

# ***Truckin' Up!***

By  
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*For that truck drivin' man of mine.*

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Chapter one

***Alligator on the Zipper***

We were riding north on Interstate 95 in North Carolina. The sound of the big diesel engine vibrated through my head as I watched the white dashed lines slip by on the dark road ahead. I had been riding as a passenger in this semi truck for only a few days at that time and it was an exciting new adventure for me. It was so different from what I had imagined. Riding high above the road, I looked down into the cars that we passed. It gave me a whole new perspective on everything. I saw people doing all kinds of crazy things while they were driving. People reading newspapers or writing notes, and talking on cell phones, women putting on makeup, businessmen juggling coffee and biscuits. There were people changing clothes or flossing their teeth (steering with their knees) and even having sex while driving in heavy traffic!

"Break one nine!" The voice on the CB radio broke into the cab of the truck. Don grabbed the microphone that dangled from a bungy cord attached overhead. "Come on break!" he said.

"Northbound," the driver came back, "You got an alligator on the zipper at the 129 yard stick." Don grabbed the mike again and said: "Preeshaydit southbound. You're looking good back to the line." Now, I was raised in Florida and it wasn't too uncommon to hear about alligators roaming around in neighborhoods or on highways but this was North Carolina in the middle of winter!

"Did he say there was an alligator on a zipper up here?" I asked,

some what confused. Don looked over at me and grinned. "It's not a real alligator, it's the rubber off of a recapped tire laying on the zipper, which is the white striped line in the middle of the road." "Why do they call it an alligator?" I asked. "Well, if that thing gets caught up under your car or truck, it will chew up everything it hits." He said. "Well, where is this alligator?" I asked. "It's at the 129 mile marker." He said as he pointed to a small road sign on the side of the road. This one read 120. "You see," he started, "most highways have mile markers or "yard sticks" that measure the distance from beginning to end of the road in each state. They start at 1 at the south and east ends and run higher as you drive north or west." We were headed north which meant that the "alligator" was nine miles north of us.

I watched the mile markers as we pass until I saw 129. Just ahead, straddling the striped line in the middle of the road lay a large jagged piece of rubber. One end of it curled up in the air, looking very much like an alligator poised to strike. A few minutes later, we saw a big truck pulled over to the shoulder with his emergency flashers on. Don took the mike and asked: "You OK over on the side driver?" A voice came back: " Yes sir, I just hit that gator back there and it took out my break line. I got help on the way." "10-4" Don said as he let the mike go. "Those alligators are dangerous!" I said. "They cause hundreds of accidents and hundreds of thousands of dollars in vehicle

damage every year." Don said as he shifted to another gear. "Why don't they outlaw them?" I asked. "Lots of large companies use recapped tires to save money. They have lobbyists in Washington who make sure that recaps aren't banned." Then he added: "It's a money thing."

As I listened in to the conversations on the CB radio, I soon realized that I didn't understand half of what was being said. I learned that since the 60's, truckers have used Citizens Band or CB radios for communications and over the years, they have developed a colorful language all their own. Truck drivers generally monitor channel 19 on the CB or "Sesame Street" as it is sometimes called because of the childlike behavior that is sometimes heard on that channel.

I was glad to have Don as an interpreter. He literally grew up in the trucking business starting behind the wheel on his daddy's knee and driving by the time he was thirteen. Yes, he is a driving machine. The man even drives in his sleep. Every now and then in the middle of the night while we are sleeping, he will reach around and grab one of my breasts and start shifting gears. Those first three or four gears are bad enough but when he shifts into high gear I have to put on the breaks.

Don had been driving trucks for more than twenty years when I met him and was well versed in "Truckers Slang". There is trucking slang to describe almost everything and I have listed a collection of over 400 truckers slang words and phrases in the

chapter titled: "Truckers Slang". I have also listed "Trucker Cities" and the National 10 codes. The list of trucker's slang is by no means complete because new words and phrases are being born everyday but I hope you will refer to it and enjoy it as you read this book.

Most drivers have a "handle" or CB name. Generally, a driver will use a handle rather than his real name in order to protect his privacy and anonymity. Most handles are cute names that distinguish each driver's radio personality. Handles like "Leadfoot", "Fast Lane", or "Speed Buggy" might describe a fast driver or maybe a driver that just wants to sound like he's fast. I've heard many handles such as "Spanky", "Corn Cob", "Skid Mark", "Side Pocket", "Wild Man", "Corn Flake" and "Mattress Monkey". Female drivers also have some cute handles like "Big Momma'", "Wild Flower", "Little Momma", "Queen Bee", "Soggybottom Sal", "Precious" and "Shake-n-Bake". My handle is "Sweet Pee" and Dons' handle is "Bloomer Snatcher", which might tell you a little bit about him.

A typical CB conversation might sound like this: Driver 1: "How bout ya' Rain Man? This is Desperado. You got your ears on?" Driver 2: "This is Rain Man. What's your 20? Come back."

