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Signed

Dated
Keywords:
Trucks
Road Safety
Road Transport
Drivers
Transport Industry
On road safety issues

Places visited;
4. PACCAR Technical Center, Mt Vernon, Washington.
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtSVq9FOIg0 Personal Tour of Facility and around test track.
5. Boeing Everett, Paid Tour of plant.
6. 3M Global Technology Center, St Paul, Minnesota. Lunch provided, Discussion of Conspicuity and Road Markings and Personal Tour of Center.
7. Tour of new offices of NEWCOM South Asian Media Company, Toronto, Canada.
8. Great Canadian Truckshow Flamboro Speedway, Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
10. American Trucking Association National Truck Driving and Step Deck Championships, Columbus Convention Center, Columbus, Ohio. Invited and attended National Breakfast of Champions.
11. Eau Claire Truckshow, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Entry and stand with marquee provided.
12. Cummins Technical Center, Columbus, Indiana. Tour of Center including VR and AR studio and activity.

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the Churchill Trust, the NRMA/ACT Road Safety Trust, Rod Pilon Transport, my employer and my family for their support and all who have either helped me to this point, or who helped and or participated or assisted with this fellowship study tour.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

THE NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust, Churchill Fellowship to Study Trucks and Road Safety 2018

Rod Hannifey, Road Transport and Road Safety Advocate, TIV Driver and Operator. Telephone: 0428 120560 Email: rod@truckright.com.au Website: www.truckright.com.au


I am a fulltime interstate b-double truck driver employed by Rod Pilon Transport, Dubbo, NSW.

My fellowship study tour started at the Convoy in the Park Truckshow at Donnington north of London where I was offered a small stand, had the opportunity to meet with the organisers, staff from Trucking Magazine, drivers and suppliers. I also met Alan Taylor of Taylors Transport International, followed on by a visit to their depot and some time spent on the road in one of their trucks. I visited the offices of the Road Haulage Association and plan to keep in touch with them.

I travelled to the USA starting in Seattle, travelled 6,000 miles visiting truck plants, the 3M Global Technology Centre in St Paul Minnesota, various truckstops and rest areas along the way. Travelled into Canada meeting with the staff of Road Today, Trucknews and Todays Trucking and was introduced to Bruce Outridge. Bruce is a respected driver, orator, educator and author in the trucking world there, spending time in his home and then visited a truckshow with him there.

Then back into the USA for further time on the road, truckstops and rest areas along with doing a tour of the Kenworth plant in Chillicothe. I was invited to attend the Breakfast of Champions for the American Trucking Association National Truck Driver and Step Van Championships and watched some of the competition. At this event I met with the CEO and other staff of the American Trucking Association, the head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association and other drivers and industry people.

I then travelled to and had a stand at a truckshow in Eau Claire Wisconsin, interviewing drivers and showing the banners I use in shows, depicting the “Truckies Top Ten Tips for Sharing the Road with Trucks” and “Australian Heavy Vehicle Combinations”.

Then a tour of Cummins Global Technology in Columbus, visited the largest truckstop in the world at Walcott Iowa and completed my trip with 3 days at the Great American Truckshow in Dallas Texas. I had a small stand, did interviews with Tony Justice a fulltime driver and music artist, The St Christopher Truckers Relief Fund, Trucker Buddy and drivers, among many others.

In conclusion, many of the problems in Australia are similar overseas, but the problems exist there and still have not been solved there either. I plan to go through all my written material collected, cement those relationships begun, pursue avenues to get further input from those I met. My aim is to disseminate the learnings now I have returned, but have started already with my blog, column in Owner Driver and a number of radio interviews in both the USA and Australia, podcasts in Canada and will aim to extend this where and when I can.

I will contribute to an enquiry by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Association, pursue the aim of setting up a program similar to Trucker Buddy in Australia, but as Truckie Mate and continue my efforts to improve road safety for truck drivers and those we share the road with.
INTRODUCTION. Road safety is not only a big part of my job but has also become a passion and this study tour was the next valuable step towards a wider perspective and understanding. My aim was to study trucks and road safety overseas to see what is done differently and what can be used here in Australia to improve the safety of not only truck drivers, but all who share the roads with trucks. I chose to visit England due to the congestion and not having the size of trucks we do in Australia, Canada as the home of the b-double which Australia adopted over 20 years ago and which is now the mainstay of the Australian road transport fleet and the USA, as it most resembles much of our industry, mirrors some of our problems and as I have been watching it for many years, perhaps being older and more educated in the problems and solutions of trucks and cars sharing the road.

It had been suggested to me a few times over previous years that I apply for a Churchill Fellowship. At those times, not only did I not fully understand what such a fellowship could allow me to do to further my road safety aims, I simply did not have the time. I had instituted the TRUCKRIGHT Industry Vehicle idea, sought companies to assist with the endeavour and felt I had to not only honour those who supported me, but also give them a more than reasonable return on that investment.

To do that I had to have the TRUCKRIGHT Industry Vehicle [TIV] on the road, I had to attend events, take passengers and obtain reasonable press and exposure and do, what I had said I would. In being owned and operated by my employer, Rod Pilon Transport, the truck obviously had to pay its way and earn income, but I was allowed enormous scope to try and fit the extra events in and in designing and adding additional components to the truck and trailers, which I and those who have supplied them, committed to test, monitor, maintain and for me to offer review and comment.

With my aim to set up the next TIV, I looked at how to again, get another view and wider inputs into achieving my aims, that of improving road safety, specifically but not only for truck drivers, but for all those on the road with trucks.

I speak and live the issues other truck drivers face and many want things improved but are either too cynical or simply do not know what to do, who to speak to or how to even try and achieve such major changes needed to improve safety for us. There are many road safety practitioners and they all want to see the roads safer, but there are few who drive trucks fulltime for a living and in so doing, live their life on the road.

I have been involved with trucks and road safety for over 20 years and fully recognise the issues, understand the cynicism and truly feel the frustration of seeing and living the problem, without being able to get others to listen, let alone act. We are still blamed for many road crashes, when the statistics used often cite trucks as over represented in crashes. Yet when you look at the kilometres we travel and the data for who is responsible for truck crashes is used, we are not the biggest problem.

Truck drivers are not perfect, no one is, but we do recognise this is not only our livelihood, it is our way of life and the road is our workplace, yet another issue that authorities will not even consider. So, then what can I do to change this? I saw the applications had opened for the Churchill Fellowships and the timing was suitable as I felt I had given good value to those who have supported the TIV. If I was successful, I could learn from other drivers in other countries and perhaps, make a difference using that knowledge.

That is my reason behind my application and having completed the fellowship trip, I now have even more to do to fully gain the benefit of the information I have gathered, the contacts I have made and use that to further improve road safety in Australia.
Churchill Fellowship Report by Rod Hannifey.

Awarded NRMA/ACT Road Safety Trust, Road Safety Fellowship 2016. Deferred to 2018 start.

Aim: To study Trucks and Road Safety overseas, towards improving road safety for all.

20th July. Flying from Australia to England to attend “Convoy in the Park” at Donnington. Offered a stand to have direct contact with truck drivers and the public to gauge their comments and on road experiences in England, a very busy and congested road transport industry. Chosen to reflect against that of the USA and Canada and so to provide a view of those levels of congestion and interaction and their impacts on truck drivers and road safety.

Message on departure day, flight from Sydney delayed two hours, finally underway, seven hours to Singapore, all cabin luggage out for cleaning, one hour plus holdover, then 14 hours flying to Heathrow.

21st July. Long delays at the Hertz desk, it’s summer here and a Saturday, wish I had known and been able to confirm ahead, did not expect three hours hold up here.

A car carrier was loading cars at Hertz and I spoke with him about his issues. He told me he had caused chaos on the M1 the night before, due to a blown steer tyre and being the driver’s side and no shoulder, they had to close the first lane to allow them to safely change it, then the tyre fitter had the wrong gear and had to go away and get more. Long delays for all. He was due home yesterday and was still loading now. The issues he raised were mirrored by many of the drivers I subsequently spoke with or interviewed. Car drivers, congestion and lack of rest areas.

I could pay 25 pound a day for the additional GPS navigation system, or pay a bit extra and get a vehicle with inbuilt GPS but a bit dearer overall and asked for a discount having waited so long, so ended up in a bigger Land Rover Discovery.

The issue of the motorway being expanded to another lane using the current shoulder drew comment from a number of drivers during my visit here, saying it affected safety in that now for many kilometres, there is no shoulder for any breakdown or emergency stop, as confirmed by the driver and his issue above. The government decided and I do not have any comments on whether they spoke with any road transport people, that it was cheaper to use the shoulder than widen the pavement, but most agreed that the next time any widening is done, it will cost even more and
without the shoulder now, there will be more incidents and possible crashes with no where to go in
an emergency stop or for breakdowns. Is it short sighted saving and will it create a road safety issue?

I had wondered traveling northbound to the show about the recurring signs, No Shoulder for next so
many miles and this explains it. They are warning motorists, but that alone will not stop drivers
needing that area, let alone for a tired driver being able to get out and walk round a vehicle safely, if
they need that to get to the next safe site for sleep and or rest.

I arrived at Donnington Park at about 3PM local time and had to wait at the gate for the organisers
to arrive with my pass etc. It was too late to set up, but we confirmed a site and I went off to
interview some lorry drivers.

There was a lot on, truck, ute and C2 racing, kids rides and circus, trade stalls and displays and 1000
trucks for display and judging. I found even more things Sunday, with rides in a drift car, Monster
Truck rides, drive a HGV (Heavy Goods Vehicle) for a 5-pound donation for charity, or ride in a
Kenworth or Peterbilt for a fee. Then a truck pull, truck drifting and a caravan smash as well.

I asked a couple of drivers for comments and videoed others, including a lady truckie and then spoke
with a lady who operates the biggest wrecker I saw there, and her son had started a school project
about stopping road workers getting killed and it had become quite a success. I planned to get back
to her, but each time she was away, so I did leave her a card and hope to follow up later.

I spent quite some time interviewing a man who is semi-retired, but now operates a compliance
training business and we got into some detail about drivers and both how they are treated and what
their issues are from the compliance viewpoint. It was too late to video him Sunday afternoon when
I got back to him, as he was packing up and he has promised to email the details.

Having seen all the Taylors trucks, I stopped into their hospitality tent and asked who was in charge. I
was introduced to Alan the owner and he was busy as they had a race coming up, so he asked could I
come back after 7PM. His sponsored truck did win and when I arrived it was congrats all round, as
the trucks then all came back to the pits. I let them settle and then spoke with Alan and we moved
away for a video interview. He invited me back for a beer and again for a brekkie the next morning.
He had many of his drivers attending and the tent and food and entertainment he put on, was as
good or better than some of the event efforts.
By late Saturday evening UK time, having now been mostly awake for nearly 36 hours, as I did get some sleep on the plane, but in my usual job, the aim is not to sleep when moving and so I do not sleep well or much on planes, unless to the point where I will get a small amount. A touch of sinus did not help, nor were the other passengers very happy with my nose blowing, but what do you do? I camped in the SUV overnight, getting a fair sleep, then was up early and off to explore.

22nd July. I spoke with one of the drivers doing the HGV rides. He had slept in his truck and offered me a coffee as we chatted. Last year was the first year of this show and Alan Taylor had got behind it whole heartedly, as he has a truck in the British Truck Racing Championship. He also now has a fleet of 200 trucks and 300 hundred trailers which he did take over from his father when the fleet was much smaller, but which he has significantly expanded.

Last year, they offered up free drives in a HGV and whilst on a closed and controlled track, there are no dual controls. It was if you could reach the pedals and see over the windscreen you could have a go and the youngest was 9, but this year the motorsports team who now run Donnington Park circuit, have imposed more stringent safety standards and controls. So, whilst this year you have to make a donation of 5 pound or more which goes to a charity, you must also have a car license.

After being invited up to the grandstand to view one of the truck races by Alan Taylor and being shy and demure, I then asked where the racing broadcast was done from and after explaining yet again, why an Aussie truckie was here in England and at this show, to three levels of security and management, was interviewed live and asked to explain why and what I was doing and where my stand was. During the day quite a number came by, specifically commenting on the interview, while others saw the banners on display with the two biggest drawcards, being the large banner of the TIV and the Australian Heavy Vehicle Combinations panel. Our roadtrains drew them in and quite a number commented on OUTBACK Truckers and Mr Steve Graham, who does the triples in the mud in the West.
Alan also invited me to visit his depot which was not that far away on Monday, but he was vetoed by Kelly his PA who had been working all week-end and she suggested Tuesday and I said thanks, I will see you then.

Back down to the vehicle entertainment area later on to see the truck pull and the two Taylor Transport Volvos with trailers and their qualified drivers, had a que of about 20 people, even more than for the ride in the Yankee big iron and I interviewed Susan, after she got out from one of the Taylor Volvos and she said she thought it good not just to have the chance to drive, but that those that did have a go, would most likely see and think of trucks differently, as she did now.

