

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

23. **Stan Miskin (31/07/1925 – 21/12/2014)**
29-30 October 1988
22:59:48
Adelaide Harriers Track, Adelaide, SA

Stan Miskin, born on 31st July 1925, had a wonderfully varied life. He joined the RAAF, in 1942, aged 17, after artificially inflating his age to 18, and served as a rear gunner in Lancaster bombers during the Second World War. Leaving the service in 1946, he joined the SEC, working first as a linesman and later as a teacher at the SEC School.

He and Ellwyn married in 1951, beginning a 63 year partnership that was only broken this year with Stan's passing. Together, they brought up their family of 4 children, moving house a number of times into the bargain.

His running career did not start until around his fiftieth birthday. Responding to a challenge from one of his mates to run 50 laps of the local oval, he quickly caught the fun run bug. He ran his first marathon in 1978, aged 53 years, and by 1988 he had run 81 marathons (with a best time of 3:16), many 50 milers (best time of 7:39), had a best 24 hour running distance of 187 km and a best 48 hour distance of 241 km.

In 1988 he decided to walk rather than run in the annual Sri Chimnoy 24 Hour event being held at the old cinders Adelaide Harriers track in Adelaide. He successfully completed the distance in a time of **22:59:48** to become our oldest Centurion, being 63 years of age at the time. He also became only the fourth Australian to both walk and run the 100 mile distance within 24 hours. Within a period of less than 2 years, we had seen Claude Martin, Jim Turnbull, George Audley and Stan achieve the run/walk double. No further athletes achieved this feat until Yiannos Kouros in 1998.

Stan did not even know that the Australian Centurion club existed at the time he did this feat. It was only after he saw a race report of our 1994 event that he contacted us in early 1995 and sent the relevant documentation to verify his performance. This created a difficult situation for us – should we recognise the performance or not?

After extensive investigation, it was decided to grant Stan Centurion membership (after all, it had been our own fault in that we had been out of circulation all these years) but to set a firm rule that no such dispensations would be made in the future. From now on, the onus would be on the competitor to contact us beforehand and forewarn us of the attempt. Only if one or more of our members were present and only if we could absolutely verify the correctness of the performance would we consider such applications.

With ultra-distance runners of the ilk of George Audley and Stan Miskin joining the ranks of the Australian Centurions, it should have augured in an era of new blood but unfortunately the opportunity was lost. It was not until Yiannos Kouros completed the 100 mile walk in 1998 that the ultra-distance runners once again discovered ultra-distance walking.

In the early 1990s, Stan and Ellwyn won a lottery that give them a new home on the Gold Coast in Queensland (yes, people do actually win such things) so they sold up and journeyed north.

It was during his time in Queensland that he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and underwent the usual treatments. But not happy with his rate of recovery and the long term prognosis, Stan researched for alternatives and soon developed his own treatment regime which proved very successful. Soon he was back to full strength, in spite of the doctors' fears.

It was not until 2000 that he and Ellwyn sold up again and came back south, settling in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Once there, Stan found he lived around the corner from Fred Brooks who was in training to attempt to qualify as a centurion. That was all the invitation that Stan needed and he was soon pounding the beat with Fred, helping him prepare for his date with destiny. He had already been toying with the idea of a final big walk and the timing was perfect. In October 2000, he travelled to Adelaide and completed 120 km in the Sri Chimnoy 24 hour event. He was on track.

