

# The Rock Solid News

LITTLE ROCK FARM *Trucking*

## Marks Message - Skill vs Frustration

Transportation definitely becomes more challenging during cold wintery months. Successful drivers plan ahead allowing more time for pre-trip inspections and planned travel times.

Here is a tip that might help you get out of the yard rather than "spinning your wheels" and getting frustrated.

A very common call we get, is from drivers stating they are stuck after hooking to a trailer and preparing to leave. Often, we go to the truck and move it without the help of salt, sand or tow. How?

First, realize why you're stuck. Often the reason your stuck is because when the equipment was parked with warm tires, underlying

snow or ice was melted. The tires are now sitting in a pocket. Be aware of that, that's what you are most likely trying to overcome. A way around this is, when parking, leave the truck sit for a bit while doing your paperwork before putting it in the final park position. This allows the tires to cool down eliminating the melting effect at its final parking spot.

**Rule #1** DON'T spin tires when hooking up to trailer if at all possible, you just make it icy.

**Rule #2** Give trailer brakes time to release...pulling spike a few times with full air pressure may help.

**Rule #3** Don't spin your tires...you just make ice.

**Rule #4** Don't use any fuel, leave your foot OFF the throttle.

**Rule #5** Try backing up a bit before you attempt moving forward.

**Rule #6** Use a higher gear (4th or 5th) without touching throttle, this results in less torque to the wheels minimizing the chances of them spinning. You may have to slip the clutch to eliminate any spinning.

Nobody enjoys being aggravated wasting time and energy just trying to get out of the yard! *Using skills to outwit the circumstance is much more productive than just spinning your wheels & getting mad!*

### Random Thoughts with Ray Pennington

The purpose of an open mind, as with an open mouth, is to close on something nourishing... Worry is the usury you pay if you borrow trouble... Nobody loves the messenger who brings bad news... Don't wish you could live your life over again you can't afford it... Parents often think their children would behave better if they didn't have to play with those brats next door... It's fine to be without vice, but not to be without temptation... Some people act as though they'd begotten their own ancestors... How foolish to live miserly in order to die wealthy.

Thanks, Ray, For Sharing!

## A Merry Christmas



*Have yourself a merry little Christmas,  
Let your heart be light  
From now on, our troubles will be out of sight*

*Have yourself a merry little Christmas,  
Make the Yule-tide gay,  
From now on, our troubles will be miles away.*

*Here we are as in olden days,  
Happy golden days of yore.  
Faithful friends who are dear to us  
Gather near to us once more.*

*Through the years  
We all will be together,  
If the Fates allow  
Hang a shining star upon the highest bough.  
And have yourself A merry little Christmas  
now.*

*Merry Christmas  
Everybody!*



## Helping Dispatchers To Help You Faster

Okay I get it... dealing with customs is a hard issue. Rules are constantly changing and officers breathing down our necks over small issues.

I also get the brokers don't pay their staff well enough to keep employees satisfied. They are subject to constant harassment from drivers who don't understand the rules and don't have the patience for the political game of border crossing to take place.

I've been there at the customs while they put a flea bagged dog in my truck to sniff my laundry, walk on my bed, and leave dog hair on my seats. I'm not impressed.

Unfortunately, we can't control how customs does their job nor can we control the speed of which shipments are processed. We can do something though, we can help each other through the process to make is a smooth ride for everyone involved.

We are a team of people with the objective to stay employed and to ship customer's products in a reasonable time frame. The internet has changed the face of dispatching by providing instant information for us to be successful.

We cannot control how a customer does their customs paperwork, nor can we control how fast it gets done. We rely on our team (which includes you) to get the job done as smoothly as possible.

Rule of thumb, get your customs to the broker as fast as possible. If there is a problem, we can address it. Faxing it to the broker from Michigan when the driver has picked up in Oregon is silly. All that time wasted and usually our driver will pay the price of sitting and waiting for the process to go. If there is a problem discovered we have the time to get

the customer involved to fix it. Once the after hours of dispatch comes into play, customers are gone home and people are harder to reach.

Here's a perfect real life example. A driver is having an issue with the broker. The driver is upset that their time is being wasted. They are upset with the speed of which the problem is being identified.

They have spoken to the broker but feel they are not being dealt with. The driver wants to be set free so badly that their anger and frustrations are spilling out in words. The driver makes the call to "The Rock" to have one of us take care of the numerous phone calls and get

them on their way.

The phone call comes in asking for help and we hear the driver's story. The driver has taken the time already to speak with customs and the broker. The driver is in a rush, quick with their words and wants immediate action.