Then there was the truck drifting and caravan crash, these Poms don’t mess about in showing their true feelings. Our issues with caravans taking up truck bays in truckstops, are sometimes much more vocalised in Australia, but due to the lack of and cost, of truck parking in the UK, you could imagine they are even more serious about it. Watching two drift trucks with caravans swinging merrily from the rear and hearing the winner was the one with the most damage, then seeing them all but destroyed with one massive impact, was a sight dear to many truckies, but of course, we would never even think of such a thing here in the convict country.

Whilst I did see a few caravans and motorhomes, I am told it was not peak season and when you see some of the Highway Services, read motorway servos, few have room for trucks at all and when the caravan season there kicks into gear, I am told it is much worse, taking truck parks when they are nearly non-existent in some places.

Back to the stand for awhile with more fellows interested in our roadtrains, then the fellow from Commercial Motor Magazine visited and said he had taken a photo of the Aussie Configurations himself and he had watched many read it and or take photos. He suggested I drop up and see the editor of TRUCK and Driver nearing the Truck Awards ceremony and I did and we recorded an interview and I am to send him some photos.

I went up and spoke with Keltrans, who are a major Scania distributor and who seem to sponsor several race trucks by the Keltrans logos on many and hope they will respond by email as they were packing up, then spoke with a small fleet owner with some very nice Scania. His young driver the day before had been camera shy and his boss was too, but he did chat with me for some time and
yet again, reiterated the same issues. After the awards I went around speaking with some of the stand people and all had a good result and enjoyed the show.

The trucks are not supposed to leave before 5PM, but many have load commitments and sneak out as needed. After the awards, there was a max exodus and the stands that were left, packed up and by 7PM, I was a bit worn out and planned on a kip. Couldn’t sleep and so decided to head up and see how many trucks were left.

There were 4 young blokes and a couple of partners and the guards had headed up that way as well to check and see who was going to be left for the night. There were a couple of others further away, but I stopped with the young fellows and spoke with them, again detailing why I was there and then seeking their views. They too spoke of the issues with uneducated car drivers, lack of rest areas and the cost of parking. I gave my business cards out to most I spoke with, asking them to check my website and or offer comments later, should they think of something further, or important.

Many truckstops charge up to 35 pounds a night for a lorry to park, have lousy facilities and are not much safer or more secure for truck or load safety. One fellow spoke of paying 50 pound near London and another paid 17 pound, which he thought OK, but the young fellows said they had one driver who was in paid truckstops every night for a week and so with the fee for the parking and the living away from home allowance for the driver adding up to 70 pound a night, it was a big cost.

All drivers I spoke with said their bosses pay the parking fees, but the stories of hijackers spraying ammonia into the cab air conditioner to knock out the drivers to steal their cargo and or the truck and to rob the drivers, fuel thefts and one fellow who emailed me after hearing me on the air at Donnington, said he had his curtains slashed 6 times in two weeks and was setting up a petition to have the motorway trucks stops offer some security.

23rd July. Monday I was up early again and off to Peterborough to visit the Road Haulage Association (RHA). I stopped in a layby on the M6 and took a number of truck photos with the occasional wave, flash of the lights or toot of the horn. Watching the left-hand drive trucks from Europe on the road is something we do not suffer, let alone allow here, but it is somewhat common here for those who travel across international boundaries. No visible street numbers meant a trip into the shops to ask where Transport House is and luckily one fellow said, it is across the road at the next roundabout.
later learned that whilst our postcodes cover a whole suburb, UK ones are much more specific, down to a very small area and that is why they do not bother with street numbers.

I spoke with the RHA training manager, as many of the staff were on holidays and he did say they are not there as drivers’ representatives but do provide training for members drivers and do lobby for industry improvements. We spoke of the CPC and its value and cost, the rest area issue and have initially agree to keep in touch to see what we can cover together. On leaving I saw a truck coming with flashing lights on the roof that did not look wide and I wondered why. It was a reasonably short rigid, towing a very long fifth wheeler type campervan and then a normal caravan behind that again!

Trailers here, including semis must have the same numberplate as the towing vehicle or truck, though front plates are white and rear yellow and this combination I speak of, had the same plates on all including the caravan, so it may have been legal. If you change trailers, you must change the number plate. And with the number of speed and elapsed time cameras, you won’t get far without getting seen and if you have a company name or other markings, you will get a ticket for not having it fitted.

Stopping in a truckstop by name, but a hut (and a pretty tired hut at that) in a layby in truth, a driver I sat and spoke with, said 20 years ago he was earning 2,500 pounds a month, but now was struggling to earn 1,600 pounds per month. A reduction in driving hours, overseas drivers coming in and working cheaper and parking fees etc, had all contributed, while everything else has gone up. He was also driving a trailer nearly 4.8 metres high. There is no height limit for trucks, and bridges below 5 Metres high are the only ones signed, but he had just scrapped the roof at the back of the trailer on a bridge showing 15 feet, when he is nearly 15 foot 5 inches, after dropping the airbags on the truck and getting it through, so had to then get out and drop the trailer airbags to get through, only loosing a couple of rivets on the roof. The trailer was new and he hadn’t mentioned it yet, as it could not be seen.
At another truck layby, one driver I spoke with complained of the drivers coming in from Europe. There are a number of factors here and no one likes outsiders generally, but not only is there the issue of wages being forced down with the availability for drivers from countries where they earn far less, keen to come to the UK and earn more, there is the issue of Left-Hand Drive vehicles on what are Right Hand Drive roads. I was told later of a driver in a LHD vehicle being involved in a major crash, only to find he had been given his semi license only two days before in a small European country. Was he trained at all before he was sent off across the continent and into a RHD environment, was he even tested properly and should anyone complain, they are labelled as against foreigners or worse, racist.

I travelled back to Taylors to arrange a time for Tuesday and the driver/trainer fellow I had spoken with at the show was there and suggested there may be a chance of going out with a truck for a bit, but Alan and Kelly were not back yet and it was agreed to return at 9AM Tuesday. I went off to find accommodation, the first two being full, but was directed around the corner to the White Swan Inn. A little place, but they had a room, a reasonable tariff, much less than the first two, but only took cash. The owner offered to take me round through the narrow streets to the ATM and I stayed there three nights. Looking back, the most affable and personable paid accommodation of the entire trip.

24th July. Tuesday, I returned and met with Allan and Kelly and we exchanged cups as gifts and I had a quick tour of the office and the international division. If I wanted to go out in a truck, they would need some time to sort out a plan and I was asked to drop back in the afternoon. That left me without a specific plan and I asked Kelly, was there anything close handy to see. She suggested Hardwick, a National Trust building and estate.

I went there for a look and whilst the house was closed Monday and Tuesday, the gardens and stables were open. It has some magnificent history and I wish I could have seen inside the house, but I paid for parking and the garden tour and had a look around, took some photos and then set off looking for the next item. In doing so I ended up in a very narrow lane, one car wide with hedges all around and in seeing a vista which at the extreme, included Hardwick, I stopped for a photo and then took one of a little old English house. The lady had been in the garden and saw me and asked what I was photographing and I explained my trip.

This led to a long chat and I was then invited in for a cuppa. Her husband was both a retired mechanic and truck driver and had just found and restored an old Atkinson, so we looked at photos and discussed trucks. She was both knowledgeable and specific in her comments about trucks and drivers generally, her hubby being retired, but still drove some nights and or week-ends as there was such a shortage of drivers and with the current hours, they ran out and needed others for week-end work.
Whilst discussing where to go next, she mentioned there was a truckstop not far away and that they had free truckie papers that she had read when on the road with her husband. I headed up there and got the latest three issues. This site is fenced and signed as being a secure and patrolled safe parking place. It did have a shop and showers etc, room for perhaps 30 lorries and is not the only one, but it was off the motorway and whilst I think it was signed on the highway, you would need some local knowledge or truck-based information to know of it and its’ facilities. I then headed back to Taylors, found they had a plan for a trip and to be there at 6AM in the morning and I was able to use their wi-fi to get a blog post up and check some emails.

25th July. Wednesday, I returned to Taylor’s Transport at 6AM and met with Luke, one of their local lorry drivers. He had been with them for about 4 years and previously worked shorter hours at McDonalds, but had always loved trucks. He spent a total of well over 3,000 pounds, doing the medical first, then to gain his Class 2 (rigid) license, 1200 pounds, then his Class 1 (Semi/ HGV) license, another 1200 pounds, and also the CPC.

Even though he did gain some knowledge from the CPC, he doubts anyone who has been on the road for more than a couple of years, would gain much from it. In discussing his move up to trucks and his earlier car license, not only was he taught nothing at all about trucks in that car license training, he was told specifically by the trainer, that he was being taught to Pass the test.

I have said that I fear this is what is happening in Australia, that instead of teaching people to survive safely on the road for the next 50 years, we are teaching them just to pass the current test. We do now, after me writing to the state road authorities many years ago, at least have some questions on trucks in the license test, but my aim is still to have a short 10 minute video, filmed from within a working truck, as part of the training and testing of new drivers.

We checked the Scania out, the Mercedes Luke usually drives had a gearbox problem when he came back from holidays and is still in the shop, then headed off a short distance to the trailer yard to pick up our part loaded semi. There is a system called SNAP and you can park at truckstops, or even in other transport company yards for a fee, so there were a few other company trucks and trailers on-site.
Luke hooked up, checked the pin (and the trailer connections are similar but different to ours) then ignored the que for the bowser as Luke said we had sufficient fuel for what we had planned, then headed off for our first drop, a delivery to a Tesco Distribution Centre (DC), one of the big retailers in the UK. Eddie Stobart have the haulage contract for Tesco and there were plenty of their trucks with the TESCO signed trailers as well as full Stobart rigs.

We were early, but Luke is a regular here and we were allowed in and backed onto a door. Even in a tautliner, we backed onto a door and after asking how they were going to unload, based on Aussie Chep pallets, I then learned that UK pallets are open both ways, so can be unloaded through the back doors. The strap from the back of the pallets had to be removed and then with the doors open and trailer backed on the dock, you go into the office with your paperwork and sit till it is empty and you are called.

With only 10 pallets, we were not there long, quicker than most of the DCs I visit, but one driver had some problem and was told he would be at least 45 minutes before he got a dock. I chatted and gave him a card and he was still waiting when we left.

Two separate pick-ups of bricks for a local transfer, both not only tight spots, but with tight access were next. I must say the public do seem both very patient and accepting of delays and wide trucks in narrow streets. They seem to manage to stop and or move over where needed and it must be done, as you cannot fit past on the narrow roads with cars and trucks parking on the side as well.

After discussing load restraint and how in Europe it is much more stringent than the UK and not having seen any loads from there, I can only take Luke’s word for it, but I guarantee you, what I saw and spoke with fellows about at both loading sites, would not be legal here. Gates are not used and the only thing of note, was the rubber coating on the timber floor, no coaming rail or raised edge, no straps on rails anywhere and curtains deemed to be load restraint, that are just curtains.
In his 4 years on the road, all with Taylors, he has never been stopped for an inspection or got a ticket and there are more cameras and average time cameras about on the M1 than in most of Australia if the signs are true. So many different things, that I will have to consider as to how they vary from what we do, then decide which is better or worse and why. Luke dropped me back at the yard, so I could again use the wi-fi and he could get paperwork copied and I thanked him and offered a small new “TRUCK That Australia Drivers Club” keyring which we have done for members.

I have stayed at a quaint little pub, where the owner Paul was a drinker there and then bought it. He is 74 I think and was very affable. The dinner every night, included with the very reasonable tariff (continental breakfast included as well) was bloody beautiful and the meat nearly melted in your mouth. The best feed I have had here.

Succumbing to a cider each evening was my only extravagance and I was kept chatting by some of the locals for hours. On my return for the last night, my new fan said, “They don’t know how famous you are, I checked up on you on the net last night and you are big on there”. He has vowed to follow the blog and keep an eye on me and I thank him for his company and conversation, along with all at the White Swan.

26th July. Up at 4AM local time and I am now at a hotel at Heathrow and due to fly out to Seattle tomorrow. I did not want to travel so far and or, get caught in traffic and miss my 9.30 AM flight. I caught the tube into London, took some photos of Buckingham Palace and Trafalgar Square. There was a big event on in Kensington Park? And a few trucks were still moving in and out. Even Buckingham Palace and the Royals need trucks for supplies and event gear. I watched one driver get out saying “Goodaye” and then got photos as he came through the arch into Trafalgar Square. I gave him a card and he wants copies of the photos. It has been very interesting and will give me a lot to think about, but I do think there are some things, particularly for drivers, that I will follow up on and hope to possibly help them here. (The driver did email when I was in Dallas and I have sent him the photos and got his very effusive thanks.)
A comment from many is that truck drivers are required to do their initial CPC and then every 5 years at their own cost and or time off work to comply, but car drivers are not only NOT taught to share the road with trucks, they are not retested. Any recognised training, for dangerous goods or approved company training can contribute to your 35 hours for your CPC and that may be worthwhile in some regard, but there was an overwhelming response from drivers, that the CPC in itself, was a severe cost with far less benefit for drivers with some years on the road, than perceived by those who have enforced it.

