

A SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP





Above: Sri Chinmoy honours Fred Lebow for his contributions to road running during a ceremony held at Lincoln Center on 21 October 1978, the day before the New York City Marathon. Below: Fred receives a trophy honouring the New York Road Runners Club's twenty-five years of service to the running world at a dinner held at Annam Brahma Restaurant on 21 June 1983.





Fred Lebow becomes the 700th person to be lifted in the "Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart" programme, in which Sri Chinmoy honours men and women of inspiration and dedication by lifting them overhead with one arm. The ceremony took place at the Sheraton Center on 3 November 1988.



The following story recounts Sri Chinmoy's experiences running with Fred Lebow in the Orange Bowl Marathon held on 25 January 1983, as recorded in his book Run and Become, Become and Run, Part 13.

The registration place for the marathon was the Holiday Inn in Miami. Just after I arrived there, whom did I see? Fred Lebow! He grabbed my hand and introduced me to the Race Director. While he was introducing me, he was looking at me so lovingly and intensely. He told the Race Director, "This is Sri Chinmoy. He conducts races, especially marathons, and all his races are excellent. Whenever we need help, Sri Chinmoy's team always helps us."

The Race Director said, "Yes, I have heard about him."

Then Fred told me, "You must come to our Club on the fifth of March. We are having a special banquet for excellent runners."

I said to him, "You have to finish tomorrow's marathon in under 3:30."

He said, "My best time is 3:40."

I said, "Isn't your best 3:30?"

He said, "No. Where did you get 3:30? My best is 3:40."

While he was talking to me, he was looking at me with such affection and loving concern.

A few minutes later I went into the stationery store in the hotel to buy The New York Times. Who came up to me? Fred Lebow again!

He said, "I was looking for you. Here, I am giving

you this T-shirt." On the T-shirt was written, "Training for the New York Marathon 1983."

He said, "I want you to have it."

I thanked him. Then I asked, "This year, are you going to Russia to run a marathon?"

He said, "No, not to Russia, but I am going to China next month." In another two weeks he was going to Shanghai to run. He also told me that two weeks earlier he had run a marathon in New Orleans.

I asked him, "Will you run one of our races? Have you ever run in Germany?"

He said, "No."

I said, "We have a few marathons in Germany. I would be so happy and honoured if you could run in one. I also will go once this year."

He said, "If you are going to run, then you let me know and I will come to join you."

He gave me the New York Road Runners Club schedule for the whole year. Then both of us said that we would see each other the next day at the race.

After I paid for my New York Times, I saw Fred coming right behind me with a chocolate bar. He was trying to get his money out of his running shorts. I said, "I am paying for him."

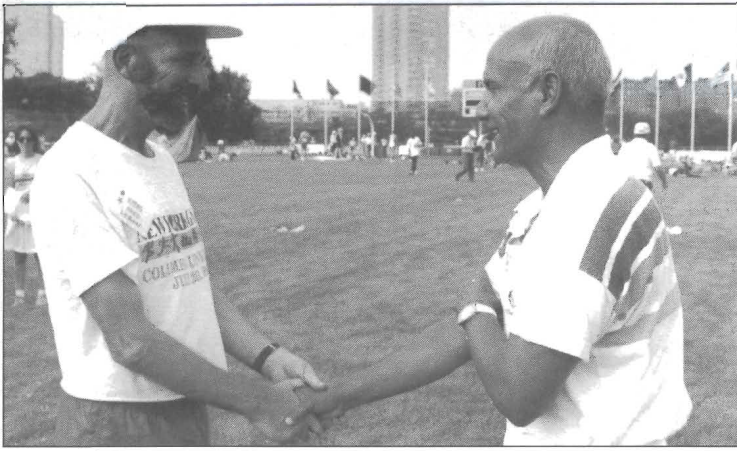
Fred grabbed my arm and thanked me. Then he said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. You have to come tonight. I have a videotape of the New York Marathon that I am showing here."

I said, "Three days ago I saw it in my house. First there were short, short races. Later you were waving your arms in circles. You were so happy and delighted when Salazar and the other big runners were



Sri Chinmoy chats with Fred during the first Sri Chinmoy 1000-Mile Race, held in Flushing Meadow Park in May 1985.





finishing."

He asked me, "Where did you get it?"

I said, "One of my students got it."

He said, "Very few are released, and I have come here to show it."

Then we departed.

The next morning before the race they were making announcements. Mr. Marathon was Bill Rodgers. Then they were saying that some great runners had come from Scotland and Ireland. They also said they were happy to have Fred Lebow running. I was happy that Fred's name was mentioned.

After two miles I felt as if I had run a whole marathon. It had started drizzling. I didn't mind the rain, but the humidity was so bad that after two miles I wanted to give up. With greatest difficulty I continued.

After four miles I started running and walking. After nine and a half miles, I was absolutely walking for four or five hundred metres at a time. Then whom did I see? Fred Lebow! He came from behind me. When I saw him, I said, "Oh, you were behind me?"

He started running with me. He asked me how many marathons I had run. I said, "This is my twentieth."

He said, "I am fifty years old, and this is my fiftieth marathon."

I said, "I am congratulating you! For each year of your life you have run one marathon."

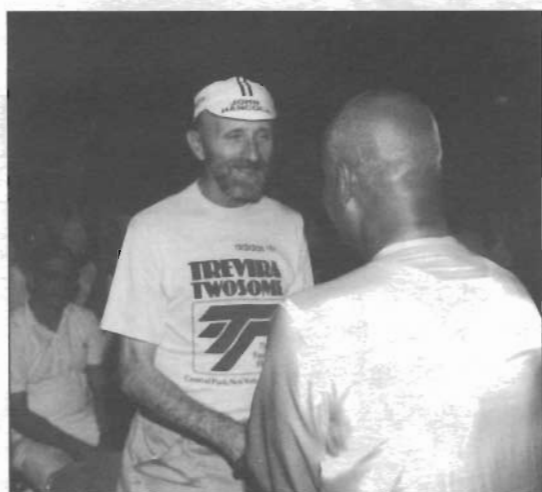
Then he said, "Look behind me. The man there has run a hundred and one marathons."

I was running with Fred for some time. I often complain about my stride. His stride is also short, but very quick. He was complaining about the humidity. Finally, he went ahead of me.

After thirteen and a half miles, I saw him coming back in the other direction. He was practically a mile and a half ahead of me. He said, "Oh, Sri!" His face was so tired. I was not tired because I was walking.

After sixteen miles one of my students saw him walking, but when I saw him, he was still running.

The humidity was unbearable, but I was able to continue and eventually finish because Fred was encouraging me.



Fred Lebow congratulates Sri Chinmoy on his 61st birthday during a celebration held at Julia Richmond High School in Manhattan, 27 August 1992.





New York Road Runners Club, Inc.
Organizer of the New York City Marathon®

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Fred Lebow
Chairman

August 24, 1994

Sri Chinmoy
c/o Rapunta LaRusso
150-47 87th Avenue
Jamaica, NY 11432

Dear Sri,

With heartfelt warmth, I wish you a very happy 63rd birthday this Saturday and many pleasant things for the year to come.

I am truly proud to know you and to be associated with you and goodwill that you foster through your words and actions.

Thank you for the beautiful letter that accompanied the floral bouquet you sent in honor of my induction into the USA Track and Field Hall of Fame.

I am both happy and honored to count you as my friend.

All my best regards,
And hope to see you soon,

Fred Lebow