



FROM: EMPIRE STATE BUILDING
Fifth Avenue and 34th Street
New York, New York 10001

Howard J. Rubenstein Associates, Inc.
Public Relations - Tel: 212/489-6900
Contact: Frances Borden

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST ANNUAL EMPIRE STATE "RUN-UP" SCHEDULED FOR FEB. 15
Marathon Veterans to Race 86 Floors Up Building Stairs

A vertical race up one-quarter mile high in the sky, up the 1,575 stairs of the Empire State Building to the 86th floor Observatory, will be held on Wed., Feb. 15, at 10:30 a.m.

The first annual Empire State Building "Run-Up" will be sponsored in cooperation with the New York Road Runners Club. A horizontal distance of 1,050 feet is not great as far as Marathons are concerned, but the difference becomes major when the thousand feet means traveling upwards. The race will conclude at the end of the staircase with a sprint around the Observatory terrace outdoors, breaking the tape against a breathtaking panorama of the New York skyline.

Approximately 15 runners, 10 men and 5 women, will be competing for the honor of a record in the first official staircase run ever held by the building. All male contestants have competed in an Ultra Marathon (minimum distance of 50 kilometers or 31.1 miles), and most of them have done a Double Marathon (52.4 miles). Female contestants have participated in one or more Marathons (a distance of 26 miles and 385 yards).

Starter will be Ted Corbitt, age 54, known as the father of long-distance road-running in the U. S., who will also judge. Other judges will be Fred Lebow, president of the New York Road Runners Club, and Robert L. Tinker, vice president and general manager of the Empire State Building.

(more...)

Various Ascents

The participants appropriately will wear T-shirts showing the Empire State Building with King Kong clinging to the top. It was King Kong, in 1933, who was the first to negotiate the ascent, although it was on the outside of the building and with one hand, since the other held Fay Wray.

Members of the press and onlookers will not pant, huff or puff to the top. While it is estimated that the runners may make the long-distance climb by stairs in 15 to 20 minutes, express elevators to the 80th floor take 60 seconds time. A change of elevator at the 80th floor to reach the 86th floor Observatory will add another 30 seconds. The mechanical climb, therefore, takes a total of one-and-one-half minutes, and no physical exertion whatsoever.

Dream Come True

One contestant, Mrs. Nina Kuscik, age 38 and the mother of three, is finally realizing a lifelong dream. When she was 16 years old, she trained in her home apartment building to race up the Empire State Building stairs. When she tried, building officials wouldn't let her. Now, 22 years later, she will realize her ambition. Mrs. Kuscik is a female winner of the Boston Marathon, and several times winner of the New York Marathon. She holds the American record for women for a Double Marathon (50 miles). She is a nurse in patient relations at Mt. Sinai Hospital by occupation.

Another contestant will be Brian Jones, Australian by birth and age 37. He has been practicing running up the stairs in an apartment house at 86th Street and Second Avenue and has done the thirty flights in approximately 4 minutes, 15 seconds.

(more...)

Currently the oldest entrant is George N. Spitz, 55, of New York City, a man accustomed to running since he has been a regular but unsuccessful contender for local political offices. He started running at the age of 50, has started in 14 marathons and finished 13. His customary practice run is always 6 to 7 miles, after which he runs up 10 flights of stairs as a top-off.

Practice Grounds

Training is popular for runners on Fifth Avenue in New York's winter weather. Since the Empire State Building "Run-Up" was announced, they have switched from the sidewalks of New York to running up the front steps of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Communication

There is no single staircase in the Empire State Building that reaches the Observatory. Therefore, runners will switch stairs on both the 20th floor and the 65th floor, sprinting down public corridors in a change of stairwells for the ascent. Communication among officials observing the race will be by walkie-talkie from the lobby through the various floor levels to the finish line.

Previous Run-Ups

There has never before been an official "Run-Up" the Empire State Building. There have been a few sneak ascents, unofficial and untimed.

In 1932, the Polish Olympic ski team on a visit to New York decided one February day to climb what was then Manhattan's loftiest peak. Five team members, also expert mountain climbers, had just reached the 86th floor when they met the Czech Olympic skiing team. They were challenged. The guardians of the Empire State Building were not agreeable, however, so competition was called off and the laurels left with Poland.

(more...)

In 1939, the Yale track team slipped in and climbed up, but no team time was given.

In 1941, two Bronx youngsters hoofed it and were rewarded with tea and crumpets, and an introduction to the then president of the Empire State Building, Alfred E. Smith.

Why the Climb

Entrants in the Empire State Building "Run-Up" have been asked why they want to perform the strenuous climb. The answer, as with all "mountain climbing," seems to be the same: "Because the building is there."

Official medic for the Empire State Building "Run-Up" is Marathoner Dr. Edward Colt.

