


# FIRST GEAR

## NEW DRIVER NEWSLETTER

Presented by  ROADPRO  
FAMILY OF BRANDS

**FEBRUARY 2020**

### What I Wish I Knew Then

By Idella Hansen and Henry Albert

*When you enter the trucking industry there are a lot of questions and many unknowns. You want to know what you can expect, how to figure out what is fact or fiction and what it will truly be like out there on the road.*

*We reached out to two veterans in the trucking industry and asked them to share their stories of what it was like when they started and what they would tell new drivers today. Here are their stories:*



**Idella Hansen**

*If something doesn't feel right – question it.*

Looking back now I realize that was something that I put on myself and I worked harder than I probably had to. I also never questioned things back then as I should have. I never questioned why I didn't get that load or was made to wait at the dock when others did not. If something doesn't feel right – question it. You don't have to be rude or have a chip on your shoulder but if you have a question or concern you can state your position in a fair and proper manner. Don't expect special treatment because you are a woman but be up front and make sure you are firm with your expectations. My father always taught me to be independent and self-sufficient and to also not depend on anyone else to get your job done as you will be disappointed. With that advice in hand I have always went above and beyond and have never expected anyone to owe me or give me anything without earning it.

At first, I wasn't making the kind of money I wanted and realized that I could make the same working at the local convenience store with probably less effort. I questioned if I needed to choose a different career path - but I truly loved the trucking industry and driving. I needed to do something, so I started to network with other drivers and ask questions and realized that there was money to be made, I just had to find the right company.

*If it sounds too good to be true – it probably is – so investigate the company you are going to work for.*

I found a job driving longer distances and doubled my money that first year. I continued to look for opportunities along the way to further my career and find the jobs that would pay me for what I do. Back then it was word of mouth and job boards posted at travel centers – now it is much easier with the use of the Internet and social media. I also learned that if it sounds too good to be true – it probably is – so investigate the company you are going to work for. Find out what other drivers are saying about the company. Do your homework and make sure before you join a company that you know the terms and conditions of your employment. Be aware of your rights and check the company's policies so you know what you are getting into when you sign up.



**Henry Albert**

I always dressed well and kept myself groomed. If you don't think people notice, they do. By dressing in this manner, it was perceived that I was my own boss and my focus was to make sure my customers were happy.

*You only have one chance to make a first impression.*

I have found over the years if you operate in this way it will impact your business in a positive way and you will be successful. Sometimes it's the little things – attention to detail, your attitude, presenting yourself as an extension of the company you are either working for or with will impact your success greatly. I realized that marketing myself as an extension of the company I was delivering for created a demand for me to do the work versus someone else. I have also learned to always look for a need that is not being covered – finding solutions to the customers problems and figuring out ways to set myself apart from others.

*Find yourself a good mentor.*

Also, find yourself a good mentor, someone that has had success in trucking. I had a mentor who started his business with one truck and grew it to have 89 more trucks by the time he was 40. I used the knowledge shared as a model for my career.

I also learned along the way to really do the math on the loads I chose. There are times when you may think taking a load for less might not be profitable but look at the numbers. If you are paid well for a load going in and only offered a lower rate on freight going out do not immediately assume you are not going to make money. Your expenses are already paid for the load you brought in so take the cheaper rate on the way out and you will still make money. Remember your profit is not based on one load but everything you do over the course of the year.

*Idella and Henry are both members of the RoadPro Pro Driver Council and their combined time in trucking totals over 75 years. They both have travel centers named after them and are involved in various causes and organizations that impact the lives and well-being of fellow drivers. For more information visit*

[www.roadprobrands.com/about/pro-council](http://www.roadprobrands.com/about/pro-council).



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## Gear Up Your Home on the Road

By Kim McDonnell

As a new driver you may have already had the experience of needing something while on the road and not having it. For over-the-road drivers, the cab is home and outfitting it for maximum comfort and efficiency is important. Whether it be a dry pair of shoes, a fuse or a specific tool, having the right gear can make the difference between a safe, comfortable trip and an unpleasant one.

