



RUNNING TO **EXTREMES**

THE LEGENDARY
ATHLETES OF
ULTRARUNNING

SCOTT LUDWIG

MEYER
& MEYER
SPORT

Running to Extremes

DEDICATION

To the enduring legacy and memory of Ted Corbitt

SCOTT LUDWIG

WITH

BONNIE BUSCH, CRAIG SNAPP, MARSHA WHITE,

DAVID CORFMAN & NORM KLEIN

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

THE LEGENDARY ATHLETES OF ULTRARUNNING

Meyer & Meyer Sport

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Running to Extremes


Maidenhead: Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd., 2016
ISBN: 978-1-78255-748-7

All rights reserved. Except for use in a review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means now known or hereafter invented without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book may not be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of trade in any form, binding or cover other than that which is published, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

© 2016 by Meyer & Meyer Sport (UK) Ltd.

Aachen, Auckland, Beirut, Cairo, Cape Town, Dubai, Hãgendorf, Hong Kong,
Indianapolis, Manila, New Delhi, Singapore, Sydney, Tehran, Vienna

 Member of the World Sport Publishers' Association (WSPA)

E-Mail: info@m-m-sports.com

www.m-m-sports.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	2
HERE'S WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT RUNNING TO EXTREMES	8
INTRODUCTION	11
THE FATHER OF LONG DISTANCE RUNNING	15
THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW (BEFORE READING THIS BOOK)	21
FOREWORD BY GARY CORBITT	22
CHAPTER 1 RAY ZAHAB	26
CHAPTER 2 MIKE SMITH	42
CHAPTER 3 AMY PALMIERO-WINTERS	52
CHAPTER 4 DEAN KARNAZES	70
CHAPTER 5 MARK COVERT	82
CHAPTER 6 BOBBI GIBB	98
CHAPTER 7 MIKE MORTON	108

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

CHAPTER 8	MARSHALL ULRICH	118
CHAPTER 9	PAM REED	128
CHAPTER 10	LARRY MACON	138
CHAPTER 11	TIM TWIETMEYER	154
CHAPTER 12	HELEN KLEIN	164
CHAPTER 13	ERIC CLIFTON	174
CHAPTER 14	ED ETTINGHAUSEN	186
CHAPTER 15	ANN TRASON	202
AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS		218
EPILOGUE		226
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		229
APPENDICES		231
CREDITS		259

HERE'S WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT RUNNING TO EXTREMES

"I believe all of us are born to be explorers, and those who discover this are the luckiest people of all. Distance runners certainly fall into this category. Those who truly love life and the world they live in chase after life with every bit of gusto they have, and that transforms them into extreme runners. I truly enjoyed reading Running to Extremes."

-Bill Rodgers, four-time winner of both the Boston Marathon and New York City Marathon

"Ted Corbitt always stood for me as a symbol of how through large efforts (such as his pioneering work in course certification and his selfless volunteering) and little gestures (he once surprised me with a cake at the end of a race), someone can advance a sport and touch people's lives. I welcome this book that recognizes his achievements by highlighting Ted and some of those who followed in his footsteps."

-Ann Trason, 14-time winner of the Western States Endurance Run

“I am honored to be included with such an amazing list of athletes and people in Scott Ludwig’s book. Through their passion for living life to the fullest, these are the people who inspire me; I hope they do the same for you.”

-Marshall Ulrich, extreme endurance athlete and author of *Running on Empty: An Ultramarathoner’s Story of Love, Loss, and a Record-Setting Run Across America*

“Scott and his team of writers have compiled an outstanding collection of the most prolific endurance athletes in the world. I’m excited to be included and hope this book proves to others that what appears to be impossible is indeed possible.”

-Ray Zahab, one of only three men to have run across the Sahara Desert

“This book does an excellent job of honoring Ted Corbitt and the other founding fathers of long-distance running. Running to Extremes will be an important part of the running history continuum for generations of participants, fans, historians, and scholars.”

-Gary Corbitt, curator of the Ted Corbitt Archives

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

“I am so grateful I still love to run. I encourage people to step outside the box and do something different to mix things up; it keeps it exciting. Keep putting one foot in front of the other and never stop.”

–Pam Reed, two-time winner of the Badwater Ultramarathon

“Trail and ultrarunning have created a never-ending source of new challenges as well as friendships and experiences that road racing just can’t provide.”

