

Centenarians

Kay Lynn Duncan, October 2020

This list of retirees and spouses who reached the age of 100 was compiled by Association Secretary Kay Lynn Duncan. It is based on information from past newsletters and other records and the recollections of Mike Moore, the Association E-Communications Officer. There are undoubtedly other retirees and spouses who have reached the 100-year milestone; if you have information on them, please contact Kay.

Harry H. Whiteley turned 100 on November 8, 2019

Former DNR Commissioner Harry Whiteley served on the Board and was elected chairman six times of the Michigan Conservation Commission later known as the Natural Resources Commission greatly contributing to Michigan conservation. In 2013 the Harry H. Whiteley Conservation Education Building at the RAM Center was named in his honor. He took over the Presque Isle County Advance newspaper at Rogers City in 1962 when his father retired. He devoted much time to public service and served on many organizations some being: Thompson's Harbor State Park Advisory Commission, Presque Isle County Sportsmen's Club, Michigan Press Association, Michigan Outdoor Writers Association, Michigan Travel Commission and he was named Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 1967 by the City of Rogers City. He served 33 years on state boards under five governors. He is an avid outdoorsman. Harry and his wife Betty (she is 102) reside in Petoskey. Featured in the DNR/DEQ Retirees Spring Newsletter 2020.



Ms. Zita Rae Pearsall, Age 102

On Jan. 25, 2018, Zita Pearsall, one of McLaren Greater Lansing's volunteers turned 100 years old. Pearsall has been volunteering with McLaren Greater Lansing since 2000. "A friend of mine had suggested that I look into volunteering for McLaren Greater Lansing," Pearsall said. "I am really glad I did, it's a very nice place to volunteer." After almost 20 years of volunteering Zita has put in more than 1,500 hours at the hospital. She started in clerical work according to a Face book post by Bev Carter in 2018 on Zita's 100 birthday. Bev worked with Zita in Forest Management Division, then a spot opened in the hospital's gift shop and she changed roles. "She is still going strong!"



Merle Jean Schaap, Age 103

Ms. Merle (DePree) Schaap is the widow of former longtime DNR Forester Glenn Schaap and mother to two sons and daughter Ann. Ann was my very good friend from childhood to adulthood, and sadly she passed in 2005. Ms. Schaap served as our Brownie Scout Leader. I have fond memories spending nights at the Schaap home, eating her wonderful cooking and known for famous homemade cakes with mouthwatering icing. Mrs. Schaap was an excellent seamstress making all of Ann's clothes for school. The Schaap household was very normal and I recall they enjoyed adventures in the outdoors. Ann's older brother Steve would drive us girls places and my favorite times were tobogganing at Lansing's Waverly sled hills. Ms. Schaap comes from a family of entrepreneurs; her father was a famous furniture maker, followed by her two brothers taking over the family business. The DePree family all have longevity. Her father lived to be 99 and siblings lived long lives too. Her father served as a pastor for several years and she became a strong woman of faith. Our own DNR retiree Ted Reuschel went to visit Merle in 2017 finding her in very good health at age 101. Another school friend of mine visits her regularly and reports to me on her well-being. Merle will celebrate her 104th birthday on November 9, 2020.



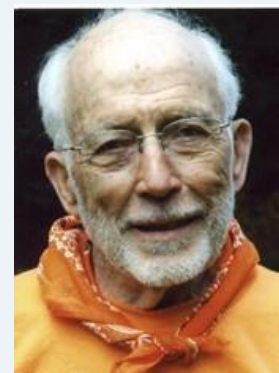
John Potvin, Age 101

John E. Potvin, age 101, of 543 Park Avenue, Manistique, Michigan, passed away Friday evening, January 3, 2014, at Schoolcraft Medical Care Facility in Manistique. John was born November 5, 1912, in Garden, Michigan, the son of John and Clara (Lester) Potvin. He attended grade school in Garden and graduated from Gladstone High School. On November 6, 1937, John married the former Stella Marie Gauthier in Garden, Michigan. Together they made their home and raised their family in Manistique. Stella preceded him in death on March 28, 1983. He then married the former Fern Marie Chamberlain on October 6, 1984 in Manistique, and she died in May 2002. John worked for many years as a Fisheries Aide with the Department of Natural Resources, retiring in 1974.



