

TRUCK'N – the good, the bad... and the ugly



TruckSure
By Trevor Toohill

A few weeks back Mrs T and I were pretty excited because we had scored a couple of tickets to the Rod Stewart concert at The Mission Estate in Hawkes Bay. We headed south to our destination via Taupo.

Bit of a long haul from Auckland with the caravan in tow (I can already hear my trucking clients having a laugh at my expense). Yes I admit we are vanners!!! The pains in the backside for most line haul drivers in a hurry going somewhere and yeah I know Auckland-Napier is no big deal for you guys.

Didn't always like vanning but last year someone wanted to swap their van for a car I just happened to have spare and the rest is history.

Anyway this trip was a bit of business and a bit of pleasure because we took the opportunity to visit a few clients and make a couple of new contacts on the way. It worked out really well.

But what I really wanted to write about this month are a couple of observations we made on the road this time around.

The Good

As an Aucklander (well Wanganui-ite really) I cop a fair amount of flak – you know, of the Jaffa variety, about life north of the Bombay Hills. I don't need convincing that life exists south of the line as our client base is well spread throughout the country – but this trip was a bit of an eye opener.

Firstly, the trucking activity down through the State Highways and in particular Central NI and the Bays – Hawkes Bay and the Bay of Plenty.

The number of rigs on the road this trip was decidedly and noticeably more. The roads were buzzing with B-trains and bath-tubs, containers and curtainsiders, reefers and rigids, loggers and... So much activity – the port was humming, big evidence everywhere of logging, contracting, earthmoving and agriculture.

No doubt in my mind where the current growth is focused – and it's not Auckland!!

Secondly, the pride of the operators in presenting their trucks and various rigs.

There were some pretty amazing units working the area.

Looking at the vehicle registration stats each month and following new purchases in the various trucking magazines and it is not hard to see where the trucks are ending up. There is real meaningful growth and activity in rural NZ.

The Bad

I am not normally into naming and shaming but I witnessed the worst case of dangerous driving that I have experienced EVER!

Generally the traffic and, in particular, professional truck and coach driving was exceptionally good this trip.

Each month I write about safety, speed, maintenance, technology, etc, but it is a real eye-opener to see a couple of bad experiences play out in front of you.

When are the few idiots going to realise that speed kills, PERIOD! The few giving all the rest a bad name.

We were on the road about 4pm, heading east on SH5 along the Kaingaroa Plains. Good steady traffic and easy travelling for us at 90kph with the van in tow. Plenty of good straights and room to pass – no need to pull over. Nowhere much to go anyway because we were about 10th in a line of traffic, following a truck sitting on the limit. Everyone was fairly relaxed and just moving along – me, last in line, when I noticed out of nowhere a furniture truck towing a 20 foot container trailer sitting right on the back of the van. I mean I could feel this guy's breath on the back of my neck. I am still pulling 90 and solid traffic in front.

A couple of ks down the road and it is obvious this guy was going to do something pretty stupid – he is on my tail and pulling out wide every opportunity he gets. I am just about to slacken off and get him off my back when there he is right beside my door and heading back into my lane – you know shades of the movie 'Duel'. I hit the brakes as he cuts in – the caravan is having a hernia in the slipstream of the passing truck doing at least 120 and for a while I thought I was in the local rodeo – still don't know how I pulled up straight.

But it doesn't end there, this idiot then proceeds to pass all 10 cars and the front running truck over the next 5 to 10 ks.

No doubt in my mind he was exceeding 120 kph each time and as he proceeded to disappear into the mist.

Obviously trying desperately to beat the traffic into the Waipunga Valley. Conroys need to have a look at this driver real quick before he kills himself and anyone else in his space. Our comments among a few others "#*+**!", "he ain't going to make it home tonight" and "who is he going to take with him?"

The Ugly

Only last month I gave a graphic description of a tractor losing its trailers when the wheels travelled the soft road shoulder...

Well we didn't have long to travel before we encountered emergency police, ambulance and fire attending a truck and trailer on their sides hanging off the side of the road down the side of a cutting to the river. It had probably happened in the last 30 minutes – both units totally written off by the looks to me. Cab still in one piece so hopefully the driver was ok.

No, it wasn't the Conroy truck and driver but I sure hope he got a wake-up call as he passed on by.

Marks on the road and shoulders indicate speed into the corner – lost control left, crossed the centreline and flipped on the right side while attempted to pull up straight.

Well there it is, The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.

I have to say coming home was a breeze and uneventful.

Oh, and the Rod Stewart concert was the best concert EVER!

I am a very positive person and like to focus on the good, but every day I have claims experiences presented to me which just keep me wondering if the Bad and the Ugly have too much horse power. 🐎



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'You sit behind the wheel – we stand behind the truck'