**For us to problem solve is not a big deal but where the problem remains is that the driver has taken the time to problem solve this but they haven't taken the time to learn who they spoke to at the broker or customs.**

So what's the big deal? The driver wants immediate action but as most of us know, most of the brokers are call centers. We get an operator that isn't associated with the issue. We provide pars or paps for them but get put on hold more times then we can count. They have no idea who is dealing with the issue.

We get frustrated, the driver is super frustrated because they are stuck and we are at a loss tempo-

rarily in trying to fix the driver's issue. We cause more delays for the driver by not getting a hold of the right person.

We want to assist our drivers. In fact, it was Steve M's idea to have all customs information faxed directly to our office as a back up to ensure smooth border transactions.

We are watching for Pars and Paps clearance. In fact, thanks to Mark, Fleet shows us when Aces are clear to cross without having to pick up a phone.

We want to help you, your success means you are clear faster to come on home or get on with your next schedule. We don't want you waiting at the border.

When calling in, have some information ready for us to be able to take over the communications that you are struggling with. We can look up some things but the driver is the expert of that load and is front line. To speed you up, we would ask questions like:

1. **Who is your broker?**
2. **Who did you speak with at the broker?**
3. **What number did you call to speak to that person?**
4. **What is your Pars or Paps Number to track your shipment through the internet.**
5. **Did you verify your fax to be received by the broker?**
6. **What have you done already?**
7. **Have you been given any promises or know if they are working on it?**
8. **Will this delay be causing further delays in your schedule?**

Your dispatcher may not be available when you call in (after hours or they are simply on the phone). The more information you can feed us, the quicker we are able to help you. The answers may not always be pretty, but we really do want to get your on your way... you are the key to that... Help Us Help You.



## Roger Dunning — Driver Profile

### Surprise Roger

Roger doesn't know that Jeremiah, his son, contacted Mark in September to post this picture for Roger's Birthday in December. **Happy Birthday Roger.**

After several failed attempts to contact his mother in Kentucky to get the dirt on Roger, Michael had to tell Roger he had been selected for a driver profile in order to get this picture and some background information to make this a successful article for his family. Roger and I conducted a telephone interview.

### Driver Profile

Roger is one of those characters that is hard to forget. He is tall, deep voice southern voice and always has a story to share.

Roger is from the United States and met his lovely wife, Kathy, who is Canadian in 1997. A marriage

## Recycle

For the chicken haulers who have a great deal of paperwork, we have a system in place that Michael pre stuffs envelopes for the entire chicken haul. There is a combination of 4-5 forms. To make Dave's job simpler, they are stuffed ahead of time so that Dave needs to throw your Ace, Itinerary, and CCI into the envelope.

Occasionally the wrong envelope is given where the driver doesn't need some documents, or there are extra. If you get something in error, just hand it back in with your envelope. During the envelope stripping process, it's removed and recycled into another blank envelope. It saves money and eco friendly!



formed and Roger moved to Canada.



Roger has been driving trucks for a long time. He was raised on a farm where he was expected to drive an old Model Mack Hopper. Roger was the first in his family to start a trucking career.

So what keeps this guy going on the road... his family! **He is a family man with strong loyalty to ensure his family is taken**

**care of.**

Roger is now driving with our Live Haul Team but was doing general freight for Little Rock too. When asked about his best experience, reminisced about hauling the potted flowers to Texas. Some of us remember those days of 30+ stops. He loved the money from this run.

Roger has been around long enough to see definite changes in the trucking field. He shares his opinions with passion and you really get a sense to what he is talking about.

Trucking for Roger is no longer just a driver in the seat hauling product from one point to another. **He states that a driver must have many hats:**

- **A Truck Operator**
- **Lawyer**
- **Book Keeper**
- **Secretary**

He feels the law is always right even when they are clearly wrong. He believes that the



government knows drivers take home a decent paycheck and see opportunities for cash windfalls in drivers by being fined for unimportant details.

Roger noted that he appreciates how some of the changes in the trucking field best reflect his personal safety, his family's safety, and his comfort level on the road.

**He appreciates scale houses and officers that pull trucks off the road that are clearly in violation of safety issues.** He doesn't want trucks on the roads that may harm himself on the road. He likes the strictness of it because it makes companies and individuals more responsible and not wanting to take chances of equipment that will cause accidents.

He remembers that there was a time where truckers were instructed to take back routes in order to sneak through the highways of the countries. The fines are hefty enough to have stopped that. There was a time where he will have blown a tire and told by his dispatcher to not worry about it, even with weights exceeding maximum.

Roger left Little Rock but came back, what was his motivation to coming back to us? **It's the team spirit of the Live Haul Drivers.** What's the mean exactly?

He appreciates how the Live Haul meet up in teams at the farm locations. They help each undo chains, tarps and direct the catching crews to be in sync with our drivers. He knows that if he is experiencing difficulties at the farm, he has back up with another Little

Rock Live Haul driver to step up and assist.

