

Sierra Owners Share Positive Experiences

DETROIT – When a new generation of the GMC Sierra full-size pickup heads into production, it will have already absorbed hundreds of thousands of miles of hauling, towing, use and abuse testing.

It's the kind of durability exam customers in the real world administer for years and even decades.

Tammie Roeber, Dave Cleveland and Don Impson are three of those customers. Together, their trucks represent more than 2 million miles and two-and-a-half decades of proven GMC engineering.

"I signed the papers on my new Sierra 3500HD one-ton pickup in 2006, hitched up a trailer, and have been on the road since," said Roeber, who has recorded more than 1.2 million miles on the original Duramax diesel engine and Allison transmission in her GMC.

Roeber makes a living transporting horses across the eastern United States. "From 30 below zero in Minnesota to 100 degrees in Miami," she said.

"I had two Ford pickups prior to owning my GMC, but I was replacing a transmission every year. If that rate continued, I'd be through my sixth transmission with the miles I've put on the Sierra."

Most of Roeber's miles have been driven pulling trailers, including a 48-foot, 16,000-pound trailer holding as many as nine horses.

She maintains her truck religiously, sticking to a 15,000-mile oil change schedule. At her pace, that's just three weeks between service visits.

Among Roeber's favorite features are the truck's engine braking capability – she often encounters 6 percent to 7 percent grades that stretch for miles – that's allowed her four-wheel disc brakes to last longer, as well as the comfortable crew cab. With most of her life lived on the road, the rear seat often doubles as a bed.

Dave Cleveland uses his 2002 Sierra 1500 extended cab to travel from his home near Chicago to trade shows as far away as Florida and Colorado. Between those travels and his daily 60-mile commute, he's

accumulated 420,000 miles over the past decade. The truck shares a driveway with his wife's 2010 Sierra.

"This truck runs as good today as the day I bought it," Cleveland said. "The engine and transmission are original. I haven't even replaced the brake rotors or shocks."

"Other than a rear pinion gear replacement and regular oil changes, it's just had one major tune-up at 200,000 miles."

Don Impson, a semi-retired veterinarian in Arkansas, has stretched his miles out longer than the others.

He started accumulating his 520,000 miles – mostly by making farm visits tending to animals in a three-county area around his home – when he bought his GMC pickup new back in 1986.

"Everyone down around us owns trucks, but no one ever talks about this sort of mileage on one engine," Impson said. In addition to the original engine, his manual transmission still has its original clutch.

"I bought a red-and-white two-tone truck off the lot because the colors were done wrong for a local construction company, but it's actually become somewhat of a calling card. Everyone knows my truck."

"In 1995, I bought another GMC ¾-ton pickup truck thinking mine may quit on me," he continued. "Man, how wrong I was."

"The 1995 truck has mostly sat while my '86 continues to get the work done. We're both getting older, but me and the truck may still be hankering to make a cross-country trip and I bet we could make it."

Customers like these help GMC make advancements in durability by providing real-world test results, GM says.

"Customer stories are great to listen to, and they provide useful data for planning new trucks," said Jim Mikulec, lead development engineer for Sierra Heavy Duty pickups.

"We test our vehicles based on where and how our trucks are used to assure consumer demands are met. Vehicle testing takes us high in the moun-

tains, low in the deserts, colder than -50 degrees in Canada and up past 120 degrees in Arizona.

"These stories show that our diligence is paying off."

Mikulec's favorite testing involves driving Sierra 3500HD Duramax diesel trucks up Eisenhower Pass in Colorado with 20,000-pound trailers attached.

"With the inclines and altitude, there's no more demanding place to drive a truck and trailer. It's a task to stay with traffic all the way to the top, and it has been satisfying seeing publications prove that GMC is the leader in that regard."

All of the trucks wear out their set of four tires every 40,000 miles or better, so front-end alignments help the trucks to ride the tires "true."

In an August 2011 Pickup-

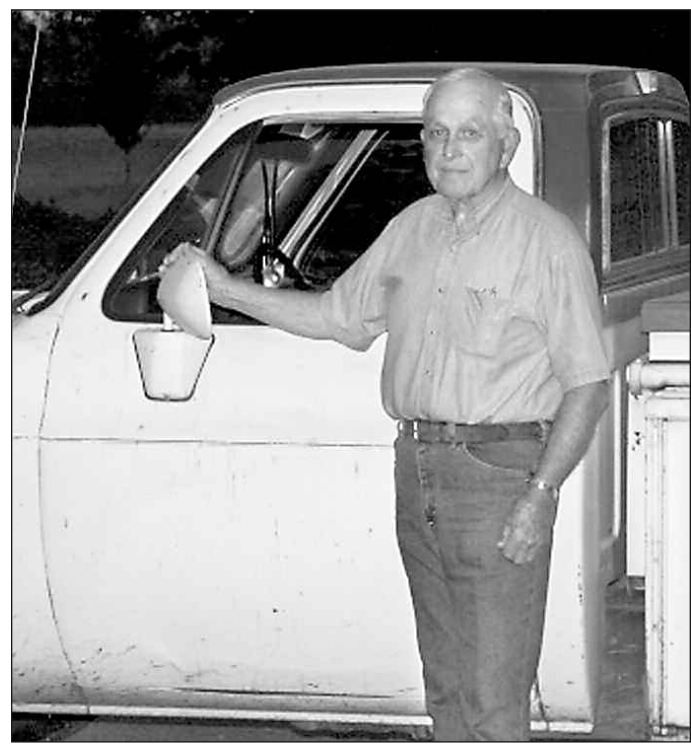
Trucks.com test, a 2012 GMC Sierra 2500HD Diesel ascended Eisenhower Pass, the highest point on the U.S. Interstate System, faster than comparable Ford or Ram trucks.

