

Reichard Ronald\_19920605

RICHARD SHARPLESS: This is an interview with Ron Reichard of 2052 South Delaware Drive, in Easton, actually Raubsville. It is June 5th, 1992 approximately 8:25 in the evening and we are sitting in Mr. Reichard's house. Okay Ron, how old are you?

RR: Twenty-six.

RS: Twenty-six, okay. And where are you from?

RR: Easton, Pennsylvania, right here in Raubsville.

RS: Raubsville, okay. Lived here all your life?

RR: Yes, most of it.

RS: And you went to school in -- ?

RR: Wilson.

RS: Wilson High School?

RR: Yes.

RS: When you got out of high school, what did you do?

RR: Went into the military, I didn't even really graduate, I caught my diploma on the fly and went straight into the military.

RS: How long were you in this?

RR: Four years.

RS: In the Army?

RR: Four years in the Army, yes.

RS: Four years in the army, okay. [00:01:00] What year did you get out?

RR: Nineteen eighty-eight.

RS: Nineteen eighty-eight, okay. And hold it just there.  
(pause) What did you do in the army?

RR: Heavy equipment operator.

RS: Heavy equipment operator, okay. And you got your training there?

RR: Right.

RS: Alright. When you got out of the army in '88, what did you plan to do, what were you thinking?

RR: Well, I went into heavy equipment operating. I did that, and just like that, pretty much the bottom fell out.

RS: Where did you work?

RR: In (inaudible), a local contractor.

RS: What kind of equipment were you running?

RR: Everything. He had bulldozers, backhoes, pretty much anything in the heavy earth moving.

RS: How long did that job last?

RR: About six months.

RS: Six months. You say the bottom fell out.

RR: Yes.

RS: What do you mean?

RR: Everybody started [00:02:00] tightening up on money, the contractors didn't finish their jobs. Not mostly the contractors, I guess it would be the main general contractor, the whole job never finished. They, the banks, took over a lot of the housing developments because people just weren't buying at the present time and nobody could afford to go on.

RS: So you really got nailed by the recession that started.

RR: Right away, it started right away.

RS: Okay. And when you left that particular job what year was that through?

RR: Nineteen eighty-eight.

RS: Eighty-eight, okay. And what did you do then?

RR: I went, I moved for -- I guess I was gone about two years. Went out to Harrisburg and got a job there, and the pay out there is so much different than here.

RS: Higher?

RR: No, lower. Way lower --

RS: Lower?

RR: Yeah, [00:03:00] I took almost a four, in fact it was a \$4 cut in moving.

RS: Well why did you do that?

RR: There wasn't nothing here. Plus my family moved, so it made it a lot easier too. I wasn't ready for bills yet

(laughs), because I seen everything was slowly declining and the contractor took all my hours away, I was only working 40 hours a week, and that was about it. And then I went into truck driving out there.

RS: Okay, hold it, just before you do that, you were in Harrisburg two years you say, about two years?

RR: Right.

RS: Okay, what did you do down there?

RR: That was -- I went into truck driving right after I moved. I went into heavy equipment operating about three months I was out there, went in about three months. I worked [00:04:00] in a quarry, I took another pay cut because that was the only job I could find. Just had no luck in the field at all, nothing was happening, there wasn't nothing happening.

RS: So actually, from the time you started working, after you got out of the army, in heavy equipment you actually took two pay cuts then in the next two jobs.

RR: Yeah, right away. Within a year I took two pay cuts.

RS: From what to what?

RR: From 13.75 all the way down to 7.50.

RS: Down to 7.50. And this was in Harrisburg?

RR: Right.

RS: Okay. Now when did you start driving a truck, then?

RR: Nineteen eighty-nine, January 1<sup>st</sup>.

RS: Was that in Harrisburg?

RR: Right. Started hauling the hazardous waste.

RS: Hazardous waste.

RR: Right. (laughs)

RS: From where?

RR: Mostly [00:05:00] a place out of Philadelphia down to Alabama, down near Alabama. And a lot of, just common mistakes, like people's oil in the driveways if somebody would complain and most of it was like oil spills, say there was a wreck, a truck wreck or something, there'd be diesel all over, we'd have to come in and take all the soil out and clean up and it's considered hazardous material.

RS: Now were you in a union when you were doing this?

RR: No, it was all -- I went into truck driving because I couldn't make no money. And then I was planning on getting married, so it was time to get my shit together.

RS: Right, but you weren't -- when you were working in hazardous waste you weren't a member of a union.

RR: No, never in a union.

RS: Did they offer any -- since this was a rather hazardous job, I would think, did they offer any kind of -- did they offer better pay, better pensions?

RR: Not [00:06:00] really. It was a good job, but it wasn't outstanding.

RS: When you say good job what do you mean by that?

