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1987 Ferrari Mondial Cabriolet

I've always loved cars. All cars. Take any list of the most undesirable cars of all time, and I'd likely want to own some of them and be excited to tinker on any of them. I've had a motley assortment of cars in my life, and wish I'd been one of those people who could hold onto each one in a barn somewhere. I've called myself an automotive bottom feeder. If a car was desirable to the general public, I've never owned it.

About three years ago, I had a great 1962 Ford Fairlane four-door that my brother converted into a hot rod with a 5-liter engine with a race cam and a five-speed. I replaced the interior with factory materials and put a healthy exhaust system on it. It got terrible fuel economy, and there was always some small project with it, as it wasn't restored; it had simply had the worn-out items replaced.

I figured if I was going to have a car that I worked on all the time and rarely drove, I might as well move into something more exotic. When I was young, I had a poster in my room of a Porsche 911, and have never lost the bug for that car. I narrowed my search to a late-'80s cabriolet, but couldn't quite pull the trigger. This was the point when my neighbor, who owned a Ferrari 348, told me about a Ferrari Mondial that had been for sale for a long time, and where it was advertised. He suggested the owner might be willing to deal on price. When I realized that I might be able to own a Ferrari for the price of a mid-'80s Porsche, a car that I'd never even dared to dream about, my mind started racing and I had trouble sleeping.

Through the website it was advertised on, FerrariChat.com, I contacted the owner, received photos and communicated back and forth with him. I did a tremendous amount of research on FerrariChat.com and other sites I could find. I gathered from my research that the Mondial had the identical drivetrain to the 328 series, and was considered by some to be the most reliable older Ferrari. With a lot of trepidation, I went to look at the car—this was still a tremendous amount of money for me. After extensive negotiation, and a thorough inspection on a lift, I realized that it was simply an older car with older car



issues, and the owner was going to accept my offer.

I had to ask myself why I wanted a 1980s Italian convertible. Had I not had enough electrical problems in my Fiat 850? Had I not ridden in an old Triumph Spitfire, where on the highway a passenger can stay drier in rain with the top down? I controlled the urge to jump in my Mazda pickup and throw gravel all over the parking lot while making a hurried escape.

I have owned this car for almost three years now. I still can't believe that I own and drive this car. I feel as if every day is on borrowed time, and that some force of the universe will sweep in and make things right by taking it away from me. With these feelings inside me, I use it at every opportunity to maximize my experience before the inevitable.

From day one, I planned a grand trip: YOTF, Year of the Ferrari. From my first moment of ownership, I set about getting a feel for the car, becoming comfortable and learning to trust it. I took it on longer and longer trips. After six months of ownership, I did a major service on the car—timing belts, valve adjustment, fixing oil leaks

and replacing the fuel and coolant lines plus other "while you are in there" items. I took two weeks of vacation and saw it as a job. I worked 8 to 5 or more every day, and weekends as necessary. I put over 100 hours into the service. I give thanks to my understanding wife, and to the internet sources and a few techs who were willing to assist over the phone.

Last year, 2011, I started out early on my YOTF. I had to drive to Florida for family issues early in the year. At the last second, I took the Mondial. Fifteen hundred miles in five days, and the car ran flawlessly. Then the big plan: In May, a friend from California flew out to Louisiana to join



me on my epic journey. We did a small crawfish boil, did a toast and headed out the following morning at 4:30 a.m. We covered over 800 miles the first day. It was five days before we pulled into his driveway in Sacramento. The details of the trip are another story.

The car had sat in his garage for a couple of months when, in August, I picked up another friend, and we took a trip up to Victoria, British Columbia. What a drive, running through the redwoods and along the coastal 101 highway! After that, I made a few trips from Sacramento to southern Oregon, where I have family. Altogether, I put over 12,000 miles on the Mondial in 2011, and about 18,000 since purchase. I have pictures and memories to last a lifetime. The car was dead reliable; I had one axle boot break and replaced the fuel pump when it became noisy. The car didn't leak in the rain and the heater worked well when needed.

My fear of the universe told me I should sell the car after my YOTF, and I advertised it for two days before I pulled the ad. For the car's current value, in the low to mid-\$20,000s, I can't think of anything that could replace it. I've had many friends and family members drive the car, and I hope there are many more I can share the



experience with.

It's a special car, and I can't imagine ever parting with it. After nearly three years, I'm still learning what the car has to offer. It has a complex personality, a mix of sports car and GT with wonderful engine sounds and top-down cruising for four. Although I hope I can create some room someday for a Citroën 2CV, an AMC Hornet and—if I'm lucky—the 911 that I've been dreaming about since a very young age. 🍷

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Aug. 17	Istanbul, Turkey	7:00 a.m. / overnight
Aug. 18	Istanbul, Turkey	1:00 p.m. / 1:00 p.m.
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Aug. 20	Athens (Piraeus), Greece	7:00 a.m. / 6:00 p.m.
Aug. 21	Mykonos, Greece	7:00 a.m. / 6:00 p.m.
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