27th July. Leaving Heathrow finally at 10AM, flying 9 hours and arriving at Seattle 11.15AM makes for a long day by night time. Again, a protracted hire car event, though mostly me trying to get the best deal for the GPS etc for the long visit. I had considered buying a device, but one of my sponsors suggested it may be possible to supply one and so I waited, only to find out leaving England, they could not help. It would have saved me a lot of money, but I need it now so will have to pay.

Direct now to the Kenworth factory in Seattle for a plant tour. The shift has finished and I have a personal tour, thanks to help from Kenworth in Australia and the fact the plant manager has just come back to the USA, from time at Kenworth in Bayswater Australia. Some very serious trucks built here for extreme conditions in Canada, with one truck having a very rare, triple chassis rail for such conditions. The majority of trucks built here, possibly 70%, still using manual transmissions, while the trend in the USA generally and elsewhere is to autos at that level or even higher. Due to the task of some heavy application trucks here, also more Allison automatics as opposed to Automated Manual Transmissions (AMTs).

Finishing the tour at 5PM, Bart has also arranged a tour of the PACCAR Technical Centre in Mt Vernon for Monday, so after the tour I read for a bit, dreading the traffic I have been warned about and leave about 6PM and head north to the Smokey Point Rest Area, the first really from Seattle and visit the volunteer coffee shack. Traffic was not that bad, only a few slowdowns, Police at three sites
with people pulled up and being my first time on the road in a left-hand drive vehicle, you really do need to concentrate after 40 plus years on the other side.

A scout group has stepped in to run the volunteer hut as the normal church group could not. Similar to our Driver Reviver system, but previously run every day and now back to mostly Friday to Monday, volunteers from different community groups man the coffee shacks in rest areas, supplying coffee, tea and a biscuit in return for a donation to their group.

It was getting to be a long day and I did not want to drive on any further and risk getting too tired, so stayed for the night. There is ample parking separate for cars just stopping for a quick break, for trucks, perhaps not enough for the volume and this is the same in far too many places here, as in the UK and at home. Then there is parking for caravans and RVs and I stayed here behind a little camper so as not to waste a space. The truck bay filled up, with many trucks left not only idling all night, but with their lights on and there was some overflow, into the caravan area, including a long and wide load that simply would not have fit in the truck bays, without taking up 3 spaces.

28th July. When I went to the loo, I found the rubbish bins inside overflowing. I looked outside only to not find, a single bin anywhere. Many truckies arrived with small bags of rubbish and surely this is one of the intents of rest areas, to break the trip and allow you to dispose of rubbish, rather than throw it out the window and on the road or shoulder. It was said later by the volunteers, they thought there had been a problem with locals using the outside bins and they had all been removed. I aim to email the Washington State Road authority to follow up. Someone had even missed the toilet it seemed and there was crap on the floor.

29th July. Sunday, I travelled up to Mt Vernon and sussed out the technical centre. On the way up the road I had seen some old trucks parked up and stopped in to look and get some photos. A young fellow came out and asked what I was doing and we had a long chat. His grandfather owned all the land, though it was now leased out to other farms and had trucks years ago, the trucks I was looking at belonged to someone else who leased the space. We chatted about farming, water issues there and the fuel refinery I could see in the distance. He suggested I come back and visit his grandfather who had photos of his trucks and then recommended a hotel in town and I went there, booked in and did some local shopping and then caught up on emails finally and a blog before bed.

30th July. Up to the technical centre and what toys they have, including trucks. Things I still can’t pronounce, that do not only stress testing of components, but to a near cell level and a number of engine test beds, jigs for accelerating stress and mileage on trucks and a test track. It would cost a fortune to test a new truck and or engine for a million miles on the road, drivers, fuel and even running 24 hours a day, a long time indeed. But not only can they run engines under very consistent conditions continuously, to ascertain fuel use, parts life etc, they can alter those conditions from I think it was 30 degrees below to 55 above. They can also change the air intake to reflect operating at altitude and run trucks on dynamometers, to again confirm specific outputs and component life.
It was suggested they could do a million miles of testing on the test track in 3 to 4 months and for structural parts, in 3 to 4 weeks on a jig. Of course on the road you do not hit the dips and potholes every inch of the way and so on the test track and then even more on the jigs, they can replicate very harsh conditions not only consistently, but at a much accelerated pace than would occur on the road, hence saving costs, reducing testing time and supplying a product tested to last. After the tour I headed back down towards Seattle and stayed on the other side at Smokey Point for the night.

31st July. I then travelled into Everett and visited the Boeing factory. I spent some time on the deck and saw one of the DREAM Lifters land, bringing a set of wings from Japan and then did the Boeing Factory Tour.

Again reading for about an hour to both finish my book and to let the traffic go, then it was onto State Highway 2 to bypass and so avoid the Seattle traffic and then Eastbound and Down, but I did stop at the Snoqualmie Falls for some photos and then on to Monroe and south to join Interstate 90. I travelled into the night and stopped at the weighbridge, the only one I have seen open in the first 9 days here. I explained my trip and spent about an hour chatting.

They said one of their fellows was a big fan of Outback Truckers and would be sorry he missed me to chat. I gave them a card and left them with a request to look at doing something positive. I had spoken of the industry days in NSW where the weighbridge was open and there was a sausage sizzle instead. They did speak of doing such things 15 years ago but were not aware of anything since. I asked them where to the next fuel, they said take exit 47 as it was a better price, I said thanks, got fuel and went a bit further up the road to the next rest area and to bed. The sign at this rest area showed next rest area 86 Miles!

1st August. Up in the morning, more photos, chats with drivers and cards given out, then on my way again on I-90 where I visited my first “Loves Truckstop” where there is a wall of coffee, a wall of soda (soft drink) a bay with 10 different sausages cooking continuously and tried 2 for $3.99, each on a bun and including condiments and tax, $4.29 and a large (read bloody big) Pepsi for $1.69 and tax, $1.82. I did not find another Loves till Saturday night and they all have Subway as we do in Australia, but no restaurants of their own anywhere.
Loves have Tire Pass, you pull into a marked lane and call them on an intercom and they come out and check all your tyre pressures for a fee while you fill up and I asked how many people use it. The store manager said it was regular and growing. There are hoses set up to be able to do the truck and trailer in one place. As the trip progressed, I did see some trailers with CTI systems, one truck, but
lots of rubber on the road and shoulders. With the cost of tyres and the issue of blowouts, particularly the very wide profile singles, such a system could where tyres are regularly checked could well be a road safety benefit.

While eating my hotdogs, the store manager was interviewing a lady for a job there and not only was he very passionate, he would have nearly convinced me to apply. I then stopped at my first Flying J Pilot truckstop. Had a sticky beak (and every time I said this I got strange looks and was asked “What”), then parked on the shoulder and walked up and got some footage from the overpass.

On my return to the car, a fellow and his wife had been at the truckstop trying to get a lift and they were now at the freeway entry and asked was I going west, I said no east. They asked could I give them and their luggage a lift to the next exit east then, as they were having no luck here. I explained that I had a car full and bedding out, so not really enough room. They asked did I have any money and I said I had no US cash, then the fellow said he had his phone and wallet stolen and were going to visit their daughter. I offered them a couple of muesli bars and a bottle of water, not much, but they were thankful.

In the USA is a satellite radio network with over 200 channels of mainly music. You buy a specific radio and pay a subscription fee and can then access the stations across the whole country. There had been two different truck radio shows some years ago, but they had merged into one to survive and now operate as Road Dog Trucking Radio. The car I was driving had it included and I started listening and it was mostly like talkback radio, but all about trucks and drivers. Over time it did give me another insight into drivers issues here. I did ring in and was told they might ring me back if interested, but as I was using my Australian phone, it seemed a problem and I never heard back, though continued to listen as I drive across America.

2nd August. I had travelled till late, finding a big gap in rest areas through the mountains and at this one, could not find a name for it. Up and some more photos with a lovely mountain backdrop, my first photos of the triple trailer rigs and some of a semi with a short trailer behind, along with many with lift axles. I went through my tourist cache and kept some, discarding those without value for the trip and updated my report.
I took some photos and video and watched a fellow drop his trailer in the rest area. I walked over and he had some ramps down and was backing his 3-wheeler trike up onto the gooseneck. His wife had been riding it as he was too heavy on the drive (the trike weighs 800kg he said) for the scales (weighbridge) I had stopped at the night before, but his wife was suffering from the heat as she had done, the day before. When his wife first started travelling with him, they had rented cars and it had cost a fortune, so the bike was bought and carried and when they are held over, they go sightseeing and his wife “drives” the trike. He detailed her first trip with him in the truck, hearing all these gasps and wondering where and why. He looked over and it was his wife, saying “Did you see that car driver cut you off and the other one?” “Yes” he said, “Welcome to my world” and so I asked him to do a video and he told his wife, we are having a 30 minute break now.

Another driver answered my introductory question, mostly the same, where I am from, what I am doing and “What is your biggest road safety concern on the highway?” with, other drivers in cars. This has been consistently the biggest response, but there have been a few who have said other truck drivers. He also explained the lift axles you will see on many trucks are to comply with US laws after loading in Canada where the laws are more lenient for weight. Lift axles cannot be used in Canada and must be chained up if you go to California. One driver had a sticker on his truck, “I refuse to travel to the Republic of California”. Few like going there it seems.

Listening to Truck Dog radio, they spoke of record truck and trailer orders in the USA, 41,800 trucks and 18,000 trailers ordered in June and speculated many were over ordering as the market was under pressure and delays of 6 months to get any truck were becoming the norm. One announcer said the whole industry was under pressure, drivers with the new ELD laws and amount of freight, lack of drivers, again partly due to the new laws with some leaving and difficulty with getting new drivers into the industry and rest areas, where there had not been enough in some states before, now worse with the ELDs meaning drivers were having to stop on shoulders and the like. Then the improving economy putting pressure on carriers to move the freight and that putting pressure on the equipment suppliers as well.

Being early in the afternoon, the next two rest areas looking damn flash I must say, were too early to stop at and I veered off to 1-94 to get to my visit at 3M in St Paul Minnesota. From that junction there had not been a rest area sign for some time. I stopped into a Town Rocker truckstop, bought a salad in a bowl prepacked for $2.49, potato salad and devilled egg for the same and ate tea, asking one driver was it Wednesday, yes, thanked him and travelled on to Columbus for fuel and at 11PM pulled into Yellowstone rest area.

3rd August. Waking up and turning on the phone to show it was Saturday the 4th August in Australia, Happy Birthday to me, meant it was actually Friday here, not Thursday (my trucker mate had obviously been a bit out as well, or I would have driven on) and I was a day out. I had been watching both times, so as not to wake anyone I spoke with in Australia, and in doing so the date had gone off my watch display. I was due in ST Paul Friday 9AM and was still in Montana 9 hours away, bugger! It
was then just after midnight in Australia and my contact there who had not got back to me before I left Australia and with no phone in the UK, we had emailed but with large gaps in between.

I headed off up the road, found a good spot for photos and some video at a highway cross over (with old wagons from the cowboy days in a paddock on the side of the road) and travelled on to the town of Miles, where I asked a lady if I could find a phone number as my Telstra phone would not hook up to the internet, saying the network was unavailable, not very helpful and this never changed during my time in the USA. She was very helpful and I got onto the man at 3M, apologising for my not being there and we rebooked for Monday morning.

My shoes that had lived in the truck as my spare pair had dropped a cap (the sole had peeled off one) so I looked for a shoe shop, they were on lunch and I went next door looking to buy myself a nice USA belt and was disappointed to find many made in China. Finally, the boot man returned and he said, throw those shoes in the bin, I can’t fix them. I then went looking to buy an old CB, they still use 27Mg here, so bringing a UHF from home was no good, visited my first WALMART, bought some cookies and food for the next leg.

My children had started texting me Happy Birthday and as they did, I rang them back and I got a text from 3M in Australia thanking me for updating them re the tour. Off again and I pulled into a Town Pump site and asked a double driver for his issues. He said, “Damn car drivers, my partner nearly got one this morning, a car went off the exit, then pulled back onto the highway and stopped in the middle of the lane. He swerved and missed him, but car drivers need to respect trucks and they will respect you”. I then spoke with another driver for some time. He would not agree to do a video but was happy to chat and I will call him Joe.

