

I had never driven a stick shift

Ronda Tackett joined Women In Trucking in May. She is from Johnston City, IL. Here is her story ... written by Sue Dickens.



Ronda Tackett

Three years ago Ronda Tackett joined the growing number of women who are proud to say they are working as a professional driver in the trucking industry.

"I decided to get into trucking after I met my husband Keith, a driver for over 17 years." It wasn't long before Keith and Ronda decided she should enroll in a truck driving school – but there was a bit of a snag, something she hadn't thought about until her lessons started.

"I was in a class with six other men – and I had never driven a stick shift in a car, let alone a truck," she says laughing. "These guys all knew how to drive – so I baled."

It was then that Keith came to the rescue and "took me out for a month in his truck and trained me."

In fact Keith had worked as a trainer while at Schneider. He was a company driver for seven years then a trainer for a couple of years.

"I've learned a lot of stuff that other drivers just don't know," says Ronda with pride.

After Ronda got her truck driving licence, the couple drove for Tango transport for a while. They continue to drive as a team and are now leased as owner/operators to UPS Freight.

Ronda and Keith drive an apple red 1996 W900 Kenworth. "We have an older truck that has been rebuilt and it does the job," she says.

Trucking is a way of life for this couple that spends two to three weeks at a time on the road. They enjoy each other's company and the company of other truckers they meet on the road. "I like driving ... especially the Interstate," says Ronda.

"In the last couple of months I have been able to drive at night ... I've gotten the courage to do it," she comments. Like many women being a truck driver has its own special challenges but it also has its own rewards.

For Ronda, her religion is a big part of her life too. But being able to stop at a chapel on the road is not always possible. "I wish they had more chapels open all day long with somebody there," she commented.

When Ronda and Keith are not on the road, which is not that often, they relax and enjoy their satellite TV and their computer. "When we are on the road we like to listen to the Truckin' Bozo on XM satellite radio and when we are home we like to go to his interactive website," says Ronda. "We often fight over who can get on the computer first," she adds with a laugh.

Like all truckers Keith and Ronda each have their own dreams. Ronda would like to get a new truck. "We want to get a 120" sleeper on that truck," she says adamantly.

Keith would like to own 10 trucks and be his own boss. Their plan is to one day sell their house and live their life on the road in a big rig.

That's nothing new for Ronda's seven-year-old cocker spaniel, Rose. "She goes in the truck with us all the time. She is my baby ... velcroed to my keestra," she says laughing.



Membership Count
September 20, 2007



WIT Reaches 500 Members!

In less than six months since its inception, Women In Trucking has grown to more than 500 corporate and individual members.

"I believe the strength behind the organization lies in the varied and vast career success of our board of directors," said Ellen Voie, WIT Chairwoman. "The women on our board bring a combined total of 265 years of service to the trucking industry and with that kind of power behind us we can make some changes."

WIT was officially founded on March 12, 2007 as a means to not only get more women interested in the trucking industry, but to also provide a platform to voice the successes and struggles of those women already in the male-dominated field. Now less than six months later, the organization has 12 board members, 44 corporate members, 16 sponsors, 98 male members, 402 female members and one staff member.

"Although encouraging women to join the industry plays a role in WIT," explained Voie, "it's not our only focus. We believe that providing a greater understanding of the special challenges that women face on the road, under the hood or behind the desk will only serve to better the industry. Among our many goals, we plan to hold our own convention to honor carriers, truckstops and suppliers who have proven to be female-friendly in their hiring and retention practices. It's not just about voicing an opinion; it's about understanding an issue, addressing it and hopefully in the end, remedying it. With over five hundred men and women already joining us, I think it's a sign the industry is ready for us!"

Written by Susan Fall

LaunchIt Public Relations and

Women In Trucking Board Member

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Women Make Changes in Sleepers



By *Elwin Eash, Indiana Custom Truck*

When I first started selling sleepers in the early 80's, they were much smaller than they are now. The interior color of the sleepers were expected to match the interior color of the truck cab. Small refrigerators and TV's were luxuries of the day.

As women became more involved, the addition of cooking facilities became important. Meals are now prepared in the truck instead of every meal eaten in a restaurant. This led to larger refrigerators, microwave ovens, sinks with hot and cold running water.