–Mike Smith, trail and ultrarunner

INTRODUCTION

Early in 2012, my friend and accomplished ultrarunner, Amy Costa, invited me to participate in a conference call. Ordinarily I make it a practice to stay as far away from conference calls as possible for a variety of reasons: poor connections, trying to listen to more than one person speak at the same time, not always knowing who is speaking, people speaking just to hear themselves talk, and wondering if someone is on the call who hasn't been announced as *being* on the call. Man, I avoid conference calls like I do the bubonic plague and chick flicks.

But not this one.

This conference call was different. This call was being hosted by Gary Corbitt, son of the late Ted Corbitt. You may recognize Ted Corbitt as the father of long-distance running. Ted Corbitt was one of the first distance runners who inspired me to become a distance runner. He was among the inaugural class of inductees into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame (1998) as well as the inaugural class of inductees into the American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame (2006). The purpose of the call was to preserve the history of road running, and the call was going to be recorded. For the first time in my life I was actually excited about being on a conference call. Actually, *giddy* might be a better word.

The participants on the call included a veritable who's who in the world of distance running:

- Park Barner, former U.S. and world record holder in the 24-hour run
- Fritz Mueller, who, at age 42, ran a 2:20:47 Boston Marathon and, in 1978, won the World Masters Marathon Championship in Berlin

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

- Rob Deines and John Garlepp, former 50-mile U.S. record holders; Garlepp was a former running rival of Ted Corbitt and the current coach of the renowned Millrose Athletic Association
- Rich Benyo, established ultrarunner and editor of *Marathon & Beyond*
- Ray Krolewicz, former U.S. record holder in the 48-hour run and finisher of over 400 ultramarathons
- Phil McCarthy, current U.S. record holder in the 48-hour run
- Neil Weygandt, finisher of the last 45 Boston Marathons
- Jacqueline Hansen, 1973 and 1975 Boston Marathon winner and two-time world record holder in the women's marathon
- John Chodes, author of a biography on Ted Corbitt

Gary started the call by reading a letter from Bruce Fordyce, nine-time winner of the Comrades Marathon. Gary then introduced a true ultrarunning legend, Bernard Gomersall, winner of the 1965 Comrades Marathon and four-time winner (1963-1966) of the London-to-Brighton road race.

Bernard reminisced about his battles on the road with the ultrarunners of the 1960s, including his thrilling one-minute victory over Ted Corbitt at London-to-Brighton in 1964. His stories were so vivid it was as if they had taken place yesterday. Asked if he continues to run, Bernard stated he has arthritis in both knees and at the advice (nay, *insistence*) of his doctor is not allowed to run anymore. He remains active in a variety of other non-contact sports but misses the days when running 75 to 80 miles a week (and up to 110 miles a week leading up to important competitions) was the norm. Soon Bernard, a widower, announced he would be leaving his native England and moving to Maryland so that he can be close to his daughter.

The call was then opened up to others, and the topics were many:

- The first AAU National 50-Mile Championship (Staten Island, New York) in 1966 when the temperature reached an almost intolerable 85 degrees Fahrenheit. The winner was Jim McDonagh in 5:52:28.
- Ted Corbitt's goal in the 1966 60-Mile Championship race: to hit the marathon mark in a brisk 2:42, only to be disappointed when his 26.2-mile split was 2:49.
- The days when running competitions of significant distance had drinking regulations; in other words, no drinking prior to the 10-kilometer mark. (One person commented they saw runners disqualified for breaking this rule.)
- Competitions that included actor and accomplished (in his own right) ultrarunner, Bruce Dern.
- Park Barner, in his humble and soft-spoken manner, noting he now runs an average of two miles a day as he has a shoulder that "doesn't agree" with his running (while not mentioning he at one time held the U.S. record in the 24-hour run with 152-plus miles, which bettered the former record by over 16 miles and later held the world record with 161 miles). Note: He did mention, however, that he loves to bowl and manages to maintain a 200 average. (Note to this note: In my opinion, a 200 bowling average is bowling's equivalent of running 152 miles in 24 hours.)

Amy and I were both as quiet as dormice during the call, content on intently listening to the legends relive a time that was essentially the birth of ultrarunning.

In our own way, we were able to relive history, and we were very grateful for every second—and every *mile*—of it.

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

Those 105 minutes on that call inspired me to do my part in preserving the legacy of ultrarunning for generations to come. I couldn't think of a better way than to write about those whose lives have been inspired by those who have run countless miles before them.