Joe drives a purple Kenworth which had caught my eye and his answer to my intro was, “Car drivers are the biggest problem” and I asked is anyone teaching them and he said, “No one is.” He spoke of a certain ethnic group, saying no one will do anything about the problem. They are stopped and checked in a vehicle with bald tyres, lights out and told they will not get a ticket, but the problems must be fixed before they leave and they claim they are being racially abused and treated badly. With the snow, you have to chain up at some nominated sites and one of these drivers having stopped, virtually told Joe, “It is your job to chain my truck up for me!” Joe suggested he get back in his truck before Joe threw him in it. I then spoke of how others behaved, both those who live here and those who have come here. Joe then said he will help anyone who asks, but takes offence to being told to do something by someone who won’t even try. He said he has helped many and most truckers will assist, if asked for that help.

I spoke of the shortage, saying is it a driver shortage, a pay shortage or both being part of the current turnover problem, quoted on the radio show as being over 100% in some companies. So in one year, they more than completely turn over, the number of drivers they employ. In truck stops,
on the radio and at truck shows, there are adds for drivers. We pay more, have better benefits etc, etc. Many companies have raised pay rates twice this year it is claimed, but surely that means they were not paying enough when they thought they could get away with it.

My personal view, having watched and heard this for years including to a lesser extent in Australia, is that the people have changed, the job has changed and the recognition of the lifestyle and the impact on both personal and families involved is not truly recognised, even by those who employ drivers, unless they too have done the job. It is often quoted here that pay is not always the top reason for joining a company, or for that matter for leaving for another one, but whilst the cost of food here seems lower than Australia, particularly in truckstops, I would say most of it is not healthy for you.

There are more choices here for all the bad stuff, than I have ever seen in one place before and yes, if you look and also take the time to sit down and eat, you can make healthier choices, but the ELDs and hours regs, the lack of rest areas (and nearly all of them have vending machines with more less healthy foods than healthy for you to eat) mean it is far easier to eat badly, than it is to eat healthy.

Joe said he does not have a problem with E-logs (Electronic Logging Devices ELDs) having used them for years, he gets his 10 hours sleep and break each night and the company with 70 trucks, backs him and his role. His boss at the last Christmas party told the dispatchers, if I have a complaint from a driver that you are pushing them, it will be much easier for me to replace you than the driver, so don’t let me hear there is a problem.

ELDs have been an alternative in the USA to paper logbooks for some years and were made mandatory in December 2017 for all Class 8 (highway prime movers) trucks and a grace period existed till April when enforcement really started. There is a grandfather clause, that if your truck (or its engine, where you can also buy a brand new truck and put in an old engine, deeming the truck to be the age of the engine, known here as a Glider kit or truck) is older than 1999***********, you do not require an ELD and can continue to run on paper logs. This has seen both a big increase in glider kits and now a push to change the laws relating to them, currently a big issue for all involved.

Joe has seen others who are pushed, says some do not manage their time well and he will often ring a client and confirm the load is ready and available, telling them he will not start the truck unless it is ready and so does not lose his work time turning up to be delayed for hours. This works to help him mange his time far more than relying on those who say, yeah it’s ready, when it’s not and when he gets there and they mess him about, he reminds them he made the call and they will either pay or the load will not arrive till he is ready.

As I had walked across to the roadhouse earlier, there was a piggyback set of Kenworths waiting to fuel and I could see the half guard in front of the drive wheels on the lead truck was rubbing on the tyre. The fellow went to back up and move to another lane and I stopped him and told him, as, if he backed up, it could have caught and torn itself off. As I walked out of the shop later and he came in, he thanked me for bringing it to his attention and said he had fixed it.
I got back on the road and the often welcome and very regular signs before each exit, one listing lodgings, the next gas and or food, seem to have disappeared here. I have not seen a rest area for maybe 200 miles by 10PM. Many exits have shown NO SERVICES signs and I have just seen my first two deer in the middle of the road, big buggers with large antlers, though their eyes did show up like cats eyes, then round a corner and a deer facing the other way in the middle of the road brought me to a quick stop, as it moved off the road. That woke me up. Now travelling towards a lot of lightning and had a little rain, the first here, so pulled into a parking bay at 11PM, later hit by a big storm swaying the car and waking me and a bit muggy, the first night hard to sleep and missing home a bit.

4th August. I finally worked out how to ring a normal phone in Australia, the mobiles work fine, just dial, but to ring a landline, I have to ring out of the USA, 011, then into Australia 61, then the area code but just the 2 not the 0, then the number. My youngest daughter texted saying hello and I rang her back and she asked the time and why I was awake. I blamed the storm. We chatted about some family issues and then I tried to get back to sleep.

When I woke my eldest daughter then texted and I rang her back, again chatting for a bit. I had a bite from the car for breakfast and then settled down at a table to catch up on this report. Going back into the large building housing the toilets and tourist info, there were two young boys in the corner that bolted when I entered. I did not think much of it till a trooper arrived and came in asking had anyone dialled 911, the emergency line. I said I had been outside till about ten minutes ago, had come in and been reading the tourist brochures and then recalled the boys in the corner where the phone was. He said thanks and I asked him did he have much to do with trucks and he said no, that was more the highway patrol.

Back on the road I pulled into a town, did a bit of shopping buying myself a couple of tools, including a temperature gun, all really for the truck at home, but sort of for my birthday, back on the road and into a truckstop for a look about. I bought a tube of super glue and sat outside and thought I would try it on my shoes and if no good, it was worth the 3 dollars for a try. They are still holding together now days later and have done two tours and though I did look for new ones, did not find any that took my fancy and we will see how long they last.

I pulled into a centre park rest area, the first I have seen of this type, where you exit into a large rest area in the centre of the freeway. Exiting from the left hand or centre lane is very rare here, though there was a highway exit just earlier and maybe only some states do it at all. A very good use of space, again beautiful lawns and lots of room for pets and tables and chairs in the shade with the usual big flash building for toilets. Slowing from the fast lane, but with good signage, line of sight and deceleration lanes, not unsafe.
I spoke with a fellow in a big Dodge ute, they call them trucks here, but they are a ute grown large. He had a transport company name on the windows and so I asked my question. He was the owner/operator and delivered fifth wheeler motorhomes across the country. He travels at about 60 MPH, has done 180,000 MILES this year and sleeps in his ute. I had a conversation with a fellow who delivered caravans in Australia some years ago and he too, because he was below the threshold of needing a logbook told me he drove long, long, hours to earn more, and it seems this fellow must do the same without any legal impediment?

I also spoke with the cleaner gentleman on site, he said he works part time and I told him he was doing a good job and photographed a gopher who was digging holes and making life interesting for the cleaner. It seems many of these sites are maintained by a number of organisations that employ handicapped or people with disabilities of some sort. Many show signs of such groups and one had a sign congratulating the group on I think it was maintaining such sites for 30 years. It seems to work for all involved and some of the best rest areas, the lawns and facilities would not be out of place in a holiday resort. The cost though, must be high and is perhaps why some states in the USA have rolled back and or closed rest areas, without any real thought for the travelling public, let alone the truckers. I will follow this up.

Back on the road and to the next Loves Travel Plaza and asked, do any of their sites have their own restaurants? No I was told and whilst they had both a Maccas and a Subway attached, I went across the road to the Flying J, which again do not have their own, but had a “Huddle House” in the plaza. I had a look and stayed for tea, pot roast with mashed potato, gravy and one side dish included, I said only one side with this one and he said, I’ll give you two if you like, yes thanks chips. No we have never had them here, but of course fries got a different response, yes of course.

I had a lovely meal and sat there with free coffee refills, though was looked at strange when I asked for some milk and used that in my coffee instead of the whitener powder so many use. I asked if OK to sit for awhile and got the laptop out and worked on this report. I am keeping a diary mostly up to date each day with notes and then when I have time, extending this report.

I pulled into Lake Latoka Rest Area at about 10.15 PM, tried ringing home with no answer, rang a couple of mates and rang the last of the family who had not known whether they could call for my birthday and had a chat and it was still my birthday here.

5th August. Up at 6AM, go through my dockets and update diary. I spoke with the cleaner, he has been retired and now doing this for 6 years, 12 days a month. I asked did he have any issues with the truckers and he said no. He did speak of an oversupply there of maps to give away, yet the DMV themselves had none and the truckstops down the road sell them. He has been told the road will be resurfaced next summer, doing both lanes at once and he has asked, so how will people get into the rest area and was told it will only be closed off for one day, but he is sceptical. He also said the rest area up the road I had seen closed, was shut due to beavers and the animal rights and politicians were still sorting it out.

I chased up my contact at 3M and he recommended a hotel across the road and I headed there and booked in for the night. A snack in the room did for tea and a call to Stan from Trucker Radio, who I had spoken to for an interview some years ago and we had planned to do another here, but the phone had not been too flash, so he then rang me back and we did it on the hotel line. We spoke for some time, then recorded the interview of 18 minutes and then he had enjoyed our discussion and would send me some contacts for the Toronto area. I rang work in Dubbo to check on a driver who had been injured before I left and to wish him well.
6th August. I got a message telling me not to rush, our 3M meeting was put back to noon. I then chased up the next truckshow and have been offered a campsite and will be their international guest. All good and got there early, was given lunch, then an introductory presentation, specifically covering truck conspicuity markings and other road safety markings.

There is a problem with road signs in Australia being badly aligned and then giving far too much glare back with the powerful lights we use on our roads which I hope to pursue with both NARVA and 3M in Australia and we discussed this as well. I was then given a tour of the 3M Innovation Center and I must say I was amazed, entertained and astounded by some of the things there. It was an incredible experience and I learnt a lot, but wish I could have videoed it all, truly inspiring and I do believe it will help me keep pushing on towards better road safety for all.

I did a small bit of food shopping and headed off towards Toronto, stopping at the Wisconsin Kenworth dealer who I could see from the road. I had hoped to get an old CB to talk with drivers on the road and though he tried a couple of others for me, no success. Across the road was a Walmart DC and I drove in and asked to speak to someone about trucks and road safety. The safety fellow had gone home and I left a card.

The next rest area had 40 truck spaces and was again well set out and perfectly maintained. As I took a couple of photos, there was a car parked at the back and I walked over thinking it may be the Police and it was, the officer had a truck pulled up and seemed to be doing a routine sort of inspection. There was no loud voices and I waited patiently till the officer came back up to the car and asked did she have a few minutes. I launched into my spiel and we chatted, then she said she had better finish with the trucker (I had thought she was) and I said I would go and get a business card. When I came back I gave one to the trucker, apologising for possibly holding him up and he said, no problem it is all good, and thanks.
I then spoke some more with Lauren, the officer. She told me she is one of a few who deal more with trucks than most, as others do not understand all the rules. I asked could I take a photo, which she agreed to and gave her my card and asked if she would email if she thought of anything else. She had certainly seemed to know what she was doing and looking for as I watched her go around the truck and in under the trailer behind the prime mover with her torch. She did say that some drivers do try and go too far, some drive tired, but that she does understand the rest area shortage and will not fine or wake a driver asleep on a highway ramp, unless he is parked unsafely.

I had also spoken to the next driver parked in the line while I waited for Lauren to finish with the one she was checking. He too responded that car drivers were the biggest problem, commented that he leaves the CB off most times now due to the idiots and that the rest area issue was a far bigger problem in some of the other states.

The biggest thing though of this rest area stop, was the design. There are signs on the highway that say, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SITE in the rest area. Not only are such sites for getting cars off the highway in the event of a smaller prang, these sites are used by the police for pulling trucks into. Firstly having a place to get cars well off the road is good and the design and use by Police for trucks is absolutely a terrific idea for this design. Where in Australia we have bays for inspections that cost a fortune to build, as they too must have a deceleration and acceleration lane suited for trucks and the road, many of them are then closed when inspections are not happening.

Some are open, but signed TRUCKS MAY BE ASKED TO MOVE ON, others have barricades keeping us out. If such sites were built onto the back of the rest areas, then the officers have the facilities to use, there is a saving on a bay only used possibly one week a month or less and could provide a heap more truck bays by building the extra on the back of current rest areas and allowing the trucks to use the bays already in place.
7th August. I had a light brekkie of muesli bar and apple, drove on to the Loves Truckstop in Dekorra, took some photos with my first photo knockback. I had taken a photo and spoken to a driver who had a newer model truck which gave him an extra 2 mpg improvement and he said the only difference was the rubber skirts under the truck and the front air dam and steer wheel rubber fill-ins.

I moved on to a similar truck without the fill ins and was about to take a photo when the horn tooted. I looked around and could see anybody, looked again and a woman came out of the bunk and I walked over and she said they carry bonded freight and no one was to take photos of the truck or their loads. The trailer was empty, but I said no worries, gave her a card and moved on to one of the few cabovers and an Argosy at that, that I have seen on the trip in the USA. The fellow said it was a good old girl, though I did show him the loose grill panel.

I then had lunch in the adjoining Hardees fast food (Like Maccas), did a bit on my report and then found a spot to ring the Walmart DC and speak with Steve the Safety Officer. We chatted for some time, I told him I had heard their adds for drivers and a show on Truck Dog radio where a couple of their drivers and some staff sold the case for working for them.

