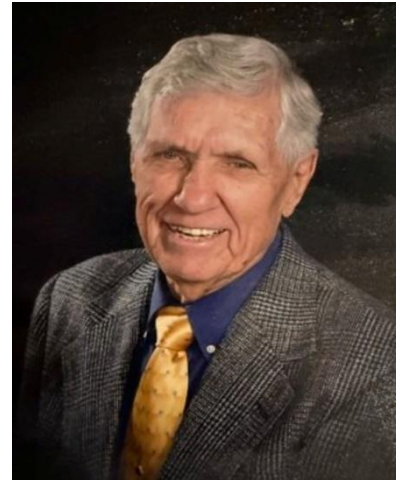


The Life of William Albert Streets

Early Years and Unimaginable Hardship

William Albert Streets was born on December 25, 1928, in Oklahoma City. He was the son of Thomas Streets, who hailed from Illinois, and Selma Ray Streets, originally from Alabama. William's early childhood was comfortable; the family lived in a nice brick home with a tile bathroom located on Northeast 23rd Street, roughly a mile east of the state Capitol.

This stability shattered in November 1937 when Bill was eight years old. His mother passed away from pneumonia while confined to an oxygen tent. His father, a car salesman and a heavy drinker, suffered a breakdown following her death, leaving the children to fend for themselves for nearly three months. Recognizing the dire situation, his father and grandfather packed the children's belongings into a trunk and sent them by train to New Boston, Illinois, where they were taken in by aunts and uncles.



They remained in Illinois until October 1938, when Thomas Streets returned to retrieve them. After a brief month living in a downtown Oklahoma City hotel, Thomas placed the children in St. Joseph's Orphanage in Bethany, Oklahoma, in early 1939. Bill's older brother, three and a half years his senior, left the orphanage after a year to work on a farm in Okarche. Bill lived at the orphanage for four years before his father, still working as a car salesman, brought him out to live together in a rooming house.

Entering the Workforce and Finding Trouble

Bill's long career in the plumbing and mechanical trades began by sheer coincidence.

- While fixing a sink faucet for his landlady, Thomas Streets went to a local business, Acme Plumbing, to purchase parts.
- There, Thomas learned the company was looking for a young man to clean the shop and deliver materials.
- Although Bill was only about fourteen years old and underage for driving, Acme Plumbing hired him.
- Bill worked at the shop in the mornings before attending Central High School, holding the job for about a year and a half.

Unfortunately, Thomas's drinking worsened, prompting Bill to move out and rent a room of his own. Lacking guidance, Bill fell in with the wrong crowd and found himself in trouble with the law. He was sent away to serve a three-year sentence. Adding to this turbulent period, just one week into his sentence, Bill received word that his father had passed away. Unable to attend the funeral, Bill served his time and eventually returned to Oklahoma City.

Upon his return, the older gentleman who owned Acme Plumbing rehired him as a laborer digging ditches. During this time, Bill lived in a room and boarding house alongside his older brother.

A Disastrous Detour and the U.S. Army

When it was time for his brother, who was studying engineering, to return to Oklahoma A&M, he convinced Bill to join him. Bill attended college for a single semester, taking a course in air conditioning, but soon realized higher education was not for him.

Leaving college during a harsh winter with ice on the ground, Bill struggled to find work. Desperate, he and a friend — referred to as "Buddy" — hatched a plan to drive to California using a 1941 Buick provided by Buddy's stepfather. The trip was doomed from the start:

- Just north of Kingman, Arizona, Buddy abruptly stopped the car and instructed Bill to get out.
- Once Bill retrieved his suitcase, Buddy pushed the Buick off a cliff.
- Buddy revealed that his stepfather, Tommy, had instructed him to destroy the car to collect insurance money.
- Stranded in 15-degree weather, the pair were quickly picked up by a highway patrolman who saw through their story and arrested them.
- Bill spent three days in the Kingman jail before a judge charged him with "improper registration," sentenced him to time served, and ordered him out of town.

The journey back home was equally chaotic. Hitchhiking, they were picked up by a Native American man who shared his whiskey and dropped them off at a reservation. They later hitched a ride with a lumber yard owner who drove them to Ash Fork, Arizona, and gave them two dollars each. After renting a room for the night, they caught a freight train to Winslow, Arizona, and eventually made it back to Oklahoma City.

Still unable to find work, Bill opted to join the U.S. Army, serving a one-year enlistment before being discharged in late 1949.

