

TOWING & RECOVERY FOOTNOTES

Too Long?
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Pg 14

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Dealing with stress after roadside carnage

By Allan T. Duffin

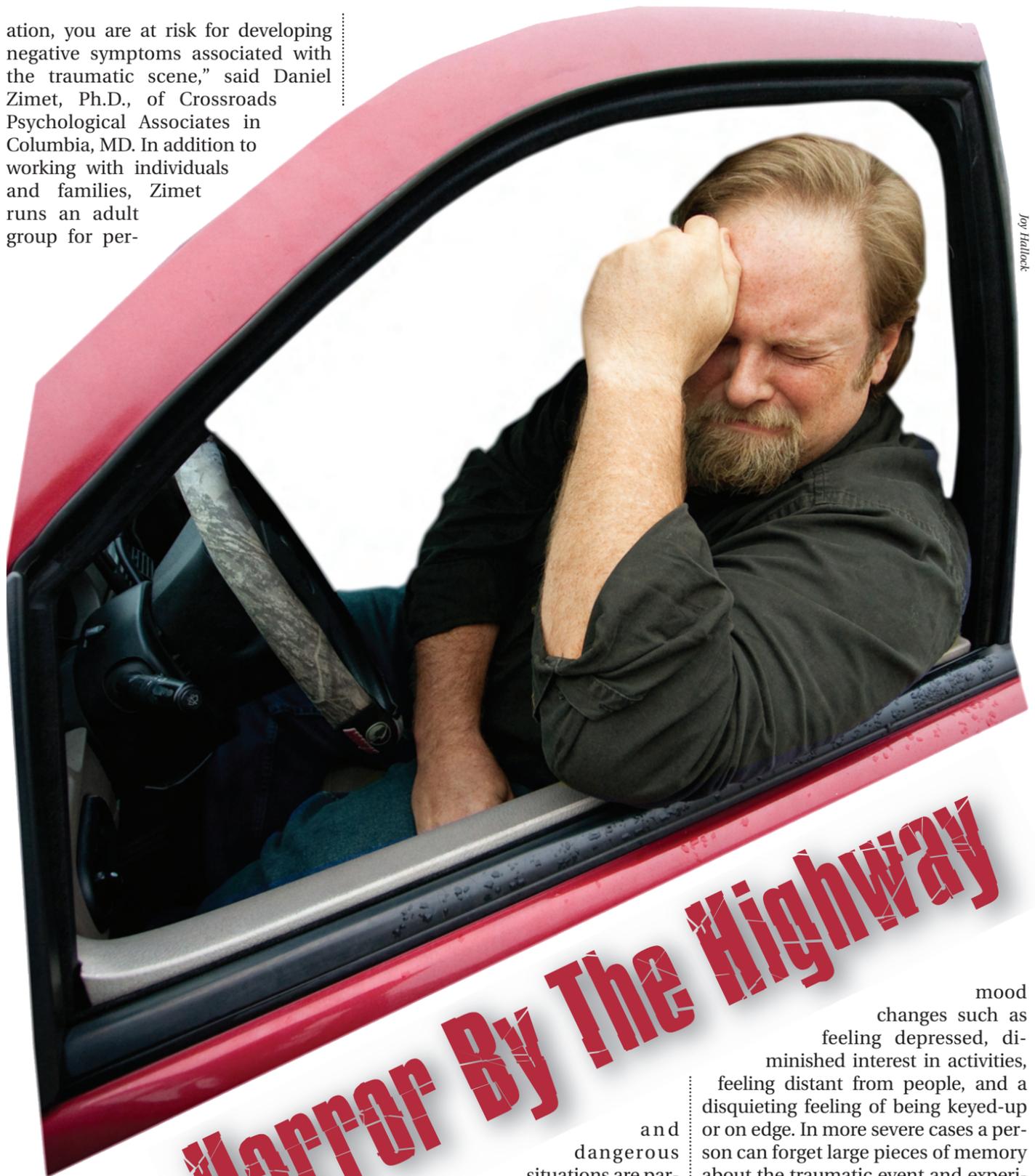
A 16-year-old boy in Michigan is driving home. About a quarter-mile from his house he falls asleep at the wheel. His car rumbles over the center-line and collides with a loaded gravel hauler — 2000 pounds of car smashing into 139,000 pounds of truck. The gravel hauler crushes the car, metal scraping against metal, until the front bumper of the truck comes to a stop at the rear window of the car.

Paul Sheffer, owner of Paul's Collision & Towing, Inc., in Almont, Michigan, got the call to haul away the mangled car. "We had to lift the truck off the car to get the car out," recalled Sheffer. "Then we had to rig lines to pull the front of the car off the boy to get him out of the car. I'm not sure where the boy's head was. I didn't look — but I know it wasn't attached."

Some towers never have to deal with recovery jobs like this one. And some towers have to live with the memory for the rest of their lives. The resulting trauma from experiencing this kind of tragedy, if not effectively dealt with, can develop into an ongoing condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

The specter of PTSD can haunt anyone exposed to a highly stressful or life-threatening situation. "Even if you only witness the aftermath of a horrific situ-

ation, you are at risk for developing negative symptoms associated with the traumatic scene," said Daniel Zimet, Ph.D., of Crossroads Psychological Associates in Columbia, MD. In addition to working with individuals and families, Zimet runs an adult group for per-



Joy Hullock

HORROR BY THE HIGHWAY

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sons coping with significant emotional and social hardships.

Though the term is often heard in a military context, PTSD isn't just experienced by combat veterans returning from war. "Early responders to violent

and dangerous situations are particularly vulnerable to developing mental health problems related to what they have seen or had to do," said Zimet. "This is just as true for tow truck drivers as it was for responders to 9/11."

Symptoms Of Stress

According to Zimet, the symptoms of PTSD include recurrent and intrusive thoughts about the event, anxiety and avoidance of anything reminding the person of the event, nightmares,

mood changes such as feeling depressed, diminished interest in activities, feeling distant from people, and a disquieting feeling of being keyed-up or on edge. In more severe cases a person can forget large pieces of memory about the traumatic event and experience flashbacks, as well as feel a sense of being detached from his or her own body or mind.

These symptoms "are the responses of the body to help overcome danger," added Dr. Elmer Maggard, a psychologist based in Booneville, KY, who works at Navy Medical Center Portsmouth (VA) with military personnel returning from combat. Maggard is also a former coal operator and trucking company owner. He classifies PTSD as having three primary types of symptoms:

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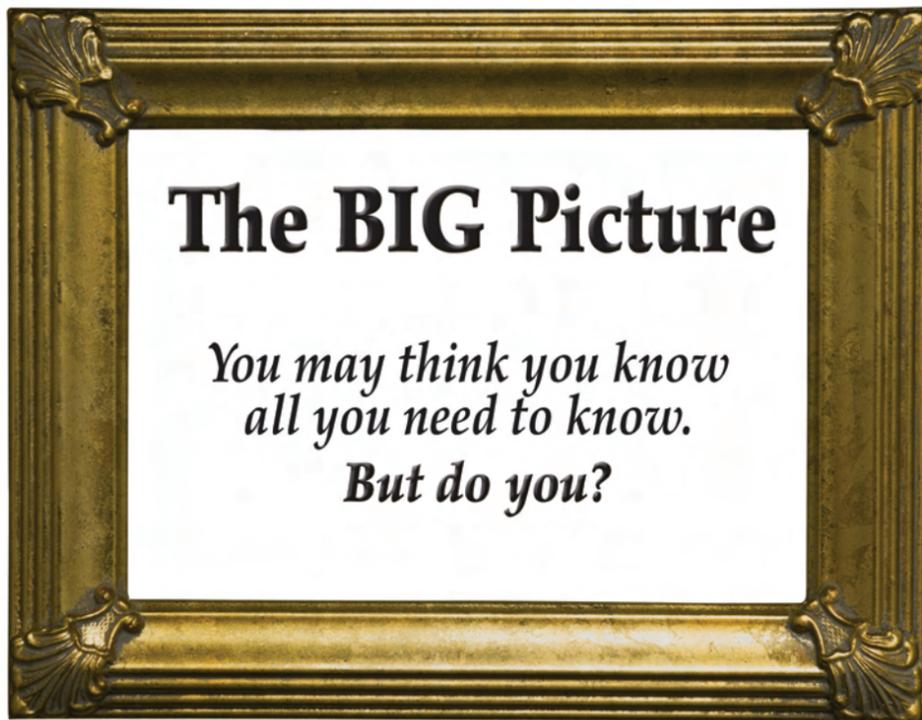
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By Norman Horton

Before Christmas, I was up in Bill Tomlinson's territory in northern Wisconsin. I figured I needed to have my head examined for trading 54 degrees in Atlanta for six-below with compacted snow and ice on the roads.

Besides giving me an appreciation for what these guys in the northland go through, it made me realize that doing a recovery in the rain is a lot better than doing one at 60-below with a wind chill.

Interestingly enough, while driving from Milwaukee north, I saw a truck belonging to a major carrier stuck in the median and looking like it was about to turn over. Five days later when I came back through, it was still there. Obviously there had been no direction or instructions from anyone on getting that rig out any earlier.

On the way home we sat in the plane on the runway in Milwaukee for an hour after it was supposed to take off. Air traffic control had determined it was too foggy in Atlanta and decided it was not smart to clutter up the

"This can be one of the most powerful business tools you have"

skies with a bunch of planes that couldn't land.

So our pilot is perfectly capable of flying a plane, knows where Atlanta is, and can get there quite easily, but he has to wait for takeoff and landing instructions and get other directions about weather and such while he's flying, all from someone on the ground who is aware of the bigger picture.

That stuck truck and the wait on the tarmac got me to thinking about the towing industry...

Gaining An Edge

It seems like in the towing industry many of us go out, run our trucks, and

run our business, but often really don't have insights into the bigger picture beyond towing that also affects our businesses. We operate only based on what we already know and see and take no direction and get no instructions from anyone else. Unfortunately, those who do not see beyond what's right in front of them are doing themselves and their company a disservice.

So what does seeing some "bigger picture" matter, you ask. You know your business, you think, so why would you care about this, and why would you want to get direction or input from anyone else?

The answer is simple: You will have a much stronger and better-run company and gain a competitive edge over your competitors.

Having the equipment and training you need and the pricing models you adopt certainly have a direct effect on your profitability and the survival of your business. But there are other things outside of the nuts and bolts of running your daily business and outside the industry itself that also impact your business success. Call it getting directions — gaining awareness, if you will — about the bigger picture, just like our capable pilot got his from the ground controllers.

In The Know

So where do you get this information? One of the first and best things you can do is join your state and national associations. TRAA should be first on your list because people like Harriet Cooley have the pulse of what is happening in and to this industry nationwide. They have the heads-up on legislation, trends, and rules and regs the Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration are working on.

Your local association will often know and be instrumental in improving the laws and regulations in your state that affect your towing business. Believe me on this: If you have to have two heavies instead of one for a recovery because of a new regulation, that regulation has a direct impact on your business.

You also need direction and input from and awareness of the economy as

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HORROR

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1. Alarm Response. First, PTSD sufferers re-experience the danger via flashbacks, intrusive memories, or dreams of the event. “The dreams are alarm responses,” said Maggard. “Although they disrupt your sleep, they’re the mind’s way of waking you up to keep you aware of the danger until it’s overcome. That means your spontaneous neurological reaction is to stay awake because the danger isn’t over.” The resulting sleeplessness can lead to increased stress on the job.

In working with a military population, Maggard has found that “most PTSD is a result of wars that aren’t over yet, or battles that we didn’t win.” So how does a soldier or sailor overcome his or her PTSD? “You need to experience some sort of victory over the situ-

ation and overcome the danger,” said Maggard.

2. Avoidance Response. If the situation remains unresolved, PTSD sufferers might begin to display the second general symptom of PTSD: an avoidance response to keep from being overwhelmed by the trauma. “It’s a way for the mind and body to manage the amount of danger,” said Maggard. “You might see soldiers laughing just before a battle, pranking on the battlefield, or see people reading or listening to music.” All of these activities are ways to keep trauma — or impending trauma — from overwhelming the body and mind.