RR: You'd get meal money, you were home quite often, home every weekend. They paid a lot of your -- they paid all your benefits at the time. But I have a friend that works there now and that company's falling apart too, and that's a brand-new company.

RS: Okay. So, hazard -- okay, so -- (laughs). Alright, then you moved back here to Raubsville?

RR: Right.

RS: Okay, and what did you do back here?

RR: Started driving -- I just kept my driving, still driving.

RS: Alright, but now if I understand it, you changed several companies, you went through several companies in the last couple of years, right?

RR: Right, I left [00:07:00] there -- you should have warned me on this one (laughs) -- when did I leave there? 1990. No, '91. What year is it? '92.

RS: Ninety-two now, yeah.

RR: Yeah 1991 -- yeah, 1991, I left there in the middle of January. There wasn't nothing happening. I was halfway on the seniority list, halfway up, and I was working one day a week. I couldn't make it at all.

RS: This was in waste?

RR: No, no, this was -- I was home (inaudible).

RS: Who were you working for here?

RR: [redacted]

RS: And then driving?

RR: Right, and nothing was happening out here. I mean absolutely nothing. The guys, some of the guys below me were not working at all.

RS: You were working one day a week.

RR: One day, I just, I couldn't afford to do it. So then [00:08:00] I went to work with the township, I worked with them for six months, they promised me a promising raise and I never got that. So I went back into driving.

RS: What did the -- how did the pay at the township compare with the other, the driving?

RR: It was salary, it was basically salary. It was a steady gig, I was working five days, 8.50 an hour, it's better than working one day for 20 -- I was only getting 23 cents a mile then.

RS: Did the township pay benefits?

RR: Right, it was paid benefits right off the bat and that was one of the reasons I took the job right away.

RS: But you left with them because you felt that --?

RR: There was a -- I'm back driving with the same company now because business has picked up.

RS: Atlantic State?

RR: Right. We did a real good year last year, last winter I worked all winter and that's a first.

RS: What [00:09:00] do you haul and where?

RR: Water line, sewer line, all over. I'd say from Maine to South Carolina pretty much is ours. But there's a division out in Utah of us that's called Pacific States and they take care of that. We sort of take care of the East, and there's different companies in between.

RS: That's a Texas outfit isn't there?

RR: Oh no that's Tyler Pipe, they're on strike now. Yeah, they --

RS: Alright. Do you consider this a pretty good job?

RR: I'm surviving (laughs). My wife don't have to work.

RS: And that's important to you, right?

RR: Right.

RS: Do they pay benefits?

RR: Right. Oh, we pay some of the families. We pay, I don't even know what it is, I think it's 12.90 a week. But they pay for me, I'm paying for my family health payment.

RS: So they at least cover you?

RR: Right.

RS: And [00:10:00] you're working steady?

RR: I work five days a week. Now that summer's here, it's five days; in the wintertime, Christmas and New Year's is murder, I didn't work at all. I've marked down when I worked. The month of February I think I was actually off two weeks, two whole weeks. I could have worked two weeks straight and then took two weeks off and it would have been the same thing. But they break it up to try to do where you can at least make a decent -- you can survive, put it that way.

RS: How many people work?

RR: Forty-two I think, 42 or 43, somewhere right around there.

RS: Is it a pretty good company to work for?

RR: Yeah, I feel it is, a lot of guys feel no, but everybody thinks it's greener on the other side of the fence, it's not always [00:11:00], because I left there and then I came back, and they started a pension plan for us now.

RS: You have a pension plan.

RR: They just started. It's sort of not a real good pension plan. They control it, we have nothing to do with it.

RS: Do you contribute or do they?

RR: They do how much ever they want to put in, one year they put it in, if they don't want to stick none in well then,

they don't stick none in. So I don't even really -- it's a pension plan, sort of, but it's not. I don't count on it.

RS: Now, you said they don't have a union there, right?

RR: No, Atlantic States is union though, we're not a union.

RS: I misunderstood you, I thought you were working for Atlantic States?

RR: I work for [redacted].

RS: Okay.

RR: [redacted] pays me [00:12:00] so it's a fine line you know.

RS: Alright, so the company you work for is actually a subsidiary?

RR: [redacted]

RS: [redacted]

RR: It's a real fine line I mean.

RS: What kind of future do you see with this company?

RR: Long hours (laughs). That's about it, hopefully there is maybe some future there, some guys have been there ten years.

RS: Oh yeah?

RR: Yeah, I guess the oldest guy there is like 18 years. So there is sort of a future there if you want to basically put up with the bullshit of driving all the time.

RS: Do you think you could do that for 18 years?

RR: If I have to (laughs). I'll do anything if I have to, right?

RS: A pretty tough job the older you get.

RR: The older you get [00:13:00] the worse it gets.

RS: How about heavy equipment?

RR: I don't see it ever coming around here again.

RS: No?