Driving isn't the same as it used to be. He says now if he is stranded on the side of the road he prays for help to come. Back in the day, if a trucker even pulled over for a break, other drivers would stop to make sure he was okay. Times sure have changed!

**Please wish Roger a Happy Birthday when you see him!**

## Daily Log Sheet Submissions

What happens to your logs? Mike McCann (Evening Admin and After Hours Dispatcher) patiently enters all your logs into our JJ Keller Log Checker Program. It's that program that determines log falsifications. Mike has been doing this for years and I am sure has become the expert of pinpointing errors at just a glance.

The payroll entry personnel which includes Pat, Michael and Mike M enter your trip into the system. Envelopes are stripped and audited. Miles are tracked, receipts reconciled, expenses are recorded, and driver payment is done.



They also pull out the driver's log sheets.

Please do not keep more than one month's logs at one time. The quicker you submit them, the better we are.

Logs are sometimes used to settle trip mileage disputes because some drivers hand writing is hard to read.

For the local and chicken haulers. We ask that you submit your logs in one of your trip envelopes at the end of the week instead of separating out your logs by individual day. It makes it quicker to sort through and keep organized once it does the office paperwork shuffle. **Thanks very much.**

## Little Rock Technology & You

Mark has taken the time to ensure we are computer smart. Our dispatching program is highly complex and yet can perform amazing things to simplify our jobs.

Some of our drivers receive their itineraries through PDF format to their personal email addresses. Our photocopier is also a fax machine and scanner. Documents can be scanned and sent electronically.

Some drivers do not report into Walkerton or Milton first, they go to their waiting truck. Other drivers like to



know where they are heading to next so they can map out their directions and figure out their timing.

Drivers, like Tom Moon, have their Itinerary and Ace emailed to their house. Tom simply opens the email and the Ace and Itinerary just pop up and can be printed just like the copy you were to get from Little Rock. He goes to the farm where another driver will have his trip envelope waiting for him.

We just simply save your email address into our email list, scan your itinerary and send it through cyber space. You might find this convenient. Ask if you are interested.



## Have Your Say Right Here And Give It Back To Me

Okay here is your chance to be famous for what you would like to see changed in the trucking industry.

We are the expert in seeing what is wrong and think how things can be done to be better. Maybe technology changes, border changes, customer arrangements, pars, paps, or scale houses. You can write your comment to the right and give it back to Michael. Answers should be back by December 24th, 2008 in order to be in the January 2009 Issue. **Your answers will cause a debate, debates usually cause changes to occur and you realize you are not alone!**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Submitted By: \_\_\_\_\_

## Our First Year Anniversary Of This Newsletter!

It's hard to believe for me that a year of News Letters have been completed. I figured by now I would run out of topics to talk about.

Truth is, I had an opportunity to write for a national trucking magazine but would be required to move to Toronto. I completed a couple of paid for assignments that appeared in the Highway Star Magazine. I am passionate about what I write and the ideas I talk about. I didn't want to leave Hanover and I love this job. Why move to the big smoke and give

up a job that I enjoy?

The newsletter is and was never a part of my job description. It was just an idea. I find that I fulfill my personal need to want to write and talk about the hot topics bouncing around The Rock!

Certain ideas are given to me through Mark and



my fellow co-workers, which include our drivers too!

In the beginning I was wanting the dispatchers to write up their own sections but they have enough on their plate. I realized I can listen to conversations and see what are the hot topics or something that really must change.

Almost all my blogs and personal stories are a direct result of listening to what is happening around me. What topics are upsetting people and what are the good points. Steve M shared

with me last month that the best times we ever have in dispatch central (Walkerton) is when we all have a round room discussion about the hot issues. Invisible walls are taken down with everyone having a say about a topic. Each of us have input even if some of us are skeptical in nature about the idea.

This is our newsletter, I encourage anyone wanting to write something or share ideas to email me or talk with me. What's on your mind?

## Pizza Pizzaz Fridays!

In November the office started Pizza Pizzaz Fridays. We have a coupon through a community sponsored program to buy two pizzas and receive a third pizza for free.

Michael has talked with New Orleans Pizza

in Walkerton. They want our order at 10:30am on Friday mornings.

Michael will contact Don on Thursdays to get the final group total. It's an optional event, if you don't feel like pizza, you don't have to participate.

Michael will order the size of Pizza that reflects the numbers. A person can expect 3-4 slices for \$3.00.

This is not paid for by Little Rock. Just us pooling our money together for a Friday Treat!



## Another Mike In Da House!

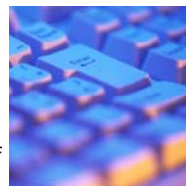
At the end of October Katherine's position from 11 pm-7 am was taken over by Mike Showers.