3. Nervous Arousal. To guard against potential danger, the third symptom of PTSD is the increased arousal of the nervous system. “You have highly honed and tuned reactivity to any sign or indication that danger is present,” said Maggard. “You’ll get angry more quickly, run

away faster, turn and fight faster. You’ll be hyper-vigilant; you’ll be scanning for danger.”

Roadside Trauma

Some towers have dealt with harrowing recovery jobs involving maimed or dead bodies. Jason Strickland, owner of Strickland Towing in Wellington, KS, is one of them. “I have had several experiences with fatalities and seeing dead bodies, waiting on the coroner to come out before we can do anything with the wreckage,” he recalled. In two of those incidents, Strickland actually knew the victims. “I don’t know that I suffered PTSD,” he said, “but I did feel horrible for the families. Every time that we work a fatality my heart goes out to the families.”

In Michigan, Paul Sheffer recalls another recovery job that has stuck with him through the years. Just before Christmas a mother was traveling home from a holiday party at work. Her car was stuffed with Christmas presents. And she was drunk. “She hit a tractor trailer,” said Sheffer, “and the truck nearly cut the car from the right headlamp to the left quarter panel.”

When Sheffer arrived on scene, first responders were removing the body and “there was something on the road that I was not familiar with,” he recalled. He asked Emergency Medical Services personnel what it was. “They confirmed it was brains,” he said. He couldn’t get the woman or her now-motherless children out of his head.

“Those sad children weighed heavy on my heart,” said Sheffer.

Unresolved Issues

Though Strickland and Sheffer have accepted what they saw and have moved forward, some towers may be haunted for years by bloody accident scenes they’ve experienced. “The most important thing to understand about the so-called symptoms of PTSD is that they are the emergency response of the mind and body to danger,” said Maggard. Under the right circumstances — in a combat zone, for example — PTSD symptoms work to help solve or overcome the danger that a person is facing. “You have to be aware of it, and you

have to stay aware of it until the danger is gone,” explains Maggard.

But in many cases, PTSD symptoms continue because the situation isn’t resolved or is open-ended. Since they can’t reverse the consequences of an accident, all incident responders are highly susceptible to this problem. However, fire, rescue, and EMT responders have an advantage over tow truck drivers: At an accident scene those trained in lifesaving and rescue can have an impact on the extent of a victim’s injury — and possibly save a life. So the danger that these responders face can be mitigated or overcome simply by doing their job.

Towers, on the other hand, usually arrive at a bloody accident scene unable to resolve or affect the situation. “If the tragedy has already happened,” said Maggard, “you’re looking at an aftermath. The natural instinct is to prevent it or fix it. But once it’s happened, you have neither opportunity as a tow truck driver.” Thus the resulting psychological trauma — “the experience of being alone or outnumbered in the presence of danger or tragedy” — can continue to plague the tower.

Flashbacks & More

Sometimes PTSD symptoms are the result not of road incidents but something else in a tower’s past. Jonathan Ginsberg, an attorney in Atlanta, GA, recalled a client who worked as a tow truck driver for about eight years. The man’s PTSD “manifested itself in the form of flashbacks, overreaction to unexpected sounds like horns or street sounds, and problems interacting appropriately with customers and co-workers,” said Ginsberg.

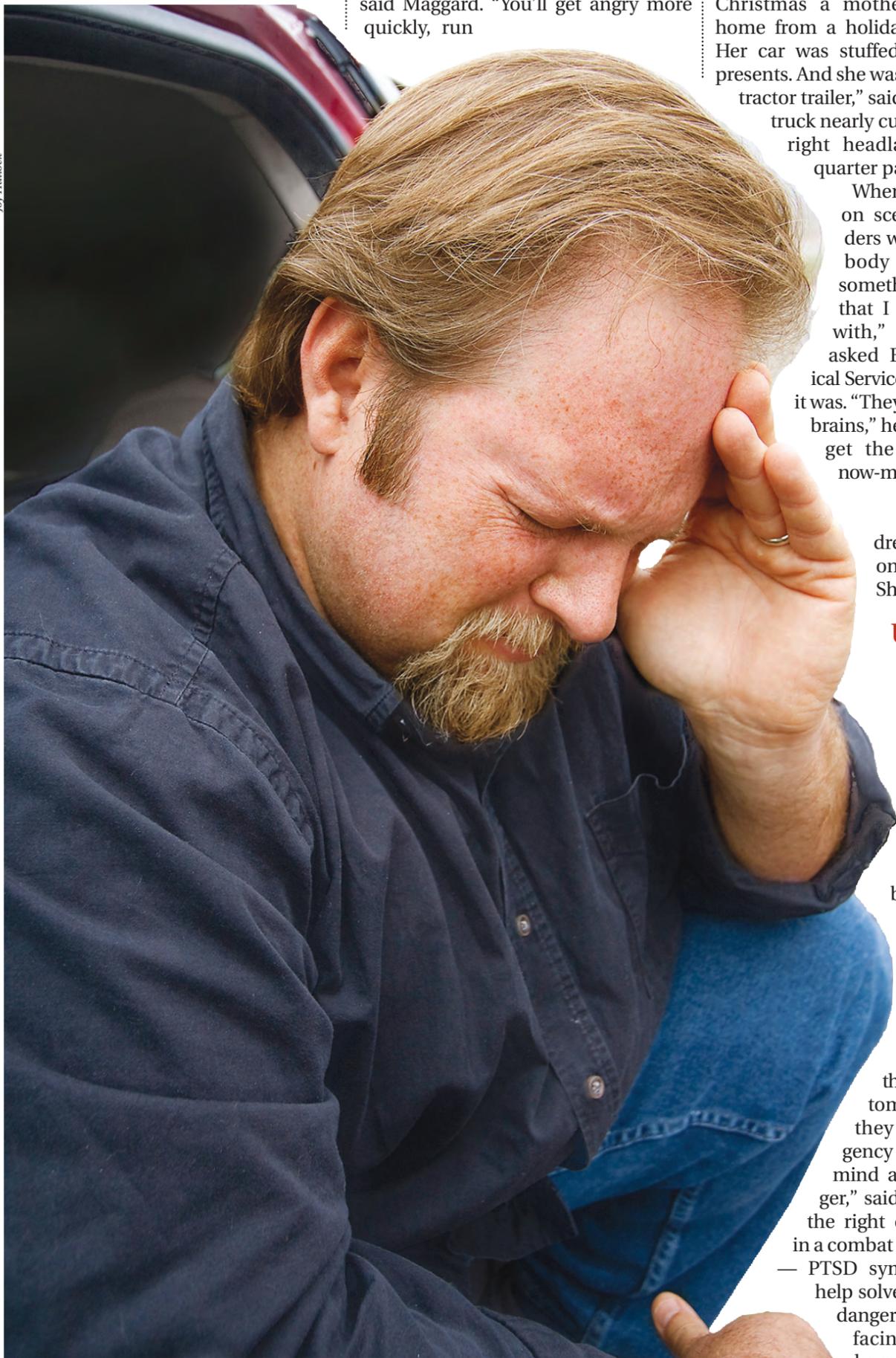
The tower spent every workday reacting to stimuli both physical and psychological. Noise was an issue. “Blaring horns and backfires would make him very jumpy and on edge,” said Ginsberg. “These sounds would sometimes result in bad dreams and flashbacks.” Honking horns and loud street noises — especially on hot days when he drove with the windows open — would result in nightmares when he went to sleep.

More important — and most crippling for a tower — were the man’s problems interacting with customers. For example, when customers complained about delays in response time, arguments often ensued. In the shop, the tower had problems in relationships with his co-workers. In eight years on the job, he had minimal conversation with other drivers. The end result: his career in the towing industry ended sooner than it needed to.

Working through the Social Security system, Ginsberg was able to secure his client some disability support by providing evidence that the tower was suffering from PTSD that had begun on the battlefield many years before.

Take Action Now

If a tower suspects he or she is suffering from PTSD, it’s important to deal with the issue as soon as possible. Don’t keep the experience bottled up,



Joy Hallock

BRAINSTORMIN

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a whole — a picture much larger than just our industry. You may want to go to the library once a week or so and look at the latest Barron's, Wall Street Journal, or Financial Times and see what's going on in the business world, what is happening with the economy itself. You'll get a better picture of the economy from the financial world than you will from the evening news crews of bubble-headed blonds.

Predicting Costs

Here's an example of how knowing more about the economic big picture can help you. As you well know, one of your biggest variable expenses besides labor is the cost of fuel. Wouldn't it be nice to have a crystal ball and have a way to tell what prices would be like in a few weeks or even a few months down the road?

Guess what? You do. Go to www.nymex.com and look at the gasoline and heating oil futures. There are no diesel futures, but you can look at heating oil as a proxy to give you an idea what your diesel will cost. In our state for example, if you add about 60 cents to the futures price of gasoline or heating oil, you'll be close to the pump price that you will pay within two or three weeks. This is because there is a lag time between the futures price and the pump price — the Nymex price has to work through the system.

This way you can look into the future and see what your cost of fuel will be several weeks down the road. Your competitor probably has never thought of that. So your pricing adjustments, fuel surcharges, or whatever else that may be necessary in running your business can be worked out ahead of time.

There's also a chart on the Nymex website that shows what gasoline or heating oil, the proxy for diesel fuel, is doing; whether it is trending up, going sideways, or trending down.

It is this kind of bigger picture that will give you some useful direction beyond the daily routine to help you manage your business better.

Taking Off

There's another thing you should seriously consider to help get more direction for your business: surveying your customers. Find out what they like, what they don't like, and what they would like to see you do better.

This can be one of the most powerful business tools you have available to improve your business. You will have to have a tough skin to accept criticism, but then turn it around and use it as a tool for improvement rather than viewing it as just seeking approval.

Run your business like the pilot of that airplane. Welcome outside direction and use the bigger picture to help make your business soar. Don't just take off into the wild blue yonder without a flight plan. ✈

HORROR

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say the experts. "These feelings should not be ignored as they can endure for a very long time — often years — and they can frequently get worse," noted Zimet. "Unfortunately, many people choose to ignore or turn to negative choices like alcohol to cope with PTSD. This can affect your work, relationships with people, and overall health in a profound way. Your best choice is to communicate with someone about what you observed and experienced, and learn techniques for managing your thoughts and stress."

Opening up about what you've seen can be difficult. Strickland, who's seen acquaintances die at accident scenes, noted that sometimes he stays quiet, mainly out of necessity in order to get the job done. "I think that I have

"Those sad children weighed heavy on my heart"

become somewhat callous to opening up my personal feelings and try to focus on the twisted metal part of the accident," he explained.

"Working a family member's or a friend's accident is much, much harder when my own personal feelings are involved," Strickland continued. "When we work a fatality, most of the time we don't talk about it very much, and there are only a few of us who have actually seen a dead body on an accident scene."

However, Strickland acknowledged that he and his staff do their best to share the pain that a difficult recovery job can trigger: "Most of the time, if something is bothering us we all discuss it at the end of the day."



Jonathan Ginsberg, attorney



Dr. Elmer Maggard

Respect Discomfort

At Tony's Wrecker Service, Inc., in Louisville, KY, owner Nick Schade goes through the same thing with his employees. "We talk about what happened," he said, "but as far as any kind of outside professionals coming in, we haven't had the opportunity or need to do that so far."

Schade noted that his employees are often protected from viewing the gore of a horrible accident scene: "Usually we don't see too much of it — for example, the fire department has already cut the victim out of the wreck by the time we arrive," he explained. In

addition, Schade does his best to cater to any employees who aren't comfortable responding to a bloody incident. Usually Schade will go himself instead of sending someone else.

At Five Seasons Auto Rebuilders, David Beer prepares his drivers accordingly. "All my drivers are told that anytime they're in an uncomfortable situation, they're to call me immediately," said Beer. At that point, Beer can replace the driver at the scene, or — if the driver is all right with handling the situation — Beer follows up after the job. "We'll seek out the appropriate type of counseling for the driver," he

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HORROR

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said. "And they know that they can take days off."

Schade notes that a professional counselor would be useful in an area where there are a greater number of traffic fatalities. "Then you have an opportunity for cross-training among the paramedics, fire department, and towing and recovery people, for example."

To get assistance from a professional therapist or counselor, some companies have an Employee Assistance Program that offers therapy services. If not, Zimet said, finding a therapist can be as simple as going online or looking through the yellow pages.

