

Rae McMillan

Lives life to the full

Ruth turns 104

QUEENSLAND'S Ruth Frith celebrated her 104th birthday in August. Ruth competed in Perth at the Australian Masters Championships in 2010.

Ruth featured in the film *The 100 + Club* shown on ABC TV where she was pictured pumping iron in her personal gym.

MAIN PHOTO: Ruth Frith watches Rae McMillan in Perth.

RAEMA McMillan, oldest female MAWA member by five years, was born in Sydney in 1927. Primary schooling was near the family home in Maroubra Beach and later at Sydney Girls High School. At fifteen she started work at Spicer & Detmold Stationery Manufacturers, a protected industry during the war years. After doing various jobs she moved to Perth in 1952. Six years later she married James McMillan, a British ex-serviceman and she continued working full time until she was sixty. They had no family and, since Jim died some years ago, she has hankered after a return to NSW to be near the rest of her family.

Being the daughter of Howard Hallett, who, in his time, was considered Australia's greatest ever rugby league fullback, it is not surprising that sport was part of her family life style. Rae could swim at a very early age and was a proficient surfer by the age of ten. Perhaps not remarkable today – but more than 75 years ago?



In focus

With Christine Oldfield

Despite being an all round athlete at school, she made a start in competitive swimming. But, at eighteen, she switched to her preferred sport of athletics and competed for NSW Women's Amateur Athletic Association from 1946 to 1952. Rae's documents are all in NSW and it was a long time ago, but she recalls that for three consecutive years, 1948, 49 and 50, she was discus champion and achieved an Australian record. She then dropped to second but won the javelin in 1952. And competing for NSW in the state team, she achieved first or second places in various throws.

She continued in athletics after coming west, competing first for North Perth then for Applecross-Melville AC.

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Heading back East

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE SHE was state javelin and discus champion and was placed in other throws at various times. There were no medals awarded in those days – just certificates.

After giving up athletics in 1960 she pursued other interests. She played weekend golf and was a member of several clubs.

When she retired, her sister, a life member of NSW AAA, sent her a javelin and suggested she “try the Veterans”. Raema already had a discus so, at 60 years of age, she went down to McGillivray Oval and joined WAVAC.

She immediately made her mark, knocking huge chunks off state throws records. And this continued as she passed through the age groups, breaking records set by the likes of Phyllis Head, Val Tyson and Betty Baumann. The same happened to many Australian records and as a W65 she added the throws pentathlon to her list of state records. She still holds current W80 and/or W85 state and Australian records in all five throws and the throws pentathlon.

As the sole competitor in her age group, Rae obviously features first in the W85 Club Tops, but the distances she throws are greater than many of the much younger athletes who figure in the Tops. Raema has two pet gripes about getting old – AWA’s insurance doesn’t cover athletes over 80 and the 2kg shot is too small to allow her to get a proper hold on it. She has never been one to enjoy sitting around doing

nothing and has made valuable contributions to several of the clubs she has been a member of.

In NSW she was inter-club secretary for the women’s athletics association, officiated for Randwick Kensington AC and coached a women’s basketball team – as well as competing in it. In Perth, she was an official for WA’s Association, serving at Perry Lakes each week and at some international meetings. She sat on the committee of a public course golf club from 1952-2006 and, at Mount Lawley Golf Club, she was a committee member for many years and lady secretary for three years. Having held the posts of president and treasurer and served on the committee of Trigg Art Club she was awarded life membership in 2010.

MAWA has also reaped the benefit of her experience and dedication. Rae has always pulled her weight in making sure the mid-week field sessions run smoothly, often transporting heavy implements week by week. And in the last year or so, when she has been carrying injuries, she has still turned up at the stadium to officiate the throws on a Tuesday night.

Rae competed in the 2013 state championships but it will be her last – in mid October she will make the move to NSW. She has already made contact with a masters’ group over there and hopes to be able to join them. But she won’t be forgetting her ties to Perth and MAWA.

