

Road Runners Club: New York Association (RRC:NYA) History Project

Hi Jim:

I'm excited to announce the start of the foundation called Theodore Corbitt Institute for Running History Research. I'd like to invite you to be part of the foundation's first oral history project.

The 60 – 90-minute Zoom interviews will start this summer and will include runners who competed on the historic Bronx Macombs Dam Park course. You were part of this special period in running history when many aspects of today's sport were invented in New York by members of RRC:NYA. This history will be on display at the New-York Historical Society in the upcoming exhibition titled "Running for Civil Rights: New York Pioneer Club." The exhibit will run from October 27 to February 25, 2024.

For now, I'm compiling a list of people interested in participating in this project and ensure I have your correct contact information.

Let me know if you wish to be interviewed and our team will be in touch.

Best Wishes!

Gary Corbitt

Curator: Ted Corbitt Archives

Historian: National Black Marathoners Association (NBMA)

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Hi Gary,

Thank you for contacting me. I would like to participate. I met your dad a number of times at races and always wished I had had chances to train with him. These interactions had a definite effect on me and I am sure affected the trajectory of my running career.

I lived in New Jersey and only ran with the outstanding NY runners when I ran in races there. My strongest memories are of Ted Corbitt, Gary Muhrcke, John Garlapp and the tall John Kelly. I think they all ran in the London to Brighton ultra. Was it 50 miles? This distance blew my mind and I never thought I would run that far. I have now been running for 64 years, have run a number of ultras and am in charge of a running group consisting of over a dozen runners in my community. I am convinced that if I had not had my racing experiences with NY runners in the 1960s and with a good friend Joe Kleinerman, I would not be running now. And my life would not be nearly as enriched as it has been.

Ted Corbitt made a point of talking to me and encouraging me after races and once even during a race. At a race I think on Randall's Island, I had a heart warming experience. It was a hot day, I ran out too fast and was walking and discouraged. Few if any other runners were nearby except Ted magically appeared. He came running up to me and stopped to walk and talk for a while. I don't think he gave me anything to drink because he didn't have any. But somehow his words got me going again and after a while we were both running.

In my running website jimruns.com, there is a link to a page listing highlights of my running career. Among these highlights is an entry for the Milk Run & National AAU 25K championship in August 1964 that started on the grounds of the New York World's Fair. I wrote the following comment as part of that entry. "It was a very hot day. After the race Ted Corbitt talked to me and impressed on me the importance of the 5th place national medal I had won. He wanted to encourage me and it worked". I believe there is a direct connection between that event and a June 1968 event, the Milk Run & The NYC Metropolitan 25K Championship. I believe that Ted Corbitt helped to build that connection. If he had not talked to me that day in 1964 I don't think I would have trained as hard as I did for 4 years nor would I have run the best race of my life in 1968. In the hot 1968 race in Central Park, Gary Muhrcke and I ran the first mile in 5:00 and for the next 14 miles we were not separated from each other by more than 5 feet. In the beginning he ran some faster stretches I think to try to lose me but I just stuck with him. In the end I had just enough energy to out kick Gary for the win.

I didn't train hard nor did I compete from 1969 to 1972 because I was finishing my graduate studies at Rutgers. In 1972 my wife Mary Jane, our one year old son Jamie and I moved from NJ to Meadville PA where I started 34 years of teaching physics and doing research with college students. After that move, I started running seriously again. What spurred me on was the memory of my June 1968 win and the wonderful memories of my running in the 1960's.

I met Ted Corbitt one more time in 1982. I had just turned 40 and ran as a masters runner in the popular Youngstown, Ohio 25K Peace Race. Runners took part from all over the world. That day I had the fastest time of everyone over 40 and won a trip donated by Aer Lingus to run in the Dublin Marathon the following year. And on top of that I met and talked to Ted Corbitt who I had not seen since 1968. It was great to talk with him again. He was happy I was still running. So much so, when he got home, he wrote a newsletter to NY runners telling them that Jim Lombardi was still running. Needless to say this made me very happy.

I have had a wonderful running career that was ignited by races I ran in the 1960's and by Ted Corbitt, Joe Kleinerman, my teammate George Sheehan and many others. If not for them, I am sure I would not be running now. This past weekend at age 80, I ran in the USATF Midwest Region Masters Championship Track and Field Meet in Geneva OH. My 5K and 1500m times were 28:16 and 7:57. I hope to keep running for a while.

By the way Gary. Did you think of contacting Ed Ayers a runner from NJ in the 1960's and my teammate for a few races. I just Googled him and found:
Edward H. Ayres (born October 1941) is an American writer, editor, environmentalist and ultramarathon runner. He is the **founding editor and publisher of Running Times magazine**, and he served as editorial director of the Worldwatch Institute and editor of Worldwatch, a bimonthly global-trends magazine.