



## 2017 Personal Best Athlete Profile

### Roy Englert, 94

Springfield, Virginia

#### Roy's Run

*For a man who didn't start running until after he was 50, Roy Englert has made up for lost time. In fact, the level of fitness he has achieved as a senior athlete has undoubtedly added to his time on earth. At 94, the retired U.S. Treasury employee isn't contemplating anything but continued running and competing to achieve his Personal Best.*

*Roy was not an athletic type in his youth, though three years of Navy service (including participating in D-Day) during World War II helped to keep his trim form. In his 40s Roy picked up Dr. Ken Cooper's book "Aerobics," which advocated running as good exercise, and the path ahead opened.*

*Within a few years of running casually, a nearby masters track meet caught his attention, and he enjoyed the experience of competing against others of his age. When he got word of a new national multisport event for seniors being organized in St. Louis in 1987, he had to go. Thirty years later, Roy has kept coming for every National Senior Games, and eagerly awaits toeing the line in Birmingham for the 2017 National Senior Games presented by Humana.*



Photo: Doug Mills - New York Times

*Along the way, Roy has steadily racked up more than two dozen USA Track & Field masters championships and has won an armload of National Senior Games medals, mostly in mid-distance track events and road races. In 2013, Roy set a masters indoor record in the men's 90-94 3000 meter race, and in 2014 he was part of a relay team of runners in their 90s who set three world records at the USATF Masters Outdoor Championships. Their accomplishments were publicized worldwide-[check out this New York Times feature about Roy for more background](#). Since then, Roy has run his way to #1 in National Senior Games all-time rankings for men's 90-94 for both 5K and 10K events.*

*However, medals, publicity and accolades are not the great motivators for Roy Englert, who doesn't display his awards in his house. He literally runs for his life. Competing in sports is the most fun way he has found to motivate himself to maintain optimum health and well being through fitness. Sounds to us like a Personal Best plan to smash the 100 age barrier!*

**Roy, we have to ask you this first. We notice your email address starts with "Frodo49." Are you a fan of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* books?**

[Chuckle] Thirty years ago, when my kids were in high school, all the young people were reading the Rings books, and I picked up on it. Besides the email, I had a personalized license plate for years that said Frodo 49. Frodo is for the book character, of course. The 49 is for the three years I spent in the Navy on LST 49 in World War II. We went to Southern France, participated in the Normandy Invasion, and then went on to Okinawa in the Pacific. They said "Join the Navy and see the world." So, I'll never forget 49.

**Thank you for your service. Before we talk about running, tell us a bit more about your history.**

I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. I graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1943 and went directly into the Navy. After that, I went back to Nashville and went to work for National Life and Accident Insurance Company, which owned the WSM radio station which broadcast the Grand Ole Opry. In the early days, not many people paid attention to the country people coming into town on Saturday nights. Then it got much bigger. I regret I did not become a country singer and get rich. [Laugh]

From there I got a law degree from Columbia University, and then landed a job with the US Treasury in Washington D.C. in 1951. I still live in Virginia 12 miles away from the capital.

**Were you an athletic kid?**

No, I was very small and never competed in anything until I started running casually in my late 50s. I never did any set thing to stay fit, but I've always kept active, chasing my kids around you know. [Laugh]

I started running when I read Dr. Kenneth Cooper's book *Aerobics*, which said exercise was good for you, and that running was good exercise. He was my inspiration to try it. So, I began running around my basement, which was pretty large back then. I couldn't go a quarter mile without getting winded. But I kept at it and graduated up to local high school tracks to run on.



**How did you take the step from running for fitness to competing on the track?**

My first competition was when I was 60. The Senior Games hadn't started yet. There was a regional masters track meet at Georgetown University, which was close by. Once I got going, I realized I wasn't a sprinter, so I have mainly concentrated on the longer races like the 400 and 800 meters and the road races. I've done the mile also. So, I ran the 400 and 800 at this meet, and there were only two in my age group. I won a silver in one, and in the other one the guy pulled up lame and didn't finish, so I got the gold. [Laugh]

My son had been going to national championships in judo, and he's now an international referee for the sport. He encouraged me to do the masters national track championships. I thought, "Well, I got nothing to lose, I'll go try it." It was fun, so I just kept going.

**This was in the mid-80s. How did you find out about the first National Senior Games, and what kept you coming back for every one since then?**

I think I read about it in *National Masters News*. The first one had track events at Washington University in St. Louis. There weren't nearly as many people there as are in it now.

I like to compete against others. I compete against myself and my times, but it's not as much fun if there's no competition. I don't go to as many races now because sometimes there's no competition in my age division. In Minnesota in 2015, there was only Joe Barger and me in our age group for the 10K race.

In Birmingham, I'll do the 5K and the 400 this time. "God willing, and if the creek don't rise," as they say.

I've had a lot of fun doing it. The best thing was it gave my first wife, Helen, an excuse to travel. She was my cheerleader. We went all over the country, places I never would have gone. Like Baton Rouge, Louisiana. We went there twice. It's a delightful town. I think that first one in St. Louis and Baton Rouge stand out.

I was married to Helen for 65 years before she died a few years ago. Last year I got married to Maureen, who I've known for 15 years. She travels with me now. I've been really lucky.