Driver 1: "I'm headin' northbound at the 35. Where you at Desperado?" Driver 2: "I'm on your front door about two miles. Where're you headin?" Driver 1: "I got two drops in the Motor City. Then I'll have to call my travel agent to see where I'm

goin' after that." Driver 2: "10-4, I'm headin' for the home 20 for a few days and spend some time with the other half, roger?" Driver 1: "I hear that. I haven't been home for about three weeks now and the warden is getting pissed. Roger?" Driver 2: "I copy that." Driver 3: "Brake one nine." Driver 1: "Come on brake". Driver 3: "You got a major cluster fuck on your side at the 73 yard stick. Both lanes are blocked up for about five miles." Driver 2: "What happened up there driver?" Driver 3: "A roger ramjet hit a pregnant roller skate and caused a thermos bottle full of go juice to go greasy side up and spilled motion lotion on the blacktop. They got a meat wagon up there making a pick up and a dragon wagon pulling off the wreckage. The haz-mat crew is mopping up the mess but it's going to be a long while before they get it cleaned up so you might want to detour. 10-4?" Driver 1: "I hear that driver. Well, thanks for the heads up. You're lookin' good back that way. The chicken coops are open and checkin' the tension on your suspension. 10-4?" Driver3:"I copy that, driver. Don't tense around that break check."

Now, just in case you didn't follow all of that, I'll explain. The first driver, Desperado, asks Rain Man if he has his radio on. Then the second driver, Rain Man, asks Desperado where he is located. Desperado tells him that he is front of him about two miles and asks Rain Man where he's going. Rain Man tells Desperado that he has two deliveries in Detroit and that he

will have to call his dispatcher for his next destination. Desperado is on his way home for a few days to spend some time with his wife. While Rain Man is talking about his wife being angry about his long absence from home, a third driver brakes in to give them a warning about a bad traffic accident involving multiple vehicles ahead of them. The accident was caused by a speeding car, which hit a Volks Wagon and caused a tanker full of fuel to turn over and spill diesel fuel on the highway. The ambulance is on the scene and a tow truck is picking up the wrecked cars. Firefighters are cleaning up the fuel spill but it will take some time to clear the road and the driver suggests that they might want to find a way around the accident. Desperado thanks the driver for the warning and tells him that there are no police ahead of him and that the scale house is open and weighing trucks. The driver acknowledges the road report and tells him to take it easy around the accident ahead.

"Break one nine for a radio check!" This is probably the single most used phrase on the CB radio. There are literally thousands of CB radios in use by truck drivers alone and they check on their equipment regularly. "Break one nine for a radio check!" ... "Yeah, come on" ... " I just got this radio and had it tweaked out. How's it sound?" ... "You're treetop tall and wall to wall, driver. Just like my girl friend, she's puttin' out all over town!" A "Mud Duck" is a radio that sounds weak or garbled.

CB radios come quipped with FCC regulated frequencies and



basic microphones. But, drivers often have technicians' work on their radios to enhance sending and receiving capabilities. There are plenty of radio accessories available to dress out radios such as: high power microphones and antennas, audio features like echo, reverb, prerecorded responses and much more. Generally, an average radio signal can be heard for three to five miles in either direction. If the traffic is heavy and several drivers are talking in the area, they can "Walk on" each other causing distortion of signals between trucks. If a driver has his radio "Tweeked out" with power boosters and high-powered antennas, the driver can "Walk on" or interrupt transmission for other radios for miles around.

Some things you hear on the radio aren't very nice. For instance, when occasional fights break out over the radio. One driver may have pissed off another by driving too fast or too slow. He may have cut the other driver off in traffic or it might just be that a driver has had a bad day and just likes to start trouble on the radio. Bantering back and forth, they call each other all sorts of derogatory names like: "Harvey Wallbanger" (reckless driver), "Juvenile Delinquent" (someone pretending to be a truck driver), or a "Good Buddy" (a homosexual), as well as the usual four letter words one might hear in a heated argument.

"How bout ya', covered wagon. Why don't you get that dragon fly (drags uphill and flies downhill) out of the hammer lane and

quit blockin' traffic?" "Back down, windjammer (fast moving truck), I got a fat load (heavy load)." "Well, quit knuckle draggin' (going slow) and put your foot in the gas hole and do it to it, good buddy." "OK, bumper sticker (driver following too close), how about you eyeball me (meet) at this pickle park (rest area) up here?" In this instance, the language isn't too bad but in some cases, it gets pretty nasty and is hard to listen to. Personally, I prefer to use "cussin' cusins'" or words that sound like swear words. When the language get real bad on the radio, you just have to tune them out or turn the radio off until you get out of range.

Most drivers use clean language on the CB. Only small minority of drivers use fowl language and they may give the impression that all truck drivers are rough ridin' tough cowboy types. But for the most part, these men and women are average hard working people doing a hard job and often under difficult conditions.

Often, drivers will listen to the CB to help them stay awake. If you've ever been on a long road trip, you know how tiring it can be. So, imagine driving for eight to ten hours with few breaks before climbing into the bunk for a few hours of sleep. Then, after you jump right back into the drivers' seat and run straight into a traffic jam. If by some miracle, you arrive at your destination at the appointed time, you find out that you must still wait in line to be unloaded even though you

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