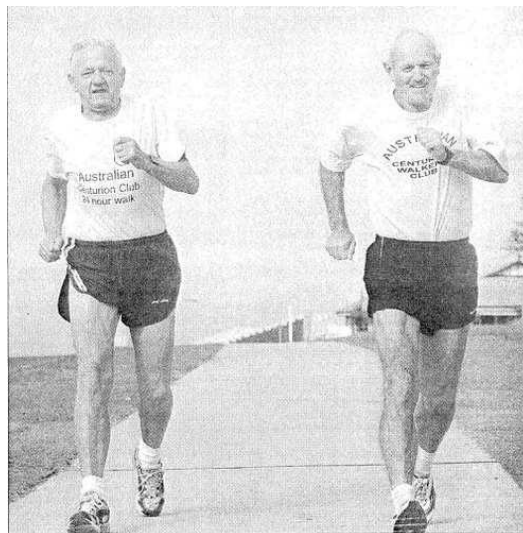
Both Fred and Stan toed the line to start the 2001 Australian Centurions event, held over 7-8 April in Coburg. Fred was duly successful, walking strongly to become Australian Centurion number 42 with a time of 22:31:15. At 67 years of age, he became our oldest centurion qualifier. Michael Harvey also became a centurion on that day with his walk of 22:48:26. The third walker of interest to us was Stan whose aim was to break the Australian

Ultra Distance records for the 75+ age groups. Of course, these were running records and Stan would be walking - but they seemed achievable targets.

And Stan was successful in his aim. His final distance was **142.791 km**, blitzing the previous record of 132.8 km, held by Aussie running legend Drew Kettle. Along the way, he also broke Drew's records for 12 hour, 50 miles and 100 km. A fitting achievement at the age of 75!

He was now hooked once again. After further training with Fred, he was ready for a big year in 2002 but just how big was a surprise to everyone. Here's how it read.

- *5-6 January 2002, Coastal Classic 12 Hour Event, Gosford, NSW*
Stan, at 76 years of age, beat Cliff Young's 75+ 50 Mile AURA record – and Cliff did it running while Stan was walking. Cliff's record was 12:21:47 but Stan went through the 50 mile mark in under 12 hours and went on to record a 12 hour distance of 81.967 km – another AURA 75+ record for him.
- *2 Feb 2002, Caboolture Historical Village 12 Hour Dusk to Dawn*
Stan completed 74.837 km.
- *2-3 March 2002, Sri Chimnoy 100 km, Canberra*
Stan's 100km time of 15:11:00 was a few minutes faster than his 100km split at Coburg the previous year, a fine walk considering the tough course and adverse conditions.
- *13-14 April 2002, Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg*
Stan had a great day, breaking his AURA 75+ records for 50 Miles, 12 hours and 100 km and just falling 1 km short of his 24 hour record with his final distance of 141.537 km. Of course, these were running records and Stan walked!
- *19 - 21 July 2002, Australian 48 Hour Championship, Bribie Island, Queensland*
Stan came 4th overall with a final distance of 205.113 km.
- *19 - 20 October 2002, Sri Chimnoy 24 Hour Carnival, Adelaide Harriers Track, Adelaide*
Stan finished 11th with a distance of 121.695 km.
- *17-23 November 2002, Australian 6 day Race, Colac*
Stan unfortunately blistered in day 1 and had to retire early on day 2 after only 138.2km. The next year, he would be back!



Stan and Fred photographed in 2001 after their successful 24 Hour walks at Coburg

2003 saw more of the same

- *4-5 January 2003, Coastal Classic 12 Hour Event, Gosford, NSW*
Stan, after a conservative start, passed a number of the slowing runners and stormed home with a distance of 76.944 km (almost equalling his age of 77!)

- *12-13 April 2003, Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg*
Stan walked the first 6 hours with his wife Ellwyn (who was doing the 6 hour event) and then headed off himself into the familiar 24 hour territory. At 77 years of age, there was no slowing Stan down and his 117.484 km left many younger competitors in his wake.
- *23-34 August 2003, Gold Coast 24/48 Hour Carnival*
Stan completed 182 km in the 48 Hour Championship.
- *4-5 October 2003, Sri Chimnoy 24 Hour Championship, Adelaide*
Stan walked a distance of 114.620 km to finish 13th.
- *16-22 November 2003, Australian 6 day Race, Colac*
This event saw 78 year old Stan as the oldest in the field and the only walker. He acquitted himself superbly, meeting the 65 km per day criteria to finish with a wonderful **482.539 km**. This was definitely his year's best performance and one of the best performances I have personally seen.