We asked a few of our veteran drivers what they would advise a new driver to have on their truck and received great recommendations that we grouped by category:



### **Electronics / Appliances**

Many drivers singled out the need for a CB radio such as the 40 channel RoadKing® 5640. While you may think you don't need it because you have a cell phone – think again. There will be times when you will be in an area with no cell service – and you don't know the phone number of every driver traveling the same roads. There may be a time when you are in a traffic jam and need to find a way around it or warn another driver of a potential problem a CB radio can not only save you time but may save your life or the life of another driver.

A good Bluetooth® headset is also a must have. Check out the RoadKing 950 with up to 40 hours of talk time and a 66-foot operating range so you can be connected while tarping a load or checking your truck.

Having a power inverter can power your appliances and electronics and PowerDrive® offers a variety of options and applications to fit your needs. Whether hardwired to your battery or plugged into your 12-volt port it provides a perfect way to access power for your electronic devices while on the road.

If you prefer to prepare and pack your own food in order to manage your calories and save time and money – check out some of the 12-volt appliances such as the RoadPro® Roaster or portable oven. There are also a multitude of 12-volt coolers, fans, adapters and plugs that will also come in handy.



### **Clothing**

The requirements here depend on the time of year and where you'd driving. In winter especially, pack as if you might be stranded in the cold because that is always a possibility. That means a winter coat and warm clothing that you can layer. Also, an extra warm blanket or sleeping bag should be in your arsenal. Regardless of the weather, work boots (insulated or not) are always a good idea. Bring an extra pair of footwear in case one gets wet. One or two pair of good work gloves and a reflective safety vest can save your life in a dark terminal or by the side of the road. There is a great selection of these options by BlackCanyon Outfitters® in most travel centers.



### **Tools and spare parts**

A good flashlight, for checking under the hood and around your trailer or providing supplemental lighting is one of the top things that was mentioned by our veteran drivers. Check out the complete line of options from LUMAGEAR® found in most travel centers. You will find various styles with features to suit your needs. That was followed by a tool kit for emergency repairs and replacements. Drivers specifically mentioned hammers, tire thumpers, tire gauges and tire plug kits, side cutters, multi-tools, 5th wheel pullers, jumper cables, vise grips and air hoses for gladhand connectors. WD40®, duct tape and electrical tape also are must-haves. For winter driving, make sure to have additives that liquify gelled fuel and thaw out frozen fuel filters. It was also recommended that you carry extra fuel filters, fuses, light bulbs and replacement lights.



### **Miscellaneous items**

Sometimes, the little things make a difference.

Though virtually every truck and cell phone are equipped with a GPS, several drivers still recommended packing an old-fashioned road atlas for those times when electronics fail.

Things bounce around in trucks so it's a good idea to pack some bungee cords and zip ties. Glass cleaner and paper towels keep your windows clean and hand cleaner, soap and disposable towelettes can do the same for you.

A first-aid kit as well as non-perishable food and water.

Whether all the items listed here can even fit into a sleeper cab is questionable and there probably isn't a driver on the road who carries all these items, but it's a good start from which drivers can make their own list according to their own needs and circumstances.



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## Trucking Trade Shows – What’s in it for You?

Every year there are a multitude of trade shows that are specific to the trucking industry and held in various parts of the country. Two of the most popular trucking shows are the **Mid-America Trucking Show** held each year in Louisville, Kentucky typically the last week of March, and the **Great American Trucking Show** in Dallas for several days at the end of August. As a new driver you may be wondering if attending a trade show specific to your craft is worth it and if you do attend, what is in it for you?



March 26-28, 2020  
Louisville, Kentucky



August 27-29, 2020  
Dallas, Texas

Trade shows can serve as a one stop shop when looking for new products and visiting with the manufacturers that make them. This is a great way to give new products a try, or see the latest trends and technology coming to market. You can also talk to the experts from the companies in attendance before committing to spend your hard-earned cash.

Keep in mind that very often the exhibitors are also there to gain intel on what is important to you – what are your specific product needs for your truck? – What do you like or not like about their products? – and to ask YOU what products you would like to see come to market.



These shows also provide a great way to learn more about the industry and meet the leaders that are impacting change. Finding out about new rules or regulations that could be coming your way, attending education sessions, or participating in forums are all part of attending the show and will help you as you start out in your career as well as in the future.

These shows also provide an opportunity to meet other drivers who will be more than happy to share their insight and experience with you – making your drive easier. Those that you meet at a show will very often become lifelong friends and mentors and play a critical role in your trucking lifestyle.

