

## MERV LOCKYER (C30): 1931 - 2020

*C30 Merv Lockyer (31/08/1931)*

23:45:51

05-06 October 1996

George Knott Athletic Field, Clifton Hill, Vic

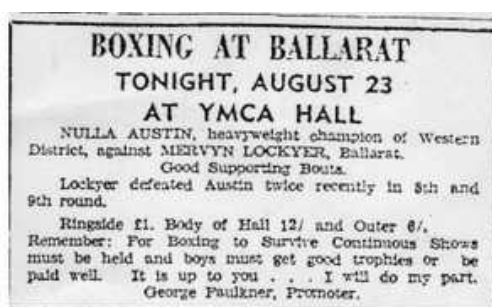
Mervyn (Merv) Lockyer was born in 1931 in Perth in Western Australia. He was the great grandson of one of the earliest settlers of the Swan River Colony so could lay claim to be an Australian of longer standing than most of us.

While Merv competed in various sports at school, the opportunities were few in those days and he did not pursue a sporting career at that time. The one sport in which he did compete and excel was boxing. He was a middleweight boxer in his early adult years, boxing in the Western Districts in Victoria, with some success.



*May 1953, Findon Park Hall, Adelaide  
Merv (Tex) Lockyer 12.3 Vs Tommy Ferguson 11.7  
Merv's third fight as an amateur*

In the arena, his greatest moment was in 1957 when he knocked out Western District heavyweight champion 'Nulla' Austin in the 8<sup>th</sup> round in a main bout in Hamilton, Victoria. The bout was all the more meritorious as Merv weighed in at 11st 3lb, against Austin's 13 stone.



*1958 – local advertising for the return bout between Merv and Nulla Austin*

Like many veteran athletes, he came into the sport of athletics at a later age and perhaps even by accident.

Due to a very severe automobile accident in 1983 (aged 52) and a second accident in 1987, Merv suffered very severe arthritis in both ankles and knees and was confined to crutches and then a walking stick. His doctor had advised him at this time that due to the arthritic condition, he would be unable to walk in the normal way and

might eventually be confined to wheelchair. This was a challenge to Merv who decided that if it was at all possible, he would walk to and from work every day and try to actively rehabilitate. He sold his car and some 4 months later, he was covering the 4 km walk in 32 minutes.

As time went by, Merv found that his condition was improving and that he was walking at a faster rate. While watching TV one night in February 1990, he saw Australia's top female walker Kerry Saxby in action in a walking race and decided to try it out. He found it very hard to walk with the proper technique due to his arthritic condition, but Merv was not one to give up and he kept at it, gradually getting on top of the pain and improving in his standard. He competed in his hometown Ballarat and in Melbourne in Veteran competitions and was helped to improve his technique. He competed in the Veterans Games in Alice Springs in late 1990 and won gold in his age group. It was a thrill to be awarded the medal by swimming legend Dawn Fraser.

A series of major setbacks occurred when he suffered a mild heart attack in March 1992 and then suffered a mild stroke in September 1993. Not to be deterred, Merv was back in light training after only a couple of weeks off in each case.

Now with a new lease of life, Merv competed in the Oceania Games in Auckland and the World Masters Games in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Alice Springs and won a number of medals, as well as setting a few age records in walks, Javelin and Discus. His repertoire was wide and he competed in walks, Javelin, Discus, Shotput, High Jump Long Jump, Triple Jump, Pole Vault and sprints.

His arthritis eventually caught up with him in the early 1990's and he was forced to undergo a complete knee reconstruction, resulting in a new plastic knee joint. This put an end to his running but he endeavoured to keep up his walking, and Merv started to look for new challenges.

While competing in Adelaide in 1995, he walked a half marathon and found the experience to his liking. Hearing of the 100 mile distance, he approached Australian Centurion C2 Jack Webber of Adelaide for help in preparing for such a challenge. With Jack advising him by correspondence and phone, he increased his mileage and entered the 1996 Australian Centurion event which was being held in Melbourne in September of that year.

