GLADYS "GLADY" BURRILL BIO

When Gladys "Glady" Burrill  was born on Nov. 23, 1918, women did not even have the right to vote in the United States, never mind do a marathon.

But on Sunday, Dec. 12, 2010, at the age of 92, Glady completed her fifth 26.2-mile Honolulu Marathon in seven years and became the oldest female in history to finish a marathon. She bumped Jenny Wood-Allen of Dundee, Scotland, from the top of the Guinness Book of World Records list. Wood-Allen had set the record in 2002 in London at age 90.

Glady had failed to finish her previous two marathon attempts and many thought her marathoning days were over. Family and friends worried about her and some advised her not to try again. But she was determined to prove she still had the endurance.

On Dec. 12, she started strongly and actually went through the first half of the course at a rather rapid pace. But long exposure to the heat and humidity of the day eventually took its toll on her body and she slowed down. She struggled valiantly to finish in a microchip time of 9 hours, 53 minutes and 16 seconds.

As she headed toward the finish in Kapiolani Park, she had to stop to collect her emotions. “When I knew I was close to the finish I knew my life was going to change,” she said. While she sat on the curb, she was surprised to look up and see six-time champion and Honolulu Marathon Hall of Famer Jimmy Muindi walking toward her. Muindi, the greatest of all Honolulu champions who befriended Glady several years ago, offered her words of encouragement. “That was so precious,” she said.

When she finally arose and resumed her walk toward the finish, her family, friends and Dr. Jim Barahal, president of the Honolulu Marathon, were all there to greet her with leis and hugs. Barahal draped a lei around her neck, hugged her and ordered her finisher shirt be awarded to her immediately.

“We shouldn’t require her to come back tomorrow after that kind of effort,” he said.

In 2008, after four successful finishes, Glady tried to break the time world record (8 hours, 53 minutes, 8 seconds) for the 90-94 age group. But became ill at mile 25 and had to withdraw. Complicating her emotions that day was the death of her husband a few days before the race. With a heavy heart she tried to complete the race in his honor.

She wasn’t able to make an assault on the world time record in 2009 either. Bothered by stomach problems, she dropped out at mile 16.

The time record was no longer a reachable goal for her. Finishing another marathon became her simple goal. Little did she know that there was another reachable world record she could achieve just through the perserverance which is part of her nature.

Glady power walks rather than runs. Her daily routine is to do between 8 and 10 miles a day. She does an average of 50 miles a week which comes out to about 2,600 miles a year. Twice last April she walked the entire marathon distance.

Glady has few of the symptoms normally associated with a woman her age. She has no arthritis and her posture is nearly perfect.

She does not drink alcohol nor does she smoke

Her permanent residence is in the tiny frontier town of Prospect, Oregon, but she owns a condo on Kalia Road in Waikiki where she stays much of the year now that her husband has passed. She has owned that unit for two decades.

Glady recently renewed her driver's license which willl expire when she is 98. She drives 50 miles each way in her 1999 SUV from Prospect to the nearest city, Medford, to buy groceries.

Glady has been a multi-engine airplane pilot, a desert hiker (Arizona) and a mountain climber (she scaled Mt. Hood). Glady's love of challenges led Honolulu Advertiser writer Michael Tsai to dub her "the Glady-ator" in a Thanksgiving  2004 feature.

She has shirts with the nickname emblazoned on it.

Glady has 26 great grandchildren. She has 18 grandchildren (two deceased) and five children (one deceased).

She helped her late husband, Eugene F. Burrill (they were married 69 years), create what became Southern Oregon's largest family-owned lumber company. Founded in the early 1940s, it closed before the the turn of the century. Glady is featured in a 2000 book about her husband by Marla Cates called "The Mill In the Brush."

Glady is featured in a two-page section of the Fodor's travel book, "The Traveling Marathoner," by Elise Allen.

**GLADY'S OFFICIAL HONOLULU FINISHING TIMES**

In 2004 she finished in 9:09:33

In 2005, she finished in 8:55:39.

In 2006 she finished in  8:36:25.

In 2007, in a downpour, she finished in 9:13:18.

In 2010, she finished in 9:53:16.