

Truck Driver Appreciation Essay
Super Heroes of the Roads
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I am a very lucky young man because I have four truck driving heroes in my family. These amazing people have done so much to keep family, local, state, and national economics booming. Their examples have helped me set my sights on a truck-driving career too.

My Great Grandpa Earl and Grandma Joye drove for IML Eagle Division and were owner operators. My Grandfather Michael has owned four tractors, numerous trailers and has hauled everything from fuel to livestock. My father Rodney has been an Associated Food Truck Driver for 14 years and was recently awarded Utah Driver of the month. These truck-driving heroes have earned my respect and the respect of many other people because of top-notch drivers they are or have been.

My Great Grandfather Earl taught me about the importance of keeping vehicles in good running condition. He would pull his semi behind his house and make whatever repairs were necessary to keep the truck running. This included an in frame engine rebuild on his 8 V 92 Detroit in his cab over Peterbuilt. He did a complete rebuild of his 13-speed Road Ranger transmission. He did these huge jobs under the apple tree in his back yard. He was a very frugal man and had been a car and bus mechanic so he knew that he could do the repairs necessary to keep his big rig going safely down the road.

My Great Grandpa and Grandma drove sleeper team together. Grandma was one of the first lady truck drivers in Utah. She was very nervous to become a driver, but it was so important to her to be with her husband that she learned how to drive the truck and map out her road plan. They were on the road constantly and shared many funny stories with the family about how they uniquely solved problems on the road. One time the valve that directs the air on the 13-speed transmission started leaking. This valve looked like a spinning top with 3 rings, the difference being there were 0 rings around each ring. This valves job was to direct air into the cylinders. One day an 0 ring failed making it so Earl could not shift or keep air. He pulled out his dental floss and replaced the splitter valve stem 0 ring by wrapping dental floss around it many times to make his own 0 ring. This fixed the problem and got him home where he could repair it correctly.

My grandfather Michael has taught me about the importance of doing the mechanic job right for the good of the truck, the safety of the driver, and all the drivers on the road. Grandpa Michael's first semi was a 1948 Kenworth narrow nose piano hinge with a 58-glider kit. No one dared guess how many times the old semi had turned over a million miles. The speedometer and tachometer were so old and worn from miles and hours on the road that the needle would bounce and would not stabilize because the bushings were worn and had nothing to ride on. He turned them 180 degrees upside down and they worked perfectly because they were working on the unused portion of the bushing. Grandpa Michael was also a problem

solver. His Kenworth over heated traversing big hills like the Sisters in Wyoming. To help keep the truck cool, he placed a garden weed sprayer with a pressurized pump handle between the two seats in the cab. He then ran the hose out under the hood and hooked it to a spray nozzle in front of the radiator. When the truck would start to overheat going up the hill he would pump the handle a few times and it would spray the radiator with a fine mist and cool things down.

My Grandpa Michael taught me about sharing mechanical gifts to help others on the road. He has changed flat tires, taken families to gas stations to get cans of gas, and worked on cars to get them going again. One time he took a motorcycle rider to the hospital because the man had wrecked and broken a leg. He even helped a man that had been hit in the head with a high-heeled shoe by his very angry wife that left him on the side of the road bleeding. He took this man to the nearest police station to get help.

My father Rodney is another of my truck driving heros. He took me on ride alongs all the time. I was seven years old the first time I got my turn. As I sat in the passenger seat looking out those huge windows at a very big world, I felt like I was king of the road. My dad amazed me because he could perfectly back up his 53-foot trailers into spaces no bigger than the trailer on his first try. He explained what he was doing and why and answered all of my endless questions about his truck and his job. While sitting in the passenger seat I learned about double clutching, and the names of the parts of his truck. I could talk about turbos, cylinders, pistons, crank and cam shafts, u-joints, airbags, suspension with conviction at the age of 8. I could also recognize the make and model of every big rig on the road. My mechanical knowledge and skills earned me a place on our school FFA mechanical team as a freshman. My dad is our family hero because his job takes him away from home and he misses many events that we participate in so he can provide a GREAT life for all of us.

All of these family members are heroes to me because they have given me a passion for this career as well as a lot of knowledge so I can be a truck-driving hero just like them.