

## She's 103 and Just Ran the 100-Meter Dash. Her Life Advice? 'Look for Magic Moments'

Julia "Hurricane" Hawkins took up running at age 100. "As I get older, I feel like I only have so many 100-yard dashes left, and I don't want to waste them in practice," she said.



Two years ago, at the age of 101, Julia Hawkins set a record. A running record.

She ran the 100-meter dash, finishing with a time of 39.62 seconds. They called her the "Hurricane."

This week, at the age of 103, Ms. Hawkins returned to the track to run the 50- and 100-meter dash races in the [National Senior Games](#) in Albuquerque. She is believed to be the oldest woman to formally compete on an American track, according to the organization, which hosts the Olympic-style event for athletes 50 and older.

There is admittedly little competition in the centenarian age group, and Ms. Hawkins was largely competing against herself. She finished the 100-meter dash [about six seconds slower](#) than her record time, but she was still pleased with the result. "I'm two years older, remember?"

Ms. Hawkins got into running late in life, and it has become one of her many passions. She lives in Baton Rouge, La., where she takes daily walks and cares for trees on her property. She has four children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. She was married to her late husband, Murray, for 70 years, after they had a wedding by telephone during World War II.

When The New York Times called for an interview on Wednesday morning, she was taking a break from running to spend the day at a botanical garden. (Flowers are another passion of hers.) We caught up with her afterward, before a celebration with fellow senior athletes and before she got ready to fly home to Louisiana on Thursday.

Our conversation has been edited and condensed for length and clarity.

**Q: If you don't mind my asking, when is your birthday?**

A: February the 10th, 1916.

**I understand you didn't get into running until you were quite older.**

100. But I always did Senior Olympics in biking. Then when I got too old to bike up hills and use gears and things, I went to running at 100. The first time I went to look at it and try, it was the 50-yard dash. It was fun and I fell in love with running.

**Can you tell me a little bit about your training regimen?**

I run on the street by my house, occasionally, not often. As I get older, I feel like I only have so many 100-yard dashes left, and I don't want to waste them in practice. Can you imagine that? I have markers on the street to show me where 50 yards is, and where 100 is, and I go by that. But I don't practice much. I'm just pretty good at moving around and I do it when I have to, whatever I have to do.

**How did you get your nickname, "Hurricane?"**

Well, somebody thought it up. We talk a lot about hurricanes in Louisiana and the fact that they do a lot of harm makes me not like that so much, but it is part of our home life and I guess if they think that's cute, it's all right with me. But I'm a big flower person and I usually wear a flower in my hair, even when I'm running. I would rather be the "Flower Lady" than the "Hurricane Lady."

**O.K., maybe we'll call you the "Flower Lady" then.**

Well, either one. It's all right with me.

**What do you do in your spare time?**

I read. Since I'm having trouble with my eyes, I read the books that talk to you. I get wonderful books that tell me the stories and I've been enjoying them. I have an acre of land, and I have all of these bonsais and they are enough to keep me busy. You have to water them every day and there

is something to do with every one of them almost every day. I go out to lunch with friends most every day. Someone comes to stay with me at night, and she gets my breakfast and supper, so I'm well taken care of.

**Do you have any secrets to longevity and staying in shape?**

To stay in shape, just keep active. Keep your weight down and exercise. Have a lot of passions, things that you are interested in. Keep interested in a lot of things to keep you busy and keep your mind busy.

**When you think back, what are you most proud of in your lifetime?**

I'm most proud of my children and my husband. They were the wonderful things in my life — and the grandchildren, and the great-grandson. Those are things you just can't beat that. This other (the running) is just a little icing on the cake.

**Thank you so much. It has been a pleasure talking to you. Do you have any closing thoughts?**

Keep yourself in good shape if you can. Have many passions. And look for magic moments. That is something that I have done in my life — think of the things that are magic moments that happen to you, like sunsets and sunrises, rainbows, beautiful birds, music and people's lovely comments to you. All of those are magic moments and they are free for all. Be sure to keep your eye open for them.

(source: by Sarah Mervosh, New York Times, June 20, 2019)