



105-year-old Mt. Pleasant resident is Michigan's oldest licensed driver



At 105-years-old, Bill Burden of Mt. Pleasant is Michigan's oldest liscenced driver. (Sun photo by LISA YANICK-JONAITIS/@lisaj_msun)

By **Randi Shaffer**, *The Morning Sun*

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If 15 is too young for a driver license, what age is too old?

Certainly not 105.

Mt. Pleasant resident Bill Burden, who just celebrated his 105th birthday, is Michigan's oldest licensed driver.

Bill, who was born Aug. 25, 1907, said he gave up driving two years ago, but still renews his license yearly because he's physically able to drive and does not have a handicap.

He said he isn't treated differently than anyone else when he visits the secretary of state office to renew his license.

"Same as anybody," he said. "No questions asked. I walked right in and right out."

Bill's daughter Betty Coomer, who lives just outside of Weidman, said she thought it was great that her father recognized his limits, and decided to stop driving when he felt it was unsafe.

Bill said he gave away his remaining cars to his sons, Bob and Harry.

Bill's wife, 97-year-old Marie Burden, still has her driver license as well, but has not driven since she broke her hip years ago.

"I just leave it alone," she said. "When you're older, you just can't manage things."

Bill and Marie rely on Coomer and her husband to get them around town.

Bill said he still remembers his first car, a 1917 Ford he obtained while living in Ohio.

"That's a long time ago," he said. "It was an old Model T and I had to fix it up and get it running."

Bill drove his Model T until he upgraded to a blue 1923 Chevrolet he kept for 10 years.

Cars weren't the only thing Bill drove when he was younger.

He said during the World War I era, he had a buddy with an airplane.

"We flew together," Bill said. "The pilot was in there and he'd turn the plane over to me. It was his plane."

The duo used a field on River Road as their own personal runway.

Bill said driver licenses didn't exist when he started driving.

"We never heard of such a thing," he said. "Back in the day, (we) just drove."

Bill moved from Ohio to Mt. Pleasant in 1930 to build area oil rigs.

It was that year he got his first driver license.

Though Ohio drivers did not need a license to drive, Michigan drivers did, so Bill obtained his first license in 1930.

He has never had a point on that license, he said. He has never been ticketed and never been stopped by police.

It was also in the 1930s that Bill and Marie met.

Marie said Bill worked underneath her father in the oil rig industry.

"I was still going to high school," Marie said. "The group of men that worked together, they'd have a card party on Saturday night. He joined in with them at our place, and that's how I met him."

Bill and Marie have been married for 76 years.

Bill moved to the construction industry in 1940 and retired in 1962.

Since his retirement, Marie said Bill filled his days with woodworking and home improvement, crafting desks and chairs and installing new cabinets in her kitchen.

Bill also spends his free time on either his laptop or the desktop computer he keeps in his basement, checking his email and reading the news.

Though he gave up driving, Bill still finds himself on wheels every day. He often drives around a scooter he built himself, as long as it's at least 70 degrees outside.

"I'm up and down the street every day," he said.

Bill, who still has perfect vision, plans on renewing his license on his 106th birthday.

"Dad's always been an excellent driver," Coomer said. "I wouldn't be scared to ride with him today."

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Back to top