his service in Iraq after his vehicle was hit by an IED. There are many Veterans out there who are just like us and drugs are not the answer.

Sometimes we need proper medical attention to address the issues, sometimes we just need friends to reach out to and help us. I am fortunate to have a great business partner (Steven Cramer of Newbridge Telecom Solutions) who works with me to support others, and I have a great American Legion Post I am involved in. But others may not have these resources or may not have found them. Veteran outreach is the most important thing that needs to be done by every level of government as well as individually. If you know a Veteran, check on them. If you see a Veteran, thank them for their service. Sometimes your one little "thank you" means all the difference in the world and lets them know there are people out there who care. It is OK to be opposed to war, but do not oppose the Veterans. They have only answered the call of their Country and have given their all to help freedom ring.

## Travel Itinerary

The itinerary may change depending on weather or other events. The current itinerary and status may always be found on [www.walkingmarine.com](http://www.walkingmarine.com). Below is the planned itinerary as of the date of this Media Briefing Book.

Day	Date	Start	End	Miles
1	1 Jul	Shilling Street Stokesville, NC	Lake Brandt Road Summerfield, NC	6
2	2 Jul	Lake Brandt Road Summerfield, NC	Sunnycrest Drive Reidsville, NC	14.4
3	3 Jul	Sunnycrest Drive Reidsville, NC	Whippoorwill Lane Pelham, NC	14.4
4	4 Jul	Whippoorwill Lane Pelham, NC	Nor-Dan Drive Danville, VA	14.4
5	5 Jul	Nor-Dan Drive Danville, VA	Davis Road Chatham, VA	14.4
6	6 Jul	Davis Road Chatham, VA	Keese Road Gretna, VA	14.4
7	7 Jul	Keese Road Gretna, VA	Bank Road Altavista, VA	14.4
8	8 Jul	Bank Road Altavista, VA	Lyn-Dan Drive Lynchburg, VA	14.4
9	9 Jul	Lyn-Dan Drive Lynchburg, VA	Gilbert Lane Monroe, VA	14.4
10	10 Jul	Gilbert Lane Monroe, VA	Edinburgh Drive Amherst, VA	14.4
11	12 Jul	Edinburgh Drive Amherst, VA	Ponton Lane Lovingsston, VA	14.4
12	15 Jul	Ponton Lane Lovingsston, VA	Wingspread Lane Covesville, VA	14.4
13	16 Jul	Wingspread Lane Covesville, VA	Stadium Road Charlottesville, VA	14.4
14	17 Jul	Stadium Road Charlottesville, VA	Cedar Grove Road Ruckersville, VA	14.4
15	18 Jul	Cedar Grove Road Ruckersville, VA	Schoolhouse Road Madison, VA	14.4
16	19 Jul	Ruckersville, VA	Madison, VA	

<b>Day</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Miles</b>
17	21 Jul	Schoolhouse Road Madison, VA	Country Store Drive Culpeper, VA	14.4
18	22 Jul	Country Store Drive Culpeper, VA	Catlett Road Remington, VA	14.4
19	23 Jul	Catlett Road Remington, VA	Roebing Street Warrenton, VA	14.4
20	24 Jul	Roebing Street Warrenton, VA	Pageland Lane Manassas, VA	14.4
21	25 Jul	Pageland Lane Manassas, VA	Meredith Drive Fairfax, VA	14.4
22	26 Jul	Meredith Drive Fairfax, VA	Key Bridge Marriott Arlington, VA	14.4
+	27 Jul	Key Bridge Marriott Arlington, VA	US Capital Washington, DC	6

#### Additional Events

On 27 July, Terry will complete his walk through the DC Memorial Parks to end at either the White House or Capital Building.

## Biography On Terry

Terry was born into a relatively poor tobacco farming family in McKenney, VA in 1950. Terry quit high school during his 10<sup>th</sup> grade year so he could work at a Sonoco Service Station in South Hill, VA. He also found work on a farm and where he grew an acre of tobacco and hauled moonshine from South Hill, VA to Rocky Mount, NC to earn money. One day he decided to hitchhike back to Summerfield and caught a ride from a Marine driving a Corvette who had just come back from Vietnam. On the ride the Marine told Terry about the life and Terry decided he too wanted to be a Marine. Being under age he had to get his mother to sign to let him enlist, which he did in March of 1968.

