

PERSONAL BEST RACES			
24 HOUR	101.57 MILES	2016 COBURG 24 HOUR	AU
100 MILE	22:37:49	2015 F.A.N.S. 24 HOUR	MN
12 HOUR	58.44 MILES	2015 24 THE HARD WAY	OK
50K	5:57:17	2016 THE COWTOWN ULTRA	TX
26.2	4:49:53	2015 LOUISIANA MARATHON	LA

53 year old Rob Robertson, who lives in Oklahoma, is the first of three 2016 Australian Centurions, having earned the title of C68 with a one hundred mile walk of 23:13:53 at the Coburg Track in Melbourne on the weekend of 16-17 April. A relative newcomer to ultra distance walking, he became a USA centurion in June 2015, walking 100 miles in 22:37:49. He recorded a second USA based 100 mile walk finish in November 2015. His Coburg walk saw him complete his third hundred in 10 months, a mean feat by any standard.

First a brief summary of his 3 hundreds

- June 2015 - F.A.N.S 24 Hour Walk, Fort Snelling, Minnesota  
United States Centurion C 78  
100 Miles walked in 22:37:49
- 2015 UltraCentric 24 Hour, Grapevine, Texas  
100.744 Miles walked in 23:47:52
- April 2016 - Coburg 24 Hour Carnival, Coburg, Victoria  
Australian Centurion C 68  
101.57 miles walked in 24:00:00 (100 miles in 23:13:53)

So how did Rob get to this point? What he describes as His Epiphany makes for wonderful reading.

*It was the end of December 2012. Right after all those wonderful meals at Christmas. In two months I would turn 50 years old. I was overweight. I had high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar. Then it hit me. My Epiphany. If I did not make some changes and make them now. A train wreck was coming.*

*The answer for me. Walking and whole foods.*

*January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 I walked 5.5 miles on my wife's treadmill. Changed my diet to whole foods. Walked 4 miles a day, 6 days per week. Ate lots of salad, fruit, vegetables, chicken and nuts. By my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday the end of February I was down 21 pounds. Felt better than I had in 20 plus years.*

*I am goal oriented. I needed a goal. A BIG goal. I am loving this walking for exercise. I could walk a race. A BIG race. A Marathon. I will train to walk a Marathon. Couch to Marathon in one year. At this point I made a wise decision. I joined a walking support site. It had a catchy name "The Walking Site". Here I found a small support group of like minded Walkers. One member, Dan gave me some great advise. Try a Half Marathon First. About 100 miles from home was a race in two months. I signed up. Ramped up my training and counted down the days. Did the race and guess what, I Loved It! I walked four Half Marathons in 2013.*

*February 2014 I walked my first Marathon. I Loved It even More! I walked two more Marathons and three more half marathons.*

*At this point I was feeling like superman. Down 55 pounds. Off all my medications. Walking 50 miles per week, Strength Training. I needed a new Goal. A BIG Goal.*

*In my research on walking faster and farther I kept finding the word "CENTURION". Centurion: A person that walks 100 miles in 24 hours. Is that even possible? Yes it is and only a few, very dedicated people have done it. Question, Can I do it? About 85 miles from my home was a 12 Hour Race. New Goal. A BIG Goal. Walk 50 miles in 12 hours. A test of sorts. Three months of hard training and two marathons later it was show time. I raced well. Walked a very strong 56 miles in 12 hours. So I could "on paper" walk 100 miles in 24 hours.*

*For 2015 there is one Sanctioned Centurion race in the United States. F.A.N.S. 24 Hour in Minneapolis, Minnesota. June 6th and 7th. I signed up. New Goal. A BIG Goal. Walk 100 miles in 24 Hours.*

At that stage, Rob created an internet based journal to document his ongoing adventures in the world of long distance walking. Initially it was simply to list the training and the races leading up to his American Centurion Race but he has kept it going since and it now fully covers his 2+ years as a new man. Here it is - <http://www.walk100miles24hours.com/>.

And now a brief discussion of his three hundreds thus far.