Getting Help

Jonathan Ginsberg, the Atlanta attorney, stressed the importance of seeking treatment when needed. "PTSD sufferers sometimes do not feel that their doctor or therapist visits are doing much good and they don't want to go," he explained. "They also may be non-compliant with any medications they've been prescribed."

When he sought disability compensation and treatment for his client, Ginsberg made his case in front of a Social Security judge, who expected to see a treatment record. "Judges expect that the claimant will put forth his best effort," said Ginsberg. "That means taking meds and going to the therapist and doctor."

Another reason that PTSD sufferers don't seek help has to do with terminology, said Maggard. "To call PTSD a disorder is a mistake," he said. "Towers go out and do this extremely important service for the community. To say they have a disorder after doing what they do is a disservice to them. I think we need to recognize that there is a limit to what any person can do."

Among the military personnel with whom he works, Maggard noted that adapting to danger saves lives on the battlefield. But if a soldier or sailor departs the combat zone too quickly or before the battle is over, he continues to have the same reactions that made him effective on the battlefield. If the situation remains unresolved, the symptoms persist.

Buddy Backup

One thing that helps PTSD sufferers, said Maggard, is to help other people who have PTSD or some other problem. "The empowerment of being able to overcome someone else's danger helps you sleep better the next night," he explained.

"After seeing so much damage and destruction that they can't tolerate any more," said Maggard, "one of the best things for a tower is to move to another level of response to the danger." This is similar to a pilot project Maggard is helping develop at Navy Medical Center Portsmouth. Working with IA's — "individual augmentees" — whom the Navy sends to support Army and Marine units in the field, Maggard and



Jason Strickland & Ted Davidson

others at NMCP are bringing post-deployed sailors together to train, track, and support their shipmates who are going to the war zone.

"After they have been first responders, they will come home and help the next wave of first responders," explained Maggard. "They'll provide backup for their buddies who are in still in harm's way. They may help a buddy's family, or send care packages or meet them at the airport when they come home. When they help other sailors overcome the stress and danger of war, that's their way of continuing the fight, and of winning."

Some Good Days

Sometimes overcoming the trauma of PTSD happens as a matter of circumstance. Sheffer recalls several acci-

dents in which he was able to overcome the danger and save a life. In one instance, a woman was pinned in a car that had struck a telephone pole. "She was suffering from major internal injuries and a major laceration in the groin," said Sheffer. "She was bleeding out and needed to get out of the car and to the hospital fast or she would die."

The fire department tried everything it could but was unable to free the woman from the car. So Sheffer suggested that he rig his wrecker to pull on the car, and relieve enough of the pressure so that the fire department could pull the woman out of the front passenger seat. It worked. "She lived and came by my office to say thanks," Sheffer recalled with a smile.

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TowBlog

Where You Find What You Need To Know

Too Close To Home

In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Dave Beer, president of Five Seasons Auto Rebuilders, is in a unique situation: two of his sons are trained psychologists. One of those sons actually works in the shop.

During his 30 years as a tower, Beer has responded to five fatalities. The first one was a vehicular suicide. "They were all uncomfortable to deal with," he re-called. "You don't even know *how* to deal with it until you're actually put in that position."

Beer added that for him, it was initially very difficult dealing with families of accident victims. What can you say, what do you tell someone who has just lost their spouse, son, or daughter? Today, having experienced several of these situations, Beer said he's better able to empathize with the families' grief.

One thing that makes a huge difference for him after an accident resulting in a fatality is how the first responders deal with the body. Several years ago, during a response to a fatality on an interstate highway, Beer recalled what the first responders — many of them volunteers — did at the scene: "They surrounded the body with a blanket as they loaded the person onto a stretcher," said Beer. "They protected the person's dignity like that."

Sometimes automobile fatalities happen

close to home, and the resulting trauma lasts for a long time. Three years ago, Beer and his staff were in the middle of a typical workday when they received some horrifying news: the dead motorist in a nearby vehicle accident turned out to be the girlfriend of one of Beer's sons. She was killed on the highway on her way home after her last day of college studies.

"It was the worst situation that could possibly happen," recalled Beer. All of Beer's employees were friendly with his son's girlfriend because she had assisted in the shop from time to time. "She was part of our crew without officially being part of our crew," said Beer. "She was an absolute delight."

The aftermath of the woman's death affected everyone in Beer's company. "It literally shut our business down for two weeks," said Beer.

"We could hardly cope with that. It's a situation that I don't think anybody can deal with."

Beer didn't bring in professional counselors, but he did the next best thing: he slowed down operations to allow people to grieve. "You just have to give yourself time," he said. "It took us probably a good year to get to the point where we could function at full capacity again."

SHORT HAULS

Industry people, news, shows, awards, and more

By Cyndi Kight

Email your company press releases, news items, and other information to the editor at bcandler@dominionenterprises.com with any available photos and art.

TowBriefs Sign-Up. Footnotes is now emailing TowBriefs, a new monthly e-news letter of brief items of interest to the industry from around the nation. Visit www.trfootnotes.com and click on the new e-Newsletter tab and

sign up now to start receiving TowBriefs in your inbox each month. In addition, you will also receive an email every month with our new Digital Edition!

WreckMaster classes. In October, Chevron hosted a three-day Level 6/7 WreckMaster class sponsored by the Towing & Recovery Association of Ohio, Region 4.

A class of 35 representing towing companies from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and states as far away as Illinois, Mich-



The Wreckmaster class at Chevron

igan, New Jersey, and New England participated.

The classroom work took place in Chevron's spacious showroom and the outside facilities hosted several vehicle "casualties" for the hands-on demonstrations, which included uprighting a cement mixer and mid-air rolls of various light to heavy vehicles.

Student Trucks. Hino Trucks recently donated six trucks to various colleges across the country in support of their diesel technology programs. The trucks selected for donation are MY '05 & '06 training vehicles, ranging from a 14,050-pound GVW model 145 light-duty truck to a 33,000-pound GVW model 338 medium-duty truck.

The trucks will provide apprentices and students the opportunity to gain

hands-on experience working with engine mechanics and functionality and allows them to learn the latest on-board diagnostic technology. Visit www.hino.com



Hino & college officials with donated truck

See SHORT HAULS, page 8

TowBriefs and Digital Edition



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One lucky winner will take home a fully loaded Hino model 258ALP with a Century 12-Series LCG Carrier. Raffle proceeds benefit the Professional Wrecker Operators of Florida Education and Legislation Programs. Lucky winner drawn at 5 p.m. Saturday at Miller Industries booth.



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Join the fun Saturday as Allstate presents an evening of dinner, awards and dancing to one of Orlando's hottest local bands, Lucky Dogg.
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Friday Evening Customer Appreciation Event
Join the staff from Miller Industries, enjoy free food and drink, lots of activities and watch exciting demonstrations as they say "thanks" to their loyal friends in the towing and recovery industry.
Courtesy of 

PWOF Women's Luncheon
Join the PWOF Women's Group as they host a luncheon for ladies only. Escape for a couple of hours and enjoy guest speakers who enlighten and entertain. Keynote Speakers: Christine Corelli and Clarissa Powell
Brought to you by 

Thursday Kick-Off Party
Don't miss Jerr-Dan's Thursday night Kick-Off Party in their booth. Enjoy live demonstrations, free food, fun for all ages and a great tropical-flavored band.
Courtesy of 

Friday Evening Customer Appreciation Event
Join the staff from Miller Industries, enjoy free food and drink, lots of activities and watch exciting demonstrations as they say "thanks" to their loyal friends in the towing and recovery industry.
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Enjoy Free Snacks and Drink Specials
In the Nation Safe Driver lounge, open Friday and Saturday inside the hotel lobby.
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Drive your truck to the show and enter it in the Tow Truck Beauty Contest. Registration on Friday, judging on Saturday.
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SHORT HAULS

continued from page 7

“All Worked Up.” A new TruTV reality show called “All Worked Up” premiered this fall and features repo company owners Ron and Amy Shirley. According to the www.newsobserver.com story, “All Worked Up” follows working folks who deal with stressed-out, unhappy customers.

Along with the Shirleys, who own Lizard Lick Towing & Recovery in eastern Wake County, the show follows a process server in New York and a code enforcement officer in Florida, among others.” Learn more at www.lizardlick-towing.com



Ron Shirley of Lizard Lick Towing

New Truck Safety Requirements. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has begun enforcing its New Entrant Safety Assurance Process rule, which requires newly registered truck and bus companies to meet stricter safety requirements. The rule raises the compliance standards for passing new entrant safety audits and requires that new carriers correct safety deficiencies before being granted permanent registration.

Under the new requirements, a newly registered truck or bus company will automatically fail its safety audit if violations of any one of 16 essential federal regulations are discovered. These regulations cover controlled substances and alcohol testing, hours-of-service rules, driver qualifications, vehicle condition and carrier insurance responsibility.

Failure to pass a new entrant safety audit may result in revocation of a carrier's registration. For more information on the rule, see <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/>

2010 Ford Raffle. Sponsored by the Southwest Tow Operators, this 2010 Ford Transit Connect Raffle will raise funds for “In the Line of Duty” benevolent fund and the International Towing and Recovery Hall of Fame and Museum. Tickets are \$50 each and less



The Ford to be raffled

than 5,000 will be sold. The drawing will be held at 4:00 p.m. on May 1 at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, TX. Winner need not be present to win. Visit www.swtowop.org and click on “2010 Ford Raffle.”

Move Over Manitoba. In early December, the Manitoba government planned to introduce legislation that would make it illegal to pass a working tow truck on a highway without changing lanes or slowing down. The legislation is in response to a “Move Over Manitoba” campaign initiated by CAA Manitoba early in 2009.

TRAA Takes Issue. The Towing and Recovery Association of America (TRAA), the national association representing the towing and recovery industry, has officially taken issue with the cover story published in a recent *Land Line Magazine*, the official publication of the Owner Operators Independent Drivers' Association (OOIDA).

The story, titled “Staying Off The Hook,” was touted as a guide to truckers to improve their chances of getting a fair tow bill and can be found at www.landlinemag.com/Archives/2009/Dec09-Jan10/Bottom_Line/staying-off-hook.htm

In a statement, TRAA noted, “While we recognize a minimal effort in this

See SHORT HAULS, page 9

Our Lost Towers



Harold Blackard

Harold E. Blackard. Blackard, the owner of Blackard's Super Service in West Covina, CA, died in November at age 86.

Kevin Butler. The 36-year-old South Carolina man, who had only begun working a second job as a tow truck driver, was hit and killed December 6 on the roadside. He had been assisting customers in Lexington County.

Gary Watson. The 53-year-old tower worked for A Touch of Class Towing of FL and died in November from a medical problem while on the job.

HORROR

continued from page 6

“Those are good days. They make it all worth it.”

When dealing with danger and trauma, taking care of oneself is almost as important as recognizing the suffering that others may be going through. With regard to traffic fatalities, Sheffer said that it's important to be considerate to family and friends of the victim. To that end, he keeps all fatality vehicles as far out of sight as possible. “You have to

realize that you can't undo what just happened,” said Sheffer. “You're there to do a job.”

Sharing traumatic experiences with co-workers, friends, family, or professional counselors can go a long way in dealing with PTSD. Maggard sees PTSD as a sort of injury that's exacerbated when people isolate themselves rather than asking for help. “But the more united we are, the more common experiences we have together, the more powerful we are — and so the less danger we experience,” he said. ❖



David Beer

Defining Disability

Atlanta attorney Jonathan Ginsberg represented a Vietnam veteran who was unable to keep his stateside job as a tow truck driver. The reason? PTSD symptoms made it nearly impossible for the tower to interact effectively with his customers and fellow towers.

Ginsberg went to court to get disability support for his client. “Generally judges accept PTSD as a legitimate cause of disability,” explained Ginsberg. “They will want to see some trauma — combat duty, sexual abuse, those kinds of things — and consistent treatment with compliance of treatment recommendations.”

According to Ginsberg, the Social Security Administration — which oversees disability payments to qualifying veterans — defines disability as the inability to engage in substantial gainful activity

because of a medically determinable condition or conditions that have lasted — or are expected to last — 12 consecutive months, or result in death. “The emphasis therefore is on whether a claimant can reliably perform even a simple, entry-level, sedentary job,” said Ginsberg.

