

Dancing Queen

Brenda Painter is a lady full of humility and quiet determination. It has been an honour to profile this lovely person who has worked hard to achieve many goals during her lifetime, not the least on the athletics field. She is an inspiration to other ladies her age as she has absolutely no fear and will tackle any event with gusto. On her recent to-do list; learn the Fosbury Flop and take part in the Heptathlon— *'before I get any older'*. Her favourite events are the 60 and 100 metres, and the triple, high and long jumps. She says she was never one for arts and crafts, preferring to be more active. Brenda says joining Masters Athletics has helped her realize a lifelong dream.

Brenda was born in Pingelly in 1944 and is blessed with a fascinating ancestral history—Noongar, Danish and English. She grew up around the Pingelly/Brookton area; wherever her dad could get work. After primary school Brenda went into her first job at the old Brookton Nursing Home as a kitchen hand/wardsmaid, eventually being made a nursing assistant. She boarded with an aunty in Brookton and on her days off would cycle the twenty kilometers to Pingelly to see her mum and dad. Homesickness eventually got the better of her but thanks to a kind hospital Matron she was able to get a job at Pingelly Hospital where she stayed until she married her first husband. Brenda has four boys and four girls. At the age of 39, and showing the same determination she shows on the athletics field, Brenda went to Midland Tech to finish her education. Not surprisingly she received the highest achievement award.

Brenda now lives in Walpole and is proudly regarded by the locals. An article celebrating Brenda's achievements at the 2016 Adelaide Nationals, and advertising *Perth 2016*, appeared in the Walpole Weekly in May 2016. Brenda's form in Adelaide bears repeating— Gold in the triple jump and high jump, silver in the long jump and a creditable fifth place in the 60 metres.

Seven years ago Brenda left her job at the Walpole Visitors centre



In focus

With Carmel Meyer

when it became necessary for her to take over the care of four of her grandchildren. Their elder sister was already living with Brenda and her husband so it was going to be one busy household! Brenda is enormously proud of all her grandchildren and is delighted to see them reach an age where they are fulfilling their potential, both in the workplace and in sporting endeavours.

Brenda remembers being a fast runner as a teenager and always

wanting to take up athletics, but she never got the opportunity. A week before her 65th birthday she was in Albany and just happened to drive past the athletics track on a Masters competition night. Brenda says she thought she'd stop and make a few inquiries about joining costs etc. but Albany Masters stalwart Carey Dickerson invited her to join in the 100 metres.

Brenda says with typical understatement— *'Not having run for 30 years, I was a bit worried'* Needless to say, since that first race Brenda has not looked back and credits her mentors at the Albany Athletics club— Carey Dickerson, Barbara Wilson and Peter Mueller — with helping her develop as an athlete.

CONTINUED – next page

FROM – previous page

When asked about her training regime Brenda says simply that she doesn't really have one. She just gets on with it; juggling her role as a wife, carer, and grandmother and fitting in training when she can. As the World championships approached, Brenda tried to make the long journey up to Perth every few weeks to take advantage of some hurdles coaching with Tom Lenane and to train with fellow heptathlete Carol Bowman. Brenda has brought her granddaughter Rhianna to the track with her on a number of occasions. In her gentle way she is still nurturing; encouraging the athletics talent that she can see in her granddaughter and trying to provide her with early experiences and opportunities that she herself didn't have.

Brenda's way of addressing the disadvantage and disempowerment of her people is by quietly setting an example for others to follow and by helping out when she can. To this end, she once coached the first Aboriginal women's hockey team in Pingelly and was instrumental in helping the girls to gain access to a sport that gave them all a lot of enjoyment. Brenda now helps out with jumps and sprints coaching for Walpole primary school children.

Brenda says "*touch wood*" when confirming that she has never had an athletics injury and she wryly adds that her only injuries have been "*self-inflicted ones 'around the house!'*" I am in awe of Brenda's ability to dodge the injury bullet. Must be all that bracing (a.k.a cold) fresh air in Walpole that makes you tough Brenda!

I asked Brenda if she had any sporting memories she'd rather forget. She recounted what she calls her Bad Moment (let's face it, we all have at least one!) When competing in the 60 metres in her first nationals she mistook the one mile start line for the finish line. Her husband and daughter later asked her what happened '*why did you stop, you weren't doing too bad*'.

Brenda hasn't travelled internationally to compete but has competed at a national level for the past six years and is keen to take part in Darwin's inaugural championships in 2017. She says her most memorable Nationals moment was at her first competition (Perth, 2010) when she won gold in the Triple Jump. The opportunity to take part in the recent World Championships in Perth was a dream come true for Brenda

Golden girl



Golden girl Brenda Painter (right) and Lynne Schickert (silver) at the Nationals in Adelaide.

and her individual results prove that she gave it her all, and then some-PBA's in Javelin (heptathlon), 100m and 200m, a whopping 20cm PB in Triple Jump and a State Record in W70 Heptathlon. And then to top it all off, there were the relays. Brenda says she was delighted when AMA President Wilma Perkins informed her that she had been chosen as first leg runner for the 4 x 100m W70 relay. (Brenda was also named first reserve for the 4 x 400m) She could hear Aussie team-mates calling out "Go Brenda" as she took to the track. Anxious about the start, Brenda was hoping fervently that the field would not be held too long, in case she "*got the wobble*". She needn't have worried; a fine start from Brenda got the team on their way to a gold medal win, with fellow MAWA champion Peggy MacIver taking care of the final leg. A gold medal at a World Championships! Another moment Brenda had only dreamed about.

Standing on the dais to receive her medal was "*awesome*", says Brenda. She was unprepared for how moved she would be on hearing the national anthem played as she stood proudly as part of the winning W70 team. On

returning to the stands with her gold medal around her neck she struck up a conversation with a young reporter who organized to interview Brenda for the National Indigenous Times on her impressions of the World Championships. Brenda was happy to oblige and hopes that indigenous athletes will gain something from her example and will also decide to join masters athletics.

Brenda recalled the gruelling 800m event she had to complete as part of the Heptathlon. She decided slow and steady was the best approach and on reaching the 400m mark said to herself "*well, I'm still alive*" in order to boost herself up for the second lap! Without looking back or losing her stride Brenda gave a quick wave to supporters in the stands and she continued on her way.

I wondered what else I could find out about this powerhouse of a lady. Well, Brenda loves to dance and sing. Unfortunately, I couldn't get her to give me any further details. She can certainly move on the athletics track and through the air in her jumps trifecta. After your recent performances at *Perth2016*, I think a little victory dance is in order Brenda!