Thinking about becoming an owner-operator, or working for a different company? How about buying a new truck? Trucking trade shows are a great place to uncover new opportunities and view the latest truck models and equipment.



And of course, there is always the “FREE” swag you will be able to score at a show. Many companies will come prepared to hand out free t-shirts, hats or other goodies that you can collect while walking the floor. There are also several exhibitors that will run contests or provide opportunities to win cash, trips or other valuable truck accessories and products.

While the show may take you off the road for a few days, the advantages of being there

may outweigh the time you are not behind the wheel. Who knows, you could just uncover a fantastic opportunity that will take you to the next level in your career.



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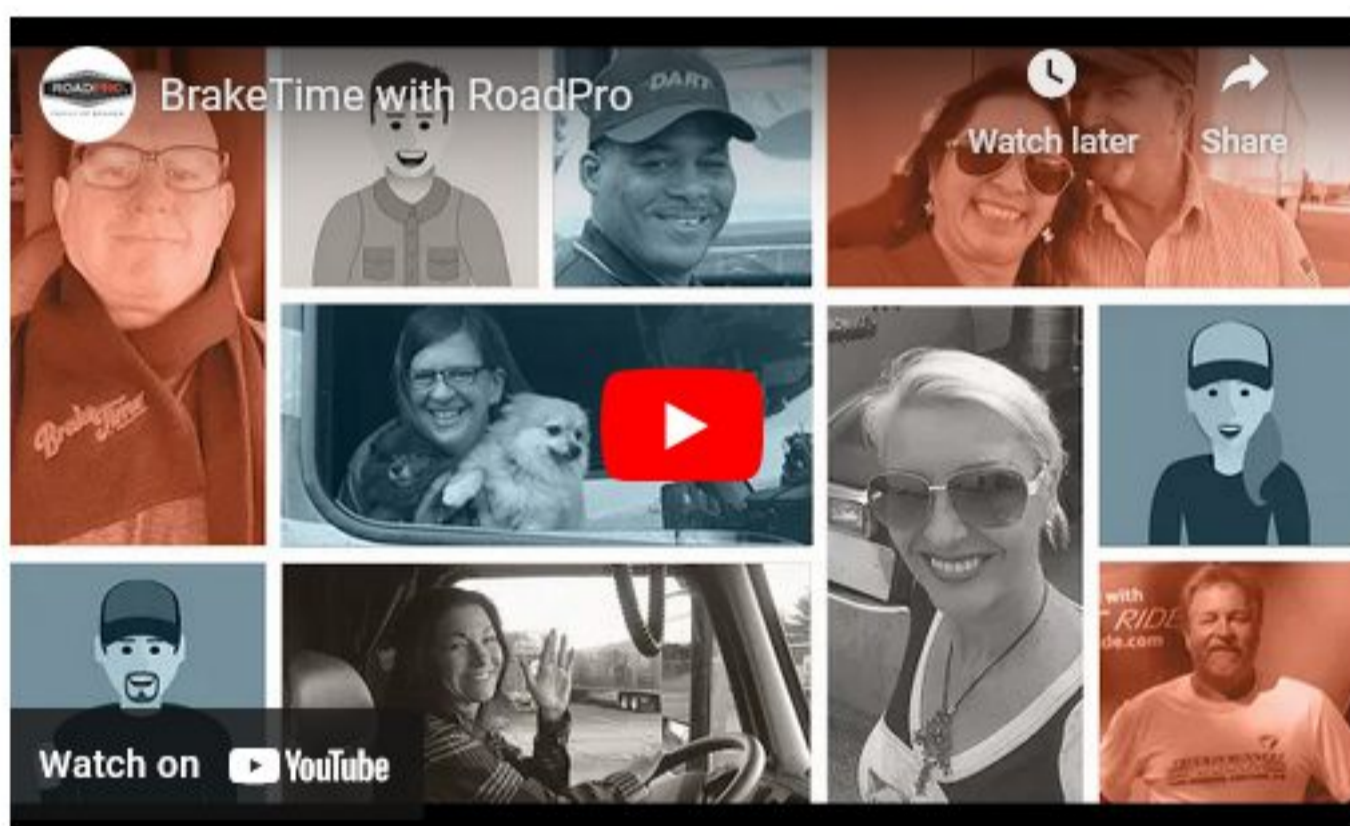
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