For his tow truck-driving client, Ginsberg collected data supporting the Social Security criteria for an anxiety disorder, which is how the government classifies PTSD. “My client's condition results in such an erosion of his functional capacity to work that he would not be a reliable worker.”

Social Security disability uses a system of work credits. “Unlike retirement Social Security,” said Ginsberg, “disability looks to the 10-year period prior to the alleged onset date.” To be fully insured, added Ginsberg, a claimant must have 20 credits out of the past 40 quarters (work five out of last 10 years). One credit is worth approximately \$1,000. “When a claimant works part-time, or works for a while then stops over a period of years, he may run out of credits and thus won't qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).”

SHORT HAULS

continued from page 8

article to support the majority of towers in this industry who constantly do the right thing and work tirelessly 24/7, most of the article is devoted to continuing media browbeating of the industry in general.”

AutoReturn Partners With San Diego. AutoReturn, a towing management and logistics company, announced a two-year contract with the city of San Diego. Using proprietary GPS-enabled technologies, AutoReturn will improve tow response times and track towed vehicles from initial dispatch through final disposition. AutoReturn was featured in Footnotes' October issue after they partnered with the city of San Francisco.

NV Insurers Against Inflation. In a late November story, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported that some of Nevada's biggest auto insurers have urged state regulators to take action against towing companies that they said are inflating bills for towing cars involved in accidents.

Complaints ranged from bills for “out-of-the-ordinary” services and winching to non-itemization of charges on towing bills and fees to visit impounded vehicles. According to the story, “AAA Nevada said a random survey of 100 tows showed the average non-consent tow cost \$590, of which 59 percent stemmed from miscellaneous charges.”

Check Out Footnotes' TowBlog at www.thetowblog.com! TowBlog features the latest news about towing and towers around the country, towing heroes and towers we've lost, as well as tow shows, demos, and other events and useful industry information. ☛

Junk My Car

Is salvage hauling part of your towing company's business? If not, are you thinking of getting into that? Either way, Junk My Car may be an option.

Based in Shelton, Connecticut, Junk My Car is a free junk vehicle removal service that facilitates the removal of cars, trucks, and motorcycles in the United States and Canada. The company has been providing this service since 2004 and has assisted in the removal and recycling of over 30,000 vehicles per year.

Junk My Car offers customers hassle-free vehicle removal for salvage companies who receive the customer's vehicle information and vehicle for recycling of its parts and scrap metal. Junk My Car has a network of over 500 towing and salvage operations throughout the United States and Canada.

Payment is offered for many of the vehicles to be removed, but if the value of the vehicle is not high enough, free removal service is available. Junk My Car has partnered with several charities to haul donated vehicles. Towing companies can learn about Junk My Car and also set up an account by visiting www.junkmycar.com/tower, or call 877-586-5692.

**Our Tow Heroes**

Saving Christmas. According to a recent *Houston Chronicle* story, tow truck operator Tracy Clark subdued and held a 16-year-old boy for police after hearing a radio call about a suspicious teen following a postal carrier. The boy was arrested by sheriff's deputies for stealing mail left in boxes, specifically targeting Christmas cards containing cash.

To The Rescue. Nelson Rhinehart, co-owner of Nutcracker Towing in Pima, AZ, came to the aid of an Army veteran who was stuck in the snow on Mount Graham for two days. According to the *East Arizona Courier* story, “Dan O'Laughlin, 59, of Douglas is a disabled, terminal veteran who is living out his last days enjoying himself by camping throughout Arizona with his two dogs. He drives around in a 2008 Chevy Silverado with a camper attached on the bed but never strays too far from a Veterans Administration hospital.”

After getting stuck, O'Laughlin tried for two

days to free his vehicle. Nutcracker Towing was dispatched after O'Laughlin called the sheriff's office. “After arriving at about noon, co-owner and driver Nelson Rhinehart said O'Laughlin said he didn't have money and wouldn't be able to pay him. Rhinehart freed O'Laughlin's truck and gave him a receipt from Nutcracker without charging him anything. Rhinehart then followed O'Laughlin and made sure he made it off the mountain without any more problems.”

Thieves Stopped. According to a recent story from the *New York Daily News*, 44-year-old Performance Automotive driver Vinnie Lanzieri helped police bust a carjacking crew. Lanzieri was driving his tow truck in Queens about midnight when he heard on his police scanner that a 38-year-old man had been held up at gunpoint and pulled out of his 2008 Cadillac Escalade in Rego Park.

Lanzieri tailed the suspects and then flagged down and alerted police officers. “I told them what happened,” Lanzieri said. “The two cops took them out at gunpoint and had them on the floor in 30 seconds.”

MI Tow Hero Honored. Bryan Hudson of Merl's Towing was honored by *American Towman* at the 2009 tow show in Baltimore for saving three people from an icy lake last December. The victims' SUV flipped into an icy lake; Hudson pulled the people to safety.

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CHASSIS CHAT

Why I Love My Kenworth

A new column features towers' favorite chassis — and why

By Allan T. Duffin

Ask ten different towers why they chose a certain brand of chassis and cab for their wreckers, and you would likely get ten different answers. In this occasional column, Footnotes will seek some of those answers to find out how certain models work best for specific types of towing and recovery jobs, and how considerations like geographic location, climate, and personal taste factor into a tower's choice of chassis. In this first column, we feature the Kenworth chassis.

If you have a favorite chassis and want to share your reasons why, email your contact information to bcandler@dominionenterprises.com

Anthony Aquilino, a third-generation tower and owner of Universe Towing in the Bronx, near Yankee Stadium, has been using chassis built by the Kirkland, Washington-based Kenworth Truck Company for 20 years. Universe Towing is a busy company: In addition to working with customers every day, the company is the authorized NYPD tower for most of the highways in the Bronx.

Aquilino sets high standards for himself and his team. As he has done since he began his career, he often goes out on recovery jobs with his staff. "I'm not a one-truck company anymore," he said. "I couldn't do this job without my team of employees. If it wasn't for them, this company wouldn't exist."



Anthony Aquilino, Universe Towing, New York City



A happy man with his heavy Kenworth

Universe Towing boasts a fleet of 30 vehicles, four of which use Kenworth chassis for medium- and heavy-duty towing: Three T800 wreckers plus a new Kworth T270 flatbed. "When I bought my first Kenworth back in 1989 I was attracted to the style of the truck — the way it looked," recalled Aquilino. "The Kenworth chassis paired with a Miller Industries industrial body is a beautiful truck, a classy-looking truck." But Aquilino recognizes that different towers favor different models: "Everybody has their own taste," he said.

Beyond the exterior aesthetics, Aquilino was impressed with the comfort of the cab interior and the way the vehicle handled on the road. "I drove one and fell in love with the ride of the truck," he said.

Street-Wise Specs

Because New York streets tend to be cramped and narrow, Aquilino noted that he and his staff perform few recovery jobs. Instead, most of their work involves towing disabled vehicles. This is where the design of the T800 comes in handy: "It's got a slope nose that gives me a good field of view," said Aquilino, "so I don't run over a vehicle or a person."

Also because of the nature of the city's streets, Aquilino requires a chassis that features a tight turning radius. The tri-axle Kenworth T800 does the trick with its floatation tires, set-back front axle, and short wheelbase, he said. His personal truck is built on a T800 chassis and includes two 60,000-pound winches, a 50,000-pound drag winch and a three-stage, 75-ton rotator boom. The other T800s in Aquilino's fleet are equipped with 40-ton rotator booms and 50-ton integrated booms.

Jeff Parietti, public relations manager for Kenworth, echoed Aquilino's

sentiments about the tight turning radius, adding that the company emphasizes driver comfort and that Kenworths tend to have a "high resale value." He said that Kenworth also manufactures an "extended day cab" that's six inches longer and five inches taller than the standard model.

To ensure that he has the right vehicle for the job, Aquilino has new trucks custom-built to his specifications. He works with a number of longtime friends including a 30-year fixture in the towing and auto body business, Thomas DeCillis, owner of Tri-State Towing Equipment in Westbury, N.Y. DeCillis sits down with Aquilino to sketch out the specifications for each new tow truck. "Tom takes really good care of me and my business," said Aquilino. "It's nice to have such a great distributor and friend."

Also involved in the process are Romolo Gabrielli and Paul Polito of Gabrielli Truck Sales, Ltd., in Hicksville, N.Y. Gabrielli Truck Sales is Aquilino's local dealership; they mesh the Kenworth chassis with the wrecker body specifications. "We make sure to build a vehicle that the customer will be happy with and will perform its functions properly," said Gabrielli. Coincidentally, the bond among these men goes beyond business: Aquilino, Gabrielli, and Polito all grew up together in the Bronx.

Exploring Options

When it's time to merge a chassis with its towing equipment, Aquilino makes periodic visits to the Miller Industries factory in Ooltewah, Tennessee, to track the manufacturer's progress. Here again, the wreckers are constructed to tackle New York City streets. "They make them short for me," explains Aquilino. "If you put a

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Rig, rates, and routes

big wrecker on a small chassis it defeats the purpose of the truck."

During this step in the process, Aquilino coordinates everything with John Hawkins, vice president of sales for Miller Industries. Hawkins stresses the importance of exploring options in order to choose a chassis that is practical and dependable. "For the most part, especially when you're dealing with medium- and heavy-duty trucks, each vehicle is customized for a specific towing or recovery application," said Hawkins. "So understanding how the vehicle will be used, and subsequently the speccing, are vital to success. Since Anthony's towing company is in the downtown, maneuverability and visibility are critical in his tow trucks."

Hawkins noted that while Miller Industries' Class 8 program involves mostly products manufactured by Paccar (the company that owns Kenworth), Miller Industries also works directly with all major chassis manufacturers. "The new LoneStar truck we showed at the Baltimore Tow Show is a perfect example of this," said Hawkins. The Kenworth T800 line, added Hawkins, provides good visibility over the front bumper and headlights. "So many times towers 'hook a bumper' during a backup — catching a curb, fire hydrant, or a building — and bend the bumper back because the obstruction isn't visible," he explained. The T800's slope-nose — one of Aquilino's favorite features of the chassis — "is useful in tight quarters and lends itself to a better view so drivers don't damage their trucks when backing up," said Hawkins.

End Product

With the chassis married to its towing equipment, Miller Industries and the local dealership — Gabrielli Truck Sales — prepare to roll out the finished product. "We perform pre-delivery inspection on the completed vehicle and then make the final delivery presentation to the customer," said Gabrielli, whose company continues to support the vehicle after the customer accepts it. "I've been in the towing business all my life," said Aquilino. "I saw what my father and grandfather had, and what everyone drove. I found out that the Kenworth chassis were strong. I liked the ride of the truck and the comfort of the cab. They're very comfortable vehicles to work in."

"Buying a new truck is a big investment," said Hawkins. "Anthony takes a lot of pride in his vehicles, and he goes to great lengths to make sure they're right for the job."

Aquilino will pass his expertise on to his sons, Anthony Jr. and Frank, who will take over the family business after they graduate from high school and college. "The fourth generation of my family will be coming into the business soon, and they'll also buy Kenworths," said Aquilino.

Aquilino urges other towers who are considering the purchase of a new chassis to buy the best type for the work that they do. "I like my trucks," explained Aquilino. "I only buy the best, and I want the best because I'll only be here once." ☛



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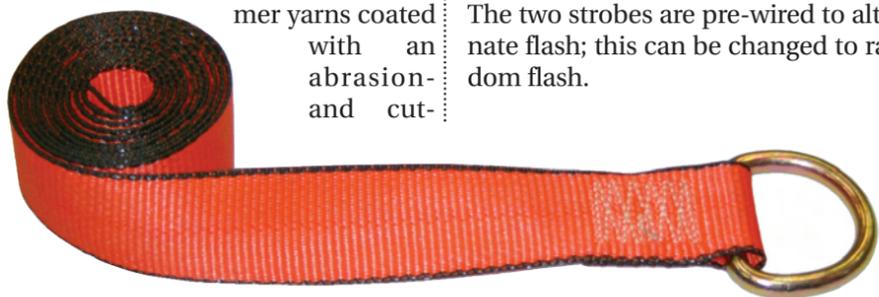
Navistar, after months of working with Miller engineers, has rolled out a new LoneStar day cab equipped with a Century 25-ton integrated unit. Several LoneStars have been previously outfitted with towing units but the chassis required extensive modifications for mounting the equipment. Now, with the new specs, LoneStar offers a natural fit for the Class 8 market and so are now available through Miller Industries dealers.

