Ted Corbitt-An Inspiration to All

Ted Corbitt paved the way
Running pioneer in his day
Long distance was his game
That brought him fame
Training, hard work, running miles
Gave people hope and smiles
Never conceited, displayed kindness and grace
Boston, Philly and New York he would race
Furious feet of fire, it was if he was flying when he ran
Not just winning but inspiring people was his plan
He inspired people indeed
HE DID SUCCEED!

Justin Best

Biography of Ted Corbitt

Ted Corbitt was often called "the pioneer of ultramarathoning." An ultramarathon is any race that is longer than a marathon which is 26.2 miles. Ultramarathons are usually 50 or 100 mile races, or a race that lasts for 24 hours. Ted Corbitt helped break the color barrier in running and set U.S. track records for distances of 25 miles, the marathon, and 40, 50, and 100 miles. At his peak, Corbitt ran up to 200 miles a week to train, far more than any other distance runner.

Ted Corbitt was born January 31, 1919. He was born on a cotton farm near Dunbarton, South Carolina. He ran track in High School and College (University of Cincinnati). Because Ted was African American, he was sometimes banned from track meets and sometimes white athletes refused to compete against him. After graduating from college, Ted served in World War II, married his college sweetheart and got his master's degree in Physical Therapy from New York University where he later lectured about running.

Ted's first marathon was at age 32 in the Boston Marathon in 1951. Ted competed in the 1952 Summer Olympics doing the marathon distance. In 1954, he won the Philadelphia Marathon as well as the Yonkers Marathon. In 1958, Ted founded and was the first president of the New York Road Runners Club and he helped plan the New York City Marathon course. Ted ran a total of 199 marathons and ultramarathons in his career and he won 30 of those races.

Ted remained a nationally competitive runner well into his fifties. He stopped his elite career in running at age 55 however continued to run/walk 200+ miles a week non-competitively until the day he died.

In 1998, Ted Corbitt was inducted into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame and in 2006 he was inducted into the American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame. Ted remained a full-time physical therapist into his 80s. His wife of 42 years, the former Ruth Butler, died in 1989. At the age of 87, Ted was still volunteering and competing in ultramarathon races in New York. Ted died at the age of 88 in 2007 of prostate and colon cancer. His son, Gary, of Jacksonville, Fla., is his only immediate survivor. Ted is quoted in the book First Marathons, saying "Running is something you just do. You don't need a goal, you don't need a race, and you don't need the hype of a so-called fitness craze. All you need is a cheap pair of shoes and some time. The rest will follow".

Justin Best

Ted Corbitt Interview Questions

1.   You have been called "the pioneer of ultramarathoning." How did you get started in running? I started running as a child. I would run to and from school. I wanted to find out how far and how fast my body could run and I pushed myself. I started running competitively in high

school in Cincinnati. I grew up with the motto: Be the best in whatever you attempt.

2. You ran 199 marathons and ultramarathons in your career. Did you wish you would have done one more to make it 200? No. I'm sure I could have walked another one but I am very satisfied with what I've accomplished.

3. How did you feel when you completed your first marathon in Boston in 1951? Finishing felt like heaven. All those long, painful hours of training paid off. I wanted to quit at twenty-three miles but I kept going and finished in fifteenth place. I was relieved. I went on to run the Boston marathon 20 more times.

4. Can you tell me a little about your experiences with segregation growing up? During college, I couldn't participate in some competitions because of segregation. I've been stopped by the police while running several times and been questioned. They were looking for someone who had stolen a car. When I became the President of the New York Road Runners club, I made sure that every person was welcome, whether they were black, white, purple or yellow!

5. What is your advice for young runners? Get the proper amount of hydration and rest. If you do not get enough rest, you will injure yourself. Put in the training needed. Be willing to suffer for what you want. Never quit!

Justin Best

Monologue for Ted Corbitt

My name is Ted Corbitt. I have been called "the pioneer of
ultramarathoning." An ultramarathon is any distance over a
marathon which is 26.2 miles. I was born in 1919 and
started running as a child. I would run to and from school. I
started running competitively in high school. I was
fascinated with finding out how far and how fast I could
run. I first heard the word "marathon" when I was a
sophomore in high school. I ran my first marathon when I
was 32 years old. I went on to run a total of 199 marathons
and ultramarathons. I won 30 of them. It wasn't about
winning to me though; it was about the discipline of
running. I got my degree in physical therapy and
incorporated my running into my work day. I ran 12 miles
one way to work from my house in Manhattan then ran
another 12 miles home after work. I ran all over the streets
of New York while training for my marathons. Sometimes
I'd leave my lunch in my mailbox and take a bite as I
passed by. One day, when I passed by for a bite, my lunch
was gone! That was a memorable day…I never found out
what happened to my lunch. Back in my day, there were no
specific running clothes. I would run in my street clothes
and sometimes street shoes instead of running shoes since I
found the support from the street shoes were better. Early
on, I didn't drink water while running. One day when it
snowed, I ate some snowflakes while running and quickly
figured out how much water helped.

Justin Best

10 Facts About Ted Corbitt

1. Ted Corbitt was born on January 31, 1919 on a cotton farm near   Dunbarton, South Carolina.

2. He set U.S. track records for 25 miles, 26.2 miles, 40, 50, and 100 mile distances.

3. He got his Masters degree in Physical Therapy from New York University.

4. His first marathon was at age 32 at the 1951 Boston marathon.

5. Ted competed in the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki doing the
marathon.

6. In 1954, Ted won the Philidelphia marathon, the first of his four wins there.

7. In 1958, Ted founded the New York Road Runners Club.

8. Ted ran a total of 199 marathons and ultramarathons and won 30 of them.

9. In 1998, Ted was inducted into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame and in 2006 he was inducted into the American Ultrarunning Hall of fame.

10. Ted Corbitt died at the age of 88 from prostate and colon cancer in 2007.