RR: No. Everything's all developed, it's -- if it develops everybody's fixing up the old, they ain't going into the new. Not around here, not even Jersey. We haul pipe to Jersey all the time and it's mostly government funded. So if the government don't want you to have -- don't do water line, then they won't do it. If they do, the towns won't pay for it.

RS: So you don't really see any future then with the heavy equipment?

RR: No.

RS: Did you expect this sort of thing?

RR: Not at all, not while I was in the -- when I was in Germany for four years, I had no idea what was going on back here, no idea. I'd come home for what, 30 days out of a year (laughs) and that [00:14:00] was my time, I wasn't worried about nothing. So I didn't -- I come into it, it was like a whole new world.

RS: Did your income level over the past four years, were you somewhat surprised by it?

RR: It fluctuated a lot. The first year we were married we did good. She didn't work no more and then the company started going up and down, up and down, I started -- I went through five jobs last year, I think.

RS: Five jobs?

RR: And I worked, I think I made twenty-two eight last year, that's it.

RS: And you're living in Raubsville.

RR: Right. I didn't do nothing last year. It was a tough year last year.

RS: Now do you think -- do [00:15:00] you foresee a time your wife will have to go back to work?

RR: I hope not. That's another reason I sort of left the township, it was getting to the point where she had to work, and I didn't want that.

RS: Why not?

RR: I have a child, I don't feel it's necessary for her to have to work, not when we still need to pay somebody to watch my son, that's -- I don't know.

RS: You don't feel comfortable with that.

RR: Right. And if it would eventually come down to it, she'd have to, but I don't ever foreseeing her having to.

RS: Are you still having more kids?

RR: Yeah, as a matter of fact [00:16:00] we are. We'll probably try for the end of the summer, try to have another one, one more. I mean I can't afford two, but I got everything brand new I might as well use it. (laughs)

RS: (Laughs) That's funny. So you plan to stay around here?

RR: Right, we just bought the house. So we're planning on living here for a long time. (laughs)

RS: Do you think that the economic situation will improve, what do you -- how do you feel about that, what's your feelings about that, the general economy, not just your situation but in general?

RR: I don't know, I heard on the radio today where everybody's thinking it's improving, but the unemployment rate went up.

RS: That's right, the highest it's been since '84. And of course, your own [00:17:00] experience, you're going through five jobs. Did you ever think that would happen to you in one year?

RR: No, never, I've always been pretty much a company man. But I don't like to be thrown around either. I had a real good job; a real good cement job and they went out of business last year. And I'd still be with them.

RS: The company went out of business?

RR: Right, they went -- they filed bankrupt. They were talking about closing the doors and I left that job instantly once I heard that. We got our newsletter and everything and I was gone (laughs). I took my money and ran.

RS: But you didn't expect this sort of thing?

RR: No. When I was hired there, they were telling me everything and how long the company was going to last. It was a brand new company, it doubled in a year, which it did. They actually showed me, and --

RS: What happened?

RR: I personally think they paid [00:18:00] the drivers too much. I made damn good money.

RS: Oh yeah?

RR: Yeah, I made anywhere between -- I was home every night and I made anywhere between 8 -- \$700 and \$800 a week. I did real good. They had 401k, they paid all your medical, it was a real good job, I think.

RS: Who was it?

RR: Baywood Express, it was a division of BMI, BMI has filed bankruptcy and they got rid of all the cement bulk business. I personally think they paid the drivers too much, because another company took over and they cut the pay, way back. Almost -- they almost took a third of what we were making.

RS: A third?

RR: A third.

RS: Did any of the other drivers stay with them?

RR: No, everybody quit, nobody'd do it -- so that tells you what happened.

RS: Jesus, when did this happen?

RR: I think they were finally out in November, two weeks be-- [00:19:00] as a matter of fact it was two weeks before Christmas, is when they finally closed the doors. It was, yeah, two weeks before Christmas, or two weeks before Thanksgiving. It was one or the other. Oh it was -- yeah, it was Thanksgiving. It was definitely Thanksgiving, because we were talking about it.

RS: A hell of a time, I guess.

RR: How about it. I was already gone. One of the other, the mechanic out there he's working with me now over at [redacted].

RS: Where was this outfit located?

RR: Allentown.

RS: In Allentown.

RR: Airport Road.

RS: What were the other companies you worked for?

RR: I worked for one job four days, I just didn't like it. It was a freight company. Go to work Sunday, come home

[00:20:00] Saturday and go to work Sunday again. There wasn't much time, no family life. That wasn't my style.

RS: On these jobs, driving, it seems to me they demand a lot of time, in terms of --

RR: All the time. It's -- (laughs)

RS: In other words, you don't know when you're going to be home, I guess?

RR: This company I do. I know I won't work weekends, and if I do work the weekend it's going to be once in a blue moon. I worked one weekend in eight months now. And I was home, I'm usually home in the afternoon. We run New York City a lot. You get up at three-thirty, four o'clock, go in, you're home by noon.

