

# The Rock Solid News

**LITTLE ROCK FARM** *Trucking*

## Message from Mark

### Special points of interest:

- Ray Pennington's Thoughts
- Security Alert
- Dialing Phone Extensions After Hours
- Understanding Provincial Holidays
- LRFT Smiles
- Melita's Diary Cam
- You Are My Customer
- A Love Story
- Many Notes of Thanks
- Thanks For Attending Our Company Picnic.



For some drivers the idea of slip seating is a dreadful concept. Someone else using their dedicated truck doesn't always go over too well. For other drivers who bounce from truck to truck, they too have the burden of moving their personal stuff around. **So why do we slip**

Diversification...what does it even mean? Marks definition— "don't put all your eggs in one basket"!

Gone are the days when one could say, I'll only do this, or I'll only do that. Sure, we all have preferences, but when your preferred work is not available how flexible are you in continuing to pull whatever will hook behind your truck?

At LITTLE ROCK we have a wide variety of industries we service.

- Automotive
- Reefer Long Haul
- Reefer Local
- Live Haul US
- Live Haul ON & PQ

Many times over we've proven "diversification" benefits everybody who depends on LITTLE ROCK as their source of income.

Here's some history:

- Spring of 2006 our live haul division slowed dramatically! We had automotive and reefer work to keep everyone busy. The poultry came back online in the late summer of 2006 and those who preferred live haul went back to doing live haul.
- In 2007 the US dollar finalized it's fall from grace. Canadian business's who grew US trade on a Canadian dollar that was worth 65 cents US were quite suddenly losing money. Shipments to the US from Canada came to a screeching halt directly affecting our reefer long haul division. Fortunately we had automotive and live haul to fall back on.
- Late 2007 and early 2008 realized a un-

precedented decrease in auto sales for American manufacturers. With a decrease in the amount of work available, carriers resorted to rate cutting in an effort to keep their trucks rolling. Refusing to be part of the madness, we reduced our fleet by 8 trucks and eliminated non-profitable automotive runs and some lanes were simply eliminated by the customer. Thankfully, live haul was busy. Those who were flexible were able to maintain their income.

So what's the moral of the story?

Next time you're rolling down the road and look in the mirror to see a different type of trailer...just be thankful you rolling down the road!

## Slip Seating

### **seat if it's not a popular concept?**

We don't have trucks sitting around collecting dust. Some may feel when they get here that 20 other trucks are sitting doing nothing, fact is, every truck is booked and it's carefully decided on which trucks

are used.

That extra load that can be squeezed out of a truck's down time allows LRFT to generate more money by employing extra people to fill in the gaps. This helps towards the future of our company.

For those dedicated truck assigned drivers, be mindful that someone else may use your truck even if you

are home for a couple days. For those who are slip seating, be mindful of the condition in which you leave the truck.

Please be sure to take your trash or items that will rot if you are parking your truck for a few days here.

Be sure to take your valuables with you.

## Business Hours With

**Ray Pennington**

**OPEN**

Open Most Days about 9 or 10.

Occasionally as Early as 7, but SOME DAYS as Late As 12 or 1.

WE CLOSE about 5:30 or 6 Occasionally about 4 or 5, but SOMETIMES as late as 11 or 12.

SOME DAYS OR Afternoons, We aren't here at all, and lately I've been here just about all the time, except when I am someplace else, But I should be here then, TOO.



## Security Alert

There has been several complaints regarding missing items from trucks where someone else has slid into the driver's seat for a few days.

Please ensure you take with you your valuables such as cell phones, credit cards,

## Understanding Provincial Holidays

Little Rock is under the federal labor laws and considered a 24-7 business. Under the law, Family Day in February and Civic Holiday Monday in August are considered holidays but do not fall under the statutory holidays. To us, it's not a day off nor is it a statutory holiday. Other businesses have the option of taking this holiday as a day off without pay, but that is to their discretion.