Most Walmart stores do allow their own trucks to park in their shopping centre parking lots, not all and few allow others to do so. Truck parking is recognised as a problem by Walmart and the ELDs coming in and others who throw drivers in the deep end do handicap some drivers and Just in Time freight management can mean some trucks run only half loaded or less, meaning more trucks on the road. Many truck rest areas are full by 6 or 7 PM and Walmart enforce strict compliance with the Hours of Service (HOS) rules.

When he had started in trucking in 1976, you could get anything fixed in a truckstop and now you were lucky to be able to get a tyre changed. He was also in the Wisconsin Road Team, a group of truckers who did sharing the road presentations in schools, but few schools do such things now and many are farmed out to 3rd parties who do it for the money and the intent can be lost and being only there once, there is no continuity for the students and teachers and he is disappointed that has changed so much and seemingly for the worse, agreeing kids are not taught now to share the rod with trucks.

I then put it to him about the Truckies Top Ten Tips I promote and the signs on the back of the TIV trailer and asked if he would put me in contact and or pass the idea along. I also suggested a campaign with their drivers contributing, so they have some ownership and that it might get them more involved as well and he said he will and will get back to me if he gets any support for it.
Back on the road, a couple of truck parking signs on exits but no rest areas for 3 and a half hours having gone through Chicago in the early evening and got a bit of traffic, then into Illinois to find toll booths with only cash accepted. The booths were staffed and each gave me a ticket to follow up, the second telling me to take the next exit and get cash, but I was told at the servo, “I wish they would stop telling people that, we aren’t a bank for them” and Maccas where I had tea with the aim of getting some cash, said the same. Few here will give cash out.

Four unpaid tolls that will eventually take me over an hour on the phone to pay online due to the stupid set up and even the staff I sought help from could not work it out, but the next lot take credit card? I got a phone call from Mackay in Queensland about funding for green reflectors and where it was going etc, then pulled into a servo tired, got fuel and asked where the next rest area was. When I said I planned to go on and sleep there, the lady said, “Oh I wouldn’t sleep in one of them, sleep here where there are more people” and so I parked out of the way and went to bed.

8th August. As I travel across this vast land, not only do the roads and truck types and speed limits change, there are signs passed in the last state, “Kill or injure a road worker $10,000 fine and or 14 years in Jail” and in this state, “Kill or injure road worker, $7500 or 15 Years in Jail” so they are serious about that, yet the speed limits in some road works at night or during the day and I will say I did not see workers in many, barely drop below 60 MPH unless there is a narrow section and they will then go down to 45 MPH and whether there are two lanes open or one. We seem to have gone way past that with 40 KPH even when there is nobody there and some of these repair sites go for miles.

I got up and found a b-double set with 11 axles parking up and walked over for a photo. That led to quite a long chat. The driver was an ex-military truck driver and had stopped here, as he had to drop one trailer and then deliver each separately, as in the current configuration, he would be overweight in Michigan, the adjoining state where he had to deliver.

He was able to gross 160,000lbs in this 11-axle configuration and was the first to claim older drivers on cell phones were the worst problem. Yes, others too including some truckers, using phones was a problem, but he agreed with the lack of training for them, saying he had got much of his trucking knowledge in the army, but others seem to get their Commercial Drivers License with too little training and whilst some then did well learning on the job, others made serious mistakes, that then brought the whole industry down. I finished chatting with him as he adjusted the weight on one axle he had to set the pressure on, whilst others were controlled by the physical weight of the load automatically. Then I ambled up onto the off-ramp shoulder for a few more photos.
After travelling for some time, I came upon an exit for a truckstop with a different name to most others I had seen, and needing fuel, I went in to have a look. Arlene’s of Battle Creek Michigan was not far off the highway and looked to be an old-fashioned diner and I fuelled and checked it out inside, got a very friendly hello and being too early for lunch, went back out and onto the highway verge and overpass to get some photos and video. There must have been a quarry nearby, as when I had stopped in the roadhouse parking lot, there were some serious axle groups on some of the tippers.

I got some good photos and videos with the long road and off ramps providing some good shots and footage. Having seen few truckstops like this, I decided to go in and try it for an early lunch. I sat down and the menu showed “Sloppy Joes”, so I just had to ask what it was. The waitress, a different one from earlier, went and got me a sample, sort of mince that you have on a bun. It tasted good but seemed to be a bit messy to eat, hence the name now obviously, but I ordered Breakwich, had coffee and then apple pie and ice cream, bloody lovely.

As I waited, the driver two seats in front of me was speaking with an older couple, about the job of a long-distance trucker, explaining nicely, the worst parts of the job. Living in the truck and away from home, car drivers etc. When he seemed finished, I got up and touched him on the shoulder and offered him a business card, saying he had listed the problems well. As I explained my presence, the young driver sitting in between us, made a comment.

This led to a three-way conversation, seemingly to the amusement of the older couple, about our problems. The young fellow then wanted to know about trucks in Australia and we chatted till the first fellow finished his meal and stood behind me listening. I did ask the waitress for an interview, but she said she was now on her own and could not, but when asked about photos inside, said yes go right ahead.

This went on till my meal arrived and the first fellow left, but seeing the young bloke was keen, I asked him about his job. He drives a beautiful Peterbilt 359, tows a milk tanker and picks up milk from farms. With his long bonnet, it can be interesting, so I asked would he do a video interview
outside when finished and he agreed. My chatting had delayed him eating, but he then sat and waited while I finished my dinner then and we went out to film. He was young for the job and responsibility some would think too young, but was a keen and passionate driver. I thanked him and gave him a card and keyring for his time.

The interview over and standing there, a fellow pulled up in a big truck ute and asked what was going on? I explained and he said he was the owner of the diner. I asked could I then interview him, but he declined saying he knew about roadhouses, not trucking and told me to come and see him when I was ready to go. I did and was offered a cup and shirt and to check them out on Facebook and when I could at the next motel, I did a comment on the meal and service, which was good and friendly.

I pulled into another beautiful rest area and took some photos of the magnificent gardens, which not only had some terrific flowering plants, they were all named on little posts and the site was maintained by a local group and had been for years. There was anew Mack Anthem, a model not yet available in Australia in the parking area and I took some photos of other trucks and then walked over to the truck and asked the driver my question.

This was only his second trip in the truck, he was impressed with it over his last Mack and that he was a dedicated carrier, carrying only the companies own freight. He spoke of cars, particularly phones and distractions being the biggest problem, seeing so many from the truck and seeing them weaving over lines and across lanes, that he thought it was becoming endemic. Wrong GPS instructions were an issue for some and one of the other drivers had been caught out hitting a low
bridge and taking the top row of bodies off, yet had been only cautioned, so he thought he was pretty safe in the job, even though he too was still learning only having been there 7 months.

He had been found overweight 1800lbs on the drives at a weighbridge, was fined $85 but allowed to go on and his boss had arranged somewhere to shift the load. The forklift did the adjustment in a few minutes and the driver had to pay $100, which I thought steep for the time involved, but he thought it fair and was otherwise enjoying the job.

I spent some time on paperwork, keeping all my receipts and listing them and my fuel costs separately as a back up record. I travelled on, later that evening paying $3 to cross the bridge into Canada, then at customs having to explain my trip and whilst the weighbridge was open, it was full of trucks and I did not think driving in there would be a good idea.

9th August. I have not seen a rest area since crossing the border and the first truck stop seemed too early, so keep on going. I will learn later that Canada do not have rest areas, they have Service Centres, I get fuel and a coffee along the way and end up in Toronto, getting tired and having tried three exits with the normal gas or fuel signs, but finding everyone a local servo with no parking, I eventually find a motel with a room, drag my gear up only to see on the room clock, it is 2.30 AM. Into bed by 3.30AM and up at 8AM as starting at noon would be much too late to organise anything as I was planning to go to Washington for Friday morning. Starting with my intended group, the Canadian Trucking Alliance, they were not all that keen for me to visit but did offer a couple of others to pursue. Having spoken to Stan from Trucker Radio in St Paul, he had followed up with an email, listing some other contacts he suggested I try and speak with, so I rang a few of them.

The first was James Menzie who is the editor of TRUCKNEWS based in Toronto and I rang and contacted James who was under a deadline and couldn't come to me, so I went to visit him in the new offices only opened a couple of weeks ago. We chatted and taped an interview and as we got back to the foyer, I was asked are you the Aussie? Another call I had made to Bruce Outridge, though it seems he had trouble understanding my wide Aussie accent on the phone in a noisy environment and he had asked his wife, Carmen to track me down on my phone.

Using my phone here has led to some not being able to call me back, but Carmen did and had rang just as I arrived at James’ reception. I had thought it was James, as I was a bit late and Carmen asked where I was. I gave the address and Bruce had been on his way there for an interview about the new offices and the merger of two trucking publication houses coming together here.
With help from James, we grabbed an empty office and filmed a podcast and Bruce knows all these people very well having worked with them for years. Bruce then did the podcast he had come to do with Manan Gupta the new General Manager of Newcom South Asian Media Company and I was then invited to tag along for a tour of the new floor of offices and met more staff. We had a cup of coffee and met some more of the team there and Bruce asked where I was going next.

My initial plan had not born such magnificent fruit as this series of events eventually did and I did not have a specific aim when that had not gone as well as hoped, but had moved straight on to visit James. However, Bruce told me he was attending a truckshow the next day and invited me to stay with him and then attend. Bruce and his lovely wife Carmen took me in and fed me and have looked after me like family for the last three days and I cannot thank them enough, for adopting an Aussie truckie a long way from home.

Bruce is an avid industry advocate here, having been an owner operator, driver and was awarded 2011 Industry Ambassador, writes about the industry, does podcasts under the banner, Lead Pedal Podcast and is not only a passionate trucker, but a talented artist and caricature artist as well.

10th August. After a lovely breakfast, thanks Carmen, we did a bit of shopping, me looking for a phone with no success, whilst Bruce and Carmen attended to a few things and then headed to the Great Canadian Truckshow at Flamboro. This was only the second year for the truckshow and attending on Friday being the set-up day, had only a number of very keen and passionate people there. But all the trucks were beautiful and there were drivers doing all the last-minute touch ups and polishing for the real full on show for Saturday and Sunday. The driver shortage or is it a pay shortage in the USA, is the biggest people issue in the industry wherever I have gone. The UK is
looking for drivers, the US and Canada as well, with several companies attending this smaller show, all aiming to recruit drivers to the fold.

Each company had a truck and or staff on hand and hope to get some good leads and drivers during the days of the show. Being set up day and having 85 trucks last year, I can only imagine they will have a fantastic turn up of trucks and wish them all the best for the show. A barbeque was held for all attending Friday night, but we left to have some tea and Bruce has other commitments tomorrow, so I was invited back to Bruce and Carmen’s again for the night in the guest room they can use for visitors.

I spent time on the phone with Matt Richardson from the Truck Training School Association of Toronto, another contact from Stan and another friend of Bruce, but all those Stan put me in contact with, are friends and industry colleagues and have all been interested and welcoming.

Canada was the birthplace of the b-double and where Australia got the idea from and that was the reason I wanted to include Canada in my itinerary. There are still very new looking combinations on the road in the same original spec, prime mover with a tri-axle and then a bogie and from my perspective, we have gone a long way from there, going then bogie/tri, then tri/tri, quad/quad super b’s and now up to the very recent announcement of a b-quad. With such different weight laws in the many states of the US, Canada has both a Federal regulation and then each of the provinces has its’ own as well. Sounds like the bad old days in Australia, perhaps we have moved forward, even if only with some things, with the NHVR.

I have a couple more contacts to follow up and thank all in Canada, particularly Bruce and Carmen for their hospitality and friendliness. In the theme of good news, when sitting on the balcony with my new friend Bruce at his home in Toronto Canada and having a beer, my first for the trip, I got a call to say I had not been successful in my bid to win funding for more Green Reflector Informal Truck Bays. Now to be fair I have just got the Newell done and I will both say thanks to NHVR for their help and support in achieving that and look forward to doing some press in that regard when I return.

However, the next call was from my partner in all things trucking in Australia, Stephen from Whiteline Television and www.truckingnation.com.au to say he had been successful in winning funding for us to do the TRUCKIES TOP TEN TIPS (for sharing the road with trucks) on video. Our aim is to do it professionally and make it available to all road authorities as a resource, so that new drivers will see and hopefully recognise some of our issues when they get on the road as well as making it available to all others who can use it to teach or simply, to see our side of things. I have been promoting these tips for nearly 20 years now and have had some terrific comments and
support, but it has been a long time coming to be able to do it in such a way and with Stephens
crredible and professional talent with a camera, I know it will be top notch.

11th August. On Saturday I visited Niagara Falls, virtually going past from Toronto on my way to
Chillicothe anyway and Bruce and Carmen said being so close, if I didn’t go I would be a goose. The
falls are magnificent on first appraisal and while I took photos and video, they do not capture it to its
best. On arrival I went looking around, having found there would be a band and fireworks that night
and I still had a day now to get to Kenworth for Monday, as most of the American Trucking
Association staff were on their way to the National Truck Driving Championships in Columbus, so I
was told it would be a waste going to Washington to see them and so had stayed another day in
Toronto for the truckshow there.