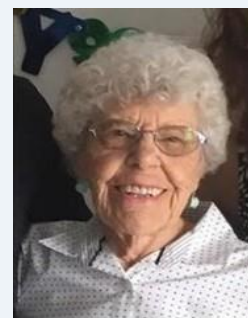
Bob Gibbs, Age 101

Robert James Gibbs passed away, Oct. 23, 2019 at age 101. Bob passed away quietly in Traverse City in the house of his childhood under the exceptional care of his daughter, Edith and Hospice of Michigan. He was a lifelong resident of East Lansing but spent much of his time in Northern Michigan. His long and active life was filled with doing for others. He valued enterprise, ingenuity, dedication and hard work. He was creative, eccentric, tenacious, engaging and tireless. He honored his memories of Mayfield, MI the village of his birth. He was buried in the village cemetery. His family moved to East Lansing at the beginning of the depression for better opportunities. Bob graduated from East Lansing High School and Michigan State University with a degree in forestry. He was a proud alumnus and supported MSU for years. Served as a soldier with the Fifth Division, he landed on Omaha Beach, fought under Patton and in the Battle of the Bulge. He returned home without physical injury after the last battle for Liberation of Paris. Like his father before him, he worked for and retired from the MDNR. His 25-year career in the Parks Division coincided with the State's expansion of the state park system, many of which he helped design and build. His singing career began as a small child around the parlor piano played by his mother and ended with a solo performance to his guests at his 100th birthday party. As a cyclist, he commuted to work every day, year around. For over 75 years he logged thousands of long distance miles on his bicycle, including the Tour de France route in his late 70s. He enjoyed many years riding the DALMAC and pioneered the popular West Route. As a carpenter and builder, he created a home for his young family in East Lansing, a retirement home for his parents in Traverse City, and for his wife, a beloved summer house on the shores of Arbutus Lake. Driving that Travelall, he chauffeured his family on camping trips for 15 years, seeing every state in the lower 48 and most provinces of Canada, visiting the national parks. As a maple syrup producer, he followed in his grandfather's and father's footsteps, tapping the same trees in Mayfield and he was a life member of the Michigan Maple Syrup Association.



Dorothy Sponseller, Age 102

Dorothy Rose Wilson Sponseller, 102, of Shepherd, MI passed on Thursday, January 16, 2020 at Harlingen Medical Center in Texas. Dorothy was born June 27, 1917 in Isabella County to Robert and Pearl (Gates) Wilson. She married Floyd Sponseller on November 20, 1937 in Isabella County. After graduation from Mt. Pleasant High School, she worked for the Murray Company as a bookkeeper. Dorothy and Floyd owned and operated the Crawford Store and Welding in the 1940's and 1950's. She worked at the Isabella County Clerk's office for several years. She also worked in the office of the State Home and Training School followed by working at the RAM Training School, DNR and retired in 1978.



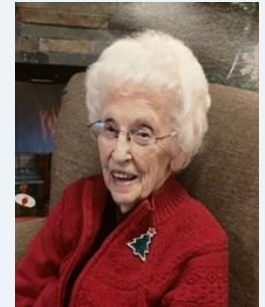
Albert Wallin, Age 105

Albert “Chick” Wallin, died in Baraga, MI on April 15, 2012. He was manager at Baraga State Park for many years, retired in 1972 with 32 dedicated yrs of service to DNR. Theodore Roosevelt was President when he was born in 1906 in WI. He worked as a tally boy in a MN lumberyard and moved to Michigan and married Edna. He lived through two great world wars and all major conflicts of the 20th Century; and lived through the development of the airplane and also space travel and the establishment of a space station. The Dept of Conservation wasn’t created until 1921; and Chick was then 15 yrs old. He enjoyed his church, fly fishing, deer and partridge hunting. Edna passed in 1997, he was survived by one daughter, Ann Swartz. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, Chick was the longest living retiree of the DNR.



