



## **MY FIRST TIME ...**

### **DRIVING DAD AND HIS PALS**

**THE COMBINED AGE** of my three passengers was 251, and their laughter was raucous as they swapped stories and memories.

Not long before, there would have been six people in my dad's car: this trio plus their spouses. But the three friends are widowed now. In fact, this ride to dinner came after we attended a Mass in memory of my mom, who had died three months earlier. With my mother gone, I stepped into the role of chauffeur, so Dad could have a safe

night out with pals.

One passenger was the mother of my lifelong friend Kelly. My father and Kelly's mom used to give up their evenings dutifully to drive us everywhere. As a kid, I didn't appreciate those rides. But what our parents did for us back then served a deeper purpose: to instill in us the value of being with friends. I know now that a ride like that, filled with joy and jokes, can be as meaningful as wherever it takes you.

This trip was my first chance to return the favor to my dad. And I couldn't wait to tell Kelly all about it.

—Sharon Waters