



Where it ALL began...

The Truth About Trucking

Aubrey Allen Smith

Driving With Blinders On

Years ago, while I was working in the oilfields of Oklahoma, I decided to start another business. Since trucking was in my blood, I chose to open a hot shot service. Though there was "talk" about an oilfield crunch, I estimated that I could still have a viable business for the next three to four years. There were several very successful hot shot services in the town, and plenty of room for one more. I purchased a nice dually with a trailer, capable of pulling 16,000 pounds. After establishing all the required business red tape, my newly formed hot shot business was up and running. For the first several weeks I was nearly worn to exhaustion by the constant need of pipeline, fittings and various oilfield supplies. However, it was a "good" exhaustion, even though like many in the oilfield, it was keeping me running seven days per week.

In my fourth month with the business, suddenly things changed. In 1982, President Reagan was talking about something called "Deregulation." Two weeks later, the oil boom of Elk City, Oklahoma had literally disappeared. Oil rigs that had darted the horizon were gone. The big oilfield money was gone. I had gone from making a very large amount of monthly income to a "new" job that only paid \$740.00 per month! Needless to say, things were bad. But, who or what was at fault? Looking back, all the signs were there. Eventually, I was able to come to terms with what actually had gone wrong . . . I had been driving with blinders on.

There are always two sides to a story. Several people around town had voiced their opinions about this as "not being a good time" to start an oilfield business. My banker had asked me, "Are you sure you want to do this?" A close friend who owned a hot shot service at the time, casually stated, "Just be careful." On the other hand, there were those business owners who could not stop talking about how great things were. They were always there to tell you their success stories. There were even those who could not stop talking about how their business just kept growing and they were expanding! I took all of this information in, but I never really processed it. Why? Because I had made up my mind that I was going to start a hot shot service, and that was all there was to it!

Today, I relate this story to the trucking industry. As in any industry, there will always be those who are doing well. If everybody failed at an industry, there would be no such industry. For one driver to tell a "newbie" to trucking that there is big money to be made in OTR driving, only because he or she is successful, is very misleading. For 5000

drivers to tell a "newbie" to trucking the same thing, is also misleading. How can that be? Because there are eight million CDL drivers in the United States today . . . will all eight million tell you the same thing? Just because "success" stories can always be found in any industry, does that tell the entire story about that industry? Are you hearing the "other side" of the story?

For my hot shot service, I chose to "listen" to the success stories, and decided to ignore the "failures." Within the trucking industry, there is a 128% driver turn over rate with the OTR companies. This clearly shows that for every one "success" story, there are 128 "dissatisfied" stories. I want to reiterate my belief that you can make a decent living with over the road trucking . . . there are those making a good living at it, and yes, there are success stories. However, you MUST keep in mind that there are MANY others who are not successful. You have to know the entire picture . . . you have to hear both sides of the story . . . any story. It is the only way you will be able to come through with a clear and accurate decision process.

For those who want to let their success stories be known, they fail to understand that by only giving their side of the story, they could be leading you down a road that you do not want to travel. What works for one person, does not mean it will work for everyone. By having both sides of the issue out in the open, it can only help in making the right choice. Take for example, these trucking companies that experience a high turn over rate. Why? Do you think that maybe there is something wrong? If there was nobody willing to give the "other side" of the story, what would ever change? If students and new drivers are aware of any scams and lies practiced by a company, this will bring about one of two things:

1. The student or new driver will not bother applying for a job at that particular company and . . .
2. The trucking company will either go out of business or better yet . . . change.

Would it not be best to bring about "change" to these companies and schools which would benefit all drivers? Or should we all remain silent and pretend that all is well within the entire trucking industry? The problem lies with people who take every "negative" thought, opinion or comment to mean that ALL companies and schools are "BAD." They are still missing the picture . . . they are missing the message. That message is to provide the truth about the trucking industry . . . the OTR industry. All one has to do is check the trucking forums on the internet. Sure, you will find "success" stories . . . but DO NOT overlook the thousands upon thousands of "negative" stories. They are not negative . . . they are truth . . . they are the "other side" of the story!

If all drivers just sit back and never say anything "bad" about trucking, then thousands of students and new drivers will come into the industry expecting success at any company or school. How is that helping? But, by voicing the truth about the problems drivers face on the road, with their particular carrier, with the truck driving school they attended, and so forth, things can change. Those companies who abuse drivers by adding false

information on their DAC report . . . those companies that promise .34 CPM and then only pay .24 CPM . . . those companies that say you will be home every weekend, but you're out for three weeks on your first run . . . those schools that give a price of \$3500, and then in the end hands you a bill for \$7000 . . . those schools that promise guaranteed employment, and then fail to deliver . . . all of this can change. If both sides of the story are known, it can force change.

We can all sit around and "talk" and complain about the poor practices within OTR driving . . . we can all lean back and tell a "newbie" that, "Yea! Trucking is great!"or . . . we can send a message to those companies and schools that practice poor policies that we are going to educate newcomers to the industry . . . we are going to tell them the good side of trucking AND the bad side of trucking . . . we are going to let these students and new drivers know what to look out for and which companies and schools have a great reputation and those that have a terrible reputation. Hopefully, they will take notice and either change their ways or we will close them down.

Or . . . we can keep driving with blinders on.

TRUTH ABOUT TRUCKING, LLC

Sharing information & knowledge to CDL students & new drivers in order to . . .

“Raise the Standards of the Trucking Industry”



[Photos of the 2nd Annual Truck Driver Social Media Convention](#)