Isabelle M. Oien, Age 102

Isabelle M. Oien, 102, passed away Monday, September 24, 2018, in Crystal Falls, Mich. She was wife of Russell G. Oien (DOB 1917) retired DNR Conservation Officer, and former CCC Forester in 1939. Russ preceded Isabelle in death on May 16, 2007. Isabelle was born September 9, 1916 in Gwinn, MI. On 12-15-1945, she married Russell in Gwinn and was a resident of Republic, moving to Crystal Falls in 1969. Isabelle was a homemaker, member of Guardian Angels, Catholic Church, and volunteered at St. Vincent DePaul. She enjoyed card playing, bowling, and fishing while at lake cabin.



Robert M. Acker, 1917 - 2017

Lansing - On Tuesday, November 14, 2017, at the age of 100, Robert “Bob” Acker of Lansing, MI joined members of his family and the Lord in Heaven. He was born August 24, 1917 in St. Marys, PA. Everyone that knew Bob could not help but love him. There was a smile for everyone he greeted. He was the most compassionate, loving and generous husband, dad, grandfather and great-grandfather. After moving to Owosso, MI he attended Owosso High School and went on to graduate from MSU as a geologist. Shortly after marrying his high school sweetheart, Arlene VanWagnor, the bombs hit Pearl Harbor, and he took the call to serve his country in the US Army during WWII. After returning from war, he worked in the upper peninsula of Michigan in the CCCs returning to Lansing when he was hired as a geologist in the Geological Survey Division, Oil and Gas Section. Tom Segall offers, “Bob Acker was a great and caring person with candor that you never forget.”



Margaret (Peggy) Shick (Widow of Charlie Shick, DNR Game Division)

Peggy Shick, Age 102 relinquished her reins on this world August 21, 2020, peacefully with no regrets. Peggy was born August 4, 1918 in Carney Point, NJ. Her grandparents were Quakers of Scotch-Irish, Hungarian, and Croatian descent. She had a younger sister Mary (Tillie). When Peggy was 4, her family moved to a farm near Wind Cap, Penn, and Pocono Mountains. Peggy was sent back to New Jersey at age 10 to help care for her grandmother and was placed in 7th grade. Peggy graduated high school at age 15, attended Penn State University and graduated at age 19, and was the youngest Penn St. grad at that time. As a sophomore, Peggy entered Penn State’s new Medical Technological Program; and became one of the University’s first grads of that program. She viewed this as one of her proudest achievements and worked in the field for 38 years. In 1950, Peggy and Charlie moved to Okemos MI and lived there for 65 years. She first worked at Sparrow Hospital, but soon found her nitch as the only medical technologist and was employed by MSU Olin Memorial Health Center. Peggy retired 27 years later in 1977, as Supvr. of Olin’s Medical Lab. She designed the Health



Center's new laboratory. Peggy loved life and wanted to see how others lived theirs. She became an inspired traveler with Charlie, and then with her family. She visited nearly all the states, dozens of Natl Parks, and 35 foreign countries. In 2012, she made her final overseas trip to Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Serbia at the age of 94. Peggy resided in Albuquerque, NM for the past 5 years near her daughter. Charlie preceded her on Christmas day 1994; and is survived by her 3 children and their families. Peggy's family said she was a model of grace, humor and enthusiasm and an inspiration on living life to the fullest. She left a treasure of wonderful memories as a source of solace and contentment.

Velmoe B. Benninger, Age 101

Velmoe Benninger, 101, of Cadillac and formerly of Traverse City, passed away Sunday, May 3, 2020, she was born to the late Opal West and Marguerite (Saulnier) West. She was a 1937 graduate of Cadillac High School. On November 4, 1942 in Cadillac, she married L.D. Winfield Benninger. She was a faithful member of Trinity Lutheran Church where she served on the Dorcas Society. Velmoe was a secretary for the Department of Natural Resources for 30 years and for Michigan Employment Security Commission for 10 years. Through her life she enjoyed traveling, taking pictures and writing poems, as a Christian she was a strong woman with strong beliefs. Velmoe was a beautiful lady who was at peace with herself and proud to be a Lutheran Christian. Paul Simmer who worked with her 1970-71 said "she was a sweet person for sure." Secretary to many at T.C.

