

# Great World

By Ross W. Cortese  
Rossmoor Corp.



Being a coach who has helped young people attain great success in athletic pursuits must present some of the greatest moments of satisfaction one can experience.

Such a person is James Pursell who had a part in the development of Olympic champion sprinter Mel Patton in 1948. Pursell has been named Leisure Worlder of the Month for March, and it is a pleasure to add our congratulations along with the many plaudits he has already received from his neighbors.

Pursell coached high school track for 38 years. "I'm sure I get little credit for the fact that Patton became the first man to run the 100-

yard dash in 9.1," Pursell says, but people who know about such things as restoring momentum to a disheartened athlete might disagree with Pursell's modest disclaimer.

Patton had suffered an injury in a bicycle accident, and the general feeling was that the star would be crippled for life and not be allowed to participate in sports.

He was assigned to gym class at University High. There Patton was encouraged by Pursell and pushed by the athletic staff until he became the fastest runner in the school. He was promoted from the "B" squad to the first team and he went on to USC where he became

the fastest human of the era. He won two gold medals at the 1948 Olympic game in London.

Interesting about Pursell is that he never competed in track events. He played high school football at Porterville and at Tulare, a town that would later produce Olympic decathlon winner Bob Mathias.

Pursell and his wife Gwen moved to Leisure World in 1966. He became a driver for the Golden Rain Founda-

tion Tram Service in 1967 and has been director for Rossmoor New Model Tram Service since 1968. His early assignment was to drive visitors to see the model homes, and we imagine few if any of those hundreds he drove around the area were aware of his coaching background.

He has been described as an uncomplicated man who has a creed for doing something at least once every day for someone else.