## **Glenn Cunningham**

by Guy Belleranti

When his legs were severely burned in a schoolhouse fire, doctors told Glenn Cunningham he would never walk again. His brother Floyd had died in the fire and Glenn was lucky to even be alive. However, Glenn refused to accept the doctor's pronouncement. For months, his parents took turns massaging his leas

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Cunningham found it

His arduous an twelve, when he won running in competitiv team. Then, as a senic

But Glenn Cuni Kansas. Here he went titles and setting reco Brutus Hamilton, was strongest miler ever t



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ally, in 1921 at age mined to pursue high school track ol runners in the mile. d at the University of multiple NCAA track (ansas track coach,

d Cunningham "the

Cunningham became America's top middle distance runner over the next decade.

The Kansas Flyer, the Iron Horse of Kansas and the Kansas Ironman were a few of the nicknames people gave him. He became a member of the 1932 U.S. Olympic track team. In 1933, he won the Sullivan Award as the nation's top amateur athlete. In 1936 he was in the Olympics again, winning a silver medal in the 1500-meter run. And throughout the 30's he set both new national and world records in events such as the 1500 meters and the mile.

Glenn Cunningham also captured the hearts of many. He had overcome extreme physical adversity. He was also modest, practiced good sportsmanship and neither drank nor smoked. Fans and sports writers alike loved him. Even though it was an era when many smoked, it is said fans would put out their cigarettes when Cunningham raced out of respect for him. After graduating from the University of Kansas Cunningham moved on to earn a Masters degree in Physical Education from the University of Iowa. And after the 1936 Olympics he continued competing in Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) track events even though he was now married and a new father. He also started working toward his PHD. In 19

in the indoor mile. He

Cunningham h
possible gold medal.
dream wasn't to be. h
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Years later, Glei Athletics Congress (n Charleston, West Virg in 1978 Madison Squ **PREVIEW** 

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e first inductees. And
the most outstanding

track and field athlete in its first 100 years.

When Glenn Cunningham died in 1988 he left behind a legacy of accomplishment. And Kansas University continues to honor this man every year when it presents its annual Glenn Cunningham Award to the track athlete who best demonstrates triumph over adversity.

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