Business Was Good

Three brothers each bought a new Buick in 1926.

In 1926 at 312 North Street in Rochester, New York in front of the Tierney Market Company, there stood a meat and grocery business which was owned by three of the Tierney brothers, including my father.

A Buick salesman stopped by one day and was pleased to have sold three new Buicks at one time.

This tells you about the life and times of 1926, when business was good.

The business had been started by Ray and Joe Tierney in 1906. My father, Art, the youngest of 11 children, joined full-time as a meat cutter and meat salesman in 1909 after graduating from elementary school.

He worked six days a week, 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., with no holidays or vacation.

The store continued into the Depression years and closed in 1936. Dad remained to the end, faithful and hardworking. Ray had pulled out earlier to start his own market.

But Dad enjoyed the work. It was through the market that he met Anna, my mother. Her mother, Margaret, a regular customer, had spoken of the “nice young Italian boy” working at the meat counter.

One day, Anna went along as her mother shopped for meat. For Dad, it was love at first sight—and forever! They married in 1919 and had four children.

Dad was adoring of his wife and children. He also was an expert meat cutter. He was jovial and friendly with his customers and would advise them on how to cook various cuts. Hearing of my father's supposed culinary skill, my mother was shocked. At home, he knew nothing about cooking and had no inclination to learn about it.

Dad was dedicated to the market. We lacked for some things during the Depression, but not for food. When my brothers needed a softening agent for their baseball gloves, Dad brought home mutton tallow. He also provided a cow's eye for school science classes.

And his Buick drove on into the 1930s. Dad loved his car.

I recall the stiff mohair-upholstered seats picking at my legs as I sat between Mother and Dad on a Sunday ride.

My sister, Margaret, the youngest in the family, was a busy child. One day, when she was about 3 or 4, the car was parked in our driveway with the emergency brake set.

She got in the car and pretended to be the driver, busy with levers, the wheel and more. The car rolled backward down two slight hills and across the street.

It stopped at the curb. There was no noise when it moved, but we all came out of the house to see Margaret in the driver's seat, looking very frightened.

Later in the '30s, when the car's brakes gave out, Dad parked it in the garage because he had no money for repairs. The tires flattened and the prickly mohair seats became dusty.

But the large driver's wheel was shiny and much used by my sister and me…as we pretended to drive on glorious excursions. We spent many happy hours in that old Buick.

One day, Dad offered the old, dusty, stranded car to one of his customers. The man came and tinkered with the tired car, added gas and oil and put air into the tires.

He drove it up the street and out of sight. My mother wept as it left us, thinking that a good friend had gone away.

—Suzanne T., Rochester, New York