

God is his co-pilot

John Brubaker rolls the big rigs better than all but one other man

John Brubaker, a truck driver who lives on Donegal Springs Road, appeared on the cover of last week's *Times* when we announced his winning 2nd place at the Truck Rodeo in Kansas. This week we visited John and asked him about the tournament, and trucking in general.

What is a truck rodeo?

We first asked John about the rodeo, which is not as wild as the name implies, but takes a lot of skill. John told us he had been practicing for it since last May.

The rodeo consists of two parts: The first is a test/interview, and the second is an actual driving test.

John did well on the written part, which tested his knowledge of the trucking industry, its regulations and laws, safety, first aid, and fire-fighting. He scored 178 out of 200 points in this part, which helped a lot.

To prepare for this part, John had read the rodeo manual no less than four times cover-to-cover.

After the knowledge test, John was finally let near a truck. But, before he could drive it, he had to find 5 brake or lighting defects on his appointed rig in ten minutes.

The final test was the only one that actually involved driving. Once in the driver's seat, John had ten minutes to do the following:

Zig-zag through a traffic-core and tennis ball obstacle course. Touching a ball meant ten points lost;

Backing up to a dock, getting as close as possible for points, but losing all if he touched;

Driving a straight line between tennis balls set 4 inches wider than his wheel track, without touching;

Parallel parking a 40 foot trailer in a 44 foot space;

Creeping up to a stop line, getting the front bumper as close as possible;

And, rounding a corner without touching the curb while staying close.

The most important skill for this sort of test is depth perception. It also helps to be able to visualise the geometry and size of the rig.

Safety

Entrants in the National Rodeo must not only win their company and state rodeos, but cannot have any sort of moving accident in the year before they compete. John himself has a perfect record of over 700,000 accident-free miles. How does he do it?

"Patience. That's the most important quality you need to be a safe driver," was John's immediate response. Other rules: Don't tailgate; and keep looking ahead.

A good mental attitude, one that John tries to live by, is "Expect the impossible from another vehicle."

Are we good drivers?

"Drivers in New York do things that Evel Knievel wouldn't try," John says. He tries to schedule himself to go through the megalopolis in the wee hours of the morning to avoid the crazies up there.

People in this area are more sane and considerate drivers than those in New York, northern New Jersey, and Massachusetts, but John finds that we often don't know how to drive on freeways.

"Sometimes you'll see someone around here stop dead on an entrance ramp," notes John. "What you should do is flow smoothly into the traffic."

John told us that his "pet peeve" is drivers who don't use their turn signals.

Moving On?

When we asked John about "Moving On," the TV show about the adventures of two independent truckers, John snorted in derision.

"That show was corny," he laughed. "If a fellow drove truck like those two guys he'd be out of business in a week."

John doesn't appreciate the popular image of truckers as "playboys with a girlfriend in every state." Shows like "Moving On" help perpetuate that image, and, according to John, many truckers do indeed see themselves in that light.

"There's a certain proportion of drivers who think of themselves as very tough guys," he explains. Such men used to wear cowboy boots and "chain-drive wallets" (the type with a chain that hooks to the belt), but lately have been trying to look and dress "sharp."

"Many people think of truck drivers as rough, tough characters, but I try to project the image of a truck driver as a happy, married family man," John says.

John, who told us that he "wouldn't drive if I didn't feel that God is my co-pilot," is happy, married, and a family man. He is a deacon of the West Green Tree Church of the Brethren.

John was impressed by the drivers at the rodeo, whom he found to be friendly, polite, and dedi-



John W. Brubaker, who won 2nd place at the National Truck Rodeo, poses with his PA state trophy

(the national prize plaque wasn't available) and his pickup, which he doesn't consider to be a "real truck."

cated. It seems that the best drivers in the country don't pay much attention to machismo.

"Just a few bad truckers are enough to give the whole industry a bad name. Auto drivers see a truck driving dangerously, speeding and weaving in and out of lanes, and it sticks in his mind. The good drivers, who are the majority, don't make the same impression on the public," he says.

Do truck stops really have good food?

When we asked him this, John replied, "Well...," and chuckled. "The biggest factors in where a trucker stops," he said, "are parking space and fast service. You don't want to sit around all night waiting. A lot of truck stops serve the truckers before anyone else, because they know you have to get out on the road again and meet your schedule."

Driving as a job

John used to be away from home for several days at a time, but lately he doesn't go any farther than Connecticut, and can make the round trip in 10 hours. He sees a great deal of his family, likes the work, and gets paid rather well.

Driving, though, is not a piece of cake. "It's a challenge to do a good job," according to John. "Not everyone can do it: Some just don't have the talent or ability to drive 6 days a week, 100,000 miles a year."

While he finds it demanding, he doesn't feel the boredom that many auto drivers experience on a long trip.

"It's interesting because you're moving all the time," he says, "and you're always meeting

people, which I like, and it's always different—a different rig, a different destination. Ten hours in a car is boring, but trucking isn't the same."

1st place on the 3rd try?

"I'm aiming for the National Championship next year," John told us. Considering that his total score this year was 643, and the winner in his class (5-axle tractor-trailers) got

652, that's a good possibility.

"I practiced three to five hours a week every Saturday since May this year," John explained. He will have another year's practice behind him next time.

For someone who didn't even want to be a trucker (he had hoped to farm, like his father, but couldn't afford the investment needed to start), John has done well.

Next year will be his third try: His first year he won the State championship, and this year came in 2nd in a field of 39 state champs. His constant striving to improve at his craft will probably keep him moving up to the top.

John told us, "If a driver thinks he knows everything, he'd better get off the road. You should always keep trying to improve."

Doc's new number is 653-4581

If you tried to call Doctor William B. Landis at his new Mount Joy office last week, you probably talked to Mrs. Charles M. Kraus III, instead. The reason: the *Susquehanna Times* got their phone numbers mixed up.

It seems that somebody in our office wrote the copy for Doc Landis' ad on the same sheet of paper that had been used to make notes about Mrs. Kraus, who will be baking a cake in honor of the new medical center this week-

end.

For the record, Doc's new number is 653-4581.

Our apologies to Doc, the Kraus family, and everyone who called the wrong number.

Good news for gourmets



If you love great cuisine, we've got good news for you. There's a new restaurant in our area which offers top-notch dining in an atmosphere of solid comfort. Read about it on page 8.