

**Wheels:** Theodore writes, “I own a 1998 Mercury Grand Marquis that I purchased new. It has 103,000 miles on it and has always had the very best products used in it. It has been maintained very carefully. My problem, which I have never understood, is transmission fluid. It appears to me that all transmission fluid is grouped into the same category. My Mercury calls for Mercon V, which I understand is a synthetic fluid, but my owner’s manual still says it should be changed at 30,000 miles (increments), which I have always done. At 30,000 miles, it is still bright red and has no burned odor to it. Am I wasting my money changing it so often as most of the miles are highway miles and the car is babied?”

**Halderman:** You are wise to follow the vehicle manufacturer’s recommended automatic transmission fluid (ATF) change intervals. You are correct that the ATF specified is mostly synthetic. I, too, am a little surprised that the owner’s manual specifies that the fluid be changed every 30,000 miles. This interval would be normal if you were using your Mercury to tow a boat or trailer. You state that the vehicle is used for mostly highway driving and this is not considered to be severe use. Are you wasting your money by changing the ATF every 30,000 miles? Absolutely not. Compare the cost of routine service to the cost of a replacement automatic transmission (\$2,000 to \$3,000) and the answer is clear. Keep doing what you have been doing and enjoy your Mercury for many more years.

