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DAVE: Hi everybody and welcome to Trucker Territory, a great destination where you're going to have a lot of fun, you can get fit, learn a thing or two on the road, and, well, listen to us as well. Don't know if you'll learn anything, but we're certainly going to have a good time talking with each other. Michael Burns is with us. Good morning, Michael.

MICHAEL: Good morning, Dave.

DAVE: And Tim Ridley. Good morning, Tim.

TIM: Dave, good morning to you.

DAVE: And here we are broadcasting to you on Trucker Territory from Radio Nemo in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and New Orleans, and today we're going to be talking about something that gets brought up on-again, off-again through the years, through the decades in trucking and, Tim, and that is the brotherhood of trucking. Is there one? Was there one? What does it really mean?

TIM: Yes, Dave, there is still a brotherhood, although years ago, decades ago, the brotherhood was, I think, in my opinion anyway, a little bit stronger. One reason I think is because the-- they didn't have the CB radios. A lot of the truckers used hand signals to alert-- of, you know, hazards up the road and so forth, but then when the CB radio came into-- into play, I think it really made the brotherhood of trucking even closer. But one thing that really impressed me, Dave, as most of the listeners know, that my dad drove, and there was a place that was near downtown where there were some cold-storage warehouses, and we would drive down on our way to some place, you know, that he was going to, and I would be riding with him in the car, and it always amazed me looking at those trucks, Dave, lined up on the sides of the streets, and they were, they were-- they were cab-overs, and they were just basically nose-to-trailer. There was pretty-- practically very little room in between the-- the front of a tractor and the rear of the trailer, and I asked my dad why do they park so close? He said they're looking out for one another, making sure through the night, no one was able to get into the door-- into the trailer doors of the truck in front of them. So I thought I would-- and that sounded pretty interesting. You know, it made sense, and I was a little kid, but I decided to cross-reference, and one weekend a family friend was over. He drove trucks as well. He lived in another state, but he came through and spent the weekend with us, and I asked him the same question, and he told me the exact same thing that my dad had told me. And I thought that was very interesting, and from that point, I realized that there was a strict-- a strong brotherhood in this industry.

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DAVE: That's a great example of something that has come and gone. Or has it gone? Michael, there is a sense of brotherhood still here, but what do you see as something that-- you have to have a beginning. There has to be a foundation for everything. What do you think the foundation is that creates a sense of brotherhood?

MICHAEL: Well, looking around, Dave, you know, there are several areas, several professions that have a sense of brotherhood, and I got looking at what creates a brotherhood, and really, it's a set of shared experiences. It's almost like a secret language or a secret kind of sharing that-- you know, if somebody asks you, you know, "What's it like to be a trucker?" and your answer sounds a little bit like, "Well, I don't know. You'd just have to do it understand," then-- then you have the-- a hotbed of a fertile ground for a brotherhood to develop. We see it in law-enforcement officers. We see it in firefighters. We see it in those people where an element of separation and an element of danger exists, and it is that shared set of experience that creates the brotherhood, and of course, trucking has changed a great deal. That sense of separation is maybe not what it used to be when you were pushing a B61 down the highway all by yourself with nothing but a CB. But now we have entertainment centers and video screens. [laughs] All these other things in our trucks. But many times, that voice on the other end of a CB radio or, you know, a voice on a radio if your truck had a radio, that's-- that's where that sense of brotherhood came from. That's where it got started and got fostered, and yes, it's-- it's very, very likely that it has been altered.

DAVE: Tim, you brought up a great point about the old days of hand signals. One driver-- and this was before the interstate highway and the dual-lane road. So you'd have two lanes of roadway, one lane going in one direction, one going in another, and that was pretty much as big as a highway got there for a long time. So that at least during the daytime as one truck going east met one truck going west, they were literally able to see each other's hands to make a hand signal and also, they could make eye contact. And it's almost like the next best thing to being there. But as Michael points out, we still-- and as you've pointed out, we still have that brotherhood, but now things seem to be more like once removed. We don't have that visceral relationship that we used to have.

