

Giant Steps: George Martin completes cross-country trek for 9/11 heroes

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After 2,800 miles and 25 pairs of shoes, former New York Giant George Martin (r., in Yuma, Ariz. on June 3) ended his cross-country walk for Ground Zero rescue workers.

Former [New York Giant](#) great [George Martin](#) has reached the end zone, completing a 3,003-mile cross-country walk to raise more than \$2 million for ailing Ground Zero heroes.

This true Giant, all 6-feet-5 of him, strode into Embarcadero Park North in [San Diego](#) yesterday after a journey of stamina and discovery that began last Sept. 16 in New York and averaged 22 miles a day.

A greeting party of former teammates, local officials and 9/11 rescue and recovery workers welcomed Martin, who set out to raise funds for a noble cause and found a lot more.

"I enjoyed every day," he said. "I found tranquility, introspection, solitude and self-improvement. And I had a chance to meet the American public - and I enjoyed it."

He also lost 40 pounds and found a curious bonanza - more than \$190 in loose change.

Martin's 13-state journey, including brutal 50-mph headwinds in [Oklahoma](#) and searing 114-degree heat in [Arizona](#), would have made Lewis and Clark proud.

Of course, neither of those explorers played 14 seasons as a defensive end, lumbered for seven touchdowns, co-captained the 1986 Super Bowl champions and headed the [NFL Players Association](#).

Martin, 55, on leave as vice president of sports marketing at AXA Equitable in New York, set out to raise millions to provide medical monitoring and health care for 9/11 responders suffering from chronic bronchial disease, leukemia and other cancers.

He raised \$2 million in cash - which will be matched by another \$2 million in medical services from [Hackensack University Medical Center](#), [North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health Systems](#) and [Mount Sinai Medical Center in Manhattan](#).

Along the way, he talked to several [Washington](#) congressmen about securing additional funding for 9/11 health care programs and visited schools, firehouses and police stations. But he "discouraged" large entourages and was usually accompanied by just a local security person and aide [Lee Reeves](#).

Early in the journey, he encountered wild dogs.

"Dogs are everywhere, and apparently leash laws here are as scarce as dental coverage," he joked.

His one side trip was joyous - the Super Bowl in [Phoenix](#), where his Giants thumped the [New England Patriots](#).

He trained in Bear Mountain park for two months beforehand, usually walking 13 miles from his Ringwood, [N.J.](#), home through [Harriman State Park](#).

Of his nine-month walk, he said: "I had no problem sustaining distance. This was a journey, not a race."

And what does he crave after more than 3,000 miles?

"To relax in my garden at home," he said.

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