

**Remembering Theodore "Ted" Corbitt
Master Teacher: The Silent Brahmin
1919 – 2007**

"The Silent Brahmin" is the name given to Ted Corbitt by the late international spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy. The Brahmins are the philosophers of India. The name refers to the peace and wisdom Sri Chinmoy saw radiating from this quiet champion of the running world.

My father died a month shy of his 89th birthday. In his 88th year he was still treating patients. On some days my father would see four patients a day using public transportation in New York City. I want to share some remembrances from people he touched in his physical therapy work. He began his legendary 44 year career at The Institute for The Crippled and Disabled in 1949. Ted received from New York University a certificate in Physical Therapy in 1947 and his Masters Degree in 1950. He was a member of American Physical Therapy Association since 1947. Ted taught for over 25 years at Columbia University and several years at NYU. The courses taught included; Progressive Resistive Exercise, Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation Technique (PNF), Connective Tissue Massage, and Guthrie-Smith Apparatus.

In my father's latter years he mentored Jack Mantione. Here are Jack's words about his teacher.

Ted's mastery of exercise, healing and preventing injuries is the result of using what works, discarding what doesn't, constantly improving on what you know and keeping an open mind. To be able to master any field you must understand your field completely, and then you can practice it intuitively. Ted Corbitt reached self actualization and practiced intuitively. Anyone who came in contact with Ted will always speak of him in the present tense because he left a piece of himself with everyone he came in contact with. I have been truly blessed to have mentored with Ted. Ted's greatest message: "Mastering yourself is true wisdom." --"A closed mind ties the hands of the healer and the trainer."

**"A master is an honorary title given by the people,
It cannot be bought or begged for on one knee,
Originating deep within the soul,
Shining bright for all to see,
If you were blessed to cross Ted's path,
Then you can't help but smile like me,
His secrets,
Stay humble,
Keep an open mind,
Just Be." JM**

Jack Mantione PT, DPT, CSCS

The next three testimonials are from patients.

Lisa, my daughter became acquainted with Ted Corbitt at his 80th birthday celebration at the New York Road Runners Club. Lisa was associated with the Achilles Track Club.

She asked Ted if he would help with her knees, which had been injured many years before. He came to our house on public transportation probably a two hour trip, and worked with her for 4 hours making observations and giving suggestions. Then Lisa said "now I give you money right?" Ted said, "no money. My reward comes when you pass this knowledge on to somebody else." I knew we had an angel in our house.

Martha Morrongiello

Ted Corbitt first came into my life in the early 1990's. At the time he was in the later stages of his 44 year career at The Institute for the Crippled and Disabled (ICD). Although I have always been a very athletic person (both as a participant and a fan), when I first met Ted I knew nothing about his history as a former Olympic Marathon runner and President of the New York Road Runners Club (of course, Ted never mentioned any of this himself). I only knew that he had been described to me as an amazing and unique healer with a quiet compassion and confidence. That description could not have been more accurate. Ted helped me like no other person ever had with my chronic back problems, and I would seek him out from time to time over the years to help with the physical ailments that aging athletes encounter.

Most recently, I had been diagnosed with trigger-finger. I was in constant pain and could barely move my thumb. I was told by two leading orthopedists that I would need surgery. After telling the doctors that I wanted to avoid that, one of them agreed to try cortisone shots (before surgery) I had two - neither of which helped. Before going for the surgery I decided to call Ted to see what he thought. I knew from past experience that Ted would take into consideration what my physicians had advised, however, he would ultimately give the greatest weight to what I said to him about how my body was feeling. After examining my thumb (Ted always made house calls!) - - Ted told me that he was confident that he could help me through a regime of physical therapy, acu-pressure and guided exercise. That was all I needed to hear. Ted came to see me two times a week for two months and then once a week for two to three months after that. By the time he pronounced me done with treatment, I was pain free and had full movement in my thumb. I am sure that there are countless numbers of people who could tell stories like this about Ted. Perhaps the most remarkable part of this to me was that this recent treatment ended just six months before Ted passed away. During my treatment, he traveled to me (in all kinds of weather) by subway and by foot, back-pack over his shoulder, walking several blocks to my apartment. Ted never mentioned his illness; as always he was unrelentingly focused on his task. Healing a patient.