Due to us being a 24-7 business, it's not uncommon for us to have drivers on the road even on statutory holidays. Working on statutory holidays under our classification doesn't entitle any of us to be paid time and a half or double time if we are required to work. Under the law, workers who qualify are entitled to a maximum of 8 hours of regular pay. Drivers get paid for their trips and 8 hours are added onto their final pay to cover the holiday.

This year is kind of messed up due to Canada Day and other holidays not matching up properly in the week. Some customers took the Monday off while other custom-



ers took the Tuesday off. We had drivers working on both days to cover our customer's demands.

We have had our Calendar on the glass cabinet since February requesting holiday information from drivers. Take an opportunity to plan ahead.

### The August Civic Holiday

In parts of Canada, the term "Civic Holiday" is a generic name referring to a the annual holiday on the first Monday of August. However, this definition is far from uniform nationwide as two provinces and one territory do not recognize it at all, and five other provinces do not oblige employers to offer holiday pay on this day, thus making it a civic holiday in the legal sense.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holidays\\_in\\_Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holidays_in_Canada)

**Our Next Statutory Holiday is Labour Day.**

## WHAT DID YOU SAY? I CAN'T HEAR YOU!

The most common complaint on the weekends when the phones are answered outside of Little Rock is the volume of the phone. **Why is it so low?**

Your calls come into Little Rock. If we are here, we answer it. If not, the phone is rerouted to a dedicated cell phone. It's the



rerouting that is causing the cell phones to sound quiet.

The call comes in, finds another phone line, calls out, and then connects to the cell phone. The cell phone is being re-routed through 3 separate phone lines.

The clarity is weakened with each line used.

**So why not give drivers the direct cell numbers?** Drivers need to know and count on one phone number for instant help.

LRF's computerized phone system allows us to reroute calls to any location. However, having a cell phone gives the on call personnel the flexibility of leaving their houses and still be reachable.

## EXTENSION 139—After Hours Help

Between 5pm and 7 am on weekdays and after 5pm on Fridays to Monday morning, drivers that require dispatching help need to dial EXT 139.

Dialing an extension such as your regular



dispatcher will only route the call to their personal desk which doesn't transfer to the af-

ter hours cell phones.

After Hours Maintenance help on the after hours phone is EXT 9.

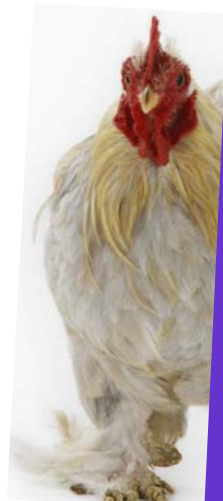


## Letter of Thanks To Poultry

We would like to extend a thank you for your patience and understanding for the continuous loading complications in the United States. As all of our drivers are aware, the chicken schedule is created on Fridays. Lately, with the complications of the loading, some of the drivers have had over 24 hour delays.

By Sunday evening we have alarm bells going off that the rest of the week will need to be reviewed. In most cases, a complete overhaul of the schedule and redirection of the crew. Decisions like redirecting come from the customer. Time quickly passes as decisions need to be formulated in order to make the rest of the week successful.

Don Church says it best, *"These complications are stressful for our drivers to scrap their entire week and start fresh while already in transit to a cancelled location."* We are working hard at settling these issues down.





# Melita's Diary Cam



## Your Truck Is Your Home Away From Home

Slip seating for a driver who jumps from truck to truck is very much like a lottery. Some days you know you have reached a goldmine with a beautiful clean truck and other times you know you have hit rock bottom.

Truth was, I wasn't working enough hours to allow LRFT to give me a dedicated truck. I wanted only a part time schedule. As a result, dispatchers would just give me a truck that would be sitting for the time frame that I was needed.

As a slip seating guy, I have seen my fair share of nasty truck interiors.

As a non smoker, smoke is usually my biggest irritant in the truck, but I won't go on preaching about that. Smoking and trucking seems to go hand in hand.

