



# Manfred "Fred" Deckert

OCT 15, 1929 - FEB 13, 2025



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**M**anfred “Fred” Ernest Deckert, a lifelong learner, devoted husband, loving father, and dedicated runner, completed his final race on February 13, 2025, at the age of 95.

Born on October 15, 1929, in Beacon, New York, to German immigrants Joseph and Betty Deckert (formerly Babette Stich), Fred grew up in LaGrangeville, NY. A book-loving farm boy, he dreamed of leaving behind rural life for the thrill of flying. In 1951, he joined the U.S. Air Force, but when poor eyesight dashed his hopes of becoming a pilot, he served instead as a radio operator for four years. Thanks to the GI Bill, he went on to earn a degree from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY, and began a career as an electrical engineer with IBM.

In 1957, fate intervened in the form of Margarete Lebold, whose proposal left Fred powerless to resist. Not even the prospect of a job transfer to tornado-prone Missouri could shake her resolve. They married on Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1957, launching a lifelong partnership built on love, adventure, and mutual support.

A natural problem solver, Fred approached life with an engineer’s mind and a do-it-yourself spirit. He built the family home with his father and wife, tackled home improvements and repairs with pride, planted over 100 trees, installed solar panels, and even taught himself to sew—crafting down jackets and sleeping bags from Frostline kits. While raising their two daughters, Barbara (born in 1961) and Caroline (born in 1963), he also maintained a small menagerie of chickens, sheep, goats, and rabbits and painstakingly restored a classic Triumph Spitfire sports car.

One of the family’s fondest memories is the summer of 1973, when Fred masterminded a cross-country camping adventure, leading the way as the grandparents followed in a VW camper.

Fred and Margarete shared a love of the outdoors, hiking the Catskill peaks as members of the Catskill 3500 Club. Their passion for fitness evolved into long-distance running, an obsession that lasted well into their 80s. In the 1970s, they helped found the Mid-Hudson Road Runners Club,



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forging lifelong friendships and fostering a vibrant running community. Fred, ever the dedicated supporter, meticulously planned training courses and strategies for Margarete, an elite masters-level competitor, and served as her biggest cheerleader—always ready with a camera when she crossed the finish line, often victorious.

After retiring from IBM following a 30-year career, Fred and Margarete moved to Tallahassee, Florida, in 1988, trading harsh New York winters for sunshine and an even more active lifestyle. They became legends in the Gulf Winds Track Club (GWTC), inspiring others through their commitment to running and volunteerism. Fred logged over 70,000 lifetime miles, while also serving as a race director, photographer, newsletter editor, and dedicated volunteer. He directed the Tallahassee Ultra Distance Classic and continued his contributions to the sport through his 80s.

His dedication did not go unrecognized. Fred was a two-time recipient of the Michael Caldwell Award for Advancement of the Sport (1995, 2019), a 2003 inductee into the GWTC Hall of Fame alongside Margarete, and a 2014 Tallahassee Senior Center Silver Star, also as a couple. The Hall of Fame inscription states: “Their consistent leadership reflects new and positive directions for GWTC.” Yet, ever humble, Fred preferred to shine the spotlight on others.

Beyond running, Fred’s retirement years were filled with intellectual pursuits and community service. A prolific writer, he submitted hundreds of Zing!s, letters to the editor, and running columns to the Tallahassee Democrat. He volunteered with Habitat for Humanity, both on worksites and in the office, and served as an ombudsman advocating for nursing home residents. Known for his quick wit, he had a well-earned reputation as a wisecracker.

Among the many adventures he shared with Margarete, a 2000 Elderhostel tour of the American West stood out. From Elvis’ birthplace to ancient ruins in Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde, Fred chronicled their travels with keen observations, humor, and colorful anecdotes—dispatches eagerly awaited by friends and family. The truth is his writings could fill a book.

A voracious reader and a man of insatiable curiosity, Fred spent many contented hours with a book and a dog in his lap. He embraced lifelong learning, taking up portrait painting and live model drawing at the Senior Center—not to showcase talent, but to prove that sheer determination could overcome any lack thereof, much like his approach to running.



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On February 13, 2025, at age 95, Fred finished life's ultimate ultra and earned his eternal rest. His spirit now runs free.

Per his wishes, a private green burial was held, honoring his desire for a simple, environmentally friendly farewell. Yet, in contrast to his preference for minimal fuss, a grand celebration of life will be announced—because a man who meant so much to so many deserves nothing less.

Fred is survived by his devoted wife of 67 years, Margarete Deckert; daughters Barbara Forster and Caroline Collins; sons-in-law Ned Forster and Keith Collins; grandson Joseph Collins and granddaughter-in-law Daphne Dodd Collins; cousin, Robert (and Gerry) Deckert; many nieces and nephews; and a treasured circle of friends. He was predeceased by his parents and his sister, Lenora (and Robert) Purdy. The family is deeply grateful to Pastor Tom Holdcraft for his compassion and support in our time of need.

His was a life well-lived, full of love, laughter, and purpose. His legacy endures in the lives he touched and the miles he ran.



## Tribute Wall

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**Jean Gray** sent a virtual gift in honor of Manfred "Fred".

Sending Condolences from the Purdy's.

March 4 at 1:21 PM



**Jay Wallace** posted:

One of my favorite memories of Fred was him standing on a ladder by the finish line at Maclay track, taking pictures of the kids finishing summer track races. He was there religiously every week. I don't think any parent couldn't access a photo (or two or three) of their child running to the finish line. He was a fixture at our club races as well, taking pictures freely shared with members. My thoughts are with Margarete and family. I will miss him.

March 2 at 7:30 PM



**Wendy Smith** posted:

Fred was an amazing individual. Bob and I enjoyed knowing him through GWTC when we lived in Tallahassee. Fred was positive and energetic, and you could always count on him to take excellent pictures of many race events. I miss running with Margarete, although I am not running these days. I still remember Margarete helping me through the entire Pine Run when it was still held in the pine forests south of Bainbridge. Bob and I are moving back to Tallahassee soon. It will be wonderful to see old friends again. Fred will be greatly missed.

February 27 at 1:46 PM



**Carol Travis Rountree** sent a virtual gift in honor of Manfred "Fred".

February 27 at 7:54 AM



**Judy Alexander** posted:

An icon has gone on to the next realm. I know they will enjoy, cherish and appreciate him the way we all do! Sending love and comfort to Dear Margarete and to your family, Caroline.

February 27 at 6:31 AM



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**Judy Waters** posted:

Fred lived life to the fullest and accomplished so much. I always told Fred that I wanted his legs. Sending a big hug to your beautiful family.

February 26 at 7:23 AM



**Audrey Wood** posted:

What a life! I'm so happy that your parents were part of our family. Sending peace and light ❤️ 👤

February 26 at 6:41 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Manfred "Fred" by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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