Then came showers and toilets in sleepers. These are important features for women due to lack of safety in middle of the night walks across parking lots. The showers became a needed feature as truck stops became overcrowded. Waiting in line meant less efficiency in the operation and being able to keep your own shower clean became very appealing.

The kitchen area continued to improve and grow in size. Longer counter tops, flush mounted or recessed stove tops, convection ovens

instead of just microwaves, dishwashers and upgraded countertops like Corian have become popular. Larger refrigerators and freezers now complement the kitchen area. We now have work areas that match some homes. Desks and computer work stations have become a normal feature in many sleepers.

Sleeper structural designs have also been affected by women in trucking. Many of our larger sleepers are now built with lower skirting that covers fuel tanks and other frame rail components. But the very usable feature this creates is the side entrance door with inset steps. This very easy



entry/exit is very popular with women in trucking.

Maybe the biggest change is in decor. Instead of matching cab colors, the idea now is to remove yourself from the work place (cab) and live in your home (sleeper). So the decor now is designed to feel like a home and not a truck. Many new materials are being used to replace the vinyls that had been used for years. Themes can be used to decorate inside the larger sleepers. Features like mirrored ceilings and indirect lighting are being used to "take you away" from the truck. In essence, the "home away from home" phrase is no longer just a figure of speech. It really is true.

We at Indiana Custom Trucks (ICT) have seen a very significant growth in the number of women in trucking in the last fifteen years. Women are now involved in about 75% of the sleeper purchases at ICT. That is a significant increase from post 2000. That has led to major improvements in lifestyle to the entire trucking industry, be it equipment, truck stop features or truck features. But the largest improvements are in their "home away from home" behind the cab.

Elwin Eash is a co-founder of ICT located in northern Indiana just off the Indiana Toll Road, 5 miles south of exit 121. The ICT website contains many of the above mentioned features (www.trucksleeper.com).



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Accident Prevention Begins with Individual Awareness

By Gary S. Rothstein, *Mobile Awareness*

The safe operation of any vehicle is determined by the attentiveness, alertness and ability of an individual to focus on the task at hand. Increasing your own driver awareness can go a long way to help prevent the costly accidents, fatalities and material losses that affect us all.

Drowsy or Distracted, Both Are Deadly

Impaired mental faculty due to limited sleep, mixed with high demands on alertness and attentiveness, makes for a dangerous combination, one that has been attributed to some \$12 billion in yearly costs and thousands of deaths (U.S. Dept. of Trans.). Driver distraction, or more precisely, driver lapses in attention caused by cell phones, MP3 players, GPS devices and other in-vehicle entertainment, has been named one of the leading safety hazards in the transportation industry. While new technologies are bringing better safety products to market, life saving changes can be made by increasing your individual knowledge about the causes of preventable accidents. Before you end up on the wrong side of a senseless driving disaster, consider there were 43,443 deaths from motor vehicle accidents in 2005!