I hope you enjoy reading about them.

—Scott Ludwig



Marshall Ulrich and Scott Ludwig, Evergreen, Colorado, July 2015

THE FATHER OF LONG DISTANCE RUNNING

I have my doubts as to whether or not I would have ever considered running an ultra if it weren't for the influence, nay the *legend*, of Ted Corbitt.

Ted Corbitt is known not only in running circles but also around the globe as the father of American ultrarunning. Born in 1919, it would be 31 years before Corbitt would begin training to run marathons. He was virtually an instant success, earning a spot on the 1952 U.S. Olympic marathon team. Four years later he would miss qualifying for the team by only one spot.



Ted Corbitt and Ann Trason

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

Corbitt was born during a period when racial discrimination was prevalent. While his classmates would ride the bus to school, young Corbitt opted to walk; it was during these treks to and from school that he would discover how much he enjoyed running.

Competing as a track athlete in high school, Corbitt learned about the exploits of Tarzan Brown, a Narragansett Indian who won the Boston Marathon in 1936 and again in 1939. Corbitt was intrigued to discover that people could run 26.2 miles. At that time, four miles was considered a long distance to run; marathons did not have the national recognition they have today.

Corbitt attended the University of Cincinnati where he competed in distances ranging from sprints to the two-mile run. He excelled at every distance and would graduate with honors while earning a degree in physical education.

Corbitt took a brief hiatus from his diligent training program when he served in the army during World War II, got married, held a steady job, and earned a master's degree in physical therapy from New York University (1950). It was then he remembered his high school promise to himself of one day running the Boston Marathon—just to see if he could.

In 1951, Corbitt proved to himself that he could, finishing 15th at the most prestigious marathon in the world with a time of 2:48:42. For an encore he ran two more marathons over the next two months in comparable times before qualifying for the Olympic marathon team the following year.

In 1959, Corbitt participated in one of the first modern American ultras, the New York Road Runner Club's 30-miler. Fittingly, he won in a time of 3:04:13, and the event kick-started the sport in the United States. Over

the next six years, Corbitt finished first in his first 17 ultramarathons in the U.S.

While maintaining a job as a physical therapist at the International Center for the Disabled, being a husband, raising a son, and working on running-related administrative duties during the night, Corbitt maintained a diligent and hard-to-fathom training regimen. He would run two, sometimes three, times a day. He would run around the entire island of Manhattan (31 miles) not once but oftentimes twice. His weekly mileage would fall in the range of 200 to 300 miles, his monthly mileage exceeding 800 miles—occasionally as much as 1,000 miles or more.

In 1962, Corbitt made his first appearance at the 52.7-mile London-to-Brighton road race in England. Corbitt was among the leaders in the first half of the race before ultimately finishing in fourth, a performance noted by Andy Milroy as signaling the rebirth of North American ultrarunning. Corbitt would return to England four more times to run the event, finishing second on three occasions, including a one-minute loss in 1964 to the number-one ranked ultrarunner in the world at the time, Bernard Gomersall. The race is considered one of the epic, classic duels in the history of the sport.

Ted Corbitt was not only a pioneer athlete in the world of running, but he was also at the forefront as an advocate in the world of running. He was the third president of the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) and was elected to be the first president of the New York Road Runners Club in 1958. Corbitt helped launch the promotion of a national ultrarunning program by the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) and RRCA, resulting in the inaugural AAU National 50-Mile Championship in 1966. Corbitt finished second in the first edition of the event (Jim McDonagh was the winner), but he would return to win the championship in 1968, running 50 miles in 5:39:45. He authored and published the booklet,

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

Measuring Road Running Courses, in August of 1964. This document initiated a program for accurate course measurement in the United States. This ensured the legitimacy of the sport of long-distance running with verifiable record keeping.

Corbitt was one of the early proponents of the masters division for runners 40 years of age or older. One of his proudest accomplishments was the development of the standards for course measurement—standards that are now followed by the many USATF-certified races throughout the country. It was Corbitt's desire to make running a truly legitimate sport. By providing runners with accurate courses to compete, they could establish verified times and records to establish standards recognized around the world.

Ted Corbitt was one of the five inductees in the inaugural class of the National Distance Running Hall of Fame in 1998. The other four inductees were Bill Rodgers, Frank Shorter, Joan Samuelson, and Kathrine Switzer. In 2006, Corbitt was inducted into the American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame.