Prizes will be scale models of the Empire State Building.

#

2/6/78/mk

PRESS ADVISORY:

Runners will be dressed and warming up in Fifth Avenue lobby at 10 a.m., Wednesday, February 15.

Race starts at 10:30 a.m.

Award ceremony after race will be held on 86th floor Observatory.

Empire State run-up

for all walks of life

By DON WILLIAMS

2-14-78

NEW YORK — Up the down staircase — “down” because who’s going to walk UP 86 flights?

Nobody. Not even 19 marathon competitors. They’re going to RUN up.

Tomorrow, that is, in the first Empire State Building “Run-Up,” sponsored in cooperation with the New York Road Runners Club.

Actually, it would be 102 flights except that between floors 86 and 102 the staircase narrows, making passing impossible. So the runners will settle for the 86 — 1,575 steps, to be precise.

Sorry, but only “ultra” marathon runners are eligible, runners who have run at least 50 kilometers, or 31.1 miles. Horizontally.

“We just had too many calls from people not qualified,” said Fred Lebow, president of the New York club yesterday. “There is, quite obviously, a health factor.”

And so it was sorry to the seven-year-old boy who “loves to run,” and to the 13-year-old boy who next year hopes to be eligible. Even the mountain climber was rejected. And George Willig, well, his meat is the World Trade Center.

“This is no joke. We are quite serious about it,” said Lebow.

Mrs. Nina Kuscik, 38 and well accomplished in marathon running, has been serious about it since she was 16. That’s when she started training, in her apartment building, for just such a task. When she tried to do it on her own, she couldn’t get permission.

Now that she has it, she’s wrenched her back and is out of the competition. Too bad, she is also a nurse.

Dr. Edward Colt, though, will be on hand, a marathon man himself. So will Bob Glover, a participant who also happens to be a physical fitness instructor who teaches cardio-vascular classes. Where were they when King Kong needed them?

Where will Joanne Schreiber of Greenwich, Conn., be at 10:30 tomorrow morning? Preparing for the climb — or is it run? — and if she wins, that’ll make her quadruplets happy.

A mother of five will also be competing. Her name? Chloe (“I’ve got to go where you are?”) Foote. Honest. She’s from New York City.

Then there’s George Spitz, a 55-year-old New Yorker who makes a habit of running for political office . . . without winning. And 53-year-old Jim McDonagh of the Bronx, a man with a very impressive 2:27 marathon to his credit.

Then, of course, there’s Elliott Denman of Long Branch, N.J., a journalist who in 1956 was an Olympic 50-kilometer walker.

Ted Corbitt, known as the father of long-distance road running in the U.S., will be the starter and one of the judges. The other judges will be Lebow and Robert L. Tinker, vice-president and general

manager of the Empire State Building.

The run — or is it climb? — is expected to take between 15 and 20 minutes. Brian Jones, an Australian contestant, has done the 30 flights of his Manhattan apartment in four minutes, 15 seconds.

When it’s over, the contestants will break into a sprint around the 86th floor observatory. They hope. You’ll be able to tell them by the T-shirts they’ll be wearing. The ones with the likeness of King Kong himself, warding off the airplane. Fay Wray will just have to wait ‘til ‘79.

Prizes, of course, will be awarded. Scale models of the Empire State Building, of course.

Oh, yes. Another Jersey participant is Pat Burke of Teaneck.

His occupation?

Elevator repair man.

2 Part III — Thurs., Feb. 16, 1978

Los Angeles Times

Morning Briefing

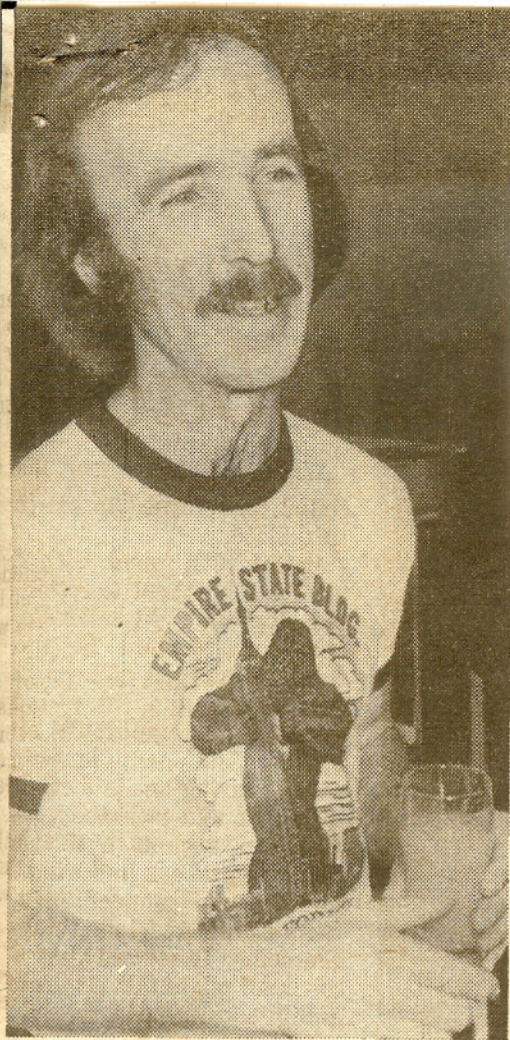
15 Marathon Runners Reach New Heights — 86 Stories