I went and did a little shopping for the family, walking maybe 7 or 8 kilometres during the day and
night, but it is very commercial there and quite a surprise, I took photos and videos during the day
and night and headed off after the fireworks. Based on the vehicles and people, I envisaged a long
slow trek out as I thought and the parking attendant agreed, there was only one way in and out. So I
had planned to sit in the car and catch up on my report.

However, it looked like a good start out of the parking area and the Police on point duty sent me the
other way and with a stop and a target in the GPS to guide me out the back way, I was on the
highway in less than 10 minutes. Now on the way into Canada, I had come upon the Illinois Toll road
with no signs or warnings for the tolls. My GPS had a setting for avoiding tolls, yet had given no
warning of the issue there, but this time decided to save me $10 in tolls and cost me two hours and
more fuel in avoiding a few on the main highway south.

I ended up on a much smaller road for hours and in the scheme of things, it was probably a good
chance to see the lesser roads and I ended up in the early hours of the morning in a small and run
down truckstop where I asked and was told I could sleep out the back.
12th August. Next morning after a sleep in and some fuel, I was on the road and reached Chillicothe that evening. I sussed out the plant, took a couple of photos of the sunset shining over the Kenworth dealers sign on the other side of the road and went and found a motel for a shower and bed.

13th August. My tour started the next morning at 9AM and went till lunch, with one of the four Assistant Plant Managers as my guide, we did an introduction and tour and he then bought me lunch in the cafeteria where I sat in with some of his friends and explained again, what I was doing there.

The plant is at capacity and working on increasing that over the next couple of years. There are 2300 employees with 1300 involved in the assembly of trucks, 53 component suppliers within a 250 Mile range of the plant and at the end of my tour I had asked JD, my guide, for what he sees as the safety aims for Kenworth. He said driver assistance was increasing to be able to be more aware of our surrounds and those travelling within those surrounds and driver comfort, to reduce fatigue and again, keep us with more ability and time to watch and drive, rather than just drive.
There are Kenworths everywhere and I took photos, visited the predelivery down the road and then the dealership over the road as well, after the tour. The manager there said he was possibly not the best to ask, but that he was seeing an increase in technology fitments, but a pushback from some drivers.

My tour with Cummins has been deferred till next week and whilst I have met with one of the ATA staff here in Columbus and been invited to the Breakfast of Champions for the National Truck Driving Championships, I will have to leave by noon to meet my commitment for a truck show 12 hours away. So, I have decided to find a motel and sit here and catch up with my report which is now into 16 pages, do a blog or two, send in my column for Owner Driver and I thought, catch up on some sleep.

But I have just spent the last hour on the phone with an Australian truckie who has raised some more hairy issues for some of the things that we deal with on the road and their legality. I must be up early and am up to date with my diary, nearly up to date with my report, showered and mostly packed and am off to bed at 10.30 PM Columbus time on the 15th. It was my youngest daughters and second grandsons’ birthdays yesterday and it is my second sons’ birthday at home in Australia on the 16th and as with my job all too often, I am a long way away, but I love my children dearly and miss them all.

14th August. I am in Columbus Ohio and have spent the day catching up on my diary and report and have just had dinner, walked to a local supermarket for supplies for meals tomorrow and on the way back spoke with a local Police Officer, parked in a servo. I asked him did he have much to do with trucks and he said no. I said there are quite a few round here, using the motels etc and he agreed, but again, said they did not have any trouble with the trucks.

I then asked about the rust I see in a percentage of cars and do they do inspections? “No, they used to many years ago, but not now” he said. It seems you can drive it till it dies and many do. In a rest area last week, I am nearly sure the thin cargo strap around the ute body, could have been all that was holding the thing together and would have taken a photo, but the fellow inside may have taken offence.

I hear broken exhausts, brakes rubbing as cars drive past and see the rust, through mudguards and over wheels and under doors, often all together on one vehicle, at least a few times a day and even in the big cities. When I told the officer we would not be even allowed out the gate like that, he said “Oh really, MMMM”.

I then walked up to a trucker and his wife and another driver. I said I had two questions, the first is that I don’t see many Western Stars? He said they are around and Western Star is owned by Freightliner and it is like the difference between a Chev and a Cadillac (basic and luxury) and he had this truck built for him in 2017. He was too long to legally pull his 3 pup (28 foot trailers each with dolly at front and single axle at rear) in his 379 Pete on the Ohio and other turnpikes (read freeways) and so he bought this and went from 4 and a half MPG to over 7, but he also now does 1500 revs at 73 MPH with a 12 speed auto against the 18 speed manual, the gear fast run slow ethic gaining more and more momentum.

The second was my basic question, “What is your biggest safety concern on the highway” and this is where the title comes in. For all intents and purposes, he could have been as Aussie truckie with all of his comments, bar one. “Car drivers are the biggest problem, you leave a space and they fill it. I had a friend have a car pull in front not leaving enough room and he hit the car, the car driver told the Police “I was just sitting here at the lights waiting to turn and the truck hit me”, the trucker gave
the police his dash cam and all was sorted quickly." I said I too have heard that story and do you
know that the idea of recording cars to protect us, because no one would believe a car driver would
be so stupid (don’t we wish) was first done by an Australian Truckdriver.

He said he is going to get a camera soon and then we went onto my trip and why etc. I told him I
think the UK lorry drivers are worse off as they have no one working for them and asked about here.
He is a member of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) and believes they
are trying, but they are fighting the government, who all know better and are happy to tell us how to
do our job, whether they could or not. I have emailed OOIDA with no luck, the emails bounce, but do
plan to catch up with them at GATS.

What about truckers? Yes there is that too, not being trained properly and the public think this is the
easiest job in the world, yet say when they get the chance to see things from our side, who would do
that job?

He went on “These ELDs are forcing blokes to drive tired, they don’t allow for traffic etc, blokes are
pushing from the minute they start the clock and no one else cares about us.” “I wish we could all
get together and shut down for a week” and I said as I have before, I have more chance flying to the
moon in your truck and he agreed. I then explained those who have advocated blockades in
Australia will simply be pushed off the road by the authorities and that unless you have two
important things, someone or a group the industry will stand behind and a short list of both,
problems and solutions, the government will simply laugh at you.

He then spoke of a lack of rest areas, Police in some states who will write up drivers for parking on
freeway ramp shoulders, no excuses accepted at all. The fact that the industry is simply there now
for revenue, as the authorities are not getting it like they used to and on one occasion, when pulled
up by a trooper, who could find nothing wrong with the truck, then wanted his logs and seemed to
get very annoyed when he could find nothing wrong. Our trucker said, “Isn’t that how it is supposed
to be?” but the officer clearly had the bothers, that he could not write him a ticket.

California not being just a different state, but a different country etc and whilst I had said to him
after the first five minutes, can I go and get my video camera, you are saying all I have heard, but
altogether and quite well, but he was not keen. While he works for a broker, the trailer had a name
that some would know in Australia from many years ago in that section of the industry and I was
holding them up as they were about to go and eat.

I apologised and then he asked me about, you guessed it, our roadtrains. They do have what we
would call a roadtrain (and I mistakenly labelled the two or three short trailer combos as turnpike
doubles previously, yet it seems as here as at home, where you are changes what something
means), but they pull two 53 foot trailers as turnpike doubles in the USA (or as Heavy Goods Vehicles
HGVs, in Canada) and with their long trucks, would well exceed our 36.5 metres. They talk in miles
here and I can cope with that, but weights in pounds still has me thinking about conversions, and
normally by then the driver is on the next comment.

So a wrap up to this point of the trip. Truckdrivers biggest problem on the roads are car drivers who
do not, or have never been taught, to understand trucks. There is a much smaller problem with
other truck drivers, but it is there and is growing. Electronic Logs (ELDs) are putting more pressure
on many and not all are coping. Some have no problem with them and it seems this is largely due to
the type of work and or where you run and or, who you work for.
The ELDs have exacerbated the lack of rest areas in some states and I have seen a site yesterday on a four lane highway where you can access it from both directions, yet there is a slowdown lane barely big enough for a single car on the opposite side and none at all on the rest area side and traffic in a 70 MPH zone, has to nearly stop in the lane to enter the rest area and or cross the road and traffic drives back and forth across the highway with barely a car length between sides. This in a state that also has a rest area with a near mansion for a toilet block and acres of gardens around it, that you would be proud to have in a show place.

My Western Star friend did say he thought the government was being driven by certain groups baying about road safety, but the trucking industry was not being given its voice and certainly not the drivers and that the government, as always will mostly follow the loudest noise. Got the column and blog done and went to the local Ruby Tuesday restaurant for a nice tea.

15th August. A sleep in, more reporting, out to do laundry and shopping for food, back to the motel and keep on writing.

16th August. I was up early and in to get a park at the Columbus Convention Center for the American Trucking Association National Truck Driving and Step Van Championships. I attended the breakfast, the speech by Chris Spears and the guest speaker were excellent and well received and met with Chris and the head of the FMCSA and others, quickly handing out a few business cards, then watched some of the drivers going through the tests, but they had already done their knowledge, pre-trip and media tests.

Not only are the NTDC held here and now, the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance 2018 North American Inspectors Championship is a concurrent event and for the first time this year, the awards were presented together with the NTDC awards at the one dinner function. I was not aware of the inspector’s championships till this event. From the CVSA website, cvsa.org “Fifty-two commercial motor vehicle inspectors representing jurisdictions throughout North America gathered in
Columbus, Ohio, Aug. 14-18, 2018, to compete at NAIC, the only event dedicated to testing, recognizing and awarding commercial motor vehicle inspector excellence. NAIC was created to recognize inspectors and officers – the backbone of the commercial vehicle safety program in North America – and to promote uniformity of inspections through training and education.”

I think this a terrific way to not only recognise the skills of inspectors, but to also bridge some of the gap between the two groups. I sat at a table with one of the inspectors and we spoke about his role and the process they go through to reach the level of inspector there.

With up to a dozen trucks and trailers idling round in a hall, grandstands and displays etc, you can imagine how big the hall is. There are 6 tests, backing into a space, running along a line on the opposite side of the truck, missing a plastic duck as a road hazard, again on the other side from the driver then round a 180 degree corner where your trailer wheels need to go over 4 marks, then all wheels including the trailers on your side must go through a narrow lane and then a stop over a line.

Each test can either gain you points, or lose them, there is a time limit, but a couple of fellows who were competitors said it was ample. If you go close without going over the line etc, you can gain points, but if you miss altogether you get none and if you go over the line, you can lose points. I was told by some I spoke with, that drivers do take this very seriously and train for months coming up to the event. Some may well be in the same configuration they drive, but few would be in the same brand of truck and or trailer.
I then left for my 12 hour drive to Eau Claire in Wisconsin for the truck show and that went well, but after only my second real rain of the trip and it was bad enough to nearly keep me awake in the car, I did come upon my first crash, a Mack semi and car off the road together, but only saw the after effects on traffic etc.

There was some flooding according to the news not far away during the night and I arrived Friday just after noon and in time to set up for the show opening at 3PM.

Stopping at another rest area, there was a sign detailing the laws in this state for emergency vehicles on the side of the road and the penalties are serious indeed.

On my way there I came across this group of parked up overlength vehicles. There were 5 of them and must have been waiting for a curfew or timing for the bridge they seem to have girders for. It was the first time I have ever seen a prime mover with 4 axles at the rear.
17th August. A small convoy arrived here about 3.30PM, having raised funds for a local child and this is what started this show off years ago, raising funds for a local family, much like another surprise birthday truckshow happening today just further south for Bubba, that has got plenty of media attention here. It is a bit like the song, “Teddy Bear”, I believe this involves a young disabled boy who sits and watches trucks and tries to get them to blow the horn.

Recently a trucker left a package for him with a shirt and some other things and a group of truckers decided to get a few of them together and do a surprise birthday party for Bubba and in the end, over 180 trucks turned up on the day. It is simply marvellous what our industry does in this way, here and elsewhere, when someone needs a hand, our Convoy for Kids events in Australia another example of truckies helping others in need. The trouble of course is that this rarely gets sufficient press to cover for the bad press we are too often wrongly getting.

The monster trucks drew a good crowd and the trucks and vendors had a good start to the show. The Army tank carrier, battery powered little jet of the Air Force that travelled around and some magnificent show trucks were highlights. I spoke with many drivers and filmed interviews with some, took more photos and asked my trip question. Many answer my question with “Cell (Mobile to us) phones and or distraction, are the biggest problem”, saying the number of people they see on phones is growing and it seems it may be an epidemic that is getting away from us all. I was given a small marquee to put my stands up in but spent most of my time roaming and talking to drivers.
18th August. The views do vary, but the themes remain, car drivers the biggest problem, some concerned with a small percentage of truck drivers as well, lack of rest areas and even here in this smaller town, there were about 8 companies with stands wanting drivers and some others for training them. Wisconsin Kenworth had a stand and trucks and I gave them a couple of the Aussie Kenworth brochures I had left over and they were so impressed, they were to give me some goodies, but I missed them closing up Sunday morning.

