

I enjoy learning about cars and reading biographies about the people who make them. I decided to write about Ferruccio Lamborghini because, unlike other auto-makers, he was not obsessed with his cars. He was inventive and was determined to improve the things that he worked with. Though he started off life as a poor boy, he became successful by being creative and working hard.

Ferruccio Lamborghini was born on April 28, 1916, in Renazzo, a small town near Bologna, Italy. His parents owned a farm where they grew grapes to make into wine. Since young Ferruccio helped on the farm, he often worked with the farm equipment that his parents owned. That work sparked a flame in Ferruccio that never went out. That flame was the love of working with machinery. Ferruccio was so fascinated with mechanics that he even made a metal casting shop in his parents' barn. However, one experiment backfired and almost burned the barn down! To keep Ferruccio and their farm safe, his parents sent him to a nearby technical school to expand his knowledge of machinery.

As a young man during World War II, he was assigned to a small Air Force base for the Italian Military. Though he was not engaged in fighting, Ferruccio was a mechanic and worked on the trucks and command cars. He became known as a man who could fix things when there were very few supplies.

After the war was over and Ferruccio was on his honeymoon, he and his new wife came across a small fleet of armored cars that were going to be destroyed. Cutting his honeymoon short, Ferruccio took his wife *and* the armored cars home. He began to tinker with the scrap parts and started making tractors out of them. He had a desire to improve the unreliable tractors that his parents and other Italian farmers owned. By the mid-1950s, Ferruccio had established one of the most successful tractor companies in Italy. He was a millionaire.

Renazzo, Ferruccio's hometown, was in the heart of Po Valley, where sports car manufacturing abounded. Ever since Ferruccio had started the tractor business, he had hoped that he could build the ultimate grand touring sports car (*gran turismo*). He owned many fast cars, like Mercedes, Maseratis, and Alfa Romeos. But his favorites were his Ferraris. There was one problem - the Ferrari clutches did not perform well at all. As Ferruccio later said, "When you drove normally, everything was fine. But when you were going hard, the clutch would slip under acceleration; it just wasn't up to the job." Ferruccio often went to the Ferrari plant in Maranello, Italy, to get the clutches fixed. The Ferrari mechanics would take his car away, and when he got it back it was not any better. Finally, he went to the founder, owner, and namesake of Ferrari, Enzo Ferrari himself. Enzo, a 65 year old man with a wild mane of white hair, was known for his hot temper. The meeting did not go well. After Ferruccio complained about his repeated clutch problems, a very angry Enzo shouted back that Ferruccio may know how to drive a tractor, but should learn how to drive a Ferrari before coming to see him. Ferruccio declared that not only would he fix the clutch on his Ferrari, but he would make his own car, which would be better than any Ferrari. Lamborghini stormed out of the office and sped away in his Ferrari, the clutch smoking on the way. When he got home, Ferruccio installed one of his tractor clutches in his Ferrari, and after that it never gave him a single problem.

To start his new auto business, Lamborghini hired Giotto Bizzarini, the engineer of one of the most successful racing Ferraris of all time, the 250 GTO. Bizzarini created a light weight 3.5 liter V-12 engine with 360 horsepower, which beat the Ferrari 250 GTO's 302 horsepower. For the new car's look, Ferruccio chose the famous designer Carrozzeria Bertone. In 1963, Ferruccio Lamborghini rolled out his first car. The Lamborghini 350 GTZ (*Gran Turismo*) had a top speed of 160 mph, making it one of the fastest road cars of its day. Three years later at the Geneva

Auto Show, Lamborghini unveiled the Miura, the first high-performance road car with its engine in the middle of the car. Instead of installing the engine longways, as in most rear-engined race cars, the engineers put the engine in sideways, which allowed more interior space and better handling. The combination of this set-up and a powerful V-12 engine gave the Miura a top speed of 180 mph. That was faster than any road car at that time. The Miura was a big hit with car enthusiasts. An auto executive who saw Ferruccio showing off the Lamborghini Miura told a Ferrari engineer that the Ferrari company should wake up and look at the competition! Later Lamborghini production cars included the Espada, the fastest four-seat car of the time; and the Urraco, which was the first Lamborghini with a V-8 engine.

In 1973 Ferruccio Lamborghini retired from the auto business to his vineyard near Lake Trasimeno, Italy. During his later years, he continued to be hard-working, being involved in several businesses that produced tractors, air conditioning equipment, and hydraulic systems. At age 75, he even designed a golf course to be built on his grape farm! After an interview with Ferruccio in 1991, the reporter said that the elderly Lamborghini was the kindest man he had ever met. Ferruccio Lamborghini died in 1993 at the age of 77.

I believe Ferruccio Lamborghini's story can show us that by using our gifts and talents we can achieve great things. His legacy of working hard to make things better lives on through his cars and through his memory.

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