RS: Do you like that sort of thing?

RR: No, I'd rather -- it don't pay -- it pays, but it don't pay real well. I'd rather stay out one night or two nights and make [00:21:00] a little more money. That's what they usually do. They'll run you long then they'll run you short, then they'll run you long, short, long, short. But it adds up. You know, I ain't going to get rich over there, but I'm pretty content.

RS: What are the longest hauls you have to make?

RR: Well, longest I've been so far with them is Atlanta, Georgia. What was it? I think it was right around 800 and some miles. It's the longest I've been with them.

RS: What are the -- you obviously meet a lot of other drivers on the road. What are they thinking about these days? There's a lot of changes that have been going on.

RR: Right, we just got a new license, which is the biggest bullshit I've ever seen in my life.

RS: You've got to pass a test or something, federal? Is that federal?

RR: Right, federal. That [00:22:00] didn't change nothing.

RS: No?

RR: No. Just made it harder on us and that's the last thing in the world we need. I mean they make it impossible. The government is actually -- the government DOT is actually making it impossible to make a living, they're such a pain in the ass. They want to stop you, they want to shut you down, they want to do stupid stuff. Connecticut will give you a ticket for having colored sheets on your bunk.

RS: Colored sheets on your bunk?

RR: Colored sheets on your bunk (laughs).

RS: You're kidding?

RR: No.

RS: What's that have to do with anything?

RR: They say, I guess -- this is a theory, a long time ago the governor's daughter or something, I've never seen it in writing. But I've seen it, I've seen the ticket, I've seen guys get them, they'll give you a ticket for not having white linen.

RS: That's crazy (laughs), that has nothing to do with anything.

RR: They say if you ever come across an accident, they said that ink [00:23:00] poison will get in the blood. It's one of their stupid theories.

RS: (Laughs) Okay. So there's a lot of government regulations.

RR: Right, or you can't -- if you're sick, you're not even supposed to drive. But if you're sick and you can't drive that means your family can't eat. It's a headache.

RS: How about the numbers of hours?

RR: We're only allowed to work 15 hours a day, only allowed to drive --

MARTIN DESHT: 15 hours a day?

RR: 15 hours a day.

RS: You can't drive 15 hours.

RR: No, I can only drive ten, legally. And I'll do what I have to do.

RS: Most drivers feel that way too?

RR: Right, you do what you have to do, there ain't nobody going to make a living legally.

RS: What happened to all the independent drivers?

RR: There's a lot still around.

RS: Are they still around?

RR: They're not making no money, [00:24:00] they're surviving just like everybody else.

RS: What happened in the trucking business?

RR: I haven't been in it real real long. My family has, but it's just, there's more and more and you get people out cutting the rates. JB Hunt used to take loads up to Canada for nothing, they'd run them from here to Canada.

RS: They call it the truck driving school.

RR: Yeah (laughs), everybody's got their theories on everything, you know. Everybody's out to cut everybody's throat. You'll have owner operators cutting into us, they'll say, "Okay, I'll take this load for a buck-thirty a mile." Another driver will walk right in and say, "Oh hey, I need that load at a buck-twenty." Who are they going to give it to? It's just cutting throats. Everybody's trying to make a living, and it's not getting nowhere.

RS: This has certainly changed then, from what it was 10-15 years ago.

RR: Right, yeah. My [00:25:00] dad -- my real father -- used to drive, he was a union driver -- when I was growing up, he was grossing anywhere between nine and twelve hundred dollars a week. This is, oh, '75, yeah right around '75. He was grossing that back then.

RS: There weren't many truck drivers during that time.

RR: You ain't gonna do that today. He was -- he'd go Monday -- he'd leave late Sunday night, early Monday morning, I'd say four o'clock in the morning. He'd be home Friday afternoon, noon. It wasn't bad. I mean we've become accustomed to it, and you just live to it if you want a lot of luxuries, you --

RS: Sure, when he made that kind of money.

RR: Right, he made that, and I can't even do it. He did that five days, I can't do it seven, I've [00:26:00] already worked seven.

RS: And you were talking about 15 -- 17 years later, actually.

RR: Right, I don't even, whatever it is now (laughs).

RS: He was a union driver, right?

RR: Right.

RS: Now, do union drivers still -- like the teamsters, I guess they are -- do they still do better?

RR: Yeah, they're making -- my stepfather's making 42 cents a mile, I'm making 25.

RS: Twenty-five, that's quite a difference.

RR: He made 53 last year, I made 22. I went through a lot of jobs though, but there's the difference.

RS: Yeah, that's a hell of a difference.

RR: But there ain't no union jobs right around here unless you know somebody. There ain't nothing around here. I don't want to move back out there again.

RS: There aren't that many trucking lines unionized, is that what you're saying?

RR: Right, [00:27:00] just your main outfits, Roadway, Preston, Carolina.