The new LoneStar day cab specs provide a 309-inch wheelbase with a 14,600-pound front axle and springs along with 46,000-pound Hendrickson rear air suspension and 40,000-pound rear axles. The chassis is powered by a Cummins ISX-500 hp engine with 1650 pound-feet of torque and a Fuller 18-speed transmission.

Visit www.internationaltrucks.com. For more information on LoneStars with a Century or Vulcan unit, see your Miller Industries dealer.

Towers Edge Web

B/A Products Co. introduces the new Towers Edge Web. The edges are constructed of polymer yarns coated with an abrasion- and cut-



The new Towers Edge web

resistant thermoplastic polymer that is more resistant to tears, cuts, and abrasions and has up to 50 percent less water absorption.

Provided in Safety Orange and for use with any two-inch strap configuration, the new B/A product offers superior protection against the elements with a modified acrylic web coating for a durable, permanent, finish. Towers Edge also features a tighter-weave style for superior flexibility and abrasion resistance. Visit www.baproduct.com

“Century has introduced a hydraulic front stabilizer”

Mini-Strobes

Superior Signals has added two new strobe mini-bars to their Meteorlite Series. These units are 24-inches with an aluminum permanent-mount base.

The 9390 Series is a two-strobe mini-bar available as two amber lenses with a clear dome, or clear lenses with amber dome. A diamond shaped center mirror enhances the flashes. The two strobes are pre-wired to alternate flash; this can be changed to random flash.

The 9395 Series features three strobes with two mirrors to enhance the flashes and is available as three amber lenses with a clear dome or three clear lenses with an amber dome. The two side strobes are pre-wired to alternate flash while the central strobe flashes randomly; the flashing sequence can also be changed. Visit www.superiorsignals.com

Heavy-Duty Dolly

In March 2010, In The Ditch Towing Products will offer the new Speed Dolly XD Dolly for severe-duty use. This extreme-duty self-loading tow dolly features an increased load rating, high-strength alloy components, HD tires, long-life bearings and seals, a new Tuff Coat severe-duty paint-finish system, lots of ground clearance, and a computer engineered rigid-frame design.

The Speed Dolly XD was specifically designed for use in severe applications where extra load capacity is required, such as for municipalities, auto clubs, large-volume towing applications, and extreme climates. Call 888-993-4824 or 208-587-7960, email sales@InTheDitch.com, and visit www.InTheDitch.com



Miller's new front stabilizer

Stable Front

One of the many advantages of Century heavy-duty rotators is the ability to rotate the boom 180 degrees over the cab in many chassis configurations. This provides three advantages:

- Added clearance to permit any apparatus on the front of the towed vehicle, such as a snorkel or fire ladder, to hang over the deck of the rotator
- Added front axle weight on the tow truck
- Lifting or recovering off the front of the unit when pulling up to the rear of a casualty

To assist with supporting the front suspension in these applications, Century has introduced a hydraulic front stabilizer. The stabilizer is available on new Miller Heavy-Spec Kenworth T800s. A version will also be available shortly that can be retrofitted to Miller Heavy-Spec Kenworth T800 and Peterbilt chassis from 2007 to present. For more information, visit www.millerind.com or call your local Century distributor.



Superior's new strobe mini-bar

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Too Heavy? Too Long?

What's in and what's out of a proposed weight exemption law

By Allan T. Duffin

Heavy-duty tow truck operators might have some legal assistance coming to them down the road. House Resolution 1451 might sound simple but, if enacted into law, could have wide-reaching effects on the towing industry.

Sponsored by Pennsylvania Rep. William Shuster of Pennsylvania's 9th District, H.R. 1451 proposes an amendment to Title 23 of the U.S. Code, allowing for an exception to weight limits on particular types of tow truck. Rep. Robert Brady of

heavy and are in danger of being hit with fines for completing a job that might have been ordered by local authorities in the first place."

This is a massive catch-22 — Federal law that often increases the problem it's

from," he adds — 10 wheels on the cab and another eight wheels on the trailer.

In an attempt to get around the problem and still do their jobs, some tow trucks take dangerous risks. They use recovery vehicles that are "too short in

three decades ago. "When I started in this business in 1976 with my father, we sat down with a group of towers to talk about how as a group they had rights."

That discussion eventually led to the formation of the Professional Wrecker



Pennsylvania's 1st District is the bill's co-sponsor. Introduced earlier this year, as of this writing the bill is still being considered by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and its subcommittee on highways and transit.

What does the bill propose to do? Heavy-duty tow trucks that transport Class 8 casualty vehicles — those weighing over 33,000 pounds — would be given an exemption from federal weight limits on their tow trucks, allowing the towers to use trucks weighing more than the currently allowable 150,000 pounds. The tower could then transport the casualty vehicle on the interstate highway system to a storage or repair facility at a distance of up to 100 miles from the recovery point.

John Daggett, director of communications for Oshkosh Corporation, owner of Jerr-Dan Corporation, both of which joined in lobbying for the bill, produced an information sheet outlining the weight exemption issue. According to the release, "Once these tow trucks leave the immediate accident locations with casualty vehicles attached, the tow trucks no longer conform to rear axle weight limitation laws."

Trouble Ahead

Because of this, heavy-duty tow trucks get in trouble once they hook up the casualty and depart the accident location. Suddenly the towers are driving

supposed to solve. H.R. 1451 proposes to alleviate that issue. The Oshkosh release noted that "State and

"Towers get in trouble once they hook up the casualty and depart"

federal enforcement agencies have placed significant equipment demands on contract tow operators to minimize road closures and other hazards presented by disabled vehicles, yet these agencies later penalize the same operators at the scale house, or during traffic stops with portable scales."

Notwithstanding the weight of the towing vehicle, the weight of the casualty vehicle can be staggering. "When you look at a normal tractor trailer, you're looking at 12,000 pounds on the steer axle on the cab, 34,000 pounds on the front tandem axles, and 34,000 pounds on the rear tandem axles, which makes 80,000 pounds," explained John Hawkins, vice president of sales for Miller Industries. "That's where the term '18-wheeler' comes

wheelbase length, under capacity in equipment strength, light in axle capability, and overall too small to safely handle the weight of Class 8 truck casualties," said the Oshkosh release.

Banding Together

With this in mind, H.R. 1451 proposes resetting Federal standards to treat tow trucks as emergency vehicles and improve communications between law enforcement authorities and weigh station operators. But the bill, say towers, won't take care of the entire problem.

"I think the bill in its present state is a good basic start," said Earl Mumma, president of Highspire Auto & Truck Repair Corporation in Steelton, PA. Mumma has heard complaints from tow trucks who say they need laws that allow some leeway in transporting casualty vehicles on interstates and secondary roads. Mumma believes in balancing the practical side of things with the business needs of towers: "I feel the industry needs to keep in mind this is an incident management tool to clear freeways, not to make towers more money," he explained.

Miller's John Hawkins said that banding together in pursuit of a purpose can result in huge changes for tow trucks across the nation. He has been a strong proponent of citizen advocacy since he entered the towing industry

Operators of Florida (PWF), which was incorporated in 1977 as a membership group that wanted to boost working conditions, profitability, and the overall image of the towing industry. Hawkins believed in this goal so strongly that he initially funded the group out of his own pocket.

Capitol Effort

"This is how our system works — through the constituents within a state," said Hawkins. "I believe in going to the state capitol and getting things done for the industry." Today PWF has approximately 300 members and employs a full-time executive director and staff, including a lobbyist to push towers' concerns at the state level.

Despite his faith in the power of politics, Hawkins has concerns about H.R. 1451: "I think it's extremely vanilla and generic," he noted. But he also is quick to point out that the bill is a definite step in the right direction for the towing industry. "I don't mean to diminish or take anything away from what people have done," he said. "As a major manufacturer I should work hard to give our customers a vehicle that has legitimate ratings and legitimate capacities, but I should also work hard to maximize the payload that the customer can carry with my unit. If I have no reason to do that — if you just say in your bill, 'Okay, tow truck, you're exempt' — that can be



Minuteman's Brian Bolus

dangerous. Because then we're causing damage to bridges and roadways, and we're adding to just cause."

Hawkins wonders which is better: getting something passed now, or con-

tinuing to massage the bill until it's just right. "If H.R. 1451 becomes adopted as written, is it good or bad? That would be my question, and one admittedly I do not know the answer to. If we as an

industry come back later to add further legislation, the Congressional committee might say, 'Hey, we just gave this industry a reprieve, and now they're coming back for more.' So is it right to leave [the bill] as written and then come back later, or is it better to get it right first? I guess that's why they call it politics!"

Clarity Needed

Scott Burrows, president of Burrows Wrecker Service in Pendleton, KY, also sees H.R. 1451 as a step in the right direction, but notes that there are still many issues that need to be clarified. "For example," he said, "while addressing the weight issue, [the bill] leaves unanswered the question of what is an 'appropriate destination' open to interpretation by the enforcement agency."

Hawkins too is concerned that although there's been much discussion about problems that towers have encountered at weigh stations, H.R. 1451 doesn't really address how weighing procedures should be standardized. "I can pull into one scale and the gentleman who's been weighing vehicles for 30 or 40 years will look at me and say, 'Go,'" said Hawkins. "But I can go to the next scale, where another gentleman who's also been doing the job for 30 or 40 years might tell me that my weight is unacceptable under this new statute."

If the bill makes it into law, said Burrows, it would be important to add language that would overlook the "over-length" of combination vehicles being towed behind long-wheelbase tow trucks. Without this additional

exemption, explains Burrows, an overzealous enforcement official will have additional opportunities to cite tow operators for violations.

Combination Issue

Brian Bolus, president of Minuteman Towing & Repairs, Inc., in Mifflinville, PA, feels so strongly about H.R. 1451 that he visited his congressman in Washington, D.C., to discuss the proposed bill. Bolus' operations manager, Paul Johnson, sees the bill as helpful to the towing industry but, like Burrows, is concerned about requirements for combination vehicles.

"The bill does not include combinations," said Johnson. "Combinations should be included, either by a definition of disabled vehicle or as a specific item. As we know, for reasons of public safety, many combinations cannot be safely or practically split along the side of the road."

Johnson noted that poor shoulder conditions — soft, uneven, and poor grading, to name several — along with inadequate or damaged landing gear, low fifth-wheels, and hazardous cargo are only a few of the reasons why it's not good public policy to split combinations along interstate highways.

"Another compelling reason," continued Johnson, "is that the additional time needed to split a combination extends the duration of an incident, thus exposing the public to greater risk of secondary accidents and their associated deaths, injuries, and property

See TOO HEAVY? TOO LONG?, page 16

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TOO HEAVY? TOO LONG?

continued from page 15

damage.” He noted that secondary accidents are the cause of one in seven highway deaths.

What's Missing

While H.R. 1451 addresses towing operations along interstate highway systems, it doesn't mention what happens to a tower who drives through different government jurisdictions: What if the tower crosses from federal onto state or county roads on his trip to the repair facility? “The bill talks about a repair facility within 100 miles, but who defines that?” asked Hawkins. “Who defines what our safe harbor is? If you go to Oregon, it's 75 miles. But it's different in other states.”

Also missing from the bill is a provision for permitted loads to deviate from their route due to unanticipated repairs, said Johnson. Requiring a tow truck to obtain a new permit will cause additional delays and associated risks.

In addition, H.R. 1451 does not exempt over-length vehicles. In Pennsylvania — where the bill originated — disabled vehicles towed by a wrecker are already exempt from length limits. “The long wheelbases of our large wreckers, while creating a very long combination, help control road and bridge overload by spreading the weight of each of the combination vehicles over a longer surface area,” explained Johnson.

Axle Weight

Hawkins also noted that axle weight is crucial. “If we expect to get anywhere on the national or state level, we have to meet certain guidelines for what an axle can weigh,” he said. “In most states that number is 20,000 pounds.”