TIM: Yeah, and to Michael's point, I think the electronics have done a lot, which is good, because we-- you know, in that aspect because we have more things to entertain us now than we used to, and I think as a people, we were in-- we're in a time where we sometimes need more things to entertain us to keep us from getting bored. You go back four decades or so, that was all they knew. They didn't have the entertainment that we have now. They didn't need-- they didn't have cassette tapes, you know, and I'm still going back further than cassette tapes. So they-- they were in the era that they were in, and that was all they

knew, so the hand signals and the gestures and also just seeing one another at the truck stops, it created that type of atmosphere where they knew they were part of a certain breed, a breed of drivers, and I can't ever forget this. I remember my dad would sometimes-- he would joke with my mom, and he would brag about his chauffeur's license. "I have a special chauffeur's license. I can drive anything on wheels," you know, and what he was basically saying is that "I belong to a certain group of people. I belong to a minority of people," meaning that not everyone can do what he did, not everyone can do what our drivers, our listeners do out there. So that in itself, you know, I think brought forth and still brings forth a degree of brotherhood. And then, too, back you know, decades ago, Dave, a lot of drivers wore uniforms, and there's something about a uniform that makes you feel that you belong, you know, whether it's military, law enforcement, as Michael was saying, whether it's airline pilots, bus drivers, there's a certain sense of pride that you carry. So I think then, that was another element as well. Now fast-forward to today, although you don't have the hand signals, a lot of drivers don't have a CB radio, but when-- when the boots hit the ground, so to speak, and when, you know, there's time to-- to help another driver, these drivers form together even in today's time with that brotherhood to help one another out.

DAVE: You know, one-- and there's a great example of something like that that was in the news just a couple of weeks ago, too. But going back again, kind of-- we're going to kind of continue to circle around here because as you bring up one point from the past and bring it into the present and then into the future, you have to kind of continually go back to pick up other points and bring them forward. So I wanted to bring up one of the points here about-- and, again, going back to the earliest type of on-road communication between one truck driver and another would have been simply hand signals, at night, light signals. And, again, that was a very visceral, one-on-one, human-to-human type thing. But Michael, they-- they still-- there were no-- you know, back in the days of "They Drive by Night," the clas-- we'll talk a little bit about movies a little bit later on, but one of the first trucking movies if not the first trucking movie was George Raft and my hero Humphrey Bogart as brothers who were wild-catter truckers, as it was called back in those days in the 1930s. They were independent trucking guys, and they were out on the road, and it was called "They Drive by Night." And they-- they didn't have truck stops. They had roadhouses where there was a bar. It was essentially a bar and grill out there on the side of the road with the classic ever-present pinball machine and things like that. When we got into more modern times, let's say late '60s when the CB radio started to become part and parcel of the equipment in a truck, it was strictly a tool at that time. I've got my own theories about CBs in the mid-'70s, but when I got into trucking radio in the early '70s-- Charlie Douglas began Trucking Radio in '71. I joined him when I came out of the Army in '72, and military has a lot to do with what I consider to be part of the brotherhood, and I

know you mentioned it too, Michael, but you still-- okay, so you lost the one-on-one contact, eye-to-eye, so to speak, hand-to-hand with the signals, but we moved into that with the human voice, and that being the CB radio. But then we got back to the one-on-one, Michael, at the counters at the truck stops, the driver-only sections, and that's where folks swapped stories and told lies and basically hung out, met one another on the road. "Hey, I haven't seen you in a long time. How you doing? Let me buy you a cup of coffee."

MICHAEL: Right. And it was a great meeting place. It was a great place to, you know, mingle endeavors, and I think that's really-- as many things have, it's gone by the wayside, and as you know, there's a tendency, there's a human trait where you react to another person well face-to-face, and your-- you get all these facial cues and body language and everything and you see all these cues. And when you're not in a face-to-face situation like when you're on a CB, it gives you the opportunity to be a little more aggravating, and it gives you an opportunity to be a little less courteous. If you move that to social media these days, there's absolutely no reason to be anything other than rude, and that's how some people look at it. I'm completely unaccountable here. You know, I can say anything I want to. And as a result of that, we've changed the way we interact with each other. I'm going to tend to be a lot nicer to Tim when he's standing next to me a foot taller than I [laughs] and have a conversation. So, you know, we've changed the face-to-face interaction, and that's a big part of bringing the brotherhood back because as you say, we used to have these places, these outposts, these roadhouses, and they included bunk houses and so forth, and there was common courtesy and so forth, and you had that kind of interaction. We don't have that kind of interaction today with people. We're very much more isolated by electronics, by many different types of media that we use. And, again, we need to bring back some of that face-to-face interaction, and, I mean, our whole subject matter is-- here is how do we bring back the brotherhood? And I think reducing the number of non face-to-face or non-voice encounters, as you know, just in business-- forget trucking for the moment. In business, the worst form of communication in the world is email. And the only thing worse is text. [laughs] It leaves great opportunities for misunderstanding, and I think the thing-- the same thing is true. And you hear people out there calling each other terrible names. "They're just, you know, a dry-freight hauler," or "they're just a tanker hauler," or "they're just the steering-wheel holder," and we, as a course of conversation, tend to put all these false divisions in between us. And we need to break those down. We need to get rid of those because we do have shared experiences. We do have a separate reality from the other drivers out there on the road. And we have to find ways to work together to meet up, to stand face-to-face once in a while, to sit down at a common booth at a truck stop and re-create that brotherhood.