RS: I guess that all depends on seniority.

RR: Mm, it's who you know (laughs). Around here, out there you can pretty much get in.

RS: Would you consider driving for--?

RR: The union? No, that's on call. You work -- you go out on your trip and you'll come back after your trip. They'll give you eight hours off, then they'll call you on the phone. You basically live by a phone until you get -- I forget how many he has to do -- he has to do five or six trips. After he gets them trips in, he can take 48 hours off, and after that 48 hours he gets on the board and he actually, he lives by the phone. So you pay --

RS: So they can call you at any time?

RR: Yes, you pay for that money. You actually -- you're on, you're never off when you're off.

RS: You're on call.

RR: Right, I know what I'm doing. [00:28:00] I know when I come in Friday afternoon, I'm done until Monday morning. Now he may come in Friday afternoon and he may have to go out Saturday. He don't know, he can't plan nothing, if it takes him nine days to get six trips in, then he can't take the 48 hours until he gets his six trips in. In the meantime he's got to stay by the phone. You know, so you pay the price. It's a whole new world out there, there ain't nothing like truck driving.

RS: Well it's changed a lot from what I hear, from what you're telling me.

RR: Right. It's worse.

RS: The truck drivers I knew was back in the seventies, it was a hell of a lot different (laughs).

RR: The equipment's changed.

RS: It was a good business.

RR: It's still a good business. It's looked down on by a lot of people, but a lot of people don't know what we have [00:29:00] to go through. I mean we had to go get the license. But I came back in the rainstorm today, I seen four cars in a wreck, not one truck, but I seen four cars.

But we need the special license. It's a monopolist bullshit game, the state wanted more money.

RS: Martin, you got any questions?

MD: No.

RR: It's tough for me though. I don't know how, it's tough for me to answer you all's questions.

RS: No, that's all -- no, you're doing good. I understand that the number of owner operators has really declined a lot, is that true?

RR: No, there's still guys going out and buying trucks.

RS: Like, I guess the number of trucking companies has declined.

RR: Yeah, no, trucking companies have [00:30:00] declined, they're folding day in and day out.

RS: Is that because of the deregulation and the competition?

RR: Yeah competition. Everybody's doing it, there's owner operators losing trucks constantly. There's owner operators losing -- you've just got to be in the right field. Now we're in the water line field and the sewer line, so we're doing alright, we're doing -- actually, probably one of the better companies in the area, I feel. There's another company in P-burgh that I'd love to get in, but it's impossible.

RS: Who is that?

RR: [Pool Co.?] is -- it's [Pool Co.], but it's got a real long name, it's right across P-burgh Bridge. They haul mostly corrosives, they make a corrosive for something, I don't know, it's impossible --

MD: Why is it hard to get in?

RR: It's such [00:31:00] a good job. It is, it's -- from what I understand they get \$10 an hour, no matter what they do. After 40 hours, I work -- we can only work 70 hours a week.

MD: You can only work 70 hours a week?

RR: Right, and -- [section redacted] I'm only allowed to work 15 hours a day, legally. It takes me, say I run to Long Island. I'll give you a quick run through the week. I went to Long Island, had a two stop in Long Island. I showed, it took me -- I even forget what it showed. It took me -- [section redacted]

RS: Okay, [00:32:00] now why is that, because--?

RR: So I don't burn up all my hours. Once my logbook shows that I used up all my time --

RS: Oh I see, in other words, you can only --

RR: -- I can get a ticket, they'll shut me down right there and logbook fines in the state of Pennsylvania per fine is \$84 per ticket.

RS: Okay, so in other words you can only drive so many hours a day?

RR: So many hours a day, so many hours a week.

RS: Okay, so if you actually -- you actually drive more than that, but you can't show it on your log, is that what you're saying?

RR: Right, it eventually comes around, you know what I mean? It comes around to that. My paperwork has to match. [section redacted] I'll come home, I'll get some sleep. This is mostly on my part though, I'm going to come home, I'm going to spend time [00:33:00] with my family. Otherwise I'll sleep in the truck all week and I don't want to do that. Then you don't have a family life.

RS: Right, okay. So you're -- what about when -- do you have to load/unload yourself?

RR: No, they do everything.

RS: They do everything.

RR: In this.

RS: When you're not driving, when you're not actually moving, how does that count?

RR: I usually put "sleep" or "berth." I'm usually -- I may take a nap. Sometimes --

RS: But I mean they don't put that on your log, I mean.

RR: Right, that goes, everything goes --

RS: Oh, that does?

RR: -- I have to show everything. I can't miss a minute out of the day.

MD: So that's why they're so important when you're stopped.

RR: Right, my logbook's actually like an official document.

MD: So you have to account for every minute you spend?

RR: Right, I don't want none of this to leak out (laughs) you know, that I do this personally, but I'm just trying to give you a field of what [00:34:00] goes on.

