Dad's Red Corvette

Sports car was a symbol of her father's full-throttle pursuit of life.

ONE AFTERNOON, in the spring of 1957, my sister Patricia and I turned the corner on Cloverdale Avenue on our way home to see a sleek sports car parked in our driveway. We thought, Someone very interesting must be visiting.

We took off like shots down the sidewalk to see who would touch the gleaming jewel of a car first.

"Whose car?" we yelled excitedly to our parents, who were having a discussion in the backyard of our Cleveland, Ohio home.

"Ours!" my father replied happily, walking toward us with a broad grin lighting up his face. My mother stood riveted near the garage. Her smile did not convey happiness.

"It's a Chevrolet Corvette," Dad said. "Lipstick-red convertible, souped-up engine, whitewall tires and a hard top for rainy days." Dad looked like he did the night our brother was born.

"Don't forget, it seats only two," my mother chimed in a voice so "happy" we knew she was not. "But that's okay; we'll just go places in shifts."

My father avoided looking at her and asked, "Want to go for a ride?"

In those days, seat belts were worn only on the Cyclone roller coaster at Puritas Springs Park. We all piled into the car and took off down the street. My mother sat in the passenger seat holding my baby brother, Dale, and my middle sister, Patricia, on her lap.

My oldest sister, Cheryl, huddled on the floor next to Mom's legs, and I was wedged in the opening behind the gearshift.

"Well, this is certainly comfortable," stated my mother, her tone of voice unchanged.

A red-plaid cap with the top snapped down onto the narrow visor had appeared on my father's head (inset above right). We knew without being told that it was a racing cap. Whenever Dad did something, he did it all the way.

My dad lived his life at full throttle, pedal to the metal, not slowing down for the curves. He golfed, hunted, skied, fished, flew airplanes, shot archery, rode motorcycles and raced hydroplanes, as well as go-carts and anything else with wheels.

As an infantry soldier, my father survived some of the deadliest battles of WWII and was sent home with a scar across his forehead, where a bullet had nearly killed him. He then spent 30 years putting out fires and saving lives as a Cleveland firefighter.

Whatever it was that gave him his courage also instilled in him a dedication to duty and family. He always had two jobs and never missed a day of work. He even trudged 15 miles to the firehouse after 29 inches of snow virtually shut down the city on Thanksgiving 1950. Forty-eight hours later, he walked back home.

In the end, my mother came to terms with my father's need to speed around town in his snazzy new car. Her resignation was helped along by an Autumn Haze mink stole with her initials embroidered in large gold letters on the silk lining—Dad's reparation for his impulse purchase.

Our parents are both gone now, as is the Corvette, traded in long ago for a wood-paneled station wagon. We think back often to those days on a shady little street in Cleveland when the days

seemed longer and the problems smaller.

It makes us happy to know that amid the hardships of raising four children, there were many special evenings when my mother, her mink draped over her shoulders, slid into the Corvette next to my father, and they sped down the road together in the moonlight.

—Suzie Davidson, San Diego, California