Corbitt dropped out of serious competition in 1974 because of bronchial asthma. At the time he was training for an attempt at bettering the record for running across the United States. (Corbitt felt he was capable of running the 2,800 miles from Los Angeles to New York in 42 days.) In spite of his health problems, Corbitt continued to run simply because he loved it. Although running became more of a physical challenge in his later years, Corbitt continued to participate (primarily walking) in marathons, 100-milers, and several 24-hour races. At the age of 82, he completed 303 miles in a six-day event—just for fun, as well as to achieve a goal and as a personal challenge.

Ted Corbitt, at the age of 88, died on December 12, 2007, in Houston, Texas. Suffering from prostate and colon cancer, Corbitt ultimately died of respiratory failure.

Ted Corbitt's philosophy on running was a simple one. He was quoted in *First Marathons: Personal Encounters With the 26.2-Mile Monster* as saying:

You don't need a goal.

You don't need a race.

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.

Ted Corbitt's wife, Ruth, died in 1989. He is survived by his son, Gary Corbitt of Jacksonville, Florida.

Gary has launched a site on Facebook, **Ted Corbitt – Pioneer**, and a website dedicated to his father at **www.tedcorbitt.com**. His goal is to not only recognize his father, but also to pay tribute to the many pioneers in running and health rehabilitation fields. Please take some time to visit these websites.

I have grown to know Gary through email and telephone correspondence over the past couple of years. When I presented the idea for this book to him and asked if he would be willing to share his father's story, he

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

agreed. For that we can all be grateful because it's highly doubtful that the people portrayed in this book would have ever accomplished the things they have without Ted Corbitt's influence, efforts, and sacrifices. As you will soon find out, Gary also generously agreed to write the foreword to this book.

Gary, thank you for allowing me to share your father's story. I'm certain runners everywhere join me in my sentiments.

Scott Ludwig

Senoia, Georgia

THREE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW (BEFORE READING THIS BOOK)

1. All of the information, quotes, and material for this book are based on personal communications—primarily telephone conversations and correspondence through electronic mail—between the authors and their respective subjects. The exception is the chapter on Helen Klein, written by her husband Norm.
2. The athletes portrayed in this book are what I refer to as ‘moving targets.’ As the majority of the book was written by mid-2015 to meet publishing deadlines, it is highly probable that by the time you are reading this these athletes will have added to their impressive resumes.
3. Don’t be intimidated by their accomplishments. Rather, be inspired.

-Scott Ludwig

FOREWORD BY GARY CORBITT

Running to Extremes is a fitting tribute to my father, Ted Corbitt, and his legendary and pioneering work in long-distance running. Scott Ludwig has assembled a team of writers and contributors who tell some quite amazing stories about a number of history's most prolific ultrarunners. Scott is an ambassador to the sport of running through his books and as president of the Darkside Running Club. His message as president of the club states "if you're a runner looking for inspiration...motivation...that little something extra to keep you focused and connected to the greatest sport on the planet—RUNNING—you've come to the right place." The same can be said about this, his latest book.

Growing up, I had a unique experience watching the sport of running being invented. I'd like to take this opportunity to review the early eras of ultrarunning and name some of the pioneers in this sport.

The sport has certainly evolved. During the 1960s and early 1970s Ted Corbitt had only one opportunity to run a 100-mile and 24-hour race. Both efforts resulted in American records, but each race turned out to be off days for what he was capable of doing, both in time and distance. I'm still amazed after reading this manuscript to learn about Iron Mike's goal of competing in one hundred 100-mile races in his career, Ed Ettinghausen's completion of 40 races of 100 miles or longer in a single calendar year, and Mark Covert's incredible career longevity.

One of the first extraordinary tests of endurance occurred in 1809 when Captain Robert Barclay, a Scottish aristocrat, walked 1,000 miles in 1,000 successive hours (nearly six weeks) at Newmarket in the United Kingdom. Barclay is also credited with competing in the first 24-hour race in October 1806.