RS: Let me turn this off, I'm just curious I don't want to --  
[INTERRUPTION]

MD: Hearsay evidence.

RS: What kind of things do truckers do in order to make a living, in order to survive? You suggested that a lot of the things that you do are not according to regulations or requirements.

RR: Well hearsay is -- I mean, I know of people going and burning up their time running two North Carolinas back to back. Impossible! I've known people to run two North Carolinas: run down one day, pick up, come back, you're back that night, you're -- it's not as far as you think it is, but it's a ride, it's 1300 miles round trip [00:35:00] from here. But you may leave Sunday night, deliver Monday morning, you're back home Monday night getting ready to pull another load to North Carolina, tip of Virginia. That

can't be done, not legally. You have to bend, but if you want to eat, you're going to do it. So every time you go out, you hope that you don't get pulled over. You run around every state they've got scales and the CB radio comes in real handy towards that because there's scales, you'll run around them, you'll do everything you can to run around a scale. And guys that are getting a percentage of the loads, you know they're running overweight because they're making -- the more weight you stick in, the more money they're making and you're gonna -- I know of guys, I know personally of people that are running [00:36:00] a hundred thousand pounds. You're only allowed to run eighty.

RS: And they're running on side roads just because --

RR: And they're running midnights, they're running nine o'clock to six o'clock. That's all they'll run. They'll run strictly dark time and they love the rain because they know DOT ain't going to be out there. They make stick a hundred ten gross in. As much weight as they can get in without hurting the equipment, they'll do it, because they're making a percentage of the load. So you're talking anywhere from putting 24 ton in up to, they may stick 35 ton in.

RS: Is that dangerous?

RR: Oh it's very dangerous, you can't stop, you lose your braking distance, but like I say you've got to do what you've got to do. You've got to eat, and a lot of people don't understand that we put a lot of time in. There's a lot of time that goes in, there's -- [00:37:00] actually more drivers fall asleep during the day than they will at night.

RS: Oh yeah?

RR: Because they're driving -- they sleep. Best time to sleep, they're usually offloaded by noon and they're dead tired by then. So you go to bed from 12 to maybe 8 o'clock at night. And you'll get up and you'll go like a bat out of hell again. By time morning comes you're beat, but you've got to get that delivery in. If you don't get that delivery in, dispatch is down your throat, the contractor is calling up. Wants to know where his freight is, and if you're late, you get a letter for it. You get a letter for it, you can lose your job after so many, you can't be late. But they don't want to hear that, they don't want to hear that you've got a family, they don't want to -- truck drivers, (inaudible) they think everybody's single and wants to go out and screw around with lot [00:38:00] lizards and everything else and everything else and we

ain't got time for that (laughs). If you do have time for it, you're not making money, that's what it comes down to.

MD: Do you think that's a popular myth, lot lizards and stuff?

RR: Oh, yeah, that's not a popular myth, that's going on. Every day. I can take you to a spot right in New Jersey.

MD: But did you say in order to make a living you don't have time to do that stuff, is the media hyping it up or what?

RR: What do you mean?

MD: Well you say if you want to make a living you don't have time to do that.

RR: Yeah you don't have time to sit around at a truck stop. You don't have -- there's times where I don't have time to drink a cup of coffee. I mean, when I go away, I don't have -- I can't afford to eat on the road. I pack my lunch, if I run out of food, I won't eat, can't afford to eat. I may go a day without eating until I get back home.

RS: So you get --

RR: Instead of spending that money out there, I'll make sure a bill gets paid, or put clothes on the kid's back.

MD: Do you have health insurance?

RR: Right, but I'm paying for it.

MD: How [00:39:00] much are you paying?

RR: Twelve dollars a week.

MD: Twelve dollars a week?

RR: Twelve-ninety, 11.90 something like that.

RS: That's for your family?

RR: That's for my family.

MD: Do you like your job?

RR: Yes.

MD: Do you, you like trucking?

RR: Yes, I'd like to have it better, but it's never going to get better.

RS: Why do you say that?

RR: As long as the government's got their hands in it, it's going to be screwed up (laughs). That's what it comes down to.

RS: From other truckers you know, obviously your own family, has it gotten worse over the years?

RR: Right, it has, my uncle used to own two trucks, he's down to one.

RS: What happened?

RR: One got stolen and he just --

RS: Stole a truck?

RR: Yes, they steal trucks. It's just like going out and stealing a car.

RS: It would be hard to steal a truck.

RR: No.

RS: Not hard to steal, but hard to hide it.

RR: No, there's people up in Connecticut they found a driver --[00:40:00] well matter of fact, they found his truck, he had a load of M&Ms on, found the truck empty, found the trailer empty and the driver's dead somewhere because they can't find him. So it happens. It's a bad time, there's places in New York City where you won't go in at dark. Your delivery time may be at midnight, it'll be a cold day in hell when I take a reefer in New York City at night (laughs).