2004 saw him continuing unabated.

- *10-11 January 2004, Coastal Classic 12 Hour Event, Gosford, NSW*
Stan's final distance of 70.700 km was another fine performance as he continued to defy Father Time.
- *17-18 April 2004, Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg*
The number of older runners and walkers in this event – Ken Matchett (82), Stan Miskin (78), Shirley Young (74), Ellwyn Miskin (74), David Padgett (72), Fred Brooks (70), George Audley (68), Ron McGregor (62), David Jones (62) and John Timms (61) – must have been some sort of record!
Stan walked 136.106 km to be the third walker overall, an amazing performance for someone 78 years old. He had few if any breaks and remained the consummate professional.
- *21-27 November 2004, Australian 6 day Race, Colac*
Stan, at 79 years of age, was the oldest entrant. He started well, covering just over 100 km on the first day but suffered a fall on day 2, aggravating a shoulder injury suffered only months earlier. He was consequently forced to retire early on day 3, having covered 181.6 km.

Now 2005 was going to be an interesting year as Stan would turn 80 in July and he had his eyes on the M80 records, World and Australian. Here is how it panned out.

- *10-11 January 2005, Coastal Classic 12 Hour Event, Gosford, NSW*
Stan finished 22nd with 59.603 km
- *16-17 April 2005, Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg*
Stan finished 6th with 81.950 km
- *15-16 October 2005, Sri Chimnoy 24 Hour Walk, Adelaide*
Stan, now aged 80, completed yet another 24 Hour walk with 101.703 km.
- *20-26 November 2005, Australian 6 day Race, Colac*
Stan, competing as a walker, finished 23rd with **431.648 km** to set a new World M80 6 Day record and bettering the current Australian M80 100 miles, 200 km and 48 hour records.



Stan Miskin walks to a new 6 Day M80 record distance of 431.648 km at Colac

In his first few months in the M80 division, he had set an enviable set of Australian walking records

50 km	7:59:45	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
50 Miles	15:04:37	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
100 Km	24 hrs	16/10/2005	Adelaide, SA
12 Hours	64.4 km	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
24 Hours	101.703 km	16/10/2005	Adelaide, SA
100 Miles	2D:4:40:17	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
48 Hours	152.4 km	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
200 km	2D:20:49:03	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria
6 Days	431.648km	26/11/2005	Colac, Victoria

Not surprisingly, he finished a close 2nd behind Deryck Skinner in the inaugural Gordon Smith Award.

Little did we know that 2006 would be Stan's final competition year. It read as follows.

- *7-8 January 2006, Coastal Classic 12 Hour Event, Gosford, NSW*
Stan's 7th place distance of 74.077 km broke the Australian and World M80 running record held by Ken Matchett – with Stan walking as usual! Ken held the record with 73.600 km so Stan added some 477m to the standard.
- *22-23 April 2006, Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg*
This event saw a race within a race between octogenarians Stan (80 years old) and Ken Matchett (84 years) as, between them, they broke six IAU World M80 running records. Ken, entered as a runner, broke the World M80 records for 30 Miles, 40 Miles, 50 Miles and 12 Hours. Stan, entered as a walker, broke the World M80 100 km and 24 hour records. Stan's final 24 Hour walk distance was an extraordinary **140.018km**.
- *12-13 August 2006, Australian 48 Hour Championship, Gold Coast, Queensland*
Stan suffered through this event, collapsing a number of times, to achieve a final 48 Hour distance of 149.7 km. Deryck Skinner commented

No report would be complete without mentioning Stan Miskin - Stan, at age 81, is an inspiration. His willpower and mental strength is something to behold. He was certainly not feeling well in this event yet he toughed it out right to the end. His encouraging remarks to me during the event were much appreciated.

