

# Corbitt loves running — no matter how far



By NANCY L. FORD, Observer-Dispatch  
 Ted Corbitt becomes sentimental as he makes his speech after his induction into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame Saturday at Hamilton College's Wellin Hall. Behind him, son Gary Corbitt holds his plaque.

By JOHN PITARRESI

Observer-Dispatch

**CLINTON** — Ted Corbitt grew up on a farm in South Carolina, a long way from anywhere.

He doesn't remember when he began to run. It just came naturally.

"I always walked and ran," he said. "You'd walk and run to school. I just had a desire to run."

Corbitt, 79, ran to the University of Cincinnati, to New York University, onto the 1952 U.S. Olympic marathon team and into a career as a physical therapist. And he continued to run, farther and farther, covering distances that were unheard of in America, testing the limits of what the human body could do.

Corbitt also ran himself into the new Distance Running Hall

of Fame. He was inducted in the first class Saturday.

At 26-plus miles, the marathon once was considered the ultimate distance for runners, but Corbitt set records for 50 and 100 miles and for the 24-hour run. He ran 199 marathons and ultramarathons in his career, ran Boston 21 times, and never dropped of a race. He still walks the New York City marathon, which he hopes to finish in six hours this year.

You might ask why he pushed himself so hard.

"Curiosity," he said. "I was fascinated anyone could run that far. I tried to do better training. I did a lot of experimenting. There wasn't much written."

Corbitt did learn much from an Englishman, Arthur Newton, the best ultramarathoner in the two decades after World War I.

Corbitt's son Gary, his presenter for the induction, remembers his father putting in 200 miles a week, sometimes 300 if he was getting ready for the 52 1/2-mile London-to-Brighton run in England.

"I remember him running 20 miles to work, working all day, then running 20 miles home, eating dinner, taking a nap and then getting up and doing paper-work," Gary Corbitt said.

The paperwork was for the New York Road Runners, a group Corbitt has served well for decades. Gary Corbitt would hear the typewriter clacking at 1 in the morning sometimes.

"The challenge was there to run fast and finish hard," Ted Corbitt said. "Those are the things that keep you going. Trying to get the best there is out of the body; testing yourself."