One day, I received my dispatch and went out into the truck. Immediately when I opened the door, the waft of cigarette smoke clouded over me. "Great, another super week!" I said to myself. I jumped in only to realize that one of the arm rest was broken off. I looked at the



gages and thought my glasses were a mess. A thick layer of dust was all over the panel.

The flies were circling me and I started to load up my truck with my cooler, luggage, and tools. Whomever had this truck had a cooler, but it seems one of the cans of Coke inside the cooler had burst. Syrup and sticky residue was leaking out onto the carpet.

I had to step back into the bunk but had to kick empty bottles out of my way to step safely. By this point I am so disgusted that I literally want to quit and go home.

I had no time to waste and just threw my stuff on top of the bed that appeared to have a loaf of bread rung out on the top of it. I wished I had brought a vacuum.

What I thought was a black steering wheel ended up being a oil and diesel slicked layer that ended up on my hands and arms. My white shirt was no

more.

At the customer's doorstep I couldn't handle it anymore and decided this truck needed its trash removed. I found 12 bottles. 1 dried up unwrapped hamburger under the seat. 2 dried out muffins. 1 rock hard donut. A dispenser's worth of used tissues. 5 fast food joint drink cups. Countless empty cigarettes packages. Loose old French fries and pop cans. Cigarette butts on the floor. In the end I took out 4 shopping bags worth of trash out. I wished I had a can of Raid.

Finally, on the road again and my eyes started to turn red. As much as I could remove the trash, the stale cigarette aroma was hard to handle and the flies were circling my face. Flies know better and avoid open windows to be sucked out.

I couldn't believe anyone would leave their dedicated truck in such a state. Who cares about slip seaters, what about taking pride in their own truck? Just something to think about.

# Drivers Are Also My Customer

Article Idea Inspired By A Conversation with Ian Thomson (Long Haul Driver)

Like all drivers, Ian thanked me for looking after his ACE progression and made sure his trip was all set to go before departure over the weekend. The main dispatchers give me a detailed breakdown of the progress for each of their drivers and departures that will occur over my watch. Most of the work is completed but some need to be monitored for border crossing. Ian's trip was on my radar for watching the ACE pass through properly.

Ian says "that's great customer service" after realizing his trip including border clearance was completed but then reminded himself that this isn't a fast food joint and he's not the customer. **TRUTH IS.. HE IS MY CUSTOMER.**

In business motivational training, we are taught that our idea of who is the customer really can be distorted. If we all treated each other like we all are the customer, business relations would improve and productivity would increase.

So how can a co-worker be a customer? Simply, by doing my job to the best of my ability and going above and beyond to exceed expectations, I can directly impact how my co-worker performs their duties.

For example, say I don't get Ian's trip all set up, make him pick up his cell phone to cross the border only to find out that he is unable to cross because paperwork is missing. The start of his trip would be miserable and cause him to scramble to get all his stuff sorted out.

A little extra effort on my part gives him a kick start and peace of mind when he begins his run. It's a small thing for me, but an essential part of his routine.

Internally, there are many things that each of us does that impact the other. Though we are all assigned duties, we can make another person's job easier by finding loop holes to speed and streamline the tasks.

In 2008, the days of "It's Not My Job" attitudes are over. It's about staying employed and marketable to the employer. How quickly people can be replaced. As a person who has been downsized out of a couple companies, it's always those people who push that little bit extra that always seem to win in the end.

Honestly speaking, I've been in the driver's

seat. I know the stress of being unsure whether or not customs is ready for me. I know the stress of scheduling. I get the fact that drivers are tired and push themselves. If there is something I can do to make it a bit easier, then I will try to step up to the challenge of it.

A driver's customer could be the next driver who uses a piece of equipment where there was a known fault and took time to report it.

I sometimes get emails from customers about issues that have nothing to do with my job. My answer back, **"ABSOLUTELY, I will get a resolution for you!"**. Behind the scenes I contact the right person to work on the solution and ensure I follow up to make sure it's done.