### **United States Centurion C78, Fort Snelling, Minnesota, June 2015**

The 2015 United States Centurion Qualifier was held in conjunction with the F.A.N.S 24 Hour in Minneapolis, Minnesota in June of that year. The field of 24 hour walkers included Australian Centurions Justin and Sharon Scholz and Continental/British centurions Antoine Hunting and Jantinus Meints, along with well known American long distance walker Ollie Nanyes – a strong field and one which would help Rob. Over to him for a description of how it all panned out.

*My game plan was to walk the first 15 hours at an average pace of 13:47 per mile, giving me almost 66 miles logged with 9 hours to go. That would allow me a nice cushion for the remainder of the race. Not so fast at the beginning to ensure I had the gas to finish. Part of the excitement with any new distance is the unknown. I tend to be very conservative when I don't know what to expect. Slow at the start. Quicker at the finish.*

*The race forecast changed my plans. An 80 percent chance of thunderstorms overnight. The race officials would stop the racers if it came a lightning storm. The clock however would continue on. With this in mind I rolled the dice on starting with a faster pace. The idea was to front load the miles. Then even with an hour delay I might still hit one hundred miles. The new pace 13:20 for 15 hours.*

*I got to the race early. Found a picnic table where I could watch everyone show up. Meet Ollie right off the bat. Ollie is no stranger to ultra distance walking events. Next to catch my eye were the Dutch Centurions. Easy guys to spot. What you would expect double centurions to look like. They sat across from me in the timing and lap tent. Then the Australian couple showed up. You could tell from their meeting there is a magical bond between Centurions. They came from opposite sides of the earth but they had all chewed the same pavement. They had a connection and you could tell it. I so wanted to be part of that magical bond.*

*At 8am sharp the race started. First an out and back then 2.14 miles around Lake Snelling. A beautiful place to race. Lots of shade and big trees. One fourth of the course was paved path. One fourth a paved road. One half a graded dirt trail. The trail had some small rock and some one inch size rock. A few steady up hills and one sharp drop down hill. Many areas had roots and buckled asphalt from tree roots.*

*The race started pleasantly cool. I had no problem holding a pace a little faster than 13:20. That is good because they were telling us the storms would arrive around 11pm. I started to have a problem. Little rocks were getting in my shoes. It got to be a game with me. A rock would get in. I would adjust my footfalls. Try and herd the rocks to places that did not hurt. If the rocks all gathered under my arch or around my toes I won the game. When you walked the tangents on the trail you had to cross the one inch rocks. On my lap 8 all four of the centurions lapped me. It looked like they were racing. Not me I stuck to my plan. Every lap I had to go down that sharp downhill. It hurt to go down. Later it became almost unbearable. Every four hours you had to weigh in. Lose too much weight and the medical staff would hold you. It made you eat and drink every lap. No problem for me. I eat like crazy. I never*

dropped more than three pounds. At the eight hour mark I changed socks and dumped the gravel out of my shoes. Patched a blister on my right big toe. My sweet wife Brenda crewed for me. I never let her go to races. I feel sorry for those wives and kids that watch daddy take off. Then wait around for 5 hours for his return. She was going to crew for me and that was that. I am glad she did. The afternoon turned out hot and very humid. Not hot and humid to me but to anyone not from Oklahoma or Florida. I had just got my lap back from the Centurions. Then it happened. A rock jumped in the back of my left shoe. Got right at the bottom outside of my heel. I could move it but only to the middle of my heel. I would just live with it till hour 16 and change socks again. I noticed some thing about the Dutch Centurions when I passed them. They did not hold their arms at a 90 degree angle. I tried it. It was perfect for relaxing my arms while maintaining my pace. Then I saw it, Lightning flash. Every time I passed the lap counters I counted it a blessing I could get one more lap. It came one of those Oklahoma Thunderstorms. It rained so hard all I could see was rain with my light on. The low spots had over ankle deep water. The water running off a nearby highway washed out two gullies in the dirt path. The road section looked like a river with Rapids. Still they let us race and we were glad to do it. There was water. The dirt turned to slick mud. It was crazy. My friend the rock had made a big blister under the callus of my heel. My friend the sharp downhill hurt my legs beyond belief. I slipped all over that dirt path. Waded through water. Walked around the gullies. Got where no food looked good. Wet socks for six hours. Every reason to throw up your hands and say, maybe next year. None of us did that. We all five did what Centurion's do. You keep going, You finish. It really is 80 percent mental. I needed 46 laps. On lap 45 it hit me. Empty tank. No power. I was out of gas. I used everything I had and nothing was left. Brenda told me I could not stop now. I don't know how I finished that last lap. I would have cried but I was too tired. John Greene was at the little down hill from hell to walk in with me. I made it. Made the mistake of sitting right down. Almost passed out. No blood in my head. Laid on a picnic table for an hour. Brenda was so sad her camera battery had died. Would have made a great before and after comparison picture. I knew a Centurion attempt would be tough. Turned out even tougher than I thought. Oh what a rush crossing that finish line. No wonder Centurions have a magical bond. It is a Spectacular event with lots of emotions and challenges. A test worthy of a special name. CENTURION!