Fifteen marathon runners, 12 men and three women, got awfully high in New York Wednesday. For kicks, they ran up 1,575 steps—86 stories—of the Empire State Building.

Why did they do it? Was it because the famous building was “there” like the mountain?

Gary Muhrcke, 37, who won the first Empire State Building Run-up in 12 minutes 32 seconds, said, “I like to win a race now and then and I haven’t won one in some time.”

Marcy Schwam, first among the women runners in the upward run in 15:16, explained the difference between flat running and up the stairs. “You need good thighs and you have to pick up your legs much higher,” she said. “But it wasn’t as hard as I thought it would be.”



Winner, in world record time: Gary Muhrcke



Running up the last flight, to the 86th floor

There Were 15 Runners; All 15 Were Runners-Up

By John Jeanson

New York—Going up. The ascent, from the Empire State Building's lobby to its Observatory, is merely 86 floors. A party of 15—three women and 12 men—merely were making the trip so many tourists make every day. There was one interesting rule yesterday, however: No elevators allowed.

For the First Official Empire State Building Run-Up, they used the fire stairs—1,575 fire stairs. Most of the runners took them two at a time, except when passing, when a few took them three at a time. They clung to the handrails (perfectly legal, the rules said) in the narrow 40-inch stairwell, and passed on the right. Since there is no single stairwell running from the ground floor to the top, they sprinted down public corridors at the 20th and 65th floors. Occasionally they happened upon "janitors and things," said participant Hugh Sweeney, "who were scratching their heads. They thought we were crazy. Which we are."

In the lobby a small crowd formed and one overcoated, briefcase-clutching man had to ask another overcoated, briefcase-clutching man: "What's going on?" The other said, "Some crazy guys are going to run up to the top." Which drew the reply, "See 'em in a couple of hours."

But it was only 12 minutes and 32 seconds before Gary Muhrcke, the 37-year-old, athletic-gear retailer from Huntington Station, appeared on the sunny Observatory deck from the dark stairwell, as if spit out by the building. He wobbled a little from the sudden brightness and the cumulative effect of constantly turning at each flight of stairs. "Twelve-thirty-two," shouted Fred Lebow, the Road Runner Club president and judge of the event. "A world record."

Sweeney, a 32-year-old lawyer from Jersey City, followed at 13:00, and Paul Fetscher, 30-year-old real estate man from West Hempstead, was next in 13:14. And a little later came the women's champion, fitness instructor Marcy Schwam of Ossining, in 14:03. "A world record for women," shouted Lebow.

Nobody had trained for the event in the

sense that nobody has a tall enough building handy to practice racing up its stairs. But all runners previously had participated in marathons (26 miles, 385 yards), and most had run races of even longer distances. Schwam, who recently won the national Ultra Marathon (31.1 miles), last week celebrated her 25th birthday—"a momentous event"—by running 25 miles.

So this was not thought of as a chore. "A marathon is much tougher," Muhrcke said. "This was fun."

King Kong tried it unofficially in 1933, and the Polish and Czech Olympic ski teams challenged each other to an uphill race in 1932, but building officials nixed that. In 1939, the Yale track team snuck up the same way, but that run was not timed and, in 1941, two Bronx youngsters did the same.

Yesterday, with everything official for the first time, 55-year-old George Spitz of New York City, a weekly-newspaper columnist and unsuccessful politician, was among the runners. Why? "I was invited," he explained. "And it's always exciting for a man my age to accept a new challenge."

"The whole thing was weird," Sweeney said. "You couldn't tell if you were going to catch anybody until you were right up on them."

"There must have been 200 turns," Fetscher said. "I think Gary [Muhrcke] had about three floors on me. I could hear people clapping from the 65th floor when I was at 62. We were all kind of squatting, running Groucho Marx style. And Sweeney and I kept shouting to each other: 'I'm on 66.' 'I'm on 67.' 'See Muhrcke up ahead?' 'Nope.'"

"Plus, it was noisy from all the heavy breathing. By the seventh floor it was like a wind tunnel: 'Ahhhhhhhh-huuuuuuuuuh . . . ahhhhhhhh-huuuuuuuuuh . . . ahhhhhhhh-huuuuuuuuuh.'"