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DAVE: The pace of life, the pace of trucking has changed exponentially over the past 50 years or so, 40 years. I mentioned Charlie Douglas. He had a-- he told a great story that I won't do justice to by any means right here. Driver stops at a truck stop, waitress comes over, pours him a cup of coffee as a low-flying airplane comes across, and just as she is pouring the coffee, he tells her, "Stop!" He jumps up and leaves and says, "Every time I stop for coffee, that guy catches up with me." [laughter] And that's a joke, but we're barely hanging on in terms of the pace of life, the pace of communication. So the old question, which came first, the chicken or the egg-- which came first, the pace of life and communication caught up with it? I'm talking about texting, emailing, Facebooking, cell phones, that sort of thing-- or has that technology presented itself, and we're trying to catch up with the speed of technology? Either way, we're going at a breakneck speed toward-- Tim, I don't know where we're heading.

TIM: You know, that's a good question, and a great way that you put it, and I've said this very often, Dave, that with each event of-- advancement, rather, of technology, life gets faster. It sped up, as Michael was mentioning the email. It sped up a little with email. Then it's sped up more with the cell phones, with the smartphones, and with texting, and now it's just about out of control. One of the things that really-- and, again, I was a kid when "Convoy" came out, Dave, and this pretty much sealed-- I already knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to drive a truck, but this kind of-- it kind of sealed-- helped seal the deal, so to speak, and I know that was Hollywood. I know it's not really reality, but one of the things that really stood out in my mind in that movie was that the communication that they had and the closeness that they had. You were talking about the old truck stops back then, the roadside-- basically, just a roadside café pretty much, the bunk houses. Michael, when he mentioned that, it took my mind back to going to a bunk house with my dad, you know. So-- but, anyway, they took the time, and they-- they communicated and talked to one another, looked-- you know, had a personal-- person-to-person conversation, you know, at the tables and so forth, but one of the things about it, when one driver got in-- got in trouble-- I think it was Spider Mike-- and was arrested and word went out over the CB radio, all of the drivers knew about what was going on, and they formed an army, so to speak, to go and rescue him, and again, I know that was Hollywood. You know, it's not reality, but the principle of it was the brotherhood that they had. That was-- you know, that's what I took out of it. But, anyway, it was a slower time in life, and again, back to, you know, those days when-- there were times even when I got into trucking, Dave, in the mid-'80s, you know, we sat around the counters. We sat at the tables, you know, and talked, had truckers' talk, and we took the time because we didn't have the technology that we have now to take our attention away-- or our focus and attention, for that matter, away from one another because if you wanted to talk to someone, it was either by landline or face-to-face. Now a lot of people

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don't want to talk face-to-face anymore. They don't want to even look at a person. You know, if you think about how many people-- this is outside of trucking-- in trucking and out of trucking-- but the amount of people that you-- that you cross paths with as you're walking into a store or a building, they're coming out of the store or the building, they won't even make eye contact. And used to, you would always-- you know, in most cases, anyway, you would always at least nod at one another.

MICHAEL: Yeah, and we've-- it's true what you say. We have basically forgotten how to have conversation. We've forgotten how to start conversations, which is one of the most interesting things. I was telling David, and it was an absolutely true story not too long ago, I was at one of America's favorite coffee stops, and obviously not with a truck, but-- [laughs] and there were three young girls sitting around a table, and of course, 90% of the people there were staring into a smartphone of one form or another, but here were these three young girls sitting around a table, and they were texting and texting and texting and texting, and at one point, one snapped her head up and looked at the girl across the table and said, "Are you serious?" They were sitting at the same table texting each other.