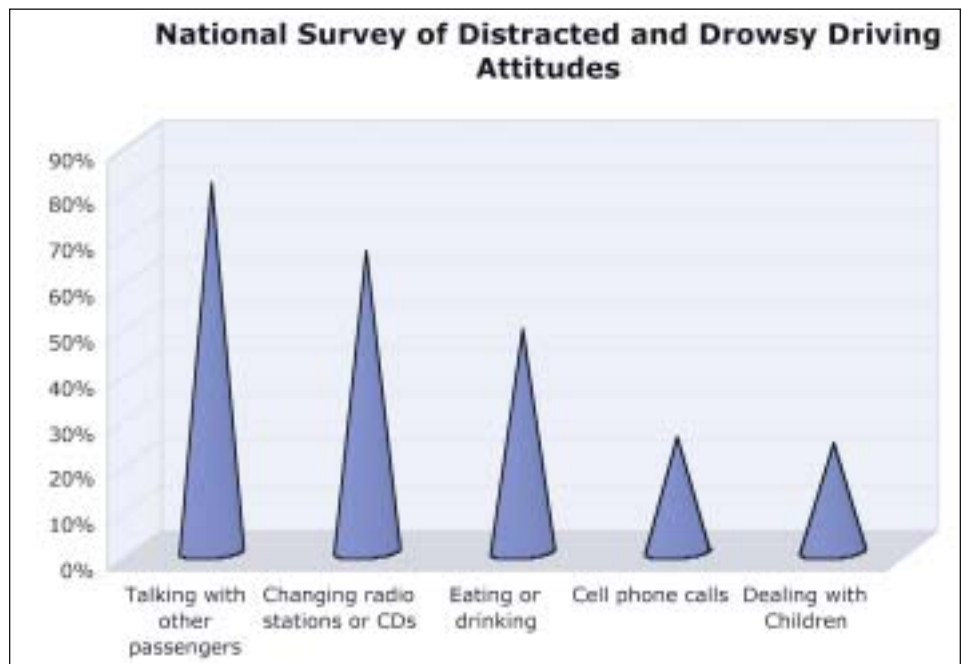
The Problem is Everyone's

Over the last 50 years much has been discussed about the perils of sleep-deprived truck drivers, tired individual drivers and drivers not paying attention. The problem is not limited to truck drivers as is clearly detailed in a report from the NHTSA (National Survey of Distracted and Drowsy Driving Attitudes and Behavior, April, 2003). The survey findings show that most drivers at least occasionally engage in behaviors that draw some percentage of their attention away from their driving task. These behaviors include

talking with other passengers (81%), changing radio stations or CDs (66%), and eating or drinking while driving (49%), making outgoing & taking incoming cell phone calls (25%) and dealing with children riding in the rear seat (24%). While it is estimated that more than a billion driving trips are made weekly by drivers engaging in each of these behaviors, fewer than one in four drivers perceive these particular activities as distracting or as making driving much more dangerous!



With some 220 million small trucks, SUV's and cars on the road, the need for safety awareness becomes even greater amid the growing popularity of horse trailers, carriages, trailer rigs and equipment trailers. While these automobiles (with or without a trail-



Dangerous Vehicles, Large & Small

There are approximately 7.9 million large trucks on our roads today. Large trucks alone make up over 400,000 accidents a year with an average cost of over \$62,000.00 per incident. In 2002 alone, the Total Cost of Fatigue-Related Crashes (in 1999 Dollars) exceeded \$2.3 billion! Furthermore, there is a lesser known and reported danger resulting from the ever-increasing number of overtired and highly distracted individuals driving noncommercial vehicles.

er) are smaller in size and weight than a commercial truck, they are no less dangerous in the hands of a sleep deprived or inattentive driver.

Doing your part to increase your alertness while driving, will not only make you a safer driver, it will benefit all that share our roads.

Gary S. Rothstein is the President of Mobile Awareness, a company which designs and markets transportation safety products (www.mobileawareness.com). Mobile Awareness LLC, Solon, Ohio 44139, 866-653-5036, Copyright 2007

WIT at A Truckers Wife Convention

Many women in the trucking industry aren't behind the steering wheel of a big rig or seated at a company desk. Some of the most influential women in the trucking industry are those left at home when their drivers kiss them good-bye and step into the cab of a truck. These are the women married to the men who move the freight ... also known as a trucker's wife.

A group of women married to professional drivers created an online community which, according to their website is "dedicated to providing the wives and girlfriends of truckers; industry information, fun stuff, and providing a community they can call their second home." To allow the participants of this virtual gathering to meet one another, they organized a convention which was held in Green Bay, Wisconsin last year.

This year, these women met for their sec-

ond annual convention which coincided with the Titledown Trucker's Showdown, and they asked Ellen Voie to address the audience and to talk about Women In Trucking. Ellen, brought along her musician friend, Rob Anthony, who had recently written a song about drivers and their families, called "Down the Road." After Ellen shared her vision for the Women In Trucking association, Rob entertained the group with his new song, as well as some of his original music along with his classical guitar skills.

The Trucker's Wife convention is an annual event which should be attended by anyone who loves a truck driver and wants to network with others who share some of her (or his) challenges in thriving in a long distance relationship. For more information about the group, visit their website at www.ATruckersWife.com.



