

Trucker Profile - John Lougheed

By: Sue Dickens

www.canadiantruckingnews.com



When John Lougheed took his truck driving course offered by the Toronto Board of Education it was free . . . that was in 1967. It's a decision he has never regretted.

I met John and his wife Diane at the Erb Transport terminal in Trenton, Ontario where he is now working, almost 40 years later, as an in-cab instructor.

Actually, John is a Central Line Haul driver at Erb and does in-cab training for new employees going on Linehaul. "I teach them what to expect from Erb and what Erb will expect from them. It is a 'real world' learning experience for the new drivers," he explains.

Before we settled down for the interview this laid-back easy going driver showed me his truck which has a Teddy bear in the window on the passenger door.

His truck, a 2002 International Eagle with a 72" high rise sleeper, is what he drives on line hauls now and he likes it a lot. He has driven that truck since August 2001 and it has 925,000 kms on it.

The bear was given to him by his 13-year-old grandson Alex, who just loves the fact his grandfather is a trucker and drives a big rig. "Alex is our eldest grandchild," says John with a broad grin.

“He really enjoys traveling with me on the road and I enjoy having him. Our grandson Bradley, who is 9, wants to go with me one day too,” he adds. “Our granddaughter Alison, who is 11 . . . well she rode with me once and that was it,” he says laughing.

Their son Glenn drives a dump truck for Drain Brothers in Norwood and their youngest daughter Wendy is a licensed trucker too. Their eldest daughter Donna, (Alex’s mom) lives in Barrie. She attended Sheridan College and is a Certified Terminal Manager. Donna is currently teaching part-time and is studying at York to become a school teacher.

It is obvious that family is very important to John.

Working for Erb Transport

“Erb is a great company to work for. They are very family oriented and they treat their drivers really well giving us a lot of perks such as profit sharing and so on. They buy us our uniforms and offer safe driving bonuses too,” says John who joined the Erb team about a decade ago.

As we continued to chat John took a few moments to talk about his early days when he decided to become a truck driver. Growing up in Toronto he attended Danforth Tech and got a job delivering milk door to door. “My dad drove for a dairy company so I guess that is why I did it,” he says reminiscing about his first taste of life as a trucker.

“The board’s trucking school had three tractors and four trailers and I remember the training was being offered as a trade. It just seemed like a good idea at the time,” he says laughing.

Teaching and more

John’s first job driving a tractor trailer was with Smith Transport in Toronto. Just before Christmas 1967 he was laid off and so he decided to apply for work at Kingsway Transport, a company he stayed with for 28 years. John was kept busy doing runs from Toronto to Montreal hauling flatbeds, floats, B-trains and more.

“I was home every second night so that was great,” he says grinning. Then deregulation happened and Kingsway merged with Cabano under the TransForce umbrella and he decided to move on once more. “They offered an early retirement so I took it,” he comments.

It was the perfect opportunity to think about a change so John decided to become an in-cab instructor at Humber College . . . that was in 1994 and it marked the beginning of a new career direction in an industry he has grown to love.

“I had students ranging in age from 18 to 68 and they came from all walks of life,” says John.

“I really enjoyed that period of my life. It was a good job and I met a lot of super people,” he adds with a smile.

When Humber lost their contract John was laid off and this time he decided to apply for a job close to home. “I chose Erb Transport because one of my students, Dan Neil, who knew I lived in Havelock, suggested Erb, where his brother Gary works, because they have this terminal in Trenton which is close to my home,” he explains. By July of 1996 John had begun working at Erb hauling locally.

“I then spent about seven years on line haul hauling from Winnipeg to Quebec City and anywhere in between,” he says. Five years ago John became an in-cab instructor and has not looked back.

“Whenever they hire a new driver around here I take them on the road and make sure they know the Erb way of doing things,” he explains quietly. It is easy to see why he is so good at his job. His calm manner is his trademark.

“You need a lot of patience when you are driving. There is so much traffic out there you have to be careful,” says John. “That’s something I always stress with the drivers I take out on the road. I like to teach what is important. They have to have the right attitude. I teach them practical things as well such as keeping a safe following distance, keeping the speed to a safe level, making sure to always watch your mirrors . . . and most importantly I tell them . . . don’t get in a rush,” he adds with a concerned look on his face. John takes his work very seriously.

Loving The Lifestyle

These days John is on the road for five-day stretches and is home on weekends. His wife Diane has ridden with him on occasion so she knows what he has to face each day. “John is a mentor to drivers and can deal with all kinds of people and that is why he is so good at what he does. He has a real low key attitude” she says proudly. The couple recently celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary, a milestone for sure.

John’s career in trucking has seen him reach many milestones. He has an award for 25 years of safe driving while at Kingsway and has been presented with one million mile and two million mile safe driving awards too.

John calculates he has driven 100,000 miles annually while working at Erb Transport for a total of one million miles. “It’s been 10 years now . . . I can’t believe how fast the time has gone by,” says John, who is up for retirement in

about four years. If and when he does retire he agrees it will give him more time for his hobby – collecting model cars and trucks.

“Usually I pick something because it has meaning for me or because of the design. I have a 1956 Packard convertible . . . it was one of my favourite cars back in the 1950s. I bet I’ve got close to 100 models in my collection now,” he says. But that is not all. John also enjoys playing the guitar and reading.

“My weekends are full right now, I can tell you and I look forward to the time when I can spend more time with our grandchildren. We have a fourth on the way you know, in four weeks,” he says with a huge grin.

So for now John continues to enjoy the lifestyle he chose so many decades ago.

“I love the solitude, the freedom, seeing different places . . . it’s a career like no other,” he concludes.