Mitchell Stern

The deep burn of motivation and pure desire to learn are vital forces that together can power an extraordinary life. Ted Corbitt embodied this tenet in the wake of his accomplishments and on his endless journeys toward new ones.

Corbitt's immense store of information on nutrition, homeopathy, and training techniques was enhanced by his interest in an enormous scope of subjects ranging from art and music to writing, physics, education and computer technology. His sense of humor, dry and light as moondust and habit of darning his own socks make him as unique a man as one may ever meet.

I met Ted Corbitt in 1984 when I was sent to the ICD (International Center for the Disabled) for rehabilitation following orthopedic surgery. I knew nothing of his Olympic history or track records, only that he was Chief of Physical Therapy at this esteemed institution. It soon became apparent that he had a remarkably unusual character. Touch being his medium, Corbitt spoke very little, taking notably meticulous care with his patients, many of whom had severe handicaps. Always concentrating intensely, he was completely and quietly consumed with exploring the most effective treatments for each one. He often worked through asthmatic stress, spent extra hours and days off helping colleagues and clients, and continues to do the same although retired. His life is a scholarly, spiritual pursuit of the knowledge of healing and human excellence.

Sarah Yuster

In 1989 The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University nominated my father for the Signe Brunnstrom Award for Excellence in Clinical Teaching. He didn't receive the award. The following are some of the comments from his peers used in the nomination.

His range of expertness in therapeutic exercise approaches is extraordinary and he masters not only the theoretical bases but becomes an outstanding demonstrator of the technique. He has functioned as a faculty member for all the physical therapy programs in the New York City area and has taught clinical workshops on topics ranging from connective tissue massage to neurophysiological approaches to therapeutic exercise for stroke victims.

To watch Ted Corbitt when he is treating a patient and demonstrating a clinical approach is an aesthetic experience as he moves with such grace and ease. He is the most important illustration of a selfless servant of the disabled through direct hands

on therapy that has also been transmitted to countless number of clinical therapist throughout the United States.

**Arthur J. Nelson, Ph.D., PT
Professor of Physical Therapy
New York University**

My first encounter with Ted's clinical skills and his professionalism was during the "polio" years. He was a presenter in a workshop on Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation. His easy manner and the willingness with which he shared his knowledge made the workshop a memorable one. My newly gained skills and insight allowed me to help my patients in a more enlightened way.

Ted taught and demonstrated Connective Tissue Massage in our Physical Therapy Program. He is a Master teacher and his demonstrations in class made each movement of the massage technique seem easy. He has always served as a role model which students seek to emulate.

**Althea M. Jones
Associate Professor
Columbia University**

He was such a good teacher! Students from other P.T. programs told me that they had asked for the I.C.D. affiliation because they had heard that "you can really learn so much from Mr. Corbitt" and indeed you could. He would spend hours with us, first teaching and letting us practice many techniques on fellow students, and later letting us use those techniques in treatments. He also spent many hours in open discussion with us about the many approaches to treating patients. How he found so much time to give to students, I'll never know.

He caused me to develop a pride in the wonderful realm of physical therapy and inspired me to develop and give as much as possible to patients.

**Bernadette Hecox
Associate Professor
Columbia University**

I'm building a database of former students and patients to learn and document the many stories I'm hearing about my father. My hope is that in preserving my father's legacy we can advance the physical therapy profession by inspiring the next generation of therapists.

The Establishment of a Ted Corbitt Archives

In recognition of Ted Corbitt's contribution to long distance running and the field of physical therapy, the Ted Corbitt Archives are being formed. The major goal of the archives will be to document the athletic and administrative career of Ted Corbitt. The archives will also document his legendary career as a master clinician in physical therapy.

Other goals of the archives are...

- 1. Document the history of road running in the United States and internationally.**
- 2. Recognize all the founders and architects of the sport.**
- 3. Develop a library of running facts and health related information.**

We're seeking articles, photographs, film and other memorabilia about Mr. Corbitt. Personal statements from those who knew Ted on the roads or off would be greatly appreciated. We'd like to establish a database of people who interacted with him be it racing, administrative work, as a fan, or as a patient and student.

**Submit materials to:
Ted Corbitt Archives
P.O. Box 23132
Jacksonville, FL 32241
corbittg@comcast.net**

**Gary Corbitt
September 23, 2008**