**Looking at your results from the past two Nationals, we see Joe Barger keeps coming in right behind you.**

Well, the other times I've competed against him in the masters track events he has beaten me. Funny, I didn't even know he was in the 10K with me in Minnesota. There's so many folks lining up there, you know. I passed him not long before I made the finish line. I'm sure he was surprised to see me. But that's what it's all about.

**You finally made it to the top, though. You are #1 all time in National Senior Games for men 90+ in the 5K and 10K. You also made a mark in 2014 as part of the 90+ relay team that set age records in masters track competition. How did that come together?**

One of the people with the Potomac Valley Track Club came up with the idea. He noticed there were no records for the 90-year-old and up in three relays- the 4x100, 4x400 and 4x800 meter races. He suggested we get together and go set the world records. And that's what we did.

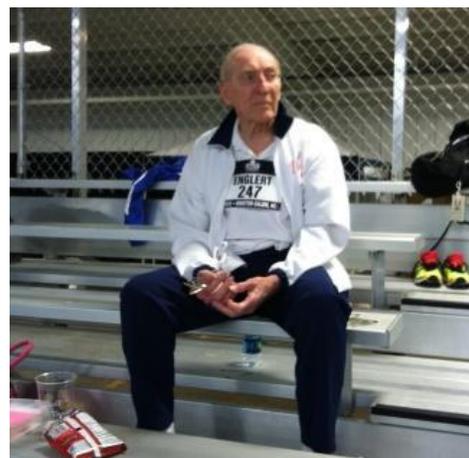
I enjoyed running with those guys. There were five on our team. Besides me, it was Charles Boyle, Charlie Ross, Goldy Champion and Orville Rogers. Orville is a real phenomenon.

**Do you think the relay team will get together again?**

There's no reason to do it again once you've set the record. Charlie Ross said afterwards that somebody would come along and break it. All records get beaten sooner or later.

**The media reported about it all over the world.**

I got enough publicity at the time. *The New York Times* called me up out of the blue and the lady wrote up a nice story. What was funny at that time involved a friend of my daughter's who knew I ran but did not know I had been part of that. He saw my picture in the Times and told his wife, "There's a 90-year-old runner. I'll bet Mr. Englert can beat him." Then he looked closer and said, "It IS Mr. Englert!" [Laugh] But really, I don't care much for publicity.



**Do people call you an inspiration for them?**

People do that, but I don't consider myself that much of an inspiration. I'm a slow runner. But I guess I've outlasted almost everybody. It gets easier to win when there's not as much competition around.

**Turning back to our Games, do you consider yourself lucky to have made it for every National Senior Games?**

Oh, yes. Over 30 years a lot of things can happen to you. I've just been fortunate. I've never been injured from running. I just keep on going. I'm sittin' here knocking on wood now. [Laugh]

I have good genes, but I've also not abused my body. I've never smoked or drank to excess. A positive attitude is very important also. For the last 30 years, I've gone to Johns Hopkins for an annual physical. They usually say, "Call us if you need us. Otherwise, come back in a year." As I've said, I feel fortunate.

**No doubt, you'll keep running as long as you can do it.**

I've made some speeches about running and aging and I make the statement that people make themselves older. They keep telling themselves, "I'm too old to do that," and pretty soon they are old. The point is that to some extent it's a mental thing. Of course, you gotta have a little luck in this life as well.

I get slower every year, but I don't know why. I know it's because of aging, but what is it about aging that causes you to get slower if you're still active?

I've been a participant in a study on the aging process at the National Institute on Aging. I go to a hospital in Baltimore every year for three days and they run all kinds of tests on me. This is my eighth year to do it. One of the other relay record team members, Charlie Boyle, is part of it too.

They always ask me a bunch of questions. One of the researchers asked if I ever get depressed. I just laughed, and they asked me why. I told them, "I don't have time to get depressed. I keep busy!"

**What do you do now to keep in shape and train?**

I run. We live in a retirement community, and I run on the treadmill there. It's an acceptable substitute but it's really not the same. I don't run on the street except in competition, and they don't let folks run on the high school tracks around here anymore. But there's an indoor track in Fairfax County that I go to when I closer to a competition.

Maureen is a power walker. We'll sometimes go out to the lake park where there's a path that goes about five miles. She'll power walk and I run out and back to her. We have a lot of fun doing that.

**What other things help you to stay busy and active?**

I'm a Washington Redskins fan, though maybe not as much as when they were pretty good. [Laugh] My son and I got to go to the Super Bowl in 1991, which was fun. I'm also a great opera fan. I've been a longtime subscriber to the Kennedy Center Opera Series for many years, and I'm also a fan of the Virginia Opera Company.



*Photo: Doua Mills - New York Times*

I don't have any problems keeping busy. I'm on a lot of committees here in my retirement community, and I was on the board of directors at one time. I still have an office where I go regularly to do all of my paperwork.

**Maybe your military training has contributed to your "go go" attitude through life.**

That may have something to do with it. Discipline is very important.

**So, keeping an office helps you maintain a routine and be more organized?**

Absolutely. It also keeps me out of my wife's way all the time. Too much of a good thing can be too much. [Laugh] Don't quote me on that! [Laugh]

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