There was a magnificent black and gold and I mean shiny gold panelling, truck with motorhome attached. Bad Ass Trucking and I spent some time talking with the owner and a couple of other drivers. As I walked up the side of the trailer, the daughter asked would I like to see inside. I said yes please and could I video and as I did, she explained she had a loft bedroom up the stairs for when she travelled with her Mom and Dad.

When I walked out her Mom was there and I asked would they agree to be videoed, yes both were happy to do so. I explained I had spoken to lots of drivers and some did have their partners with
them and a few had children, but the daughter was 18 and so both able to give her view and to be filmed with a consent form for our use.

Each answered my question and the daughter spoke of going for her license, so I asked was she taught about trucks and she was told by the tester to keep away and that those damn truckers were no goods etc and she held her tongue, rather than say her Dad was on of them. It was a completely different perspective, but the issues on the road were the same, car drivers risking their lives and ours on the road every day to gain a space or a minute.

The Owner Operators and Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) use this Western Star and trailer which attends shows and events such as this one. The driver, Mark, has been doing the job for 8 years, does a regular spot on the Truck Dog radio about those events etc and had been a driver for the Smithsonian Museum for many years before this, along with being awarded the Petro/Truckstops of America Citizen Driver of the Year in 2016.

I dropped in to speak with Mark and said I had tried to contact OOIDA a number of times prior to the trip the emails kept bouncing. He said that Mary, their radio host of the OOIDA show, would be there in an hour and he had told her on the phone I was there and she would like to meet me. I came back later and met Mary, explained the trip and my aims and we went to my stand to tape a radio interview for her show.

At the end she asked, “How can I be sure you are genuine, (the first time I had been asked that) do you have a website or Facebook page?” Yes and I asked her to check the details on my business card and confirm I was me and on the level. I did offer, as I have done with many media and or industry people I have met, to keep in touch and or provide Aussie updates for them if they are interested and some have agreed to look at doing something like that on a regular basis. We shall see where that goes.

That evening I also did a phone interview with Mark Bosna in Australia. Mark is a radio host on the local Canberra community radio station and rang me a couple of years ago asking to do an interview and we have done spots semi regularly since then. We did a catch up on the trip and planned to do another interview before I left America. I also contacted another mate with an ABC week end show to set up an interview at GATS as well.
19th August. Sunday morning here and early AM Monday in Australia, I did get to do a chat with Luke in Australia on the Nightshift show and aim to ring him from GATS as well. Overall a good turnout, the public seemed happy with the trucks and entertainment and the truckies I spoke with, were as always so far on the trip, welcoming and friendly and keen to chat. A driver with a cabover International had agreed to an interview Sunday morning and he was not afraid to speak his mind on some of the industry bodies. Suffice to say he was not a fan of the ATA there, saying they had forced the ELDs on smaller operators and were only there for the big companies. A similar criticism has often been levelled at the ATA in Australia.

He was a member of OOIDA and said they were trying, but fighting government and big companies etc, was a big task. He also said he had sold his 2016 Peterbilt to buy this truck, which being older was not required under the new law to have an ELD. Specifically that he was more than capable and had done for many safe years, of managing his fatigue and not being a law breaker, but also not a
robot, he was the only one who could manage his fatigue safely and get the job done safely as well, no one else could or should, tell him when to sleep and drive if they were not doing it themselves.

The show closed with a parade of trucks leaving and travelling through town, but I did not get to catch them in town and headed off back to Columbus. Thanks to all I spoke with or interviewed and to the organisers for the stand, invite and hospitality.

I pulled into a truckstop that has a semi and prime mover standing vertically with the truckstop sign on top, quite a distinctive signboard, walked out towards the highway for photos and got a coffee and some cookies for tea later. There was a ute there with so much rust, I was again to surprised to see it able to run on the road.
Next rest area was another magnificent site three stories, atrium, gardens etc, so I pulled in for a
toilet break. I had stopped here going across to Toronto and went back out to the car and rang John
Laws in Australia and did an interview live with him. He of course asked about the trip and I gave a
short explanation of the Churchill fellowship scheme and my aims with this trip. I have spoken with
him a few times over the years when I think there is something worthy of trying to get through to
him and he has always treated me fairly and given me a chance to put my view forward. I also rang
two of my Australian depot managers to say hello and see how work was going.

20th August. I drove till about 2AM, then pulled into a parking bay and slept. Cummins rang me about
8 AM to confirm the tour time and I said I would be there. I pulled into a Loves’ Truckstop and paid
$12 for a shower (it is cheaper if you buy some fuel and free if you buy a bigger amount, or you can
use their rewards program) and arrived early. While waiting Steven from Whiteline Television rang
to catch up and then I was due to go in. Again no cameras, but my host Louise, did take some photos
for me.
This centre was flooded some years ago and they now have levee banks and other improvements to stop it from happening. All their engine testing is carried out here and we went through the facility as I learned about the different bays and costs and asked questions. As you can imagine, simply designing an engine for a truck application, is not a simple task. Ensuring it not only does the job but lasts sufficiently is just the start. Meeting ever higher and more stringent emission standards and different ones at that across the world, means much testing and both technical and engineering work, goes into the engine that we as drivers, may sometimes take for granted.

There was to be a fuel use standard introduced into the USA for trucks, but currently that is under review with Mr trump, but I have heard before and did ask, is it true that truck engines in the USA are now putting out cleaner air, than they take in. My technical host, said it is quite possible that in heavily congested cities and with certain smog and atmospheric conditions, that could well be true.

I then went into the future, not just with Virtual Reality, but I was able to look at and test Augmented Reality, where with trucks being mechanical and the electronics to run them being more and more complex, breakdowns away from towns can be costly and Cummins is looking at technology to not only monitor the engine and diagnose problems remotely, but to inform drivers to get something fixed and in really remote places, to provide a tool that can be used by a qualified technician, to help someone check, and or test something to ensure the right parts can be sent or the right issue can be found, before someone travels hundreds of miles, only to find the problem is different to what was first thought.

This increases costs to the owner for the repair, has the truck off the road and the driver stuck there for more time than they should be and this new technology and its application in this field, could well go a long way to helping drivers who break down a long way from help. This was not really in the purview but was included in my tour once we discussed my aims. It could well prove valuable and suitable for something far more relevant in the future. Due to the museum and other section being closed for renovations, I was unable to do the extra bits, but it was interesting and valuable.

Heading off towards Walcott Iowa, I had three calls from Aussie radio stations re the Monash University report being released that quoted the dangerous nature of our industry and all were surprised to find me driving in a car and on a somewhat different highway from normal. This then prompted questions on why I was in the USA and led to two interviews that day and another the next, which started out with chats about the Churchill Fellowship trip and then the Monash report.

Timely that such a report should come out while I am doing a study tour looking at trucks and road safety. I was asked my views, commented that we have changed from the days of manual handling, but yes, there are issues with rest areas, managing our fatigue and the lack of education of motorists that sees us involved in far too many crashes that we did not cause, but which not only risk our lives on the road, but those of motorists and that there must be more done to reduce these crashes.

21st August. Stopping for a sleep in another rest area, I then travelled on to the Iowa 80 Truckstop, the biggest in the world with over 900 truck parking spaces, an enormous shop and food complex and a museum with some magnificent old trucks. I took photos, spoke with several drivers, did video in the museum and bought myself a couple of USA trucking history books. A bit of shopping, drooling over some bits I can’t afford or to carry home anyway and as I was leaving three very long setups carrying wind turbine fan blades, arrived at the truckstop.

I did see an ambulance and fire brigade arrive and go to the truck parking area as I went into the museum, but did not ask or hear why. That was the second time that such a thing happened during
the trip and let’s hope it was only something minor. It is one of the issues of the job, doing it mostly alone and in our case in Australia, often far from people, services and help.

There was some traffic mayhem for 15 minutes or so as the first could simply not get into the truckstop due to its length and cut in, but trucks had all queued up at the exit, not seeing them about to enter, so they all had to back up. Photos of the rigs show what a challenge it must be to deliver such loads. I had seen some earlier in the trip, but not this close up. I had spoken with a pilot car driver in a truckstop, asking him my question and his answer quite surprised me, he said the biggest problem was the police.

Many of the highways have minimum speed signs as well as maximum and he had a truck with a blocked filter, had been trying to get somewhere to get it fixed and got a ticket for travelling too slow. Now we all have stories of bad car drivers, bad truck drivers and bad coppers, but I think my friend was not impressed as not only had the fine itself been an issue, his insurance had then gone up each month for the ensuing 5-year period and he was suitably unhappy.

22nd August. Another night on the road, another night in my SUV staying in a rest area, more photos on waking, then to Joplin. The Chrome Shop Mafia have a store here and had a TV show for years called “Trick My Truck” where someone would nominate a driver that needed a hand and they
would take his worn-out old truck and turn it into a masterpiece. The show people did come to
Australia for a truck show a few years ago, but the show has since finished. However, they still sell
and fit chrome and accessories to trucks, pimping them up as it was on the show. I spoke with the
fellow on the counter and he said whilst it has slowed, they are seeing young drivers want to make
their trucks look good.

One can only hope that in being sufficiently passionate in wanting their rig to look good, that their
passion extends not only to both how they drive and do their job, but how they are then seen and or
perceived by the public, those they are showing off their trucks to. This could well be an avenue for
pursuit, if you want it to look good, then surely you want to be seen to be a better driver than a
bloke in a heap of a truck. I have not read or heard of any correlation on drivers and their vehicles
and their behaviour and will add this to this list, but also try and do some research, initially will ask
drivers here their thoughts.
So now on my last driving leg of the trip and so to Dallas. Coming in to Dallas I got onto the TRUCK Dog radio program on the Sirius Satellite network, having tried a couple of other times but was deemed off topic then and explained my trip and was invited to stay and chat and take calls for an hour. I raised my trip, my aims and was given a good chance to discuss the issues raised by drivers and some of my thoughts on solutions, including the current review of the Hours of Service in the US trucking industry.

Good bye to my trusty steed for just over 6,000 miles (9,000 plus kilometres) across the USA and Canada, driven and slept in with not one issue, thanks for looking after me. Packing all my gear after driving and living in it for 4 weeks took time and then getting to the motel proved to be the first of any real hassles. The organised travel had passed it on to another firm and trying to get to them, along with phone issues certainly had me hassled, but finally after 3 hours packing, ringing, moving here and there to get the lift planned, I made it to the motel for a feed, shower and bed.

I got a late call from an Aussie truckie responding to a recent Owner Driver column of mine, saying he had received a fine, but he had kept fighting and after three goes, the ticket had been withdrawn.

23rd August. In to the Great American Truckshow early the next morning to set up my stand, put my banners out and grab a few photos before the public opening. The truck show and shine had some magnificent trucks and I took photos and spoke with a lady from the American Transport Research Institute and completed their survey on detention issues with truckers as always, bearing the brunt of those who use and abuse our time to help themselves, but then do not want to pay for it.

I looked at the next seating technology, electronic seats and hope to hear from them about a trial for the next TIV here in Australia and spoke with the TEXAS Department of Transport about truck rest areas. They explained that when they spend $15 million to do one side and so $30 million to do the other side of a highway with rest areas, that funding is dependant on a number of factors, including but not limited to road safety aspects, historical significance in the area and animals etc. I had of course asked do they consult with the trucking industry and have a name to follow up with.
Three tanker drivers from Newcastle along with a couple of other truckies from home dropped by and said hello and the evening finished with a free feed and drink for exhibitors, then back to the motel and do a blog, so another late night before finally into bed. I am told the Dallas convention centre is one of the largest, and I have still not seen all of it. I hope to attend the concert tomorrow night and listen in on the proposed possible rule changes for their Hours of Service session to be held here tomorrow.

They are asking for some flexibility in their hours since the introduction of mandatory Electronic Logging Devices in December last year and the serious start to policing of them since April. This has
caused several things to change, mostly for the worse. Drivers pushing to find somewhere to legally park for 10 hours for their required break, some drivers leaving and I heard one add on the radio program here, offering a $30,000 sign on bonus for team (two-up) drivers.

Another add said they were at the critical level needing drivers and I am sure I could have had ten job offers if I was staying. A few Aussies dropped in to say hello and many Americans asked, where are you from with that accent and love to hear and ask about Australia. Off to bed now and plan to file another blog before leaving on Sunday.

24th August. There is a truck radio show called the WSM All Nighter and Marcia Campbell is the host. I had spoken with her yesterday and she asked me to do an interview this morning. We sat down and chatted for about half an hour about the trip and trucking and she was very appreciative, giving me a big hug and saying she loved my passion for the job and would make the talk into two sessions for her show.