It also performed better during the descent with its exhaust brake outperforming its competitors.

"Technology also allows us to get data more quickly than we could in the past," added Mikulec. "In today's labs, we can simulate stress tests and various weather changes to help refine frames, suspension components and cooling systems."

Mikulec's top tip for truck drivers looking to go the distance?

"A truck is like a human body. It needs care, and the best way to ensure it lasts longer is regular preventative maintenance."



Owner Don Impson stands with his 1986 GMC pickup truck, which has supported his mobile veterinary practice for 26 years and more than a half-million miles.

Franchitti Gets Kudos, Ribbing from Fellow Drivers

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) – Dario Franchitti's first win at Indianapolis, in 2007, made him more than just Ashley Judd's husband.

His second win, in 2010, was about pure dominance – he led 155 of the 200 laps.

This year's victory was about standing among the all-time greats.

He earned \$2,474,280 from an overall purse of \$13,285,815 for the win.

The four-time series champion from Scotland became just the 10th driver to win IndyCar's signature event at least three times.

Hello Castroneves, the only other current driver with three wins at Indy, already was promoting next year's race.

"Dario, well done, man," Castroneves said during the victory awards celebration at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. "Three times. Now, we're going to be racing, so who gets four? That'll be cool, huh? That'll be really cool."

Now that Franchitti has basically done it all, there's only one thing left.

Dancing. Castroneves won 'Dancing

with the Stars,' so a few of the drivers had a little fun with Franchitti now that he's joined Castroneves as a three-time winner.

"Three times," Alex Tagliani said. "I think the drivers think you need to step it up. We think if you come and try to do it four times, you should try 'Dancing with the Stars.' I think that's the only thing you can try to do to step it up."

Castroneves continued the joke.

"You want to do it? I know the people. I have people," he said as Judd gave the cutoff sign.

Franchitti prefers to let his car do the dancing. He started 16th, took the lead for good in the No. 50 Target Chip Ganassi Racing Honda car from his teammate, Scott Dixon, on lap 199.

He overcame a spirited passing attempt by Takuma Sato in turn 1 on the final lap. Sato spun and hit the SAFER Barrier while Franchitti hung on to win the race under caution.

Sato explained the reasoning behind his aggressive inside move.

"There's only one podium,

which is the winner," Sato said matter-of-factly.

Sato joked that Franchitti wouldn't want to see the No. 15 car next to him in the future.

"I'm small, but I need a little bit more room," Sato said, drawing laughter from Franchitti and a thumbs-up from Judd.

When asked if everything was OK between himself and Franchitti, Sato said, "I think so. I hope," as Franchitti nodded affirmatively.

Justin Wilson recalled getting hopeful for a moment when he saw that Franchitti and Sato nearly connected.

Then again, it was Franchitti.

"Dario's a wily old cat," Wilson said. "He had something up his sleeve."

Dixon, who won the race in 2008, earned \$1,102,280 for finishing second.

It was his seventh consecutive top-six finish at Indianapolis.

Franchitti expects a tougher Dixon the rest of the year.

"I'm a little upset here," Franchitti said to Dixon. "I know you're going to come back stronger."

Franchitti's move to elite status nearly didn't happen. E.J. Viso, who rear-ended him in the pits early in the race, acknowledged that he was a bit too close.

"Well, it didn't cost him much," Viso said. "Happy man, that you won the race. You deserve it."

Unfortunately for Franchitti, he learned the Monday after the race that three-time winning status often comes with jokes about your age.

"Dario, you are a legend," Ryan Briscoe, the polesitter who finished fifth, said. "You were a legend to me when I was racing go-carts."

James Hinchcliffe wouldn't mind if Franchitti opted for early retirement.

"I hope someday, you get sick of all this winning and let the rest of us do it," he joked.

All kidding aside, the theme of the night was the acknowledgement of Franchitti's new place in Indy history.

"You're a legend, in my opinion," fellow driver Ed Carpenter said.

"You're up there with the all-time best, and it's an honor to work with you."

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Jim Pfeifle
jpfeifle@edrinke.com

Ray Stemple
rstemple@edrinke.com

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