

Speaking from Experience

Time flies when you're having fun. It turns out that this July was the second anniversary of my writing for OTR. In preparation for this month's contribution I decided to do some homework and I catalogued every month's writings by date and subject matter in the hopes of discovering a pattern of thought I might have followed over the past 24 articles.

I won't bore you with the chronology of my submissions and truth be told, my research really didn't reveal anything overly thrilling. I was even less thrilled after I shared my findings with my wife Connie, to which she replied "yea, so!". At that point I took matters into my own hands and gave her the "do you know who you're talking to and how important this is?" look. For which I got another "yea, so!" followed by "It's summertime; tell the drivers to plan time with their families!". I think Connie likes it when she's right a little too much, but that's another story.

For some of you, the title of this article might ring a bell; it's a line from an old Toby Keith song. As the song unfolds, the message "nothing takes priority over our families and friends and those we cherish most" becomes very clear. My wife Connie has an honest appreciation for the song's sentiment as do many other drivers' spouses. I was on the road for ten years and family holidays

were not had... period! I did my 12,000+ miles consistently, month in and month out. In fact, for years I would leave on Boxing Day for Texas and return out of the valley hoping to make it home before New Years Eve. There was decent money to be made when others didn't want to truck and the traffic wasn't too bad either.

Don't fall into this trap, folks. Shoulda...woulda...coulda won't get the job done. Life is too short to ignore what's important. I know this firsthand as I lost both parents at a very young age. My dad was a driver who worked hard his whole life and died in his early fifties. Many of my best summertime childhood memories were vacations with my sister Colleen and Mom...Dad was on the road. Next thing we knew they were both gone.

Fast forward to today. During a recent trip to Dallas I ran into Marvin Shefsky, an old friend and the principle behind a couple of U.S recruiting and retention publications. One of his latest endeavors is a partnership with a company that distributes blood pressure machines, which are currently servicing 150,000 drivers per month in US truck stops. During the rollout of the new



It's Time That I Make Time for That!

promotion at the last MidAmerica Truck Show in Louisville, Kentucky, Marvin revealed to me that his booth had checked the blood pressure of more than 2,000 drivers in 21 hours and the results were a little scary. According to Marvin, 20 drivers were rushed from the show to the hospital because the readings were so critical that these drivers needed immediate medical attention. To emphasize the problem even further, one person didn't make it and died on their way to the emergency room.

The sedentary lifestyle of a driver contributes greatly to health risks; this is obvious to us all. The other item that relates to this is stress (and not just the stress of driving or finances), namely the stress of strained relationships that are prevalent in this industry because of separation.

It has been well documented that success in business or a career cannot be achieved fully without a balance in lifestyle. The balance referred to is between work/career/family and self, which includes your own health. Of course, that balance is all the more difficult when your occupation causes long separations from family or whatever significant relationships you might have.

The majority of my articles have been about planning. Plan to be a successful owner operator

or company driver, plan your career path or enjoyable retirement by budgeting, etc, etc. Here is a new planning and budgeting idea for you...set some money aside from each pay statement for a family vacation away from it all. Plan it well and include as many of your close relationships as you can. Just Do It! You need the brain drain as we all do! Get out of the truck; park it somewhere safe and forget about it for a couple of weeks. Regroup, refresh, relax and re-acquaint yourself with the important people in your life away from the industry. It might just save your life!

Keep in mind that there are no tombstones that I am aware of in the great drivers' bone yard that read "Here lies John Brown, his only regret is that he didn't get more miles in."

What do you think?

Feel free to drop me a line on this idea.

Safe and Healthy Trucking,

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PS: Here is an interesting web page with driver tips on healthy hearts: <http://healthytruckinginfo.com/HTI/Info/HighBloodPressure.cfm> 🍁