TIM: And not talking.

MICHAEL: And not talking. So, yeah, you know, that has happened, and we've gotten to that point where, you know, a conversation is a big task, and maybe we need to talk about, you know, relearning to do that, but, you know, it's funny, too, you mentioned those greetings. And when you do see somebody, it's inevitable somebody's gonna say, "How you doing?" And it's a hollow, empty thing, doesn't mean a thing, but if you turn that around and look back and go, "I'm doing great, how are you today?" You know, then it's the start of a conversation, and that's all it takes half the time is just to return that and say, "I don't know, how are you?" [laughs] You know, so it's very simple, and I think people long for it. I think people really want it back, but who's going to be the first guy to start, you know?

TIM: That's right. It's got to start with someone.

DAVE: Yeah, and again, it has-- it has a lot to do with pacing and everything, and I think a lot of times people would love to get into a conversation but don't feel like they can take the time. You know, we've gone from sit-down restaurants, the coffee counters, the driver-only sections of truck stops where the food-- the service was faster because drivers were on the go, but they're still sitting down to a three-course meal and a cup of coffee, maybe a piece of pie at the end. So they had time for a meal. And truck stops have gone to fast food-- what you call those areas? Food court type things with three or four or five or six fast-food

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counters simply because drivers basically have asked for that. So we kind of-- we-- you know, we almost in a sense have met the enemy, and he is us in that sense to where we ask for things based on one set of values, the value of getting the job done, and we got to keep going, and then what do we give up for that, you know? There's always two sides to every coin in that regard.

MICHAEL: As Tim said, too, we have a lot of cues. If a person was wearing a certain uniform with a certain trucking company name on it, a perfect conversation starter was, "Wow, how you like working for them?" Or, you know, "What's that like?" Or, "What's your experiences?" And, "I'm looking at maybe moving to another company." And, "I'm looking for something like--" you know, caps would have something on it. Half of the stuff that we wear now out in public, the only way to start a conversation is, "What would make you wear that in public?" you know? [laughter] And I wouldn't suggest that. That's almost as bad of a conversation starter as, "I overheard you talking to your wife and..." [laughs] It doesn't work, you know? Maybe we should book a podcast on conversation starters. I don't know.

DAVE: [laughs] How about them Saints?

MICHAEL: Yeah. [laughter]

TIM: "How do you like the weather?" is always a good start.

DAVE: Yeah. Well, if you wait long enough, it'll change. Wait 10 minutes, it'll change. You know, you bring up the uniforms guys, and patches and caps and everything. When I-- again, when I started with Charlie back in the early '70s, my test was whether I was going to be accepted or not-- I'll make this short. If you send me a shoulder patch-- and it was understood everybody had one-- if you send me a shoulder patch, I will send you five hit records because at that time-- this was before the Arab oil embargo, so therefore, records were just-- the record companies would just throw as much vinyl at us as the-- we could-- we could stand. So we had tons of extra records hanging around. So I would send out five 45-RPM records. They were all hit songs, and we filled the studio floor to ceiling, all of the walls with shoulder patches. Again, from a different era. I wanted to kind of, again, circle back again to something that you brought up, Michael, and that is what creates a brotherhood, things like shared experiences. And soldiers basically share a lot of experiences, especially if they were in the same theater, and now I'm speaking essentially of Vietnam. But I think the trucking camaraderie goes far back beyond that, certainly to World War II and then Korea. But my era, it was Vietnam. And I know that 99.9% of-- and here's another factor, too, Tim, that we didn't bring up, but one of the things about the brotherhood was your actual brother or your father or your uncle, his brother. It was such a family affair. It, I don't know how far off I am,

but I would say 85-- easily 85% of the drivers in my experience through my radio career back in those days, back in the '70s, for sure, came from a trucking family, and most of those came out of the military during-- you know, thanks to Vietnam. So you had that built-in brotherhood-slash-shared experience-slash-camaraderie already there forming a, really, three-legged, if you will, foundation for a brotherhood. So you had that going on. I would say Vietnam was an incredible catalyst for all of that, and, Tim, going back to something I know you like to bring into the conversation are movies, movies like "Convoy." You had the language.

