

Where else can you get both a job AND a place to live?

Written by Linda Palladino

Ever since the popular trucking songs back in the 70's, I've had a fascination with the trucking industry. Back then, truckers were the white knights of the road, rescuing stranded motorists and riding the asphalt sea like modern-day cowboys. But more than the romance of driving these monsters of the road, it was the independence of being a truck driver that appealed to me most.

No other job has ever worked well for me. I never fit in with the office environment. Politics and high fashion always made me feel uncomfortable (to say the

least). In 2003, I reached a stage of life where my two sons were grown and gone, my husband of 20 years decided he didn't love me anymore, I lost my house, my job of 12 years and most of my friends (who acted as though I had a contagious disease I jokingly referred to as, "The Dreaded Divorce Disease"). Here I was 50 years-old with no job skills and no home. I remember when I decided to go to truck driving school, I told my mom, 'where else can you get both a job AND a place to live?'

The reality of trucking is that it is not romantic, and truck drivers are not white knights rescuing stranded motorists (at



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least not most of them). The reality is that truck driving is hard work. It's the hardest work I've ever done in my life. It's exhausting and often lonely. Women truck drivers have to put up with nasty men on the CB radio and men in truck stops who ogle us and make improper advances. The great pay is really not so great when you add up the hours spent sitting at docks, waiting for a load, stuck in traffic and laying over in Nowhereville.

In the three years that I've been driving truck, I've quit three times. My first truck driving job lasted six months. I quit to take on a three-week career as a cashier at Wal-Mart where my feet hurt so terribly that I went back into the truck just to get off my feet. After another year of driving, my rig caught on fire and I quit again to take a position as a jailer where I put up with uppity inmates who treated me as though they were in a hotel and I was a maid. The worst part of the jailer job was that during the winter, I never saw the sun and I love daylight. The second worst part was the low pay, so I quit being a jailer and went back to driving truck again. I went to work for a regional company that promised home weekly. The problem with regional when you live near the Dallas area is all the local work and Dallas (as most drivers will tell you) is an awful place to drive a big truck (and that's putting it nicely). So, after six months of driving regional, I quit driving again and went into telephone

customer service where I listened to people yelling at me on the phone all day because their appliance was broken. That job was a wake-up call for me because up until then, I never realized how awful the general public can be. After four months of putting up with earning low wages and being yelled at all day, I went back into trucking. At least now, I make decent money and no one yells at me. This time, though, I think I made the right choice when I went to work for CFI. CFI runs me as hard as I want to run but they don't run me harder than I want to run. They've never once tried to pressure me into running illegal (like other companies have tried to do). I have independence, decent pay and benefits. The only downside is I wish I had more home time, but no company is perfect. I run 48 states and Canada. I'm usually out two weeks and home for two days (most over-the-road companies run their drivers this way).

I've been with CFI for almost a year now, and in that time, I've visited my grandkids in California several times, I see my mom in Ohio often and I've managed to get a lot of work done on my house in Texas. Where else can you work and visit your family? This is not a job I would recommend for someone with kids at home or someone who gets homesick easily, but if you have freedom, no other job skills, and the desire to travel, then maybe trucking is for you.