RS: I've heard they've gotten convoys actually.

RR: Yeah you go -- if I run the city, I like to go with somebody else. If I don't go with somebody else -- we deliver Harlem, I won't go into Harlem before 7 o'clock in the morning. I see people, people actually walk up and step onto your truck, it's scary, you know, cause you -- (laughs). I carry a knife and you put it, you keep it pretty handy and people will actually walk up and stand on your truck. You don't know if this clown's going to pull a gun on you or what, [00:41:00] is he going to ask you for your money, what he's going to do. You just go with the flow.

RS: What other kind of hazards do you run into on the road?

RR: That's about it. Cars.

RS: Cars, yeah, well.

RR: (Laughs)

RS: Civilian drivers.

RR: Right, people -- we're the paid professionals and they -- people forget about that. We got schedules to keep and the average human being don't know that we got a schedule to keep. Right away, we -- if they -- they don't use their heads. I mean if traffic -- you got a right lane and a left lane, and then sometimes you got a far left lane which trucks ain't allowed in, a lot of people don't know that, but trucks ain't allowed in the far left lane, and you get some clown that wants to do 55 in the middle lane, some clown wants to do 55 in the right hand lane, well where's the truck driver going to go? 55 [00:42:00] is the speed limit, but I ain't got time to do 55. I've got two speeding tickets to prove that (laughs).

RS: What's the average -- what do you think the average truck driver works, actually works, in a week, not just driving but works?

RR: Well, what, both? What, counting everything?

RS: Yeah. Somebody like yourself, well let's say yourself, what do you average in a week?

[section redacted]

RR: Well I'm answering most of these questions on -- I'm trying to give you -- I'm gonna --

RS: I know but when I edit this thing, I'm going to cut you, "I," right out of it, do you understand what I'm saying?

RR: Right, because I'm -- we're in one of the roughest, longest jobs that there is. They should -- our company should have, I'd say, at least ten more trucks and ten more drivers.

MD: Let me ask you this, what's the average age of the average truck driver? Can you--

RR: Right now it's tough for anybody to get in, you can't get in basically because of the new CDL, if you have a CDL --

MD: What's a CDL?

RR: Commercial Driver's License.

RS: That's the new license, right?

RR: Yeah, \$65 a year for that (laughs). [00:44:00]

MD: Is it mostly young guys like yourself or 50-year-old guys?

RR: I'm going to say the average age is 35, whoever's in it now is in it. For a new person to get in it, it's tough. My company won't hire a new guy off the street. J.B. Hunt will, Snyder will, they will. My company won't, you need two years' experience.

RS: So 80 hours a week, but you don't get paid for 80 hours?

RR: No, no. See that's what I mean, our company -- we need ten more trucks, probably ten more drivers. But if you're going to put ten more trucks on, ten more drivers, I can't

eat, because then you're taking work away from me and we need that work. Do you know what I mean?

RS: So what you're saying is that --

RR: I've got to work at the --

RS: -- if you put ten more drivers and ten more trucks on then [00:45:00] he'd have to pay everybody more.

RR: Right, and that ain't going to happen. But they put ten trucks on, ten drivers, and pay everybody more to work less, well hell, I'd do it, but it ain't going to happen. Right now, I'm happy. I'm happy where I'm at, happy about my job.

RS: That's just incredible, that many hours though, I think.

RR: Like I said you could spend -- you may spend five hours getting unloaded, and --

RS: That's just wasted time.

RR: Yeah, it's wasted time.

MD: Well would you say you really -- can you afford to work 40 hours a week?

RR: No, I can't.

MD: So you're happy that you can --

RR: I'm happy I'm working (laughs).

RS: You're happy you're working but you have to be --

MD: Regardless of how many hours you have to do it?

RR: Right, if I would have to leave -- which I've [00:46:00] already did, I left here Sunday afternoon, came home Tuesday night, went to work Tuesday night again, I mean, I came home I took a shower, played around, had supper, spent five, six hours at home and had to go back out. Well I was happy I just got five, six hours at home and had to go back out.

MD: So in order to keep your wife home you're working two jobs.

RR: Yes.

MD: You're working eighty hours.

RR: Easy.

MD: That's what you're doing.

RR: But it's worth it to me to have my family at home and at least one of the parents raising him.

RS: But your health's okay and you're young.

RR: But that's, there's older people doing it. There's --

MD: Are you going to be able to do it at age 40?

RR: Yeah, it's a stressful job, it's more [00:47:00] mind than it is --

RS: Right, but you know, it's a high stress element having to be out there on a rig.

RR: Right, it's getting worse (laugh) driving-wise, there's more traffic on the road.

RS: That's right, and it's going to continue to get worse.

RR: Right, it is getting worse.

RS: The roads are getting worse.

RR: Yeah, they're wore out. The state won't put no money in them.