TIM: Yes, yes, you had the language, and that was something that you-- that you shared in common. You know, you took pride in the codes, the language, and people used to even say-- they were-- a lot of times, people were amazed at the language of truck drivers. And I know when I first got into trucking, I would meet people who were not in trucking, found out I was a driver, and start asking me, "Well, what kind of-- what are some of the codes you guys use?" And-- because they came from an era, you know-- back then, a lot of them came from an era where they had a CB radio or they knew someone who had a CB radio, and they always found that so exciting and so amazing.

MICHAEL: Mm-hmm. And a lot of people, you know, take pride in their private language. Some children, of course, they practice their-- their own language, but I know as an audio engineer, we kind of have our own private language. I know police officers certainly had theirs, and now, of course, it's IT people because I haven't understood anything any one of them has said in the last five years. So, you know. [laughter]

DAVE: You know [stammers] the language portion of this-- back in the old road gang days in the '70s, we used to have a sponsor. It was a little pocket handbook. It was called "The CB Slanguage Language Dictionary" and it had all the 10 codes in it. It had all of the towns, you know, it had all of the jargon and the sayings in it, and it was part and parcel of American culture there for a while in terms of what it portended, you know?

MICHAEL: What we wouldn't give to get our hands on a copy of that now.

DAVE: They-- yeah, really. [laughter] They-- the-- back-- and again, I hearken to the '70s, and it all wraps into the Vietnam era, it all wraps into the culture at the time, the music, the films, the overall rush to CB radios when the Red Sovine's "Teddy Bear" was released. At that time, beginning in the very late '60s on through the '70s, truck drivers-- and you guys have heard this a thousand times-- were called the last American cowboys, you know, the last of the American cowboys. But think about the old-- and think about how long that lasted. Think about how long the quote Old West unquote lasted. You know, we have

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immortalized and idolized and mythicized the Old West in the United-- history of the United States. It really only lasted a few years, that Wild West idea. It was never really as wild as it was portrayed in the-- in the dime novels, in the newspaper accounts and things like that, certainly not in the movies. Take the Pony Express. What an iconic thing. Pony Express lasted for 18 months, but yet what an indelible mark it made on American history, and I think you can take the post-- or the Vietnam era in trucking and kind of give it that same stamp of historic authenticity. Didn't last for very long, but when that candle was burning, man, it was flaming, and it really made a lasting impression on our society and on our culture.

MICHAEL: Absolutely. And, you know, I think what we really can kind of wrap this up with, maybe, Dave is--

DAVE: Oh, is it time to wrap up already? [laughter] Yakkity yak, don't talk back. [laughs]

MICHAEL: I think when we talk about the things that we can do to bring back or enhance the brotherhood is, as we were talking about, start some conversations. Conversation helps. Getting to understand someone through their words and your words helps a great deal. Another thing we can do is start to develop a respect for our fellow drivers regardless of the difference in what you do, regardless of the difference in experience and understand that we are all part of the same world, and we need to rid ourselves of some of the skepticism that's just a natural part of the job. When you've been out there 30, 40 years, I think it's part of our consciousness of Foghorn Leghorn. "That boy ain't never going to be a driver," you know? [laughs] If we can kind of let go of some of that skepticism, I think it would help us a great deal and to understand that what affects that driver in a truck affects me as well. What makes his life or her life better and more useful and more enjoyable for them is going to end up making my world more enjoyable as well, and if we can somehow get across that we are all connected, we all benefit from each other's achievements, we all suffer for each other's failures, perhaps we can bring this brotherhood back.

TIM: Very well put. And respect each other because as you mentioned, they're all-- we're all doing the exact same thing out there and part of a unique group of people.

DAVE: We love being with you here in Trucker Territory. Wanna thank all the folks at Progressive Commercial Insurance for allowing us to be part of the pod. We are in the pod, which is something else that we didn't know about about, what, 10 or 15 years ago? Podcasts? What are you talking about? I know peas are in a pod. I didn't know people could get in a pod.

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MICHAEL: Some people would say we still don't know.

DAVE: We still don't know. The great pod in the sky, and we're part of it. We love being here in Trucker Territory. Thanks for being with us, and we're looking forward to our next get-together. Tim Ridley, as always.

TIM: Thanks, Dave, always a pleasure.

DAVE: Michael Burns.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Dave.

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