On the other hand, he added, the vast majority of states target 34,000 pounds on the drive axles if a tower is pulling a disabled vehicle. “In some situations that's okay,” said Hawkins. The heavy-duty tower's biggest challenge, he explained, is in “big-fixed frame vehicles” — mixers, pumpers, fire engines, cranes, drilling units — that can have up to four or five axles. “The front end weighs in excess of 16, 18, or 20,000 pounds,” said Hawkins.



Miller Industries' John Hawkins

When these fixed-frame vehicles break down, “that's really where the problem comes in,” cautions Hawkins. “You take these vehicles and you have to tow them.” This is what a bill like H.R. 1451 needs to define, he said.

“This is our industry's current challenge: disabled vehicles that we cannot break down in order to reduce overall weight and height,” he explained. “So this type of disabled vehicle has to be legal by itself, or is traveling with a permit.” Either way, added Hawkins, the vehicle “needs a secure home off the roadway after becoming disabled.”

Dickey Deal

Johnson feels that wreckers towing in excess of 80,000 pounds should be required to purchase an annual permit from either the state or the U.S. Department of Transportation. “This permit should be of nominal cost, \$50 to \$100,” he said, “and should require that any truck applying for such a permit be safely capable of handling such a load. This would eliminate the fear that

many have articulated of F350s towing large combinations,” explains Johnson.

If a move to increase legal weights to 98,000 pounds materializes, as Johnson said many forecast it will, the 150,000-pound combination limit still might not be enough to allow an adequately

sized wrecker to tow one of these units off the highway.

For these reasons and more, finding a solution is a dicey proposition. Perhaps Hawkins said it best: “There's no consistency and that becomes the challenge.”

1451's Status: Stalled

Back on Capitol Hill, H.R. 1451 has been “in committee” since last March. Mumma cautions that compromise and collaboration are necessary to see the bill through the legislative process. “The towing industry doesn't have a large lobby and is fragmented in their approach,” he explained. “If the bill gets attacked by the very industry that needs it, the bill will be doomed to failure.”

Burrows agreed that getting the bill passed will be an uphill battle. “Towers will not see a ‘one-size-fits-all’ bill in Congress,” he said. “There are too many jurisdictions, too many other regulatory entities, and too little funding to see meaningful legislation make its way through both houses of Congress and the White House.”

In the same vein, Johnson is concerned about how seriously Congress is taking the proposal. “I don't think it was proposed as legislation to be passed, but rather to pacify someone,” he said. “No one in Representative Shuster's office has any knowledge of the bill, why it was introduced, or other relevant information that one would expect them to have if it were a serious issue,” said a frustrated Johnson. “I don't know if a groundswell of comment from our industry, as well as the trucking industry, would bring this bill to serious consideration.”

On the other hand, Johnson sees the bill as a critical piece of leverage for towers everywhere. “Our industry, with the help of

the trucking industry that we service, needs to use H.R. 1451 as a common starting point to convince our federal and state legislators that there needs to be a way to legally tow all the vehicles that they license and permit from the highways in the event of emergencies and breakdowns.”

Despite the problems inherent in getting H.R. 1451 enacted into federal law, “I commend the folks that are trying to move this forward,” said Mumma. “All legislation is an uphill battle.”

Editor's note: Writer Allan Duffin tells us that, at press time in January, “there doesn't appear to be much heat building under this bill, and it's been languishing in committee since it was introduced. Based on the folks I've talked to, the bill needs to be fleshed out with more specifics if it's going to help towers across the country, who are already subject to local and state regulations. Anything too vague might contradict existing local regulations and confuse the towers who are trying to operate within the law.”

Footnotes will keep an eye on HR1451 and report in a later issue on any significant legislative action. Readers can track the progress of the legislation at:

- www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h1451/blogs?sort=toprated
- www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-1451

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50 ton Challenger

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ROTATOR

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60 ton Challenger ROTATOR

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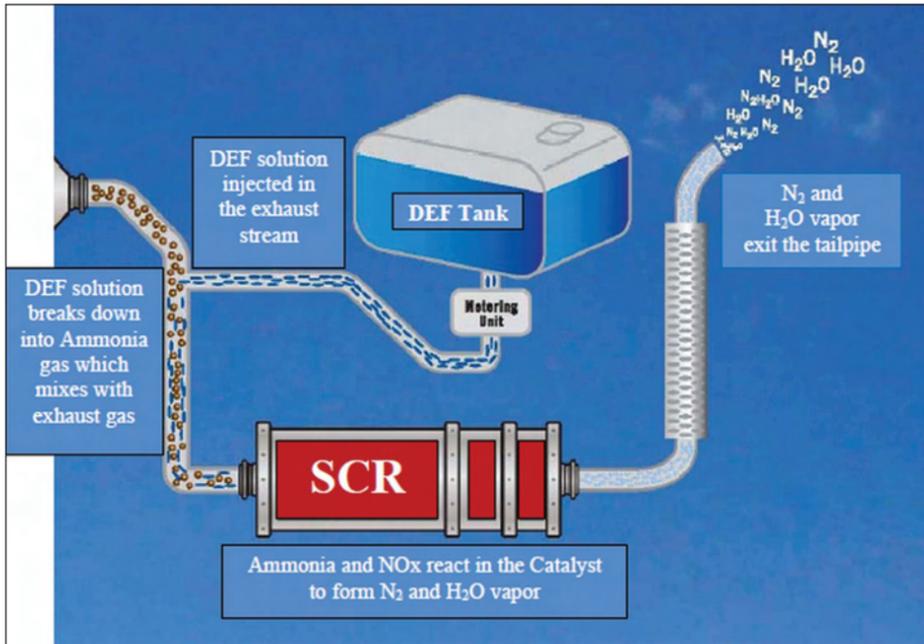
2007 M2 FREIGHTLINER, automatic, mileage 61480 approx., CD player, cruise, air driver seat, 22.5 big tires, 1994 Chevron 28 ft. smooth steel floor, removeable rails, 2 - floor winches,

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TRUCK TECH

What's SCR, DEF, NOx, and EGR?

It's what towers need to know about 2010 diesel engines



How SCR works to reduce NOx emissions

By Bill Siuru

A decade of stringent emission regulations have resulted in today's very clean diesels. Compared to 2001 models, 2010 diesel engines produce only a small fraction of emissions. The EPA's Tier 2, Bin 5 requirement for PM (particulate matter) of 0.01 gram-per-brake horsepower-hr (g/bhp-hr) is already fully implemented. PM reduction required diesel particulate filters (DPF) and ultra-low-sulfur (ULSD) diesel fuel.

The EPA now requires that 100 percent of the diesel fuel sold in the U.S. meet the 15 parts-per-million sulfur content for USLD. For 2010, the EPA requires NOx (oxides of nitrogen) emissions be reduced to 0.2 g/bhp-hr and NMHC (non-methane hydrocarbons) to be only 0.14 g/bhp-hr.

Three Methods

Three methods are being used to reduce NOx emissions but the most popular is selective catalytic reduction (SCR) using a diesel emission fluid (DEF), a solution of about 67.5-percent de-ionized water and 32.5-percent urea. When DEF is injected into the hot exhaust, the DEF splits into carbon dioxide and ammonia. The ammonia is injected into the SCR module containing a catalyst that converts the NOx and ammonia into harmless nitrogen and water vapor.

Ford, GM, Hino, Isuzu, Volvo, Mack, Detroit Diesel, Freightliner, and Paccar will be using this technology. Chrysler will use it in Dodge Ram 3500, 4500,

and 5500 commercial Chassis Cab models.

Only Navistar is using the second method — advanced exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) — in its MaxxForce engines to meet the 2010 NOx requirements.

The third method is to use EGR plus a special "adsorber" catalyst to absorb and break down remaining NOx before they leave the tailpipe. This method, already used in Cummins 6.7-liter six-cylinder engines for medium-duty Dodges, will be continued in 2010 and later Cummin diesels.

Keeping It Clean

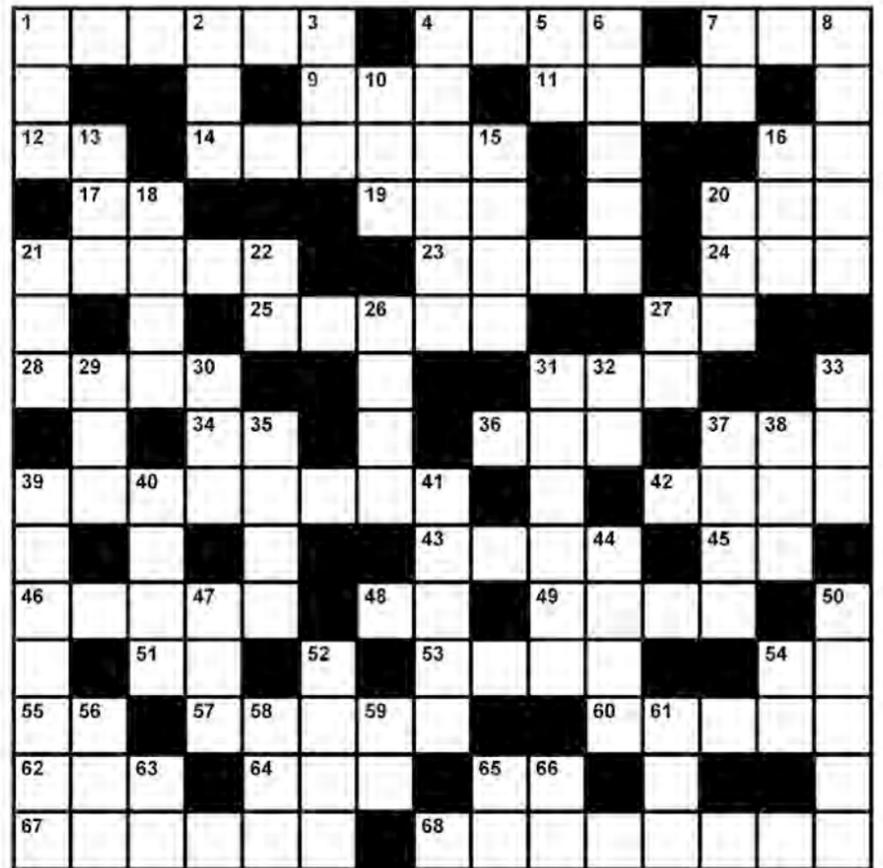
Use of selective catalytic reduction (SCR) will require some changes in maintenance procedures and operator training, though relatively minor. Like most manufacturers, Hino says the SCR system — urea tank, injectors, sensors, and wiring — does not require much maintenance. The only added maintenance for Hinos is the replacement of a diesel emission fluid (DEF) sediment filter every 220,000 miles. The un-pressurized DEF tank can be made of tough, light plastic to save weight, and plastic tanks and piping preclude rusting.

Cummin's SCR catalyst, the largest component, will not require periodic cleaning, and most SCR systems have a DEF filter. Cummins says the maintenance interval for its filter is about 200,000 miles. Isuzu's SCR filter has a replacement cycle of one to two years.

See TRUCK TECH, page 19

The Footnotes Auto Puzzle

By Myles Mellor
www.themecrosswords.com



Across:

- ___ weight, the weight at which the trailer presses down on the tow vehicle's hitch
- Swedish car company known for turbocharging, quirkiness, safety, and green technology
- Ford F650 follower
- Yes...
- ___ weight, the empty weight of a vehicle full of fuel and all fluids
- Seattle locale
- Commits a classroom wrong-doing
- Gold symbol
- Warrant Officer, abbr.
- Operate, as a car
- Used to fasten any insert into a receiver hitch
- Family owned and operated New Jersey tow truck and equipment leasing company
- Possibility of loss
- Biblical transport
- Ball ___, a removable hitch ball platform that slides into the receiver of a hitch and fastens with a pin and clip
- "Best of ___ Love" The Emotions
- Goose ___, a Class 5 hitch that mounts a ball in the bed of a pickup truck to engage a coupler on a trailer
- Panel truck
- Operation, for short
- Original equipment manufacturer
- The total weight of a trailer, including all of its contents
- Hybrid Escalade maker
- The world's fourth-largest automaker
- Strong craving
- Exclamation of distress
- Getting older
- Tea party state
- ___ pan, a fascia panel used in place of a rear bumper
- Sound system, for short
- Scram!
- "He's a good ___ boy..."
- Ave. alternative
- Dolly ___, great alternative to Drop Down Dolly Boxes
- Jack ___, damaging turning maneuver
- Philosophy, suffix
- Sewer mammal
- Exist
- ___ bar, key component of a weight-distributing hitch system
- Shotgun opposite?

