

# Remembering Ted

**Ted Corbitt, who died Dec. 12, 2007, was more than a distance running pioneer -- he was also an inspiration.**

By

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It is with the deepest sadness that I write this tribute on the passing of Ted Corbitt, who was for me a profound inspiration, a guiding mentor, and a close friend. Along with Browning Ross, who died almost 10 years ago, Ted had the strongest influence on my running life.

I first met Ted in January of 1955 at the Shanahan Marathon in Philadelphia. Running was very small then, and while to the best of my knowledge, there were only three marathon races in the U.S. that year, this race drew fewer than 20 runners. I was only 14 years old and about to run my third race when Ted sat down with me in the Shanahan Clubhouse before the event and gave me his advice. He cautioned me to make sure that running did not hinder my schoolwork. Here was a member of the USA Olympic Team giving me, an unknown kid, his care!

It is hard to find words to describe the effect Ted had on me whenever I was in his presence. It was like being with someone who was super human. Ted was so quiet, and he made his incredible accomplishments seem as though they came with no mental struggle. He personified the now-popular phrase "Just do it."

My most memorable meeting with Ted came in 1967 or '68 when my wife Kathy and I visited him in his apartment in the Bronx. We sat in his living room as he described his training for upcoming ultra races. He frequently ran from his apartment to Manhattan, then circled the entire island of Manhattan and returned home, a distance of almost 35 miles. He would carry change with him so that he could ride the subway in case of difficulty. On occasion he did two laps -- nearly 70 miles! Later his charming wife Ruth, who did not hear this conversation, invited us to share lunch. As Ruth was serving us, she said these words, which I shall never forget:

"My Teddy gets his little exercise every day. Other men drink beer, smoke, and sit around watching TV. But not my Teddy. He gets his little exercise every day."

I was astonished! Here was a man doing 70-mile workouts, and he made so little note of it with his wife that she could describe it as "little exercise." This was the real Ted Corbitt. He made the impossible seem like a piece of cake. Whenever I have faced a real challenge, I always think of Ted and how he would say with quiet force, "Plan carefully, then do it."

A giant has left my life. I shall not have the privilege to talk to him again. But I shall never forget what he told me. A little bit of him became a part of me, and I am the better for it.

*Tom Osler is a runner and author.*