Actual finishing position aside, everyone was considered a runner-up. And, oh yes: Unfortunately, Pat Burke, 36, of Teaneck, did not show up to run. The other participants thought it would have been fitting to have an elevator repairman taking the stairs.

15 Go Like 60 Up to 86th Floor

By GUS DALLA

Mouse run up a clock, that's an old story. Dish run off with the spoon, that's old stuff. But people run up 85 flights of steps at the Empire State Building for sport, that's news.

Fifteen experienced marathon runners did it yesterday morning, racing from the lobby to the 86th floor observation deck, two steps at a time, pace by a Long Islander who said he had zipped up 1,575 steps in 12 minutes 32 seconds.

Winner of what was termed the First Annual Empire State Building Runup was Gary Muhrcke, 37, of Huntington Station.

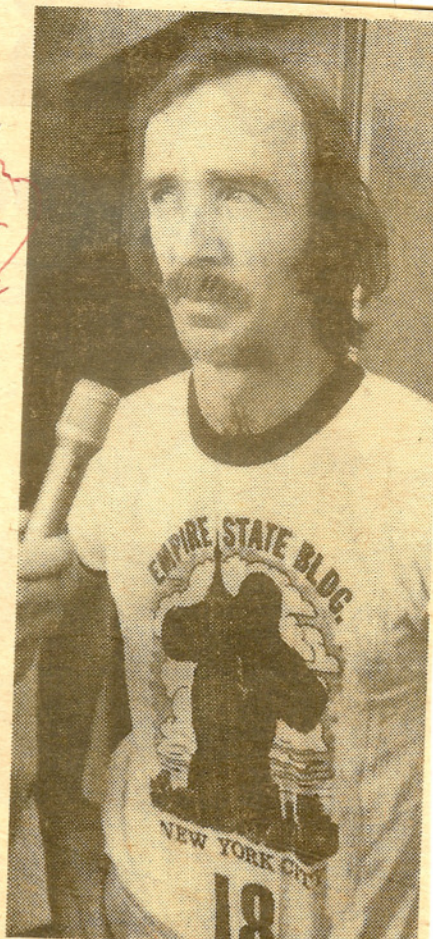
"Easier than I thought," said Muhrcke, dripping sweat but breathing easily after breaking the finish ribbon on the observatory's outdoor deck.

"The tough part was not knowing what was around the blind corners of the stairwells," he said. "No problems. If I'd known the course, I could have done it in three minutes less."

There were hazards. Paul Fetscher, 82, of West Hempstead, L.I., who finished third with a time of 13:15, encountered a postman and mailbag at about the 70th floor.

"He didn't act surprised, but I hollered at him to get the bag out of the way and swerved around him," Fetscher said.

A redhead in low-cut sweater on the 55th floor landing pot Hugh Sweeny, 32, of Jersey City off stride for a moment. "I couldn't stop, of course," he said, "but she called 'Good luck!' after



News photo by Robert Rosamilio
Gary Muhrcke, who came out on top, says run was "easier than I thought."

me in a nice British accent." Sweeny finished second at 13 minutes.

Three women ran in the event, sponsored by the building management and the N.Y. Road Runners Club, which sponsors local running events. The runup was restricted to runners who have finished in marathons of 50 miles or more. First woman across the finish line was Marcy Schwam, 25, of Ossining, at 16:03.

Ex-Fireman Who Raced Up 85 Flights Faces Review of His Disability Pension

A 37-year-old man who won a race up the stairs of the Empire State Building on Wednesday was retired from the Fire Department with a back injury four and a half years ago and has been receiving a tax-free disability pension of \$11,822 a year, a Fire Department official said yesterday.

The retired fireman, August Gary Muhrcke of 121 East Neck Road, Huntington, L.I., led a field of 14 contestants up the 85 flights of stairs, finishing in 12 minutes, 32 seconds.

The First Deputy Fire Commissioner, Stephen Murphy, who is also acting chairman of the Fire Department Pension Fund Board, said that after seeing news reports of Mr. Muhrcke's climb he decided to ask the board to review his case.

Mr. Murphy said it was likely that

Mr. Muhrcke would be re-examined by pension board and Fire Department doctors who had ordered his retirement after more than 11 years of service.

If the doctors determine that Mr. Muhrcke is capable of full or limited duty, the Commissioner said, his pension will be discontinued and he will be required to return to work at the salary of a full-duty fireman, \$17,348 a year. Otherwise, Mr. Murphy said, the disability pension will remain in effect.

Mr. Murphy said that in 25 years of active duty in the department, he had never heard of a man being returned to city employment after having been retired with a disability. Nor, he said, could he recall a case in which a man had been allowed to return to work at his own request.

Mr. Muhrcke could not be reached for comment last night.