Some of our actions go unnoticed and then we start to doubt why we stepped up to exceed expectations with no verbal reward of **"Thank You"**. Truth is, as human beings, we don't take the time to thank each other enough for their efforts.

Selfishly, by helping you, I make my job easier because usually the favour is returned in one way or another. That's the kick back of great customer service. In this day and age, it's great customer service that will win over customers... including co-worker relations at the end of the day.



## A "LITTLE PICNIC" LOVE STORY

The children of today are so busy watching adults interact with each other. It's amazing to see their interpretations of adult relationships.

At the Company Picnic we watched a little love story take place between Bill Calder's Son, Brady and Roger Dunning's Girl, Angel. Both of these children under the age of five.

During the family photography shots with Roger's family, we couldn't get Angel to smile.

On the third and final shot, Angel suddenly lit up like a Christmas Tree. I realized instantly

she wasn't looking at the camera and looked to my left to see Brady had walked up behind me. Angel turned on her charm. I suggested a photograph to capture the moment. Angel was so happy and Brady was just as delighted.

One after another she requested photographs, with each photograph changing her pose but still smiling just as much.

Angel and Brady became friends and you would see them play throughout the evening.

At one point, late into the evening, Brady had lost

Angel and looked distressed. Someone asked Brady if he was okay. He held up his hand, **"Don't talk to me, I'm looking for Angel!"**

Definitely a priceless moment at the Little Rock Picnic and one of the most talked about events of evening.

Better keep these pictures parents, they are great wedding blackmail photos for when they get older.





## Thanks To Local Delivery Drivers

Thank you so much for turning in your paperwork in a timely and accurate fashion.

We managed to go 4 weeks with all local load drivers submitting in paperwork in their envelopes. We

didn't have to chase customers for invoices and everything was mailed out on time.

As result of your efforts, we were able to receive payment from customers weeks faster than before.

Thanks for paying attention and doing your part to ensure our level of service is carried right through the entire company.

**Keep up the great work!**

Michael

### Steve Says "AWESOME JOB!"

Steve managed to negotiate a regular customer that ships Ice Cream. Many of our local and long haul drivers have been involved.

Steve says he received an email from the customer thanking LRFT for the level of service in two specific areas.

We were thanked for sending courte-

ous drivers to the pick up and drop off locations. We were also thanked for maintaining the time scheduling of what they had already in place.

*Thank you to everyone who has been involved with this customer. We can only promote how great our crew is... and you have proven us right!*



### Fill'er Up—IN THE USA PLEASE

What a terrific response from our drivers regarding paying attention to where they fill up.

These results are based on payroll entry and watching where drivers are filling up. Thank you for your attention and changing

your fuel patterns to match the changing economic conditions.

There are just a few drivers who haven't changed their fueling patterns or might not think it's important. Truth is, every decision in this business has to

be a careful one. That goes from our decisions here in the office to driver's decisions on the road.

We thank you for your continued support on this issue.

### Thanks For Attending Our Picnic

Thanks From Mark & Liz, John and Barb, and our families

Just a quick note to say a huge Thank-You to all who came to our picnic last month.

We so enjoyed our day with you all and hope you did too. It is great for us to have an opportunity to meet and spend fun time with our Employees and their Families.

We had a record breaking year this time with over 100 in attendance! Some of the last ones to leave had yet almost a 3 hour drive ahead of them... *what troopers!* The little ones had a hard time pulling away from toasting their toes by the fire and we were delighted with some very interesting stories about "anacondas" until almost midnight!

Make sure you check out the picture poster Melita made with Michael's help with photography. Thanx to both of you, by the way, for doing such a great job of this for us all, capturing our memories!

We really did appreciate those who came and missed those of you who couldn't make it. We will soon be starting plans for our Couple's Christmas Celebration! (Sorry...no more snow talk right now!!)

**Everyone take care and we'll be in touch. Enjoy the rest of your summer. Be safe and have fun!**