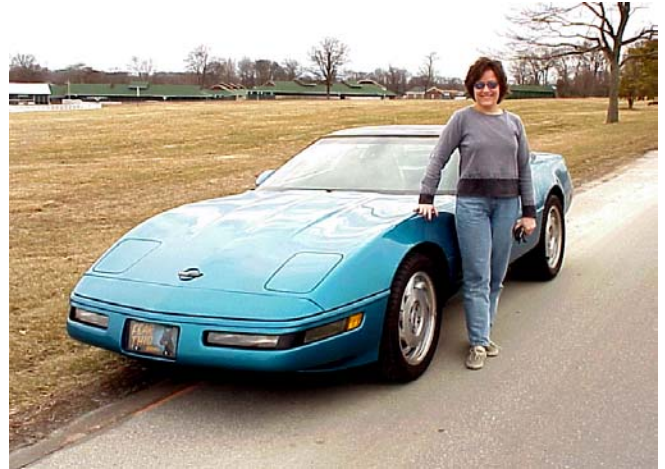


The First But Not the Last... by Charlotte Stigler **CCND MEMBER OF THE MONTH**

As a little girl, I was always interested in cars. Probably because my Dad was always working on one of the pieces of junk he and my mom drove back then, before they could afford anything decent. One of my favorite Christmas gifts was a 1979 yellow Barbie Corvette that Santa gave me when I was 10. I still have it.

I have always been particularly fond of Camaros and Corvettes. I always thought a Corvette was something you purchased only after you made your first million, and just drove on nice weekends. Dad bought me my first Camaro when I turned 16, and I bought 2 more after that. A Corvette just seemed like a far-fetched dream.

On a trip to Lancaster in December 2001 to do some Christmas shopping, a Shark-style Corvette passed us on the road. I mentioned to Bob that I have always wanted a Corvette. Being the ultimate optimist, he said, "No big deal, we can make that happen." On a whim, we decided to look for a Corvette in February 2002. Originally, I wanted a Shark.



I quickly found that banks would not finance a 20-year-old car, so that idea was squashed (for the time being, anyway). I found an ad on the Internet for a pre-owned 1994 Corvette at a dealership in Newark. I had never even been in a Corvette, let alone driven one. We took a ride in it on a Wednesday night, left a deposit, and I bid farewell to my pretty little Blazer (which I purchased only 5 months earlier) two nights later. When we got the car home, I stood inside the house and looked out the front door at this car in the driveway and got teary-eyed. When Bob asked me what was wrong, I said, "Who do I think I

am buying a car like this? I can't believe I did this." What makes me think I am so special that I have to drive something as awesome as a Corvette? It just seemed so unreal that this beauty was sitting in our driveway. My parents told everyone they knew that I had gotten a Corvette. I guess it gave them bragging rights for a while. I mailed pictures of the car to my Dad in Florida and he proudly showed them to all of his neighbors, as if he was showing off his new grandchild! Mom and Dad don't have grandkids, but instead they have 2 granddogs and a grandVette!

The first day I drove the 'Vette to work I was so nervous I could hardly stand it. At that time, I only had to drive a little over a ¼ mile to get to work. No kidding. Took me 2 minutes to get there. In those 2 minutes, I got myself so worked up about driving it that my hands were sweating and shaking. The next day Bob took the car to work to show it to the guys he worked with, and I was so relieved. As I slipped behind the wheel of his Jeep Grand Cherokee to drive to work, I felt like I was "home." I did the keeping up with the Joneses thing for about 4 years and rode the SUV train before I decided "you only live once" and bought the 'Vette. No doubt, driving the 'Vette was a big change from driving my beloved Blazer (which, I have to admit, I still get a tear in my eye when I think about it).

Bob immediately bought me the remote for the keyless entry (the dealership "lost" the original one), 4 new tires and had the CD player repaired. The first time I met Jack Layton, he told me "Anytime you say 'Corvette' the price doubles." It didn't take too long for me to realize he was right!



After driving this car, I'm hooked! I now know why people who buy Corvettes don't buy just one. I'm already thinking into the future about the next one. Currently, our "stable" consists of a recently acquired Camaro convertible, a Nissan 300ZX Turbo, the ever-so-trusty Jeep Grand Cherokee, which has definitely come in handy this winter, and Bob's Impala (I'm not touching that one!) The 'Vette is the hand's down winner, if the weather is appropriate.

I'll never say that I won't ever own anything else, but I can definitely see always having a Vette in the garage.