The race report from the 1996 Centurions Qualifier at the George Knott Athletics Track in Clifton Hill reads as follows

*Merv Lockyer was the surprise packet of the weekend. At 65 years of age, Merv was not highly rated by those in the know - especially when it was known that he had sustained a heart attack some 5 years ago and had at one other stage had a knee replacement operation on his left leg. But there were rumours of the long training sessions done and the strength of the man so we were interested to see how he went. And he is from Ballarat and we know how tough Ballarat competitors can be. Well, he certainly did himself proud. He started off at a conservative pace of just over 3 mins per lap but just kept it going at between 3 mins and 3:30 per lap for about 80 of the 100 miles. Only in the dying stages of the race did he slow towards 4 min laps but by then, he was safe with enough time up his sleeve. He certainly struggled in the second half but amazingly, he managed to maintain his lap times. This is an indication of his sheer strength and determination. He suffered badly with his plastic knee and was forced on numerous occasions to stop briefly for a rubdown or take some pain killers. But he obviously had confidence in his own ability and his support team looked after him very well. He finished in good spirits and was able to walk from the track, not bad at 65 years of age and after 100 miles of walking.*

Merv was one of only four starters in that race, with the results reading:

1.	Robin Whyte	54 years of age	100 Miles	20:37:12	Centurion No. 29
2.	Merv Lockyer	65 years of age	100 Miles	23:45:51	Centurion No. 30
3.	Peter Waddell	65 years of age	100 Km	14:49:43	
4.	Sydney Elks	71 years of age	30 Km	3:36:29	

Merv had just become Australian Centurion number 30 with a final time of **23:45:51**. Aged 65, he had also become the oldest person to qualify for centurion membership in Australia thus far.



*Left: Merv celebrates his centurion finish in 1996  
Right: Robin Whyte (C29) and Merv (C30) – new centurions*

Merv was keen to explore the limits with his long distance walking and felt that he had a few more good races left in his artificial knee joint. He fronted for the annual centurion walk the following year (1997) but suffered ankle problems early on and was forced to stop at 100km (achieved in a bit over 14 hours). For most of this distance, he had walked with Carmela Carrassi and the two had certainly helped each other to maintain a good even pace.

In 1998, he was forced to retire after only 50km in the Centurion qualifier and it was fair to say that the chances of emulating his 1996 feat were diminishing. He fronted in the 50km walk at the 1999 Centurion qualifier but was forced to stop after only 20km. His legs were now paying the penalty for his years of hard work and he eventually realised it was time to hang up the racing shoes.

He remained a proud member of the Australian Centurions and took a great interest in our ongoing activities and growth, and was always at the front of the queue to help us financially when required or to suggest activities or actions that might help us to grow.

In the late 1990s he moved from the crisp climate of Ballarat to the warmer climes of Mildura, in north western Victoria. He settled into Red Cliffs, just south of Mildura and quickly started to enjoy his new life, working at a winery and helping maintain the grape vines. He was a jack of all trades and could turn his hand to most things.

In 2000, Merv was recognised for his many years of sporting service, one of a number of Australian Centurions to carry the 2000 Olympic torch as it travelled around Australia on its way to Sydney. Other included George Audley (C22), Andrew Ludwig (C25) and Terry O'Neill (C18).



*Merv – 2000 Olympic Torch bearer in Mildura*



*June 2001 Centurions get-together in Melbourne*

*Back: Merv Lockyer, Ken Walters, Fred Brooks, Tim Thompson, Bill Dyer, Stuart Cooper, Stan Miskin  
Front Row: Michael Harvey, Carmela Carrassi, Clarrie Jack, Tim Erickson*

Around 2010, Merv stopped coming down to Melbourne for our centurion activities as the trip was just too much for him. Sadly, he had a bad fall a couple of years ago and suffered a fractured hip. No longer able to look after himself, he was forced to move into a nursing home. He also started to deteriorate around this time, a victim to Alzheimer's disease, perhaps a result of his years in the boxing ring or perhaps just the natural deterioration of old age.

Sadly, Merv passed away on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020, aged 89.

Merv had a full and varied life, but his Centurion qualification was amongst his proudest achievements. He is an example of what can be achieved if you have the mind and determination to test yourself.

We remember Merv as a friendly, courteous man, one who would give you the shirt off his back, a man with old school manners. Indeed, I don't think any of us ever heard Merv say a bad word about anyone or anything.

We will miss his warmth and enthusiasm. C30 - gone but never forgotten.

Tim Erickson  
25<sup>th</sup> December 2020