



# *Faster than a speeding bug*

**N**annette Cassidy has a need for speed. And when she's not (safely) completing her mounted mail route, you often can find the Escondido, CA Branch 2525 member at the race track.

She acquired the passion from her father. "He was a car guy," she says. "He took me to drag races when I was young and taught me to drive stick shift when I was 12." Her dad would regularly bring her to Tecate Raceway in Mexico and Carlsbad Speedway in California.

The carrier and her husband, Pat, who comes from a family of Volkswagen enthusiasts, inherited a 1968 red VW Beetle from his grandmother that she now drag races as a member of the all-female Powder Puff Drag Racing Team in Southern California. The team's members compete with each other in a ladies' racing bracket. The Powder Puff class of racing began there in 1979 and went until 1983, when the league's favorite race track shut down. It was reincarnated in 2009, and has been going steady ever since.

The carrier's involvement with the team began in 2014, when Cassidy's friend, Wendy Coleman, acted as a mentor as she recruited her to be part of her racing pit crew. "She inspired me to try it," the carrier said.

By the following year, Cassidy moved behind the wheel and drove in her first quarter-mile drag race as a fellow member of the team. She hasn't stopped since.

"I love the sport," she said. "I gave it a try and I'm good at it. We pop wheelies, burn rubber and let it all

hang out."

She takes part in about six races a year, usually in Orange County, CA. At the end of each season, the 30 team members are ranked, and the top five win awards. In the 2016 season, Cassidy finished in fourth place among those 30 drivers in the Powder Puff league and won "Most Improved Racer."

"That was my lucky year," the carrier said.

In the years since, she has routinely made the top 10. "You gotta push yourself," she said. "I'm hoping to make top five this year." That ranking will happen after her final race this year on Oct. 28.

Cassidy also enjoys other events that are part of the Powder Puff culture, including car shows, auto swap meets, "Bug In" and "Hot VW Drag Day" events (full-day events geared toward VW enthusiasts that each have drag racing, an auto show and sometimes even camping), and other events that are put on to raise money for local causes.

So what happens on race day? First, participants get to the event "super early," Cassidy says. "We do three test runs, and make sure nothing breaks down."

They then get in line and do elimination rounds, two cars at a time. "That's when the adrenaline kicks in," Cassidy said. "You're racing for you. You're doing it for yourself."

Even though the members of the Powder Puff team compete against each other, "we stay and cheer on whoever makes it to the end," she said. "It's an adrenaline rush. It makes me happy and all my worries are gone. I



**Nannette Cassidy with her VW Beetle**

have a great time doing this."

Cassidy said that being a part of the all-woman group, in a sport that is male-dominated, is "empowering."

"The crowd really loves us," she said. "Little girls come up to us. We all support each other. We can do anything."

The carrier also gets a lot of support from her family. "My husband is my crew chief and No. 1 fan," Cassidy said. "My children think it's really cool."

And when she's not racing her VW bug, "I usually drive my kids around in that car," she says.

Cassidy spends a lot of time fine-tuning her car to keep it street legal—not modifying vehicle equipment so much as to make it ineligible to be driven outside of racing—and the upkeep can be costly. Fortunately, sponsors have stepped in to help. "I want to thank my sponsors, Randar and Vee Parts, for trying to keep my bug street legal," she said. "It has a 2332 engine with a set of dual Weber 48 IDA carburetors, and it really takes off."

The 13-year carrier says her fellow letter carriers tend to be surprised when they hear about her pastime. "I get teased," she says, "like, 'Don't be drag-racing the LLV.'" **PR**