

Local

What it's like to be a ... Long-haul trucker

With college students choosing majors and high school students deciding between college or the workforce, this series will highlight one career path each week in August and September.

This week, we introduce you to **April Bronson** of Ironside, a rare female long-haul trucker and "cattle relocation specialist."

BY **KERRY McQUISTEN**
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The BCP: April, what would you say your exact title is?

April: Cattle relocation specialist! Technically, it's truck driver. Long-haul. It's different from the drivers who come home every night.

The BCP: How long would you say you've been driving? What's your background?

April: Oh my gosh. I've always been driving in some way or another—over 20 years. It's almost a family tradition. My folks have always driven. My brother drives, my nephew drives ... I used to haul fish for ODF. I have hauled a lot of things. To name just a few—agricultural commodities, live fish, produce, emergency supplies for FEMA, heavy equipment—and my favorite is livestock.

The BCP: What does it take to start driving? Do you have your own rig, or do you work for someone?

April: I've sold off all my own equipment. Now I work for Tor-S Ranch Trucking. They have locations in Roseburg, Izee, Fields—several places. So I drive their truck.

There are a lot more women drivers on the roads these days. Driving truck has always been a part of my life and a way to make good money. I started out as an employee then later on I bought my own truck and I was an Owner/Operator for 10 years.

In January, due to emission standards I chose to sell my truck and I once again become a company driver.



Submitted Photo.

April Bronson and Chico, her 15 year-old Jack Russell, heading toward his two-million-mile mark.

The BCP: What sorts of special skills do you need?

April: You have to have a good driving record first. People don't realize that whatever you do in your own car will count against your CDL. Possess a Commercial Drivers License (CDL). You must pass a written test on rules and do a driving test showing you can operate safely. You must be 21 years-old, pass a physical every two years. No felony vehicle crimes, drug crimes or DUIs resulting in deaths.

You also have to have a lot of patience and the ability to live in a 4'x6' box.

The BCP: Can you tell us a little about the best or worst parts of your job? The most interesting?

April: Driving truck (long-haul) is a great way to see the country and get paid to do it! I have seen a lot of country from behind the steering wheel of a truck. All the lower 48 states to be exact. My favorite states for scenery are Kentucky and Virginia. And there are several states that I never want to drive in again.

The BCP: Do you have any advice for someone who might want to become a trucker?

April: It is a lifestyle and you have to get used to being away from home. I've had couples ask

advice about trucking together. I always tell them to lock themselves together in their bathroom for a week. If they can survive and get along in that space, then they might be okay trucking together!

I also have some issues with truck driving schools. So if you're 18 or 19 and go through a truck driving school, insurance still won't cover you and you won't get hired after you graduate. So people should be aware of that. The companies can't get the insurance.

If you go through a driving school it helps to be one within one of the companies that you can then keep driving for. But, you have to put in so much time for that company afterward or you pay back the training expenses.

There are a lot of regulations for driving truck. The Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration sets the rules that you have to abide by. For instance, You can work a 14-hour day and be behind the wheel 11 of those hours. Then you are required to take 10 hours off with eight of those hours in the sleeper berth.

The BCP: How many cattle fit in a load

April: Really, it's all about weight and weight distribution. It will depend on the size of the animal and the trailer. With a

standard 48' trailer we say about 40 cows.

Hauling livestock always provides a challenge! Yes, my trailer is one of those smelly ones going down the highway. But we say, it is the smell of money!

The BCP: Any adventures or challenges?

April: Driving truck is a year round job. In the wintertime it can become a real challenge.

Getting lost would be the other. I've used Google Earth to get around dirt roads at night—but I located the corrals!

The BCP: How many female drivers do you come across?

April: Lately I think I've seen ... one—about two months ago. Tor-S had another female driver before me though. Most people are surprised at first, but then they come up and we yack for a while. We'll stand around and talk, so it's funny. It's good. It's definitely male-dominated, but women can do it. If you want to do it, go for it.

The BCP: Any parting thoughts?

April: I love livestock and I love the people who produce and haul livestock. Like I said, it's a lifestyle, but if you want to do it, do it! The transportation industry is vital. Remember, if you got it, a truck brought it!

This week in photos ...



Wendee Morrissey / The Baker County Press

Burnt River's booth at the Fair this year was decorated in green and displayed the 4-H motto, "To make the best better."



Wendee Morrissey / The Baker County Press

Visitors and contestants stopped by the Baker County Fair to check out some of the entries this year.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

In what was arguably the highlight of the evening, kids gathered to watch as Baker City Police Chief Wyn Lohner made a splash in the dunk tank at the Community Night Out on Tuesday. Proceeds benefitted the Baker Mat Club.

Community invited to talk about death and dying

The October 17 2015 event is part of Oregon Humanities' statewide Talking about Dying initiative, created in partnership with Cambia Health Foundation.

The program will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Riverside Meeting Room of the Baker County Public Library in Baker City. It is free of charge. Pre-registration is not required.

Death is part of the human experience; all of us have experienced loss, and all of us will die one day. Yet conversations about death and dying are difficult and often avoided even with our closest family members and friends. Talking about Dying is a one-time, ninety-minute

community discussion that provides Oregonians with an opportunity to reflect on what stories and influences shape their thinking about death and dying and to hear different perspectives and ideas from fellow community members.

Participants will explore essential questions: What do we think about when we think of dying? As people we've known have moved closer to death, what seemed to work well for them and the people close to them? What seemed difficult? When we think about our own dying, what do we want most?

This discussion will be facilitated by Dr. Jennifer Sasser of Marylhurst University in Portland who

is a nationally recognized expert in the study of aging. She designed and established the Marylhurst gerontology program in 1998. She was president of the Oregon Gerontological Association from 2008 to 2010. Sasser was recognized with a distinguished faculty award in 2012 from the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. She co-authored the textbook Aging Concepts and Controversies, seventh edition.

Participants will come away from this conversation with a strengthened sense of community support and collective engagement around these questions, as well as a resource list with tools and informa-

tion to help them consider how to shape a meaningful approach to death and dying.

Talking about Dying is a statewide initiative by Oregon Humanities, created in partnership with Cambia Health Foundation, to bring thirty conversations about death and dying to communities across the state from September through November. These conversations will be facilitated by professionals working in the fields of chaplaincy, counseling, gerontology, facilitation, and hospice care.

For more information about this free community discussion, please contact Library Director Perry Stokes at 541-523-6419.



Kerry McQuisten / The Baker County Press

The traditional Shriners parade down Broadway to Main Street saw onlookers brave the nearly 100-degree heat to see the floats pass by.