

## AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

**21. Jim Turnbull (05/06/1936 - 05/11/2021)**

13-14 December 1986

23:38:53

Kingsley Reserve, Wanaroo, WA

**Jim Turnbull (C21)**, born 1936, was a regular racewalker in Western Australia but his entry into the Centurion ranks was accidental at best.

Bronwyn Salter was a well known runner / walker in Western Australia who had already completed the 100 mile run within 24 hours. In 1986 she decided to try to complete the run/walk double and organised a 24 hour walk/run endurance race to be held on a grass 400m track at the Kingsley Reserve in Wanaroo on 13-14 December of that year. As well as a small number of runners, she cajoled Jim to accompany her to help her through. Jim had completed a number of 50 km events and was the current WA 50km champion so was reasonably experienced over the longer distances. With judges in place from the Western Australian Walkers Club, all was set.

As it turned out, Bronwyn had leg problems and was forced to retire so it was left to Jim to come through for an unexpected finish. He had done little preparation for the event but his 50km background saw him through in a fine solo performance. His time of 23:38:53 left little to spare but it was within the required 24 Hours so all was well.

Some 18 months later, on 28-29 May 1988, this story was to have a sequel.

Fellow Western Australian **George Audley (C22)** had taken up fun running in 1981 at the age of 45. By 1988 he had already amassed an enviable record of ultra-distance runs. He was now an experienced and well known ultra-distance exponent who had succeeded in most of the big ultra challenges, including the ultimate for an ultra runner, finishes in the 1987 Sydney to Melbourne run of 1060km (6<sup>th</sup> over the line and 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian – 08:01:34) and 13<sup>th</sup> in the 1998 event (07:21:16).

In 1987, George had run the 100 mile distance in a brilliant 16 hrs 45 mins and now he had his sights set on something that would set a new standard. He wanted to walk 100 miles within 24 hours to match his 100 mile running achievement. Once Jim heard about the attempt, he decided to line up also, but this time as a runner. Since he had already done the walk and George had already done the run, it remained to be seen who would finish first and claim the title as the first Australian to do a run/walk double.

The venue for their May 1988 “match race” was a grass loop of 1km at McGilvrey Oval at Perry Lakes in suburban Perth. History tells us that Jim finished his run in 21:54:36 while George finished his walk in 23:28:48. It was a personal success for both athletes. Jim had done little running in preparation for this event while George had limited walking in the legs.

Jim and George both forwarded details of their performances to the Australian Centurions President but unfortunately, no action was taken until 1994 when we retrospectively verified and confirmed their performances and awarded them badges number 21 and 22.

It was only years later that George and Jim learnt that they had been beaten to the run/walk double by **Claude Martin (C14)** who had completed his walk in 1975 and his run in 1987. So Jim became the second Australian and George the third Australian to achieve this unique double.

Following their 1988 encounter, Jim and George remained firm friends as they continued on with their respective careers. Jim, a member of the Western Australian Race Walking Club, kept to his racewalking, maintaining his association with the club for the rest of his life. George continued on with his successful ultra-distance running career, regularly placing in the Colac 6 day race, the Albany to Perth (560 km) and the Geraldton to Perth (434 km). While he was recognised as one of the legendary hard men of ultra-distance running, he confided to me some years back that he regarded his 100 mile walk (done on the grass track) as one of the hardest events he had contested.

A reunion of sorts took place in March 2002 when Jim and George walked together the Bibbulman Track (a bushwalking trail with magnificent views) which stretches the 963km from Perth to Albany. The walk took them 6 weeks - it did not have the urgency of their centurion efforts - and I am sure it was a wonderful experience.

George finally hung up his running shoes in 2006 and Jim’s retirement from racewalking occurred around the same time.

George, who was born in 1935, passed away on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020, aged 84. Jim, who was born in 1936, died on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021, aged 85.

Jim and I last saw each other at the Lake Burley Griffin walking carnival in Canberra in 2011 but we kept up correspondence until he went into aged care 5 years ago.



*Tim and Jim in Canberra in June 2011*

We pass on our condolences to Jim's children Janine, Craig, Jamie and Glenn and their families.

Tim Erickson  
Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021