

TED CORBITT: THE RUNNER-SAINT

Ted Corbitt, Ted Corbitt, Ted!  
Runner-world revolution-head.  
O softness runner-saint,  
Measureless miles your legs did paint.  
A brave champion is found  
In Heavenly Silence-Sound.

....Sri Chinmoy

"The Silent Brahmin" is spiritual leader Sri Chinmoy's affectionate name for ultramarathon great Ted Corbitt. The brahmins are the philosophers of India, Sri Chinmoy's homeland, and the name refers to the peace and wisdom Sri Chinmoy sees radiating from this quiet champion of the running world.

Members of the 60 world-wide Sri Chinmoy running clubs, and the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team, are especially interested in long distance running and relays. We have been sponsoring public and private races since 1976. It is natural, then, that we come into frequent contact with the "Father of American Distance Running", Ted Corbitt. That this contact has developed into a warm friendship with a unique "softness runner-saint" pleases us greatly.

Our first personal contact with Ted came in the summer of 1978, when 57 of our club members organized a 47 mile ultramarathon, for club members only, to celebrate Sri Chinmoy's 47th birthday on August 27. None of the 57 runners had ever run an ultramarathon before and it was immediately apparent that they needed help in planning their training.

A member of the group had met Ted and called to see if he would meet with the group to give advice. Ted graciously consented and, one warm day in Central Park, totally enchanted the neophyte

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distance runners by arriving in simple shorts and T-shirt, complete with back-pack, having run to the meeting from his up-town home. His valuable tips were carefully noted and followed and 56 of the 57 runners finished the race!

Ted next met with hs during a visit he and SCMT Race Director Tarak Kauff paid to Sri Chinmoy's Jharna-Kala Gallery in Grand Central Station, NYC, in Autumn, 1978. Ted came to see Sri Chinmoy's bright, abstract acrylic paintings. He and Sri Chinmoy met at this time and chatted privately for a while.

The two men met again in October, the day before the New York Marathon, when a runners' gathering was held at Lincoln Center's Damrosch Auditorium. Ted ran into the amphitheater holding a lighted torch and held it high while Sri Chinmoy offered the opening meditation. The photograph of this event is considered a "classic" by the Marathon Team, and symbolizes for us the coming together of the outer and the inner runner. The philosophical significance of the photograph is best described in the Team's poetic motto, written by Sri Chinmoy: "Run and become. Become and run. Run to succeed in the outer world. Become to proceed in the inner world." (See enclosures: cover of "Ten Thousand Flower Flames, Pt. 10"; Miracle Runners, #3; The Runner's Log Book; photograph.)

On January 29, 1979, a United Nation's dinner was held honoring athletics and spirituality. Ted Corbitt and Dr. Norb Sanders (Director of the Preventive Sports Medicine Center in City Island, NY) were the guest speakers and Sri Chinmoy offered the opening meditation. The dinner was sponsored by Sri Chinmoy Meditation at the United Nations. (See enclosures: "Meditation

at the United Nations" magazine, 27 February 1979, p 49, press release.)

On August 9, 1979, Sri Chinmoy held a reception for NYRRC president Fred Lebow at the Jharna-Kala Gallery on Madison Ave., New York. Among the well-known runners attending were Ted Corbitt, Dr. Norb Sanders, Joe Kleinerman, Nina Kuscsik and Kathy McIntyre. (See enclosure: "Jharna-Kala, An Art Quarterly," Jan-Mar 1980.)

Members of the SCMT have organized a number of private long distance relays. During October 3-13 1980 they held a 1300 mile relay from Concord, NH to Atlanta, Ga, entitled "Salutations to America". The patriotic run, which passed through the original 13 states, was held as a symbolic salute to America, its goals and its aspirations. Well-known runners as well as local politicians and running clubs joined the patriotic run as it passed near them, and many took turns carrying the lighted relay torch. One of the highlights of the event was when Ted joined the group as they ran through New Jersey (See: brochures and photographs.)

Each June, during the 100 Mile Race in Flushing Meadow Park, at which the winner receives the Ted Corbitt Cup, members of the SCMT man a number of the water stations, as well as help out in other capacities. Sri Chinmoy stops by frequently throughout the race to watch the progress and to chat with Ted and the runners. (See enclosed clipping.)

1979 was the beginning of the Marathon Team's successful ongoing "Run and Become" lecture series, which brings together champion runners and the local running community. Speakers have

included Craig Virgin, Craig Masback, Tom Fleming, Nina Kuscsik, Marcy Schwam and Toshiko D'Elia. Ted was one of the first speakers of the program and offered the audience so much valuable information on distance running that we persuaded him to come back to speak again, on July 29, 1980. We surprised him at this time when our singers performed a special song written about him by Sri Chinmoy. (See: Miracle Runner, #3.) Also at this time, Sri Chinmoy presented Ted with a decorative trophy honoring his invaluable work for the running community. (See: press release, Run & Become lecture brochure, clippings.)

October/November 1980 saw Ted joining with the SCMT in coming to the aid of one of the greats of women's ultradistance running, Marcy Schwam. Marcy, who at age 27 had already established a number of ultradistance records, was training hard to set a new 100 mile record in an October 31 24 hour race in Glassboro, NJ. When that race was cancelled at the last minute, the SCMT located a certifiable course and organized the race. To assure the validity of the course for record purposes, the Team worked closely with Ted Corbitt, who very kindly kept himself available to us. Ted's love of running and generous nature extended so far as to personally attend the beginning of the race and he fired the starting gun himself.

The rest of the race is now history. Marcy, who won the "Runner's World" magazine's coveted Nurmi Award in the ultradistance category because of her performance at this event, set not one but three world records: 100 miles in 15:44:27; 100K in 8:46:35; and 50 miles in 6:43:23. And a 19 year old Japanese student of Sri Chinmoy, Yasumasa Shimizu of Tokyo, in his first race at any distance over 13 miles, won by running 111 $\frac{1}{4}$  miles in 24 hours. (See clipping.)

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Ted and the Sri Chinmoy Marathon Team have interacted on numerous occasions on a private level and whenever Sri Chinmoy and "The Silent Brahmin" meet at a race it brings Team members much joy to watch the mutual respect and affection with which the two men greet each other. When Sri Chinmoy was asked to write a book on running, Ted wrote a most perceptive and illumining introduction that showed succinctly how well he understands the depths of Sri Chinmoy's philosophy. (See enclosures: Typed introduction.)

We feel that Ted Corbitt is not only great - he is also, and more importantly, good. He has a rare combination of talent, perseverance, wisdom and humility. He has, moreover, always been openly generous in helping sincere runners. He has done much to shape the course of running in America. We feel that what he has achieved on the outer plane is a direct reflection of his inner nature - his quiet dignity, his gentle wisdom, his firm detachment and his love for his fellow man.

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