

Lyle and His Little Red Corvette

When Lyle got the diagnosis he knew he had to get his affairs in order. The first thing he did was to buy a new “arrest-me-red” Corvette with 436 horsepower and racing strip. He made sure his will was up to date. Decisions about money and the house were easy -- they all went to his wife Joanne. The difficult decision was what to do about his 1962 classic black Corvette.

From the time he was a young boy Lyle loved cars -- especially fast cars and it was his dream to own his own racing car and in 1962 that dream came true. He had just landed a well-paying job as an engineer at Bell Labs in Reading, Pennsylvania and could afford the down payment on the Corvette. If the 1961 Corvette was good, the 1962 Corvette was even better. The previous silver mesh grille and its flanking cutouts were now finished in black, as was the background of the trunklid medallion. Narrow-band whitewalls were in vogue that year and looked great on the Corvette. All information that was of little interest to anyone outside the sports car racing circuit. Lyle was very much part of that circuit; every weekend was spent racing -- His favorite circuit was Watkins Glen in New York; this was where he raced with Paul Newman and it was where he met his future wife, Joanne. Over the years Lyle raced and owned a number of fast cars: Lotus and Trans Am to name just a couple. But his favorite remained the Corvette.

For fifty years the '62 Corvette resided in his garage -- lovingly maintained and polished, and inspected yearly. But what to do with it after his death? Of course -- the answer was obvious: he would be buried in it -- a fitting end. Surrounded by family and racing buddies he would be lowered into the car to the music of *“Little Red Corvette”* by Prince

*Little red Corvette
Baby you're much too fast
Little red Corvette
You need a love that's gonna last*

He ran this by Joanne. She was fine with the music, but dubious about the legality of being buried in the car -- besides, was that any way to treat a classic car? Lyle had a rethink: how about having his ashes interred in the car and donating the car to the National Corvette Museum in Kentucky. And so it came to pass. In September 2011 Lyle's family and friends gathered around the '62, said good-bye and scattered his ashes throughout the car. (Some were kept back and scattered on the Watkins Glen race track.)

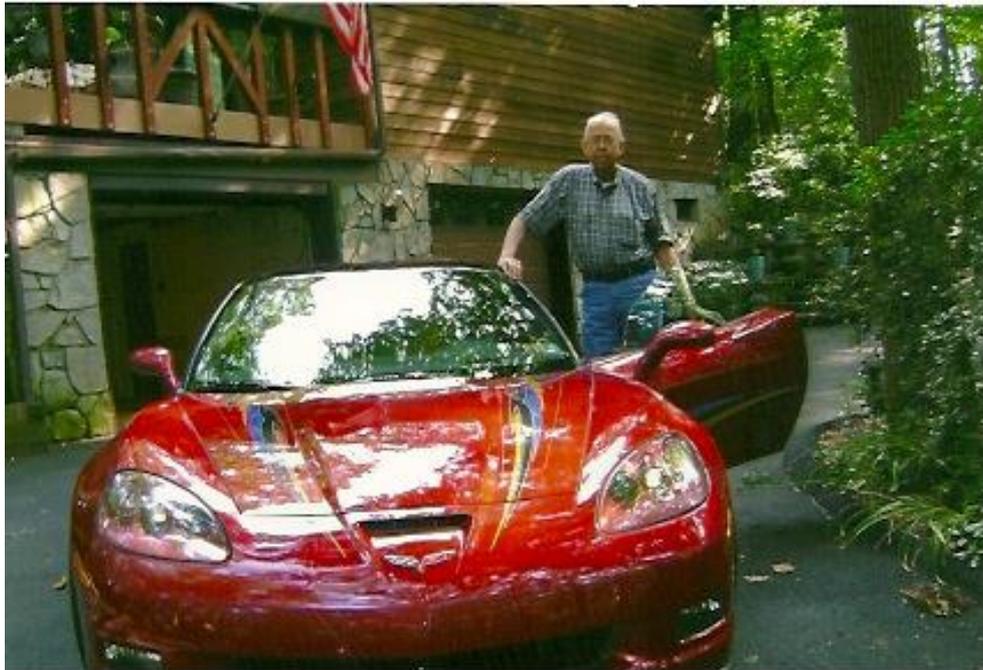
The '62 Corvette had pride of place in the museum (although Joanne and the family thought it best not to share the fact that it was the final resting place of its owner.) A couple

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of years passed and in February 2014 Joanne was contacted by the owners of the museum who were in great distress over the disaster that had befallen the Museum. A massive sinkhole had open up and swallowed eight cars, including the 1962 black Corvette. What the owners didn't expect was that the sinkhole would become such a popular attraction and that museum officials would preserve it -- along with the damaged cars. Attendance went up sixty percent in a month and the museum, which in previous years had struggled to keep its doors open, now sold sinkhole-related shirts, postcards and prints.

It may not have been the way Lyle intended, but he had gotten his wish to be buried in his beloved 1962 black Corvette whose epitaph read:

*Ashes to Ashes
Dust to dust
He kept me free
From grime and rust.*



For
Lyle
Daniel
Heck

1941-2011