My finish time 22 hours 37 minutes 49 seconds. I finished after the Australians and before the Dutch racers.



**Left: Rob in action at Fort Snelling in his first centurion walk**  
**Right: The 5 New US Centurions: Antoine Hunting, Rob Robertson, Justin Scholz, Jantinus Meints and Sharon Scholz**

Rob was in action in late October, walking in the 12 Hour event at the '24 The Hard Way' race in Bluff Creek Park, Oklahoma City, OK. For the record he completed an excellent 92.698km. This was a prelude to another 24 Hour walk effort a month later in Texas.

## **2015 Ultracentric Ultra Run, Meadowmere Park, Grapevine, Texas, 19-22 November**

The Ultracentric, which has been held annually for nearly 30 years now, is a huge affair over 3 days, with races of 72 hours, 48 hours, 24 hours, 12 hours and 6 hours. While it is principally a running event, we do see the occasional walker participate and this time around, it was Rob who waved the flag on behalf of the pedestrians.

In the previous year's Ultracentric, Rob had contested the 12 Hour division and walked an excellent 90.123km. The 2015 Ultracentric 24 Hour event was his second 100 mile attempt and it proved a lot tougher than his first. A brief synopsis from his blog

*My goal was to walk every mile between 12:30 and 13:00 minutes. Looking for a 12:51 Average for 24 hours. I started out even better than that 28 miles the first 6 hours in high wind. I was surprised that I only did 26 miles the second 6 hours. 54 miles at the turn. The night had North Texas first hard freeze of the season. I was getting much slower. I think the wind, cold and a sinus infection I am fighting took a toll. At 15 hours I was in trouble. Just no get up and go. So I forced myself into a 9 hour Death march. It was the toughest thing I have ever done in my life. First my wife told me I was leaning left. Then Marsha White told me the same thing. When the sun came up Sunday morning the shadow confirmed it. Leaning put extra pressure on my left knee. It hurt bad. The miles added up so slowly. The hours crawled by even slower than I was walking. I felt rough. Every mile I entertained the thought of quitting. For over six hours I wanted to quit. It was The great personal battle in my mind. With three hours left I need 11 miles. I started counting down 21 more laps 20 more laps....I reached down into places I didn't know I had. In the last three miles I drank a two liter Mountain Dew. I would have let someone shoot me in the butt with a BB gun if I thought it would help. As cruel punishment I did an extra lap I didn't need. But hey, I did it. I didn't quit. I persevered. I found a toughness I didn't know I had. That is how it should be if you walk 100 miles in 24 hours. 100.744 miles with about 12 minutes to spare. Fifth Place out of 30 racers.*

## **Australian Centurions 24 Hour Walk, Coburg, 16-17 April 2016**

And now to our own 2016 race where, once again, Rob produced the goods for his third successful hundred in 10 months. Over to Rob:

*The race started at 10 am. Just 388 laps in lane three plus a few steps for a total of 100 miles. After training on the rubberized track at home for two months I knew I would like that surface. The weather was perfect. Sunny and a little warm at the start. After a couple of hours it became cloudy with a nice cool wind. Over night was cold with about 20 minutes of light rain.*