In June of 1968 he had his physical in Richmond VA and then left for Paris Island. Paris Island led to Camp Geiger (part of the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune complex) in Jacksonville, NC for combat infantry training. In August he came down with pneumonia and was sent to the hospital. After being released he was put into another training group. Once Terry completed his infantry training, he was still too young to send to Vietnam (he was just shy of 18 years old), so he was assigned at Camp Geiger as permanent party teaching squad tactics until December 1968. In December he got leave to go home, and in January 1969 he went to survival training at Camp Pendleton, then on to Okinawa Japan for 2 weeks of hand-to-hand combat before arriving in Vietnam.

Upon arriving in Vietnam, Terry was assigned to Golf Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division at Quang Tri. After 5 months he was sent back south to Kilo Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division at An Hoa protecting Liberty Bridge. Terry served a total of 13 months in Vietnam returning in February 1970 being discharged with the rank of Lance Corporal.

After returning from Vietnam Terry completed his High School diploma through La Salle High School in 1974. Terry continued his education not only in the school of hard knocks, but he also attended Rockingham Community College in Wentworth, NC following a 2 year program for Textile Management. He graduated in 1977 with an Associate of Applied Science in Textile Technology and Management achieving a GPA of 3.4 and making the Dean's List for his academic excellence. This is noteworthy considering he was also working full time while attending school.

Since Vietnam Terry has worked in multiple careers. He has worked milking cows, light construction, heavy construction in the US and Saint Croix, worked in the textile mills in North

Carolina, and worked selling large tires for semi-trucks and heavy equipment. Terry was the proud owner of Sharpes Surplus Sales with stores in Martinsville and Eden selling surplus military equipment. Terry was also a volunteer EMT for a few years.

His adventures as the Walking Marine began in September 2014. He was watching the news about Andrew Tahmooressi and he got mad that nothing was being done, so he decided to walk to DC in order to get the attention of the press and elected representatives to help Andrew. Terry told his wife he was going to walk to DC and she bet him \$100 he would not do it. So, on September 6, 2014 he walked out of the house and started walking. No plan, no support network, just a desire to bring attention to the issue and the ability to walk.

Terry had almost made it to Danville when he ran across Allen Brown. Allen asked him what he was doing, Terry explained it, and Allen asked if he could join him. On day 4 Allen joined him, showing up in a pair of flip flops and large pack. So they took off and walked into history and the hearts of their many supporters. It was on this walk that Terry and Allen learned they had both served in the same Battalion in Vietnam and shared many of the same experiences. At 63 years old that trip of 300 miles in September 2014 was a challenge for both of them. They arrived in Washington DC on September 30, 2014.

After completing the first trip Terry got back to North Carolina and watched to see if anything was being done to help Andrew. After seeing no action being taken, he decided on doing it again. On October 6, 2014, Terry and Allen started again to walk the 300 miles to draw attention to the plight of Andrew Tahmooressi. They arrived in Washington DC on October 25, 2015. The efforts of Terry and Allen helped draw media attention to the cause and on October 28, 2014, Andrew Tahmooressi was released from prison in Mexico, arriving back in the United States on October 29, 2014.

In February 2015, Terry reunited with Allen to participate in a protest in King, NC, where activists forced the town of King to remove a praying soldier memorial from the Central Park Veterans Memorial. Sharpe and Brown walked 30 miles carrying the Christian flag as well as the Stars and Stripes. When they arrived at the Memorial, Sharpe and Brown joined members of 2 Million Bikers to DC. Sharpe and Brown were guest speakers at the presentation.

On April 25, 2015 Sharpe and Brown joined the non-profit organization 22 Until None on a ruck in Rockingham County, North Carolina where close to 100 current and former military service members and family members hiked 4.7 miles from Cole Auditorium in Hamlet to VFW Post

4203 and back. Many of those "rucking" carried rucksacks with 22 pounds of gear inside to symbolize the 22 veterans who commit suicide each day.

On May 16, 2015 Terry led the charge again to raise awareness about the 22 US Veterans a day that commit suicide, a devastating statistic. We owe our Veterans all the support they need and deserve, and Terry wants to bring attention to their needs. He walked along with many others a little over 5 miles from the Halifax War Memorial, Halifax, VA to Constitution Square in South Boston, VA.