Building a Career and a Family

Returning to Oklahoma City once more, Bill was rehired by Acme Plumbing as a laborer, spending about a year working with a pick and shovel. His dedication caught the attention of his employer, who helped him enter the Union Apprenticeship Committee for plumbing.

In 1951, Bill married Rose Cranfield.

- He adopted Rose's two-year-old son, Joe.
- Five years later, the couple adopted a second son, Chris.
- In 1961, they expanded their family again by adopting a daughter, Sheryl Marie.

Professionally, Bill thrived. He earned his plumbing license and began running jobs and building swimming pools across Illinois, Missouri, Texas, and Oklahoma. He continued to take on major projects with Acme Plumbing, including working under foreman Amyl Raddick on the construction of the Texoma Lodge, where he helped install a massive pipeline under Lake Texoma.

The Birth of an Enterprise

Realizing his own capabilities, Bill decided to strike out on his own. He spent three months convincing his older brother, Bob — who had a secure job as an engineer — to go into business with him. On April 18, 1960, the brothers officially launched their company, Streets Plumbing Co. They financed the startup by borrowing against their insurance policies.

Their first job was a service station in Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, where they dug ditches and laid pipe late into the evening using the headlights of a car for illumination.

- Initially operating out of Bill's home on South Blackwelder for six months, they eventually rented a small shop.
- They later purchased a house on Southeast 25th Street in Capitol Hill, where they built a dedicated office and shop.
- The early years were financially strained; their banker, J.W. Bell at Central National Bank, forced them to be conservative by only approving half of the loan amounts they requested.

Despite the rocky start, the company grew from small bids to church construction projects, and eventually to schools and larger commercial jobs. Bill's sons, Joe and Chris, eventually joined the family business. Joe became an air conditioning specialist, which convinced Chris to forgo college and enter the lucrative trades alongside him. Bill and Bob successfully ran the business together for decades, maintaining a remarkably strong brotherly and professional bond until Bob's death in January 2018. Chris joined ASHRAE in 1983 and has kept his membership current ever since.



Left to right: Chris, Bill, Joe and Bob Streets

Later Years, Loss, and New Beginnings

As his career flourished, Bill built a home on South Harvey in Oklahoma City, complete with a large swimming pool, which he sold twenty years later in 1980. He then built a new home in Ranchwood Manor, residing there for another two decades. Tragically, his wife Rose was diagnosed with lung cancer in 1997 and passed away in 1999.

In January 2001, Bill married Pat Stone. He sold his property in Oklahoma City and, in January 2002, moved into a newly built home on Lake Eufaula. Embracing lake life, Bill purchased a 28-foot Sea Ray cabin cruiser.

This boat became the vessel for a legendary adventure in May 2000. Bill and a close friend, Jesse, embarked on an 800-mile journey down the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. Navigating high floodwaters and 34 distinct locks and dams, the trip was both treacherous and memorable. Jesse had promised to pay for the fuel but ran out of money after spending \$800 on gas, forcing Bill to cover the final \$250 fill-up. The tight quarters of the small boat tested their friendship, and while they remained lifelong friends until Jesse's passing, they were "ready to throw each other overboard" by the end of the week.

Final Chapter in Ada

Bill and Pat maintained the Lake Eufaula home for about fifteen years while frequently traveling back to Pat's property in Ada, Oklahoma, for the weekends. Tiring of the constant travel and the expensive upkeep of a weekend swimming pool, they ultimately sold the lake property in 2016 and settled permanently in Ada.

In Ada, Bill dedicated his time to maintaining the property, battling failing lawnmowers, and keeping the grounds pristine. The rural setting provided its own unique challenges and routines:

- The property was home to a large population of black snakes, which Bill and Pat generally tolerated because they kept venomous copperheads and rattlesnakes away.
- Though the snakes lived above the cellar, they occasionally breached the house, including one instance where Bill had to use a hoe to extract a six-foot black snake from beneath a bedroom dresser.
- The land also featured numerous pecan trees, numbering around eighty in total across the properties. Pat's son, Dean, managed the harvesting operations using specialized equipment and managed the local cattle.

Reflecting on a long, arduous, and highly accomplished life, Bill Streets spent his later years enjoying the quiet pace of the country, surrounded by family and the fruits of a lifetime of labor.

Dusty Stoabs, PE
ASHRAE Central Oklahoma Chapter Historian



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