Yes, all three of our after hours dispatchers are named Mike or Michael. Confusing isn't it!

Little Rock needed someone to look after the drivers at night time

but also have an assortment of skills in the Information Technology (IT) Department.

Little Rock is highly sophisticated with computer technology. We rely on it for everything. Even our dispatching program is tied into our messaging and other programs are tied in



with each other. All this tying causes it to get complicated to set up and/or problem solve when things go wrong.

We needed an after hours IT Person because no one is here while he can problem solve. Turn off systems if needed and not affect other people who are using the

systems at the same time.

Mike used to be part of the trucking industry before taking the IT Technology at school. He understands drivers and the need for assisting drivers as best as he can. He will be settling into this position. Be sure to welcome him.

## The Economy Has The Long Haul Blues

The uncertainty of the long haul trucking business is really throwing many drivers for a loop. **How can trade slow down that much? Who is replacing us on the road? What is really happening here?** Many drivers have personalized this issue but we are all at the mercy of the national economy and trading levels.

There are always product to ship, the bottom line is the customer's willingness to pay the price to do so. We could accept a shipment from this region out west, but the key point of long haul is this... **"Always deliver a truck in the same region in where there will be a reload (aka back haul)!"**

The Canadian Dollar's strength is now weakening and it will shift the balance of the trade. One steady customer for LRFT ships products to the States where it's merely pennies in profit per box for them. Canadian companies rely on the high dollar value of the US Currency in order to compensate the end manufacturing and shipping costs. With the U.S. Dollar not being worth as much, Canadian Companies needed to up their prices because they had been relying on the high US dollar. American companies were having cash conversions in the opposite direction causing our items to be more expensive to purchase. Companies cut back ordering Canadian product, fewer trucks are needed, and the opportunity for back haul is lowered.

In trucking, the back haul back to our region is cheaper. However, if you can't get a truck to be shipped to a region because of low demand, there is low opportunities for the back haul. Companies in Canada rely on the Canadian Haulers to bring back goods from places like Laredo. However, it is more expensive if they hire companies that are out of Laredo to ship it because it is not their back haul. Even if a Laredo Company is hired to ship the products north to Canada, **GOOD LUCK GETTING A LOAD BACK TO LAREDO!** The demand is there to back haul from areas like Laredo; however, there just is no demand to get to the back haul locations. It's a partnership situation that is clearly one sided due to rising fuel costs and Canadian Dollar strength.

It's hard to be a long haul trucker at this time. There is a lot of unpredictability. It's a sense of living pay check to pay check. Timing is everything, a load can pop up on a sudden notice but our drivers may not be ready to leave, or they are already on a trip, or just at the wrong place at the wrong time. At Little Rock we feel the pinch, the trucks in the back lot need to be paid each month regardless if they have moved or not.

**One can only imagine when the trade will return back to normal levels. Will it be a sudden change or will it need to build slowly as confidence levels return?**



The border is having issues for Canadian Trade too. With the strengthening of the US Border, time delays to get a load cleared across a board can be extreme.

Little Rock tries to balance out the loads fairly. Some drivers have more bills to pay and can't afford the time off in between runs while others are content with up to a week or more of a break in between runs. **Everyone is different.** The problem that occurs that the content people who don't mind not working every week must return back behind a wheel which, at times, causes a driver that needs steady work to be idle. There is going to be frustration.

I drove for the Long Haul area of Little Rock. I experienced long breaks in between runs. I had a set schedule for a two week period of solid driving to a two week period of no driving. It worked for a number of years, up until the shift of the economy.

The runs were slowly getting harder and unpredictable. I started to predict two years ago that a recession was coming. We, the truckers, see it first and hear it through the mouths of the shippers. This one place made bagels for a grocery store chain, The shipper claimed he was down one truck per week. Just one shipper being down is a big deal, it means many others could be down one truck per week. The multiplication of this is a huge deal.

It was soon after this realization that my two week period break would sometimes turn into a three week break and I would be asked not to take a two week break because a load would suddenly pop up during my scheduled time off. It got to the point where I didn't know if I would be expecting a pay check or even a call for work.

I've come to the conclusion that we cycle through life on the highs and lows. The gasoline is currently 77.5 cents in Hanover. I never expected it be under 1 dollar ever again. I feel like it's a dream.

Everyone is affected. Retailers are already crying the holiday blues with sales that are projected to be extremely low in comparison. With essential items that we have grown to expect to use, but also pay the price of it... something has to be sacrificed for the sake of survival.

**Will this state of the economy be a life lesson for us all to focus on what we really need instead of our endless list of wants? DOUBT IT... it's just a cycle of life and we will figure our way around it.**