Terry again found himself frustrated by fellow Marine Veterans being held unfairly in foreign lands and the lack of support for fellow Veterans suffering from PTSD. On June 1, 2015 Terry once again decided to walk to the White House to demand support for Amir Hekmati, Saeed Abedini, Jason Rezaian and Robert Levinson who were being held in Iranian prisons. Terry completed his walk on June 20, 2015 and three of the captives (Hekmati, Abendini and Rezaian) were released in January 2016. Unfortunately, we still have no word on Robert Levinson.

Terry has continued his efforts to bring attention to the plight of US Military Veterans and has continued to champion the cause of improved care and support for our Veterans. He can be found many days in the North Carolina and Southern Virginia area standing at intersections or special events with his banner trying to bring attention to the 22 Veterans per day that commit suicide.

Terry continued his walks in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 as he continued to try and bring awareness to the Veteran Suicide rate. Terry feels strongly about the need to help his fellow Veterans that once again he will be walking the 300 miles from North Carolina to Washington DC to bring attention to the issue. His next adventure begins on July 1, 2020.

## Media Notes, Links and Contacts

### Media Notes

The proper title for Terry in his endeavors is “The Walking Marine”. He is a “Veteran” and a Marine. Marine is a title that is earned for life and there are no “former Marines” and there definitely never “marines”. Terry and Allen both were discharged with the rank of Lance Corporal which can be abbreviated as “LCpl”. It should not be confused with “E-3” which is a military pay grade, not a rank.

The title of Lance Corporal is derived from the French word of lance-pessade and the Italian words capo corporal which gives meaning towards; leader with broken lance. Marines promoted to this rank are expected to show a degree of leadership and skill in serving as role models for newly enlisted recruits. Lance Corporal is a rank higher than Private First Class and lower than Corporal. A Lance Corporal is not a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) as many mistakenly think.

In all cases, when referring to people who have proudly served in the US Military, please make sure you refer to them as a “Veteran” using a capital first letter as it is a title they have earned. Please do not refer to them as “Vets” as they are not animal doctors. While minor, and while it can be argued on grammatical merits, Veteran when used as a noun relating to title should be capitalized just like you would Legionnaire.

### Updates

To keep updated on Terry’s progress along the way, his website will have daily updates on events. Please learn more by visiting [www.walkingmarine.com](http://www.walkingmarine.com).

His Facebook page will also have updated information on events. The Facebook link is: [www.facebook.com/groups/1083033828395185/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1083033828395185/)

### Interviews

Terry will be very glad to do interviews with any media outlet. The best way to coordinate interviews before the event is to PM Terry on Facebook or send a request through the website.



Once the walk begins, interviews will be held at set stopping points along the way. Interviews can be first thing in the morning before he starts (kick off at 7:00 AM every morning), at the stopping point (between 1:00 and 3:00 PM depending on weather and traffic), or at a designated point along the route (look for Allen or others in the safety vehicle who should be ahead of Terry on the trail).

## Links For Supported Charities

Nine Line Foundation - <https://ninelinefoundation.org/>

## Other Links

Not One More Life: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1606622089576835/>

Active Heroes: <https://activeheroes.org/>

All American Alternatives: <http://www.allamericanalternatives.org/>

22 Kill Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/22Kill>

Carry The Fallen: <https://www.facebook.com/CarryTheFallen>

PTSD Break The Silence: <https://www.facebook.com/ptsdbreakthesilence>

22 No More: <https://www.facebook.com/thereal22nomore>

PTSD Projects: <https://www.facebook.com/PTSDProjects>

Platoon 22: <https://www.facebook.com/Wewillwinplatoon22>

22 Too Many: <https://www.facebook.com/22TooMany/>

PTSD Break The Silence: <https://www.facebook.com/ptsdbreakthesilence>

PTSD Release Unit: <https://www.facebook.com/PTSD-Release-Unit-212937018735848/>

PTSD Project: <https://www.facebook.com/WeArePTSD>

Concerned Veterans for America: <https://www.facebook.com/ConcernedVetsforAmerica>

## Other Media Contacts

If you need to speak to a live person, you can reach out to my media contact, Carroll "Ziggy" Levison on his cell phone at 540-359-2202.