I then moved on to do a video interview I had arranged with a lady from the St Christopher Truckers Relief Fund group and spoke with her about what they did for drivers stranded and or in financial trouble. There was also a group who will help with the recovery of the body of a driver and a group who specialise in truck stop law and fighting for drivers’ rights in court.

There was a fairly serious health area with blood sugar and cholesterol testing and then a kidney function test including taking the little bottle in a plain paper bag for a visit to the little boys room. I submitted to both and came away with slightly raised cholesterol, we will blame that on the different truckstop diet, as I had to see how the other half lives of course, but overall BMI right on target and the rest good as well. The Rookie of the year was also announced today, along with the winners of the Pride and Polish trucks.

Unfortunately, I missed the FMCSA session on Hours of Service, but will submit once home and aim to invite Mr Martinez, who I met at the NTDC in Columbus, to visit Australia and see how our hours work. As from the drivers I have spoken with, OOIDA and others have been asking for more flexibility since the ELDs came in and even more strongly, since the grace period finished in April. I did stop at a weighbridge on my way here and the officer was at first a bit pensive, though came good and said he has been doing the job for years and the number and different types of ELDs was making it hard for him to follow and inspect.

There was a concert featuring Tony Justice, a fulltime trucker, now with four albums out and he took part in the Talent quest, introducing the artists and singing whilst the judges decided, then performed at the concert and I had spoken quickly with him during the day and asked for an interview in the morning to which he agreed.
25th August. The last day of the show saw me do an interview with the past President of Trucker Buddy, something I have watched and did aim to bring to Australia years ago, but simply could not do it alone and so will try again. They match truckers with school teachers and act as pen pals for the children, sending information as they travel across the USA, using their jobs to help with education, geography, maths for loads and weights etc and aim to give not only some information on trucks and road transport, but to also contribute information that the classes can use with other work.

We discussed using Truckie Mate here as an off shoot or subsidiary of Trucker Buddy and I spoke with a driver who has been linked to one teacher for nearly 17 years and also a member of the board, who later told me at dinner that night, he had already spoken with others who were keen to offer some support and to see it get up here.

I then interviewed Tony Justice getting his answer to my lead question and asked about how he saw things from his perspective in dealing with the music and media industries. He said he is still struggling to get heard outside of trucking there and I asked if he had heard of Slim Dusty. He had not but did say he would follow him up.

Tony performed again at the truck parking area for drivers on the Saturday morning which I did not get to see or visit unfortunately. At the truck parking area there was an auction to raise funds for the St Christopher Truckers Relief Fund which raised $15,775 and showers and facilities were provided for drivers so they could attend GATS. I have since received an email that a transport company matched the funds raised at the auction thereby doubling the amount for the St Christopher’s Truckers Relief Fund.

I spoke with some more exhibitors and also had an Aussie trucker, who now lives in Montana on a ranch and does a daytime driving job, invite me to stay and do a days run with him over the mountains, if I ever get back here. I won a headset at the last minute and with the show finishing at 4PM, packed up and dragged all my gear to the hotel next door for a meal with one of the Trucker Buddy board members. I am hopeful we will have something up and running within the year, but it may need some funding to set up as it requires Police checks in working with children and this will need to be sorted here.

26th August 2018. Heading Home.

Well today is the last day of my Churchill Fellowship trip. I am packing, or trying to jam stuff in my bags, ready to catch a Qantas flight home tonight. It has been an amazing experience, I have met many people with only two out of the whole trip, not welcoming, but they could have simply had a bad day. I have spoken with hundreds of drivers through to media and industry and government bodies and have a damn site more to do when I get home and start to follow up on those meetings and contacts.

I aim to immediately put in a submission to the FMCSA request for comment on their hours of service and will invite the current head to come to Australia and see how we do it. You have to aim high! I have dozens of books and magazines to read and go through for information, for further contacts and to simply get even more views. I travelled just over 6000 miles (9600 kilometres) across America and into Canada and whilst one fellow did ask, why aren’t you flying, I said being on the road is what I do and what better way to feel and understand it, as I preach to our authorities when I ask them to do a trip with me. I could possibly have used the driving time to keep my report up to date, as I am a week behind in it, though have my diary up to date, but still feel, driving best suited the aim and intent of the trip.
I would have loved to have done it in a truck, but that was a big ask for 5 weeks on the road and whilst I have been invited back by some for the future, the issue of a truck license, unless you move here to work, is still a major hurdle. Still, one thing at a time.

The number of companies looking for drivers here is remarkable and there were dozens with trucks on show and or recruiting, but I had a number of drivers ask what I was doing. “Are you recruiting for drivers in Australia” or, “How can I come there and drive them roadtrains, I just want to have a go at that”.

Thank you to the Churchill Fellowship and its board and judges for the chance to do this trip, to my employer Rod Pilon Transport for the time and their support over 11 years now, to those who helped with contacts and suggestions and to all I have met on this wonderful adventure. I am looking forward to a few nights good sleep when I get home, as I did a few long nights (or long days and short nights) towards the end and the best part of the trip, was no bloody logbook or alarm clock.

My complete report will likely be 50 plus pages, my photo count is over 2000, video of many hours and stories and lovely people I will remember for years to come. I have just rung Bruce Outridge from Toronto thanking him for his hospitality, done an interview with Stan from Trucker Radio, earlier did a catch up with Luke on the “Nighshift” radio show back home in Australia and am now gearing up and looking forward too many hugs and kisses with my children and grandchildren, when I get home.

They have been very supportive of all my efforts in trucks and road safety and whilst it is the worst part of this job, the time we spend away from them, doing what I do, shows, events and the time to put in submissions and trips such as this, few outside our industry recognise that cost and impact on a truckies family and I fear few others care, but that is the way of the world. I love my family dearly and one day hope to make up to them the time I have put into this hobby or passion, or both.

I love what I do, I love my family and my job, but I still hope to get the next TRUCKRIGHT Vehicle up and running and will commit to it for the next 5 years and that will be my next push on returning. There is nothing like the TIV anywhere I have been and I wish I could have brought it with me to show off what we do and how we do it.

I saw during my visit to the Iowa 80 truckstop museum a truck that went over to Europe and did a tour some years ago and was recently donated to the museum when the owner retired. Oh to have taken the TIV for this trip. Anyone with suggestions and or offers to help with the next TIV will be warmly welcomed.

So now to sort the luggage issue, a shower and to the airport. Thanks again to all who have helped in any way and to my family, I love and have missed you all dearly and can’t wait to be home. Safe Travelling, Rod Hannifey.

All photos are my own with two exceptions.

Page 15 Photo of the Kenworth Plant in Seattle supplied by Kenworth Seattle.

Page 32 Photo of myself and Bruce Outridge supplied by Bruce Outridge.
Rod Hannifey Churchill Fellowship Trip 2018, Conclusions.

Many of the issues truckies face in Australia are mirrored in the countries I visited. We do some things better, specifically I think we are more efficient at moving freight but have a different dynamic to the UK and the USA so need to be, because of our long distances between major population centres. Canada has the gaps but is more restricted by the artic conditions of the north and has the trading partner of the USA immediately to the south.

From those truckers I spoke with, they are critical of the government in not educating car drivers about sharing the road with trucks, putting both groups at risk due to a lack of knowledge and or education on the subject. Car drivers are more often at fault in crashes involving trucks, yet as here, trucks are blamed first and thereby perceived by the public to be at fault. The issue of cell phones (mobile phones here) is perhaps a far greater and growing road safety hazard for all but is a part of the growing driver distraction issue that can include far worse things like texting and watching movies while driving.

As here, the laws under which truck drivers operate suit some tasks, but not others and it was specifically commented on that those who make such laws, do not have to live on the road and live by those laws, when they have all the facilities most people take for granted in their lives.’

The lack of and cost of using truck rest areas and the lack of security and possible danger for the driver and the load in the UK is critical, but does not seem to be in the forefront of anyone but the drivers, who have it seems, no real group to push those views and issues. The transitory truck driving population from Europe and the different way of life there, seems to exacerbate these problems and I see no immediate improvement likely for them, but will try and participate as and where I can.

My time in Canada was limited, but I did see new b-double combinations of the type we copied 25 years ago and few like we have expanded to here in Australia. The rest area issue and drivers from overseas were raised as major issues, along with the lack of education and cell phone problem.

Some rest areas in the USA are magnificent, but others were either dangerous, or simply not big enough for the needs of the number of truckers. The issue of 50 different states is not the only problem, but differing laws and rules does not help and the lack of understanding or caring about how truckers live on the road, is still a hindrance to getting things fixed or even improved at a major level.

I have submitted to the FMCSA regarding truck driving hours and am chasing up on all the contacts I made. Some of those are specific about sites and issues, some are general and will take time to follow through on. The design of some rest areas which include a section for traffic crash investigations and also allow for heavy vehicle inspections off the road are possibly the most valuable thing I saw and would never have learned of, without being there to see them. Learning of the inspectors championship could I hope lead to something similar here that will not only improve the knowledge and level of awareness of their job, but possibly be a way to lead to better interaction between drivers and roadside inspectors.

My trip leads me to believe there is more truck industry awareness and interaction with the public in the USA, more action from industry to see things done, but still a long way to go and insufficient action to improve road safety as quickly as we all want. It is unlikely I can change things there and that was not the aim of the trip, but I do see it as another way to keep in contact and closer now having been there, than I was able to do before.
I do hope I put forward a positive and personable Aussie view and welcomed the many positive comments I received on my efforts from those I met and also on the Churchill Fellowship program. Many were completely unaware of it, but the circles I work and travelled in may explain that and I did do my best to not only explain how it worked and what it aims to achieve, but also how it will help my efforts and that without the Churchill Trust, I would never have been able to do such a trip.

I would say I was somewhat disappointed by the response from the Road Haulage Association in England and the Canadian Trucking Alliance in Toronto, even though letters of recommendation had been sent to them from the Australian Trucking Association and I thank the CEO, Ben Maguire for his help with this. However, as an individual truck driver, I also recognise this was not completely unexpected and whilst such groups do have much of the say in industry efforts at a government level, I believe that similarly in Australia, without individual truck drivers being involved, then the aims and outcomes often miss the true needs of the person doing the job.

Without the opportunity made available to me through the Churchill Trust and the fellowships, I would not have had the chance to even think about such a trip and I do believe, again as is the case too often here in Australia, that the drivers are really the ones we need to talk to and I did manage that I think better, than someone from an association would be able to do.

I would again like to thank the Churchill Trust, along with my sponsors the NRMA and ACT Road Safety Trust for their ongoing efforts to improve road safety and for their support of the specific Road Safety Fellowship and aim to continue to do what I can, to improve road safety for truck drivers and those we share the road with into the future. Rod Hannifey 2016 Churchill Fellow.

**MEDIA List.**

Prior to the fellowship trip I did radio interviews on ABC Wagga Wagga Saturday morning program, Yass FM Community radio over several weeks, Nightshift with Luke Bona on the Triple M network (national show) and a couple of others, along with my column in Owner Driver and other trucking industry publications when the fellowship was awarded. I have detailed the earlier ones as they occurred direct to the trust, including the local Dubbo Liberal newspaper story.

During the trip, I did live radio interviews with John Laws, Mark from Yass FM, Luke Bona on “Nightshift” and two separate ABC radio interviews that followed the release of the Monash University report stating truck drivers were 13 times more likely to be killed at work. ABC NSW Drive and ABC Western Plains Breakfast shows, along with another Canberra station each rang me to ask had I seen the report and on asking where I was driving, being told in the USA, I was then asked what I was doing and that lead to three interviews about the fellowship trip and then we discussed the report.

John Laws asked a number of questions about the Churchill Trust and fellowships and it may be worth some one from your office following up with him, as he did not seem to know of it at all.

I did one hours talkback on the Truck Dog radio network show, a satellite truck radio program broadcast across the USA on dedicated radios, a podcast with Bruce Outridge, two with Stan from Trucker radio who I had spoken with some years ago about trucking here, a taped interview with Mary McKellar from Land Line for her show on the satellite network, a taped interview with Marcia Campbell of the WSM “All Nighter” show and another for a trucking video program.

Since my return, I have done another live interview with Luke Bona on Nightshift, was contacted again by ABC radio Orange and did an interview with them Tuesday morning 18th September specifically about the fellowship trip and what I learnt and not only my column in Owner Driver for
August while I was away, spoke of the trip, but I have also done stories about the Convoy in the Park truckshow as part of the trip published in the September edition and will have a story on GATS and the completion of the fellowship trip will be published in the October edition.

I have a radio interview booked with ABC South Coast for the 22nd October to discuss the trip.

In the “TRUCK That Australia” videos I have been doing with Whiteline Television, the trip was mentioned prior to leaving and the next three episodes will include some of the video footage from the trip. The October edition is out now and covers the English part of the trip and the USA/ Canada footage will make up the next two editions.