My father would talk about his desire to run 600 miles in six days and walk 100 miles in less than 24 hours. I didn't understand the significance of these pedestrian-era performances until after his passing. The pedestrian era (1870s) was when the sport of ultrarunning and walking began to flourish. At the time this was America's favorite spectator sport until interest started to grow in baseball, boxing, and cycling in the 1890s. The events were held in big arenas—like New York's Madison Square Garden—and included big prize purses, huge crowds, circus-like sideshows, lots of betting, and alcohol. Bands and even orchestras were employed by the promoters to entertain both the crowd and the men on the track. The prize money made these athletes wealthy. Frank Hart, the first African American running world record holder earned \$21,567, or the equivalent of \$480,000 today, in a six-day race. Edward Payson Weston was responsible for the birth of the professional pedestrian era. He was the first to cover 500 miles by foot in six days in 1874. A pedestrian rule change in the late 1870s took the go-as-you-please, or walking, matches into both walking and running. As the sport grew in popularity with the public, it naturally also grew in popularity with the gamblers. This led to its downfall as rumors of fixing matches became widespread.

I was moved in reading the chapter on Mark Covert. His 45-year streak of consecutive days of running started on July 22, 1968. The date was within days of when my father's 13 years of consecutive two runs per day ended. On July 24, 1968, Ted Corbitt ran his signature morning 20-mile workout to work. He ran 3 miles at lunch and another 13 miles home. He was within three miles of home on his evening run when he was injured from an encounter with a dog. All endeavors, occupations, and sports have a history and lineage. Records are set and broken; streaks are started and ended. The ultrarunning streak baton was passed from Ted to Mark in July 1968.

The sport of ultrarunning was reborn with the Bunion Derby in 1928 (199 starters) and 1929 (89 starters). It was the very first footrace across

RUNNING TO EXTREMES

America. The races offered significant prize money. Johnny Salo, a shipyard worker from Passaic, New Jersey, distinguished himself in both races with a second- and first-place finish, respectively, in the two events. My father had plans of running across America, but this dream ended when he developed asthma in 1975. Two hundred fifty-two people have journeyed by foot across the United States over the years, starting with Edward Weston in 1909 at age 70. At age 13, I saw Don Shepard in New York finish his solo run across the country without a support crew or vehicle. He set a record of 73 days that lasted 16 years until Jacksonville, Florida, schoolteacher and coach, Jay Birmingham, completed the trek in 71 days. Jay's solo record still stands today.

One of the first annual ultrarunning races in the United States was the Providence to Boston 44- mile race held in March. The great Clarence DeMar used this race as a tune-up for the Boston Marathon. In 1928, DeMar would win both of these races. DeMar won the Boston Marathon seven times between 1911 and 1930.

The modern era of ultrarunning began in 1958 with the formation of the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) by Browning Ross. The New York City metropolitan area and the New York Road Runners Club led the way in the revival of ultramarathon running by conducting the first series of ultrarunning races. Aldo Scandurra, a runner and leading administrator of the sport, organized these races in the early 1960s. The RRCA began the process of working with the sport's governing body, the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), in which Aldo was the chair of the long-distance running committee. These efforts led to the first U. S. National 50-Mile Championship race in 1966 at Staten Island, New York.

Ted Corbitt was the face of the sport during those years. His duels with Jim McDonagh in the U.S. and Bernard Gomersall in England are legendary. He represented the U.S. on five occasions at the London-

to-Brighton 52-mile road race. The London-to-Brighton was the de facto world championship race and dates back to 1951. South Africa's apartheid policy prevented my father from competing at the 54-mile Comrades Marathon, which dates back to 1921. Ted Corbitt also participated overseas in world record track races of 50 miles, 100 miles, and 24 hours from 1966 to 1973 when he set American records each time. The Millrose AA team of Gary Muhrcke, John Garlepp, and Norbert Sander won the London-to-Brighton team title in 1976. My father raced these gentlemen at all distances for many years. This team victory was certainly inspired by my father. The ultrarunning baton was passed from Ted Corbitt to these Millrose runners. In the 1970s, the baton was passed to Park Barner and Allan Kirik.

The first generation of women in ultrarunning occurred during the 1970s and included the following: Ruth Anderson, Natalie Cullimore, Donna Gookin, Miki Gorman, Judy Ikenberry, Sandra Kiddy, Sue Krenn, Nina Kuscsik, Marcy Schwam, Sue Ellen Trapp, and Eileen Waters. These women pioneers should never be forgotten. They passed the baton to Ann Trason and others.

This book does an excellent job of honoring Ted Corbitt and the other founding fathers of long-distance running. *Running to Extremes* will be an important part of the running history continuum for generations of participants, fans, historians, and scholars. Learn and be inspired by these great stories you're about to read. Take the baton and keep moving. The body and mind always get stronger by staying consistent and committed to a goal in running and in life.

Gary Corbitt, Curator

Ted Corbitt Archives