

AUSTRALIAN CENTURION DETAILS

9. *Michael Porter (06/06/1925)*

18-19 October 1975

21:45:47

George Knott Athletic Field, Clifton Hill, Victoria

Mike Porter was born in the north Sydney suburb of Gordon on 6th June 1925, with the family shifting to the Blue Mountains town of Katoomba when he was still a child.

Mike remembers reading as a young man about the famous Sydney Bush Walkers Club members who called themselves the Tiger Walkers. The list included our two first Australian Centurions Gordon Smith (C1) ¹ and Jack Debert (C1A) ². The Tiger Walkers travelled light and fast in their explorations of new Blue Mountains areas for which topographic maps did not exist. Whenever they visited, it normally made the papers. Little did Mike realise that he would eventually have something in common with these legendary figures – membership of the Australian Centurions.

Mike joined the Royal Australian Army in August 1943. He was keen to do his part in the WWII effort and signed up as soon as he had turned 18. He spent over 3 years in the army, eventually rising to the rank of Corporal. He was eventually discharged from the services in January 1947.



Mike in army uniform, circa 1943

Upon his return to civilian life, Mike apprenticed as a butcher and worked for some years in that profession. It was but one of many jobs at which Mike tried his hand (always successfully) during his working life.

Mike was a regular race walker for Mentone Harriers and the Victorian Amateur Walkers Club but it was not until 1975, when a Centurion walk was scheduled at the George Knott Athletics Track in Clifton Hill, that his thoughts turned to the longer distances.

This period coincided with a golden period of walking in Victoria with a large number of active distance walkers. This led to the largest field yet seen for the Centurion event with 21 starters. The weather was cool to cold during the night hours of the Saturday night with light rain on the Sunday morning before clearing to fine

1 See <https://vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wa-gordon-smith.pdf>

2 See <http://centurions.org.au/centprofiles/01A%20Jack%20Debert.pdf>

weather for the finish. These ideal conditions helped all competitors and the race saw the 5 finishers and a new Australian record over the intermediate distance of 50 miles.

The race was started by Cr. George Knott of the Collingwood City Council on the radio time 'pips' at 6.00 p.m, on Saturday 18th October. Excellent facilities were provided by the Collingwood Harriers in their dressing rooms, shower and canteen facilities and the public address system was used extensively to acquaint competitors of their progressive times.

Mike was some laps behind Stan Jones and in second place at the halfway mark but was confident as, some weeks previously, he had walked a particularly fine 50 miles at the Mentone Athletics Track. Thus prepared, he was able to overhaul a slightly tiring Stan in the closing stages to cross the finish line first in 21:45:47 and become Australian Centurion number 9. The finishing list read as follows

C9.	Mike Porter	50	Frankston A. A. Club.	21:45:47
C10.	Stan Jones	50	St. Stephens Harriers.	22:04:59
C11	Chris Clegg	58	USA	22:34:14
C12.	John Harris	25	Queensland	23:18:15

The photo of Mike finishing the race says it all. His arms are held outstretched above his head in victory. Rarely does a photo show a more pleased competitor celebrating the ultimate achievement.



Mike finishes his hundred miles qualifier in 1975

Mike subsequently became heavily involved in the Centurions Club as Treasurer and the producer of our first regular newsletters. He had many other interests and our paths crossed at the Murray River Canoe Marathon one year. He was a regular competitor with his son in the double kayak division. I also regularly saw him at the Corporate Cup running events where he had a regular team.

Mike continued on enthusiastically long past the normal retirement age, working as a volunteer on weekdays at the 'Polly Woodside' ³ in Melbourne where he manned the office of the Melbourne Historical Society. Into his seventies, he continued to participate as part of our team in the annual Ekiden Relay in Ballarat and talked enthusiastically about his new sport - golfing.

He also continued as a racewalker for many years after qualifying as a centurion and competed for the Victorian Masters in a number of National Masters Championships. Below is a particularly nice shot of him competing in one of those events.

3 See <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/polly-woodside/>



Mike shifted to Echuca in the early 2000s to be nearer his family. Although we did not then see as much of him as we used to, he came down for some of our lunches and still looked fit and well.



May 2009 - centurions Ken Walters (C26), Ian Jack (C17), Mike Porter (C9), Terry O'Neill (C18), Karyn O'Neill (45), Stan Miskin (C23), Clarrie Jack (C4) and Tim Erickson (C13)

I was amongst a large group of family and friends who assembled in the Victorian country town of Lockington on Friday 6th June 2025, the actual day of **Mike Porter**'s 100th birthday.

Mike was in great form and we centurions present were able to talk at length of our many exploits, real and imaginary! Mike still gets out for a 30 min walk each day and his mind is as sharp as ever. I was privileged to share the occasion with him.



Centurions all: Tim Erickson (C13), Clarrie Jack (C4), Mike Porter (C9), Karyn O'Neill (C45), Terry O'Neill (C18) and Ian Jack (C17)

As an aside, I am aware of a couple of other walkers who have reached that wonderful milestone. I was lucky enough to attend Frank's big birthday bash in 2012.

- English Centurion and Olympian **Bill Brown** who reached the age of 100 in 1978
<https://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wo-bill-brown.pdf>
- Victorian walker, coach and author **Frank McGuire** who reached the age of 100 in 2012
<https://www.vrwc.org.au/tim-archive/articles/wv-frank-mcguire.pdf>

I wish Mike many more years of what has been a wonderful life, and I look forward to helping him celebrate his 101st birthday in 2026.

Tim Erickson
Tuesday 9th June 2025