

1979 GMC Sierra



I don't know much about GMC trucks, but I had one – for the shortest time I have ever had a vehicle. In fact, I had it for such a short time that it doesn't show up on any of my vehicle records.

I picked up the 1979 GMC Sierra pickup in Dallas for \$700. I had just returned from months backpacking across Europe and the plan was to drive it from Dallas out to Cornville, Arizona, to see my at-the-time publisher. After that, a road trip back to Indiana in my trusty truck would top it all off. It needed just a touch of work before I set out, something like fifty bucks, and I was off across the desert. What actually happened then did not resemble my plan. First, on a long straight road somewhere in the Texas wastes, I saw a giant dark cloud form on the horizon to my left. In a moment, it had engulfed a small town and was heading my way. I noticed the cloud was brown and I realized this would be my first dust storm. I was surprised at the force with which it slammed into the truck, knocking the window away from the frame about an inch and letting all the outside in. I was also surprised at how wet the thing was. It was more like a horizontal mud storm than a sand storm. When it was all over, only the right side of my truck was blue and untouched, while the left was brown. It was divided exactly in half like that for the rest of the trip.

The next event was climbing a low mountain and experiencing the sound and sensation of my transmission case cracking in half. Seven hundred dollars later and I was back on the road. I did make it out to Cornville and headed back east after a short time. In the middle of the night, in the desert, the truck just shut off and refused to start again. I did as much as I could out in the middle of nowhere, beside the sign that warned about deadly reptiles and insects, and eventually hiked to a nearby truck stop. My money had nearly run out, and I had either enough to fix the truck or to get home, but not both. I traded all my hand tools for a ride in a Wal-Mart truck full of grapes, in which the driver had built his own mobile music studio. He took me to Albuquerque where I slept on the floor of the airport and grabbed a cheap flight to South Bend, IN, the next morning. I had just enough money in my pocket to

call Corey Espich for a ride and to have a half meatball sub while I waited. After months and months of living in Europe and traveling across the Southwest, I had spent my absolute last dime. As for the GMC, I never knew what happened to it after I left it in the desert. It probably started the next morning on the first crank. (I left the keys in it.) I owned it about two weeks.