In 2006, Stan had set new M80 records as follows:

M80	12 Hours	74.007 km	Gosford Coastal Classic, NSW	7-8 January 2006
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M80	50 Miles	12:31:26	Coburg 24 Hour Carnival	22-23 April 2006
M80	100 Km	16:45:07	Coburg 24 Hour Carnival	22-23 April 2006
M80	24 Hours	140.018 km	Coburg 24 Hour Carnival	22-23 April 2006

Stan regarded his M80 24 Hour record as perhaps the pick of his achievements and who can argue – 140 km at 80 years of age is astounding by any standards. To quote Stan

For myself, I was delighted to break the World M80 24 Hour Track Record which I had thought was just over 130 km, but was in fact over 139 km and held by that great English ultra runner Ernie Warwick. My policy of always doing my best and not stopping nor slowing when I passed a record certainly paid off. I had only a very small margin to spare at the finish and could never have forgiven myself if I had missed the record.

It was not surprising that this performance won Stan the 2006 Gordon Smith Award for the Best Australian Ultra Distance Walking Performance of the Year ahead of Deryck Skinner. It was a fitting final award for Stan who in December of that year announced his retirement from ultra competition. Aged 81 and suffering the debilitating effects of prostate cancer, he was forced to close the book on what had been a truly illustrious career.



April 2007 - Stan Miskin is awarded the Gordon Smith Trophy for the best performance of 2006

Stan continued to confound the doctors with his longevity. Although no longer able to pound the long miles, he continued his daily walking regime around his home suburb, mostly accompanied by his wife Ellwyn.

In 2012, he suffered a series of health setbacks including a very severe and ongoing bout of shingles, but he soldiered on, always in attendance at our centurion functions and continuing his daily walking regime. A serious stroke then sidelined him further and a long rehabilitation ensued. Stan was of course up to the tas, regaining his speech and mobility, and using his love of cryptic crosswords as part of his ongoing rehabilitation.

Stan suffered a further serious stroke on Wednesday 17th December 2014, this time so severe that there was little hope of recovery. He hung on long enough for various family members to fly home to see him, but in the early hours of Sunday 21st December, his body gave out. He was aged 89.

His wish for many years had been to emulate the words of Charles Duffy's poem

The horse and mule live 30 years
And nothing known of wines and beers.

The goat and sheep at 20 die
And never taste of Scotch or Rye.

The cow drinks water by the ton
And at 18 is mostly done.

The dog at 15 cashes in
Without the aid of rum and gin.

The cat in milk and water soaks
And then in 12 short years it croaks.

The modest, sober, bone-dry hen
Lays eggs for nogs, then dies at 10.

All animals are strictly 'dry':
They sinless live and swiftly die;

But sinful, ginful, rum-soaked men "
Survive for three score years and ten.

And some of them, a very few,
Stay pickled till they're 92.

Alas, he did not quite make it but it was not for lack of trying.

We are unlikely to see age related performances like Stan's ever again. He has set such high benchmarks that I expect his records to last for the foreseeable future.

On a personal level, he was a jack of all trades and an expert in many. He built houses and did electrical work for his children in their adult years, he could strip a car engine and rebuild it, he was an award winning orchid grower, he was an expert cryptic crossword enthusiast, he wrote poetry, he had a wonderful general knowledge, he had an illustrious war record. He was indeed one of those people who cross our paths but rarely.

I finish with a cut from the post that former AURA president Ian Cornelius wrote, upon learning of Stan's passing.

I have many fond memories...none more so than the great fight we had with the IAU about claiming a world record for 48 hours being the last two days of the Colac 6 day race in about 2006. We lost that one, but won most, if not all, of the others. You did well in life my friend... God Bless and see you on the other side.

Tim Erickson
21 December 2014
Last update: 8 October 2021