RS: I just can't -- you know, I just can't imagine, so many hours, I mean --

RR: It's -- yeah, it's nothing to work. I've already ran out of time on my log, that's 70 hours. I know people that run out of their logs and like I said 70 hours in eight days and you're doing that in five. You're only allowed to go back eight days, eight days I can only work 70 hours, but I only work [00:48:00] five days a week. Right? I work Monday through Friday.

RS: So you're actually doing all of --

RR: Seventy hours, yeah, and I've ran out of time.

RS: Seventy hours in five days.

RR: Five days, so you're pushing 90 -- if you run out of time 70 hours, if you run out of 70 hours, [00:48:00] I guarantee you've worked 100, 110. Guaranteed.

RS: When the hell did you sleep?

RR: Don't have time to sleep (laughs). I've -- just this week I've -- I had a good night's sleep Sunday night, slept -- I can, I know -- the night before last I didn't get no sleep.

RS: Then you drove?

RR: I drove straight through, I just come home [00:49:00] and you got -- they showed me how to run a boom, and I had work to do, and I didn't get no sleep. I went up to -- laid over in Boston, I slept three hours, contractor woke me up at five o'clock, he wanted his pipe, hey buddy you want your pipe you can have it. I'll gladly get it off my truck or I can go to my next job and get that off and came home. But then again, I could have went to bed right there, but I chose to come home and go to bed. You can't sleep in the truck. I don't like sleeping in the truck unless I have to.

MD: Is it dangerous?

RR: Yeah, anything can happen. Somebody come up and kill you and it's been known --

RS: Yeah that's happened plenty.

RR: I mean especially when times are tough like this, it can happen it can happen quicker now then it can happen -- I won't sleep in a rest area. I won't sleep in truck stops.

RS: No?

RR: No, I don't, I sleep --

RS: You have all [00:50:00] these guys there.

RR: I sleep at the job sites. There's people--

RS: Because there's people around.

RR: Right, I'll pull -- most of ours is way in the country, if I've got to go to the city I don't leave until the last minute. But I'll sleep in the country, it's pretty --

RS: Secluded.

RR: Yeah, you know if you're going into a good neighborhood or not. If you knew you were going into a bad neighborhood, you'll stay maybe a hundred miles out and then do that first thing in the morning and drive in.

RS: A hundred miles?

RR: Right. You play it safe, I mean, I want to come home (laughs).

MD: Are you allowed to take a rider with you?

RR: No, some companies do. I'd love to take my wife with me.

MD: Yeah, I'd like to go out with you.

RR: (Laughs)

MD: Out in the Pittsburgh area, down there.

RS: This is fascinating.

MD: When do you work?

RR: I'll tell you what, you could probably get in with me saying that you're [00:51:00] writing a book, and you wanna --

MD: Oh yeah?

RR: Yeah, you talk to [name redacted] I bet you you could go with me.

RS: As a photographer.

RR: You talk to [name redacted] I bet you I could get you to go with me. I mean -- and to mention the company name, I mean he's pretty good at that, he volunteers the trucks for the P-burgh Easter parade all the time, every year. He's pretty good about that.

MD: When's your next trip?

RR: I go out again Monday morning. It's local and then I'll come back, and I'll come back, and they'll probably send me to North Carolina or something like that. So I'm going to run a short one, then I'm going to run a long one. Short one, long one, short one --

RS: So Monday you'll probably work a regular.

RR: Yeah, I'll work a regular ten hours.

RS: Ten hours.

RR: Then I'll come home and --

RS: Sleep.

RR: I won't sleep, I'll pack my bags and probably go back out again. But I could say "No, I want to be a local driver and I want to [00:52:00] make \$350 a week," but that's not worth it. I can't survive on 350, I tried that.

RS: Okay. I feel guilty for keeping you up (laughs).

RR: No, I'm so used to it.

RS: Jesus, I can't imagine that.

MD: I can't either. That's --

RS: I'd fall asleep and be off the bridge.

MD: That reminds me of being on a ship, that's the kind of schedule he's keeping.

RS: In the Navy, yeah.

RR: I mean I do it every week, and --

MD: The most valuable thing is sleep, that's all -- your life revolves around getting your job and getting your sleep.

RR: I can sleep three hours -- I can sleep better in three, four hours than you can all night.

RS: Probably can, because yeah you have to. It's like the army.

RR: Right, same schedule.

RS: What do you consider a good night's sleep?

RR: Well at most, about six hours (laughs).

RS: Jesus (laughs).

MD: When you wake up the next morning.

RR: Yeah, [00:53:00] I've never --

MD: You haven't been mugged in your truck somewhere.

RR: It's about six hours. If I go out and sleep in the truck, the most sleep I've ever gotten out in the truck is six hours.

RS: Six hours. I can understand it. Okay.

MD: All right.

END OF AUDIO FILE