

SECOND CHANCES

By Matt Lemus

To understand this story, you need to put yourself at a place and time in your life when events, in or out of your control, take over and push you to the point of wanting to find a release. Any release.

This is not about finding excuses or looking for an inner child. It's about finding out more about yourself than you ever thought was possible.

During the spring and summer of 2003, I was at a point in my life where I was so frustrated that any little issue or problem lit my very short fuse.

FerrariChat was a battle ground and I was a warrior. I was fighting and defending people and issues I really couldn't have cared less about. I was a co-founder of the Ferrari Driving Club, which was in part, a response to my disapproval of the activities of the Ferrari Club of America and Ferrari Owners Club. My career was stagnant and I was facing the possibility of being laid off. I was considering a move to Dallas or the San Francisco Bay area. My Ferrari was even battling me, having forced me to spend a couple of thousand dollars to fix and re-fix issues and I was growing to hate the marque. All of this occurred at the same time.

I hated everyone and everything.

In the spring I became friends with L.Wayne Ausbrooks. We considered each other friends and chatted on the phone and via e-mail. I was fascinated with his knowledge, sense of history and interest in preserving the cars themselves. I was looking for validation from someone that I looked up to but, at this point, there was really no one. I had either been pissed at, or pissed off almost everyone in my life.

While at work one morning, I stumbled across a list of "where are they?" missing Ferraris. One particular car caught my eye and I was fascinated by its history. What prompted me to contact Wayne and tell him that I had found and purchased it is beyond me. I still struggle with this. I hope it was temporary insanity or just a phase that most people outgrow when they're in kindergarten. I just took a little longer.

Wayne pressed for facts about the car so I dug and called to get the information for him. Anything to keep the illusion alive, even if only for a day.

Time pressed on.

Then came the summer.

I had butted heads about control of the club and I decided to leave just before the official launch and the subsequent trip to Las Vegas in July of 2003. That weekend, I met some of the heavy hitters of FerrariChat and they made me feel larger than life. I felt a release that I had not had before. I was looked up to by other people. The feeling is a hard one to shake.

I drove with the group to Las Vegas and I had the time of my life, yet I hated almost every minute it. My car fought me the entire time. I blew a coil on the way there and it was very close to overheating, both water and oil. The trip ultimately ruined the Ferrari, something I'll get into later.

When I returned, I was greeted with a story about the trip and was given a hero's description. I was bigger than I thought I was. I thought, "I'm huge. Who cares if I piss off Wayne?" I was validated by a group of people I couldn't have cared less about.

Then the "The Battle for F-Chat" began.

Wayne fired the first salvo online. He baited and I took the bait. I was hoping that he wouldn't even mention it. I was wrong. Things were taken out of context by some users and I had fake accounts created on other boards by others. At one point, I read that I had never even driven a Ferrari. The wave was relentless.

I thought, even if I came clean, what would be the point? So I did everything I could to cover. I dodged and ducked.

At the same time all of this was happening, I was looking for work in Dallas. My wife and I took a trip to look at houses and interview. I had promised to meet Rob Lay but the wife factor eventually took over. We had looked at houses all day and were tired from jetlag. It was a LONG day. On our way

to meet Rob, she threw a fit and wanted to return to the hotel and have dinner. I complied. Making a bad situation worse, I flaked on Rob.

Back at home, I got a new job with high pay for a big company. Humbled by FerrariChat, I was grounded again. I checked the board from time to time but my interest was little.

Then the Ferrari blew a head gasket. The damage had been done on the trip to Las Vegas. I was done. I never wanted to see or own a Ferrari again so I traded the car in for a Mazda RX-8 and swore I would never look back.

Instead, I focused on work and family. I kept in contact with Art, Bruce, Carbon, Eldon, Jordan and, from time to time, Rob and Sunny and was touched that they stood by me. At times it was hard. At times it was easy. Bruce and Carbon were tough love.

I posted occasionally on FerrariChat, but most of it was bull.

Then 2004 started. It was a new year and a new time, time to make peace and move on. In the spring of 2004, I made my peace with Bruce (that was important) and with Art, Rob, Carbon, Sunny, Eldon and Jordan there was an implied peace. The issue, though, was never mentioned.

That left Wayne.

One day out of the blue, I private messaged him. There were a few exchanges and the peace was made. Wayne, in typical fashion, was a gentleman and accepted an apology without rebuttal. I felt the world lift off my shoulders.

By July of 2004, I had forgotten what it was like to own a Ferrari so I bought another one. I went to Ferrari of Beverly Hills to look at a TR but I wasn't "into it." Then my wife saw another 308, told me to get it, and so I was pulled back into the family.

I started to post again after Rob changed my username. Most knew, but didn't say anything.

Wayne even defended me at one point.

In August of 2004, Sunny took me out to meet Darth550. I was expecting the worst but it never happened. Since that day, Darth and I have become good friends. His family and mine meet on a regular basis. The issue of the car has never been raised. He is a confidant for me.

I was accepted again by the board for no reason. I am meeting new people and I am excited about it. There are FAR too many for me to mention here.

I have found true friends on FerrariChat.

I hope, through time, I can reply to all who have forgiven me.