*WIT Chairwoman Ellen Voie and Rob Anthony
You can hear "Down the Road" on Rob's site,
www.RobAnthony.com.*

Meet your Board Members - Susan Fall

Susan Fall began her focus on the transportation industry in 1993 while employed by transportation technology pioneer, Qualcomm. In July 2000, she started LaunchIt Public Relations with the intention of becoming a full-service marketing company that remained focused on one industry and one industry only - transportation -- and in particular the role of technology in this vital industry. Now with nearly 20 years of public relations experience, Susan has a very strong and passionate dedication to the transportation industry and the field of public relations.

As a strong advocate of the trucking industry, Susan has held board of director positions with Trucker Buddy and the Professional Truck Drivers Institute of America as well as serving on several industry committees.

Susan is married with two children and holds a BA in Communications from the University of California, Santa Barbara.



WIT Board Member Susan Fall

WIT Shows & Events

September 20-22, CVTA (Commercial Vehicle Training Association) Fall Conference, Atlanta, GA

www.cvta.org

October 20-21, Truck Show Latino, Pomona, CA

www.thetruckshowlatino.com

October 20-23 ATA MC&E, Orlando, FL

www.truckline.com/upcomingevents/mce

**October 22 WIT Reception
ATA MC&E, Orlando, FL**

***Speak up on the WIT
Message Forum:
www.WomenInTrucking.org***

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Women want to get out of the kitchen and into a cab

By Ellen Voie, WIT Chairwoman

Harry S. Truman has been quoted as saying, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." His intent was to make the listener understand that when the pressures become too great, don't persist in trying to get through it if you are unable to cope with the challenge.



I have heard this comment in reference to women in the trucking industry. Often drivers, (both male and female) feel that women should keep their mouths shut and stop complaining about the way they are treated on the road. Instead, women should just do their jobs or find another career.

If Rosa Parks had felt that way, would segregation have continued beyond the 1950s? If Susan B. Anthony hadn't cast her ballot for President in 1872, would the 14th Amendment still deny women the right to vote? Without Babe Zaharias' athletic accomplishments in the 1920s, would women have been banned from sports because they were considered to be fragile?

These women not only withstood the heat in the kitchen, they intensified it!

Although it's not as uncommon to see a woman behind the wheel of a truck today, the ladies who held their own in the male dominated world of long haul trucking are the true pioneers. They had to sneak into the dri-

ver's showers or have someone guard the door so they could get cleaned up at a truck stop. They learned how to shift a 13 speed transmission and they were capable of backing a trailer into a loading dock. They dealt with a lack of power steering, air conditioning and hydraulic dollies. Most importantly, they proved themselves alongside their male counterparts.

These women blazed trails for those who followed. Although we are well into the 21st century, those trails are still filled with potholes and speed bumps. The holes might not be as deep as in the past, but they are still causing us some jolts and rumbles as more women join our ranks.

Sure, there are more facilities and amenities for women, but are they as easily attainable as those enjoyed by men in the industry? Perhaps the speed bumps aren't as bothersome to everyone? How many men have been mistaken for a prostitute in a parking lot? How many men are sexually harassed on the CB? How many men are unable to find hygiene products in a truck stop? How many men notice the potholes women avoid each day?

Women want to get out of the kitchen ... and into the cab of a truck, or perhaps into the terminal itself, but the road is still hard to maneuver.

What steps can we take to smooth the path ahead so more women can follow?

We want to be treated with respect for what we have accomplished already. There are women who have proven their ability and should be acknowledged for their accomplishments. This year, seven women competed in the American Trucking Association's National Truck Driving competition. Women are running trucking companies, leading operations and recruiting departments, winning awards for their journalistic insight and showing their male peers that they can impact the trucking industry in all areas.

Yet, if we dare to key the mic on the CB we take the chance of being treated with the same way as Rosa Parks, Susan Anthony and Babe Zaharias were treated many years ago. When we walk into a trucking industry event we still search for a female face but are usually the minority in the room.

The Women In Trucking Association has a goal to smooth the journey ahead for all women in the transportation industry. We will celebrate our successes and encourage one another as we move forward. We will honor our pioneer front runners and congratulate our peers.

We want to eliminate the speed bumps and the pot holes, and we're not going to let the heat from the kitchen scare us away from increasing our ranks in the trucking industry!