*My plan was a nice steady 13:20 pace for the whole race. Set my gear bag under a chair and my food on top. Tim Tams every 30 minutes. I confess. The reason I train hard. The reason I do Centurion races is so I can eat candy all day and night. Australia has good sweet biscuits and lollies. Started off at pace. I was having stomach issues. I have the same diet day after day. However traveling the food is great but the little differences upsets my system. I also tend to overeat. The pace got harder to hold. Then along came some help. The Dutch racers Sandra and Bertus. They support each other, race together with a perfect pace to finish with success. I joined in right behind them. I knew if I just stuck with them I also would find Australian Centurion Success. For 80 miles in the race I did this. As I felt better I would pass them and then later join the Dutch train again. My next problem was sleep. I could not sleep on the overnight flight. I slept very little the next two nights in Melbourne. I really felt this lack of sleep during the race. Being an International Centurion race these issues turn an already Very Tough race to one even Tougher. Not something you really need. At one point in the race we passed the big monitor that told what lap you had just finished. Bertus said, " Look Rob you only need 100 more laps." In training on the track at home I would walk 105 laps. Several times during training I would do this 105 lap walk on back to back days. That second day would always be tough. Now I needed 100 laps and had already walked 288 laps.*

*At that point I really thought I might not make it. I was hurting. I was sleepy. I was out of gas. If you want to be a Centurion for me anyway, the race is a real gut check. With about 60 laps to go I was finished. No food looked or tasted good. I had my Wife Brenda buy some Coke. This perked me up a little. With 22 laps to go I was down again. So close but I just did not feel like I could finish. Brenda got me another coke. Tim Erickson and All the Australian Centurions, support staff, my Australian friends Kevin and Wanda who drove down from Canberra recognized my plight. Everyone was cheering me on. It was not till I got within 12 laps that I thought I could finish. I crossed the 100 mile mark at 23:13:53. Finished with 163.462K. 101.57 miles. Centurion races really are more mental than physical. I made up my mind this race would be a success ten months ago. Had a game plan for the training and the*

race. I stuck to the training and had to adjust my race plan. Now I am Australian Centurion C68. Got my name right under John Kilmartin's name. Enjoyed everything about my first International Centurion Race. Tough but Enjoyable.



**Left: The train at Coburg – Sandra de Graaff, Albertus van Ginkel and Rob**  
**Right: Rob shows the joy at finishing yet another hundred and becoming Australian Centurion number 68**

Rob's training is not your traditional diet of long miles and more long miles and more long miles. His weekly regime for the week of 26<sup>th</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 makes for interesting reading – with Coburg 3 weeks away, this was obviously an easier week from a distance perspective with only 51.2 miles but the variety is fantastic – talk about an iron man. I always wanted to do enough push-ups to match my age but never quite made it – and at age 65, it gets harder to achieve that distant goal each year. But Rob did 5 sets of 69 push-ups on the Saturday and again on the Tuesday of that week. Wow, I am impressed! And I won't even mention the 20+ minutes of planks!

Saturday March 26 <sup>th</sup>	4.8 miles, 5 sets of 69 push-ups, 21 minutes of Planks
Sunday March 27 <sup>th</sup>	20 miles LSD in 4:26:02. 3 sets of 30 squats.
Monday March 28 <sup>th</sup>	4.8 miles, 4 sets of 10 chin-ups, 3 rounds boxing the heavy bag.
Tuesday March 29 <sup>th</sup>	4.8 miles, 5 sets of 69 push-ups, 21 minutes of Planks
Wednesday March 30 <sup>th</sup>	12 miles LSD in 2:37:36. 3 sets of 30 squats.
Thursday March 31 <sup>st</sup>	4.8 miles, 4 sets of 10 chin-ups, 3 rounds boxing the heavy bag.
Friday April 1 <sup>st</sup>	Date night with my Wife!

Rob's next goal will see him walking in Redcar, England, on the weekend of 6-7 August, endeavoring to win his third Centurion badge and aiming to finish his fourth one hundred mile walk. And it would take a game man to bet against the outcome of that race.

Rob has come a long way in a few short years. His determination and his thorough planning have reaped just reward.

Well done Rob and welcome to our small but elite 'down under' club!

Tim Erickson  
23 April 2016