Down:

- Truck type?
- The world's largest automaker
- Lunette ___, a round metal ring used in place of a ball coupler on a trailer
- Automaker whose slogan is "Like Always. Like Never Before"
- Temperature control
- ___ Roadmaster, Rain Man vehicle
- Scion model
- Car compartment
- Listening device
- Wheat whiskers
- Agitated state
- Tire filler
- Of the ear
- ___load, freight, excluding the weight of the trailer
- Electrical particle from Saturn?
- Distance measure, for short
- U.S. military's insurance company
- Twin cities state
- Arrival time approximately
- Large pond fish
- Fastener
- Morning time
- Front-wheel drive
- The connector used to connect trailer wiring to a tow vehicle
- Aspiration
- Attempt
- The main structure of a vehicle
- Faucet annoyance
- ___1 Hitch, trailer hitch with capacity of up to 2,000 lbs. gross trailer weight and 200 lbs. tongue weight
- Pintle ___, the jaw portion of a pintle hitch which attaches to the tow vehicle
- Seize suddenly
- FSW part
- Setback
- Relating to
- Food measurement, for short
- Roman pot
- Diamond amount, for short
- Denials
- Formal address
- College degree
- Economy, abbr.

The answers can be found on page 24

TRUCK TECH

continued from page 18

Of course the biggest issue is need for carrying an additional fluid. There is a tradeoff between DEF replenishments and added tank weight, which is probably more important to trucks that carry cargo than towing and recovery trucks. The SCR system in the Dodge 3500/4500/5500s weighs about 250 pounds, whereas Freightliner's SCR system in the Business Class M2 model, with a six-gallon DEF tank, weighs 200 pounds.

“The next time the driver stops, the engine will not restart”

Do It With DEF

Unlike over-the-road trucks, most Class 7 and smaller trucks “come home” nightly, so smaller DEF tanks can be refilled daily if needed. A medium-duty Hino will run almost 2400 miles per tank of DEF. Typical users of Isuzu N-Series trucks need one tank of DEF, which will last six to 10 tanks of DEF, which will last six to 10 tanks of fuel. The DEF tank in Ford's new PowerStroke V8 carries sufficient fluid for about 7500 miles. Depending on the manufacturer and duty cycle, DEF usage is from one-to-three percent of the fuel consumed.

What happens if you run out of DEF? The EPA 2010 requirements say the engine must eventually stop to prevent driving without DEF. They also preclude using overly diluted urea concentrations or otherwise trying to defeat the SCR system. Rather than leaving you stranded at the side of the road, manufacturers are installing warning systems.

For example, PowerStroke V8's sophisticated warning system notifies of the DEF level. Unheeded, speed is eventually limited to 50 mph for a “limp home” mode. If all warnings are ignored, the engine will only idle.

Chrysler's system provides a low-urea/fill-urea warning when there are 1,000 miles left. As the zero mark is approached, there are more frequent low-DEF warnings, chimes for auditory warnings, and countdown of how many miles are left until the tank is empty. If the countdown goes to zero, then the next time the driver stops, the engine will not restart.

SCR systems can determine the composition of the DEF so it cannot be diluted by adding more water or by drivers peeing into the DEF tank – urea has a similar organic composition as urine. They can also detect mixtures of agricultural-grade urea and de-mineralized water.

See TRUCK TECH, page 20

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2006 Kenworth T800 2006 Miller Spec T800KW, C15 CAT 18 speed, Century 5130 25/30 ton boom, 2-25,000lb planetary winches, air ride, diagonal real spades. Stk# 112464

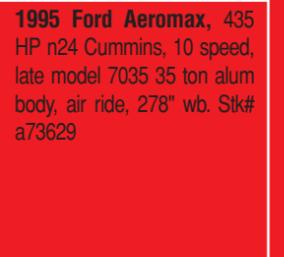

2007 T300 Kenworth, 315 Cummins, 10 Speed, Century 25 Ton Alum Body, 2-25,000lb Planetary Winches, 3 Stage Wheel Lift, 82,000 miles. Stk# t300


1995 Ford Aeromax, 435 HP n24 Cummins, 10 speed, late model 7035 35 ton alum body, air ride, 278" wb. Stk# a73629


2002 379 Peterbilt model 379, 475 CAT 18 speed, new Century model 5130, 35K winches, 7035 3 stage underlift. Stk# 586135


2010 F550 4X4, 6.4 diesel automatic, Vulcan 892 composite body, 10 ton boom, 8,000lb winch x2, 1-24" tunnel box, led light bar, car sling. Stk #a14522


2009 IH 4300, DT 466 6 cyl, auto trans, Century 21' Steel, 8,000lb winch, hyd brakes, ind. wheel lift, dual controls, Whelen LED light bar. Stk# 78544


1996 KENWORTH T800, 60 Series Detroit 13 speed, Dewalt 70 ton ROTATOR, 2-45K winches, 45K underlift, 282" wb. Stk# 716861


1996 Freightliner FLD 120, N14 Cummins 460HP, 13 Speed, air ride, 300" WB, 32,000lb underlift, dp planetary winch, 3 pr axle forks. Triple K Wheel Lift w/winch, 52,000lb GVW. Stk# 608343


2009 HINO 258A, 220 HP, automatic, Vulcan 21' Steel rr, air brakes, a/c stainless steel sims, 8,00lb winch, dual controls, independent wheel lift, work lights at winch. # S10198


94 Freightliner, 425 CAT, 13 Spd. trans, Century 5030135. Stk# 740071


1985 317 Landoll Slide Axle Trailer Stk# 30113


2010 F550 4X4, 6.4 diesel automatic, Vulcan 892 composite body, 10 ton boom, 8,000lb winch x2, 1-24" tunnel box, led light bar, car sling. Stk #a14522


1996 KENWORTH T800, 60 Series Detroit 13 speed, Dewalt 70 ton ROTATOR, 2-45K winches, 45K underlift, 282" wb. Stk# 716861


2009 HINO 258A, 220 HP, automatic, Vulcan 21' Steel rr, air brakes, a/c stainless steel sims, 8,00lb winch, dual controls, independent wheel lift, work lights at winch. # S10198


1996 Freightliner FLD 120, N14 Cummins 460HP, 13 Speed, air ride, 300" WB, 32,000lb underlift, dp planetary winch, 3 pr axle forks. Triple K Wheel Lift w/winch, 52,000lb GVW. Stk# 608343

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TRUCK TECH

continued from page 19

Stops & Starts

An infrastructure to distribute DEF throughout the U.S. is rapidly being deployed. DEF will be available at



Chrysler will use SCR in Dodge Ram 3500, 4500 and 5500 commercial Chassis Cab models

dealers, auto parts stores, truck stops, and some gasoline stations. Sold in one- and 2.5-gallon jugs, it is already available at Flying J and TA truck stops. Fleets can buy it in 55-gallon drums and DEF pumps are being installed at the larger fuel locations. DEF costs about \$2.75 to \$3.00 a gallon.

According to most truck manufacturers, truck modification for SCR and DEF are minimal. For example, Chrysler has located the DEF-fill port on the same side of the truck as the diesel-tank door so both tanks can be filled simultaneously.

Urea freezes at below 12 degrees Fahrenheit, but can be thawed out without harm. It takes quite awhile to completely freeze. Normal operation can supply enough heat to keep the urea thawed. Heating lines filled with engine coolant running through the DEF tank can warm it up when sensors determine DEF temperatures are too low.

In order to meet the EPA regulations on start times, it also may be necessary for defrosting systems to melt the DEF shortly after engine startup to enable injection. DEF slowly converts to ammonia at temperatures above around 120 degrees, so it must be replaced in trucks that sit idle for long periods in very hot weather.

Non-hazardous DEF smells like ammonia, but it's not a problem if it's kept

in a closed container, plus the aqueous urea can be cleaned up with ordinary water if spilled. Agricultural-grade urea is used worldwide for fertilizer and consumer-grade urea is used in food and medical products.

Higher Costs

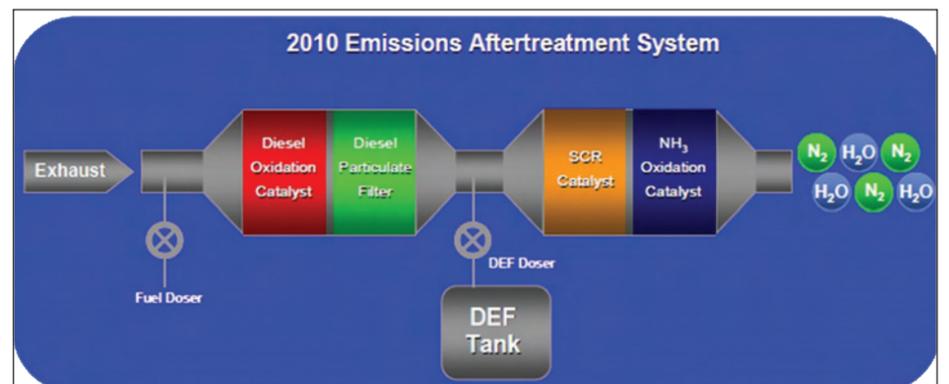
Regardless of the technology, 2010 diesel trucks are more expensive. For example, Hino is adding

a surcharge of \$6,700 per vehicle this year for the additional emission technology. Volvo is charging \$9,600 for the SCR technology that includes a urea tank and more sensors, wiring, and hoses, even though it really is not complicated or even new technology.

Manufacturers counter this by saying SCR-equipped trucks will get more mpgs, unlike the case when diesel particulate filters (DPF) were added a couple of years ago – some operators say fuel consumption went up by as much as 25 percent.

SCR does allow engines to be better optimized to maximize fuel efficiency as well as lowering heat loads on the engine to reduce cooling requirements for improved fuel economy. However, the benefits will probably be mostly for Class 8 over-the-road trucks and the typical light- and medium-duty truck user may not see much of a change.

There is lots of real world experience with DEF in Europe as well as in Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, New Zealand, and Singapore where it is marketed as Ad Blue or BlueTec and available at thousands of service stations. All European truck manufacturers, and many car companies, currently offer SCR-equipped models. Incidentally, the experience in Europe has been to see an up-to-seven percent improvement in fuel economy by using SCR. 🚛



In addition to NOx reduction technology, a diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) converts and oxidizes hydrocarbons into water and carbon dioxide. A Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) traps soot or particulate matter.

FAMILY MATTERS

Mom At The Wheel

A mother-son towing team build a business together



Charlene Gowers and son Sean Gowers

By Jill Coley

“Work hard. Don't give up. Be ready for emergencies.” Charlene Gowers' mantra has served her well through many roles: single mother, commercial real estate property manager, homeless shelter operator – and for the last seven years, tow truck driver.

Her son, Sean Gowers, threw his mother that last curve ball. He had his sights trained on a career in professional baseball before an injury took him out of the game and he convinced his mother to invest in a run-down tow truck. Seven years later, the mother-son towing team own and manage SouthSide Tow Service in Culver, CA.

Today, their business is profitable, operates 13 trucks – flatbeds and big rigs – and has two locations and five storage facilities. “Right now, we're doing it right,” Sean Gowers said.

Helping Others

Charlene Gowers, daughter of a Shakespearian stage actress and ex-wife of “American Idol” director Bruce Gowers, is not afraid to follow her gut. She worked in television as a production secretary before she married and had Sean, her only child. Returning to the work force, she entered commercial real estate property management and worked for a client whose portfolio contained some old motels in a really bad part of town.

“During my travels while managing a lot of these difficult properties, I saw people who were homeless or becoming homeless, so I said to the owner of these motels: They're empty, they're not doing you any good empty, so give

me a chance. Give me three months where I don't pay rent and see if I can get some money together,” Charlene Gowers said.

