

# *I am just a lady driver.*

*Written by Sandy Long*

My love of trucks appeared as a little girl when, living along a highway in Michigan, I would sit on the front steps of the small white house and pump my arm at passing drivers to hear them blow their air horns and give me a smile and a wave. This love of trucks is still there over 50 years later, though now I have my own air horn to toot at children who pump their arms and I get to smile and wave at them.

Being a trucker never occurred to me as a teenager growing up. Girls just didn't think of trucking when considering a possible career in the late '60's and early '70's, I really wanted to be a commercial artist. That was not meant to be though and instead I ran away from home shortly after high school graduation to travel the country with carnivals.

I got my start as a driver there because I could make a little extra money on a 'jump' weekend by driving a ride or concession wagon or two from one show spot to another. I had lived on a farm so could drive tractors, and of course I lied when I was asked if I could drive truck by a show owner needing a driver. I literally learned how to drive truck by the seat of my pants and a little advice from a friend. Still I never thought of being a trucker as a career.

Leaving show business after seven years of being 'with it' was a hard choice, but I had gotten tired of the constant moving and working outside all of the time. My mother had moved to Missouri so I returned there and got a regular job. For two years I tended bar but got tired of that too. At the time I was dating a trucker and he suggested I use my experience on the carnivals to get a job driving truck. The adventure began!

In 1982 it wasn't so easy to get a job as a lady driver though some companies were hiring women. Discrimination was rampant and the equipment was not as female friendly as it is now, but definitely better than the

carnival trucks. I had to go to a school before anyone would hire me, I did so and went to work for a trucking company out of Arkansas where I drove team for two years then went into the office to handle their personnel department and lease purchase program among other duties.

I remained there for two years. It was a definite crash course about the trucking industry. Returning to driving in '86, I had some really bad experiences and went home for ten years. During that time I took a two year course in business accounting and office procedures, learned about computers and started writing poetry some of which was published. I returned to driving in '97.

In the last ten years since I returned to my addiction to diesel fumes, I have ridden the highs and lows of the profession and life. For six years I pulled flatbeds both solo and team and loved them, but had to give them up after being in a major wreck when my now ex-husband laid the truck over with me asleep in the sleeper. Now I pull dry van solo once again.

Writing became a major part in my life when I was offered a freelance writing job by Layover.com in '05 and I have expanded my writing articles to include short stories which I hope to have published someday. Those two activities take up a lot of my time but I also do crafts, cook, read voraciously and work with various groups and associations that I am affiliated with such as my yahoo group that I own, trailertruckintech, OOIDA where I am a lifetime member, and now the Women In Trucking Association.

My love affair with trucks is still vibrant and alive. Though like any love affair sometimes there are some rocky places, I still get a thrill when I get back in the truck after home time and smile when I put it in gear. Trucking has been good to me, it hasn't always been easy, but even with all of my accomplishments, mistakes and hard lessons learned, I am just a lady driver.