



## A Publication of the Presbytery of West Virginia

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#### Need a ride?

Check with you local office on aging, and they will be able to direct you to local resources.

For a list of public transportation resources across the state, go to: <https://wvtransit.com/wv-transit-systems/>

## Should Seniors Be Driving?

### How to navigate the conversation

By Anthony Cirillo

Prince Philip, who is 97, was recently involved in a car crash that injured two women and prompted a debate on older drivers in Britain. Two days after the accident, he was photographed driving a Land Rover and not wearing a seatbelt. Of course, that reignited a debate about seniors and driving.

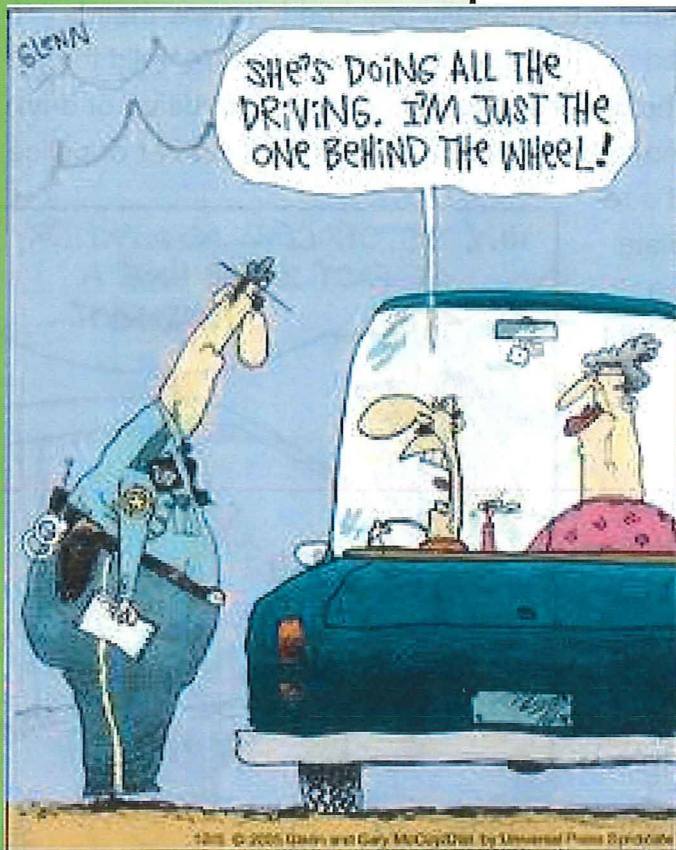
### An Emotionally Charged Issue

What if I told you that tomorrow, just for a day, you would all of a sudden not have a car available? What if I said for a week? You can start to see how your independence would be affected. A

car represents different things to people: a way to get to places, status and identity, freedom and spontaneity. What it represents also says a lot about how you approach the situation. Just because you're older doesn't mean you have to stop driving. We see many distracted driving accidents from much younger people on phones or texting, and that's not representative of how seniors drive.

### Spotting Problems

If you're geographically close by, the best thing is to observe directly. In other words, go for a ride-along. Buckle up! Distinguish between serious signs of trouble and those that are less so. For example, confusing the gas with the brake is serious. Riding the brake is perhaps less serious. If a problem is serious, take immediate action. If it's less so, observe over time, take notes and look for a consistent pattern. These facts will help when having a conversation.





### Things to look for:

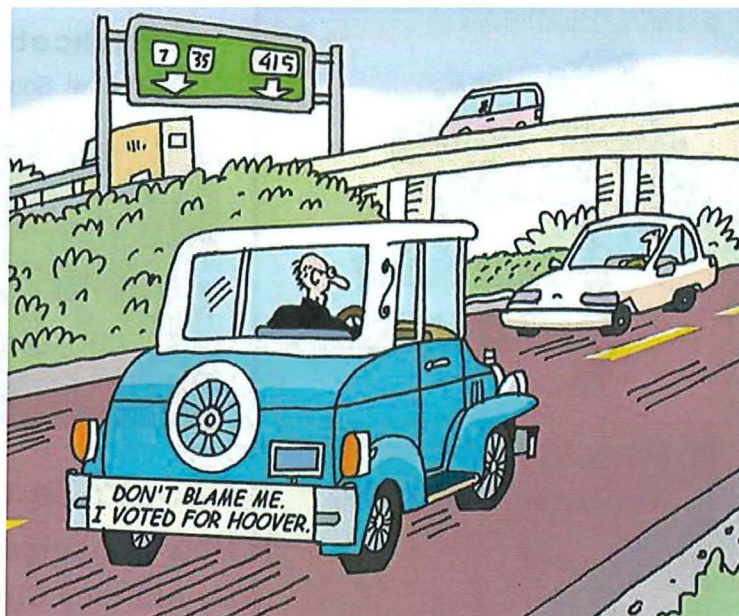
- Struggling to change lanes
- Problems turning, particularly with left turns
- Driving too slow or too fast
- Reaction time
- Other drivers honking
- Hitting curbs
- Following signals
- Scrapes on cars

Often, older adults will start self-correcting, not driving at night, in bad weather and on freeways.

My mom started going places by making all right

-hand turns. Praise these behaviors, but also take them as a sign that things might be changing.

Check in with your loved one's friends, as they may know more than you do. Has your older driver gotten lost or had near accidents? Check with their physician or pharmacist, since medication changes can impact driving.



### Is There a Certain Age When People Should Stop Driving?

The process of aging is different for everyone, so it's hard to regulate this. Every state has its own rules. Seniors are often over-represented in fatality statistics. They are, after all, more likely to be injured in an accident and more likely to die of that injury. In my state, North Carolina, drivers who are 70 or older at the time their current driver license expires are generally required to renew their license in person at a local DMV office. Licenses issued to drivers ages 66 and older are valid for five years. A DMV re-evaluation may be done based on the driver's physical or mental condition or driving record. A DMV re-examination may be recommended by a family member, EMT staffer or police officer. Information in your driving record may prompt a re-examination. The re-examination involves the immediate evaluation of an individual by a DMV authorized officer. It consists of an interview and may involve a vision test, written test and/or a driving test.

### Start the Conversation Now

Ideally, start a conversation over time, and not in a crisis situation. You should initiate casual conversations. Look for an opening in something your loved one says, as well. For example, say you're watching the news and there's a report on an accident. Or perhaps the weather is turning bad and might affect driving. Both are great times to start a conversation. Don't gang up on your loved one. Studies have shown that this kind of conversation is best initiated by a spouse, and then by adult children or a physician.