She quickly gathered people to help clean up, paint and buy beds. Families moved in and took pride in their own-

“A dive for a baseball snapped the ligaments in his wrist”

ership, paying \$200 a month rent. “Drugs stayed out because people cared,” she said. “I just kept going. I had no vision in the beginning. I just saw these people who needed a place to stay that wasn't a cardboard box or a car.”

One motel grew into four. Then she moved onto a massive 300-room shelter in downtown Los Angeles in the Skid Row area. The situation was similar. The building was nearly empty and “full of nasty, yucky, a lot of drugs and hookers and stink,” she said. “I started to do the same thing with the property, and we became the recipients of the first community redevelopment zones put together by two banks.”

See FAMILY MATTERS, page 22

FUNNIES

The Mechanic

A mechanic was removing a cylinder-head from the motor of a Harley motorcycle when he spotted a well-known cardiologist in his shop.

The cardiologist was there waiting for the service manager to come take a look at his bike when the mechanic shouted across the garage, 'Hey Doc, want to take a look at this?'

The cardiologist, a bit surprised, walked over to where the mechanic was working on the motorcycle.

The mechanic straightened up, wiped his hands on a rag and asked, 'So Doc, look at this engine. I open its heart, take the valves out, repair any damage, and then put them back in, and when I finish, it works just like new. So how come I make \$39,675 a year and you get the really big bucks (\$1,695,759) when you and I are doing basically the same work?'

The cardiologist paused, smiled and leaned over, then whispered to the mechanic, 'Try doing it with the engine running!'

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FAMILY MATTERS

continued from page 21

No Quick Fix

But the emotional drain of the work increased. "The normal day-to-day functions of running a shelter for 600 people was pretty intense and heart-breaking," she said. "You feel like you have to fix everything, and you can fix one and there are 15 more waiting. It was a wonderful experience, but very overwhelming."

The experience also imprinted on Sean, who was 12 when his mother bought the shelter. "I never saw that part of the world before," he said.

Sean Gowers, who stands six-foot four, pitched and played first base for Santa Monica High School. He starred in a number of traveling leagues, including the All Bay League. His mother had been his coach since age five.

But in a second, Sean Gower's future changed. A dive for a baseball snapped the ligaments in his wrist. "He was a baseball player and always thought that's what he'd do until he got injured," Charlene Gowers said.

In 2002, with the help of his mother, the 18-year-old high school senior bought a 1986 GMC 3500 tow truck. "There was nothing pretty about it," he said. "Leaks everywhere; starter was broken; the rear main seal poured. While I was pumping gas, I had to have the engine running and pouring oil in."



Sean Gowers with his son

So Show Me

His mother threw down another gauntlet. "Now you have to show me what you can do," she challenged him. And he showed her, hustling and quickly building up a really good bill of accounts. Soon they needed a second driver and a second truck.

Years of work and rigorous inspections landed them a contract with the

California Highway Patrol-West Los Angeles. Another contract with the patrol's Central LA station followed.

The change from shelter manager to tower was a welcome one for Charlene Gowers. The mother-son team drew on their homeless shelter experience to grow their towing business — Charlene had a strong managerial background, and knew all about how to handle a crisis. As a result, she said, "the day-to-day stuff doesn't get me down at all."

She loves driving, especially when things get hectic. "She's very strong minded and very self-confident," said Sean. "She's open-minded and willing to help you out, no questions asked."

Towing is the easy part, he said. "When I'm in the truck, my mind is at ease. I just tow." It's keeping equipment in working order and up-to-date that can be challenging. "Time passes, things get better, get newer," he added.

Keeping personnel on board who know what they're doing and can perform the job in the best possible way can be challenging, Charlene said. As a result, they place a high value on good personal relationships. And taking care of customers is the secret to growing your business, Sean said.

"Take care of customers," he said, "and bend over backwards for solid accounts."

"We got where we are through our dedication," he said. "We're only as good as our drivers are, and we're only as good as our last call." ❖

Done & Done Right

Charlene Gowers on working in a man's world: "There are challenges and advantages. Towing is a very male-dominated business. It's really hard work. A lot of people don't take a woman seriously, when you expect to see a man arrive and it's a woman. Also, there's a great benefit from it, too. Many people say to me, 'You must be so proud of yourself. My respect to you.' You hear that a lot. Being out there as a woman makes others realize a woman can do whatever she needs to do. It may not be the same way as a man does it, but it gets done and gets done well."

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HAULING HISTORY

Little Big Man

This towman makes hot rods out of tow trucks

By John Gunnell

Bob Lusetti has 30 years of experience in the auto, equipment transportation, and wrecker industries in the Cleveland, Ohio area. Towing is his bread and butter, but now he has a new interest, one he just got involved in last year. He fixed cars before he towed them; now he is enjoying taking old tow trucks, customizing them as hot rods, and exhibiting them in shows.

Here's what led him to his unusual hobby: "In the winter of 1976, I was working as an auto mechanic," said Lusetti. "A big snowstorm hit and my car got stuck, so I borrowed a co-worker's tow truck to pull my car out. Before I even got to the car, people flagged me

down. I made more money towing cars out of the snow than I ever made working on them."

He quit his job and never looked back. He owns Bob's Towing Service (BTS) and promotes it as "Your Total Transportation Company." The company operates medium-duty tow trucks, heavy-duty wreckers, heavy-duty tilt beds. BTS also hauls large vehicles and heavy equipment on Landoll trailers and lowboys. Together with a sister company named B&D towing, BTS operates 14 towing and recovery vehicles.

A few years ago, Lusetti's restored Pettibone wrecker gained some industry attention after being exhibited at a national tow show. The wrecker was one of only a handful constructed by

Pettibone LLC, a heavy equipment manufacturer in Downers Grove, IL. That truck has since been sold and is now in Wyoming, but Lusetti has since restored three more tow trucks in the hot rod style.

"It's nice when my truck puts a smile on their faces"

Custom Classic

"I raced stock cars on and off for about 10 years and I just have a real love of both cars and trucks," said Lusetti. Some of the high-performance tricks he learned in building racing cars were used in constructing his three hot rod tow trucks: a 1935 Dodge wrecker, a 1946 Ford wrecker, and a 1951 Ford cab-over-engine unit with a tilting wrecker bed. All three vintage tow trucks have Manley hand-cranked cranes mounted on them.

Lusetti said that four factors are critical in constructing such vehicles. "First, it takes a lot of fabrication work. Then the Internet comes in handy for finding things like performance parts."

Making trips to junkyards is also critical. "You can't get parts for trucks that old at your local auto supply store," he said. Last but not least, he finds some of the stuff he needs at old-car swap meets.

To construct his 1951 Ford wrecker, Lusetti mounted the vintage Ford body on a frame from a newer Chevy pickup truck. A 350-cid small-block Chevy V-8 went under the hood and he added a Chevy transmission and a Camaro rear end. Everything is painted to look like his heavy wrecker and dressed up with chrome. Lusetti did all of the work himself. "A lot of that '51 had to be custom fabricated," he said.

Lusetti has exhibited the truck at the Cleveland Autorama, two smaller custom car shows, the Choppers Rod & Custom Show, and the American Cruiser's Car Show. He took seven first-class awards, as well as "Best of Show" and "Best Truck" honors.

"You can rest assured that I'm going to keep doing shows as long as the money holds out," Lusetti said. "I enjoy seeing the people at the car shows and it's particularly nice when my truck puts a smile on their faces." ❧



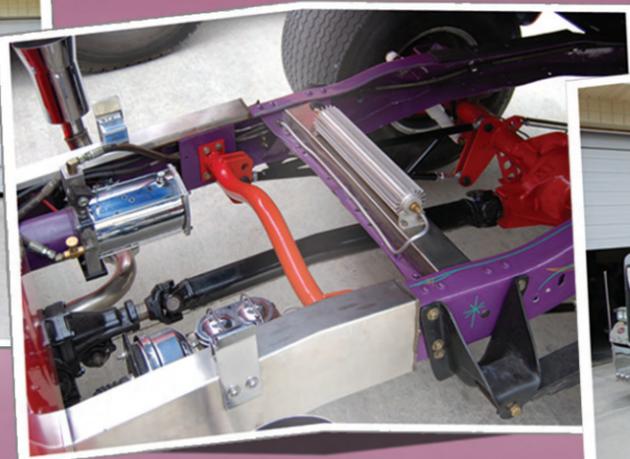
Bob Lusetti took a year to build this '51 Ford hot-rod tow truck



The little Ford with Lusetti's giant 2002 Peterbilt 35-ton



Lusetti outfitted the Ford with a wrecker that tilts to show the chrome- and aluminum-fabricated chassis parts



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1997 KENWORTH T600, CAT 3406, 435HP, 10SP, UNDER 700K MILES, 2001 CENTURY 7035, 35 TON, ALUM BOXES. JUST REPAINTED. LOOK AT THE PICTURES ON THE WEBSITE & GIVE US A CALL FOR DETAILS.

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2007 PETE 378, MILLER SPEC CHASSIS, CUMMINS 475 HP, 18 SPEED, JUST OVER 100K MILES. CENTURY 7035, 180" CB ALUMINUM BODY. THIS UNIT IS LOADED WITH OPTIONS INCLUDING: TIRE LIFT, CHAIN PACKAGE, ENDLESS LOOP, RECOVERY STRAPS, FULL FORK PACKAGE. WE BUILT IT AND CHECK IT OUT ONLINE @ WWW.CROUCHTOWTRUCKS.COM

2003 STERLING DAY CAB, WE BUILT IT FOR A TENNESSEE STERLING TRUCK DEALER. DETROIT 60 SERIES, 500 HP, 13 SP, AIR RIDE, 540K MILES, CENTURY 7035, 35 TON UNIT WITH 204" ALUM BODY. A GREAT RECOVERY UNIT. CALL FOR DETAILS.

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2001 FREIGHTLINR CLASSIC, TRI-AXLE, DAY CAB, DETROIT 430/470, 10SP, 141,000 MILES!!!! JUST TRADED ON A ROTATOR AND IS AS NEW AS A 8 YEAR OLD TRUCK COMES. ALL TIRES MATCHED 75%. WE BUILT IT ON OUR CUSTOMERS FRAME CORRECT GLIDER IN '01. CENTURY 7035, 204" STEEL BODY. POWER TOUCH WIRED AND WIRELESS REMOTE, TIRE LIFT, PINTLE HOOK, KING PIN FIFTH WHEEL. YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS TRUCK TO APPRECIATE HOW NICE IT IS.



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2006 FREIGHTLINER M2 EXT. CAB. MB 260 HP MOTOR, AUTO TRANS, AIR BRAKE, AIR RIDE, ALUM WHEELS, 180K MILES. CENTURY 21' STEEL CARRIER, ALUM. REMOVABLE RAILS, STATIONARY HEAD BOARD, 3 TOOL BOXES, CARRIER ROTATION KIT, ON BOARD AIR WITH RETRACTABLE HOSE REEL AND MORE. LOCAL TENNESSEE TRUCK. IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A REALLY NICE, CLEAN UNIT, IT'S HERE!



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2010 PETE 330, NON CDL, 300HP PACAR/CUMMINS, ALLISON AUTO, AIR BRAKES, AIR RIDE, HARD LOADED. CENTURY 22' STEEL CARRIER WITH POLISHED ALUM REMOVABLE RAILS. THIS IS THE LAST OF OUR 2010 PETE'S. DON'T WISH YOU HAVE BROUGHT ONE WHEN THE NEW EMISSIONS GO INTO EFFECT!



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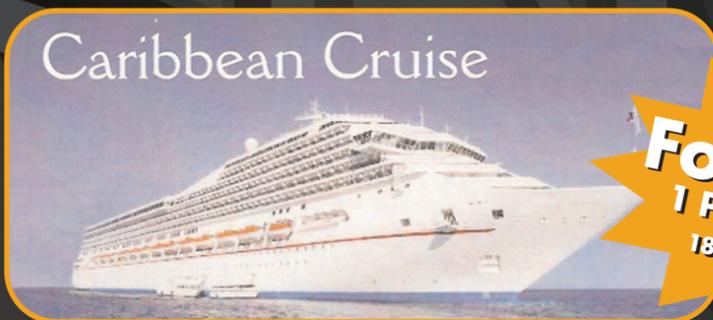
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