

To the Ones Who Keep Us Moving

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A Love Letter to America's Truckers and Railroad Workers

I don't think most of us fully understand what you do.

I know I didn't.

Between 2021 and 2025, I took a number of long interstate road trips across parts of the country.

And somewhere along all those miles, I began noticing the trucks.

Not just passing them.

Noticing them.

Through rain.
Through darkness.
Through endless construction zones.
Across mountains and plains.

Always moving.

And I started noticing something else, too:

We don't always make your jobs very easy.

I watched drivers cut closely in front of trucks, squeeze into spaces that weren't really spaces, refuse to let trucks merge, and seem to forget that tens of thousands of pounds can't stop or maneuver like a passenger car.

I found myself becoming more conscious of giving you room.

Because there was a person behind that windshield trying to do a job—and trying to get home safely, too.



Sometimes, I Followed Your Lights

There were times on those trips when the road became difficult for me to see.

Heavy rain.

Dark stretches of interstate with little or no lighting.

Poorly marked lanes where I could barely tell where the road went next.

And sometimes, somewhere ahead of me, there would be a truck.

So I would settle in at a safe distance behind it and follow its taillights.

You helped me see where the road went.

You never knew it.

You were simply doing your job.

But there were nights when those red lights ahead of me were reassuring.

And there were other stretches in the middle of the night when the highway seemed almost completely empty.

Maybe it was just me...

and a truck somewhere ahead or behind.

Strangely, I felt safer knowing you were there.

Another human being awake.

Another set of headlights moving through the darkness.

Someone else out there on the road.

I doubt any of those drivers ever knew they were keeping a stranger company.

But you were.

And somewhere along those miles, America's truckers got my heart.



Then I Began Seeing Another Part of the Story

After the events of last summer, my own travels came to an unexpected stop.

Life landed me in Nebraska, and the journey eventually carried me onward.

And that's when I learned there was another part of how this country moves that I had never really stopped to understand.

The trains.

But before I get to that, a little side story from Nebraska...

One day, another woman and I decided to walk from the shelter we were staying at to a store that was quite a distance away.

We mapped it on our phones and were *pretty sure* we knew where we were going.

As it turned out, I had somehow paired up with someone even more directionally challenged than I am—a possibility I hadn't previously considered. 😊

And somehow we ended up walking a long stretch along the shoulder of I-80.

Because apparently that's what happens when you let me navigate. 😊

Hey, it was Nebraska. I was convinced the store was just up around the bend.

After we'd been walking along I-80 for a good half hour or more, with cars zooming past us, an incredibly long freight train appeared on the tracks running parallel to the interstate.

So naturally, the two grown women walking alongside I-80 did what any mature adults would do.

We gave the engineer **the arm-pump signal**.

You know the one.

HONK THE HORN!

And he did.

Three times.

We were ridiculously excited.

For a few seconds, we were little kids again—laughing and waving beside the highway while this enormous freight train rolled past us.

It was such a small moment.

But I remember it.

Eventually, we realized we were probably going the wrong way and headed back to the shelter.

Later, I discovered we'd been walking in completely the opposite direction.

Nearly two hours of walking to nowhere.

But hey, it was an adventure.

And we got a train engineer to blow his horn for us. 😊

That was just a fun moment.

As I spent more time in Nebraska and in other places where rail is part of everyday life, trains became increasingly visible in my world and I began noticing them differently.

Not just as something passing in the distance.

I began noticing the rail yards.

The seemingly endless freight cars.

The tracks woven through communities.

And, more importantly, I began meeting and talking with people who had actually worked within that world.

The more I listened, the more I realized:

I had been looking at trains my entire life without really seeing them.

I hadn't thought about everything they carried.

I hadn't thought about where it was going.

And I certainly hadn't thought about the enormous network of human beings it takes to keep all of it moving.

Unless you live in a railroad town—or know someone who works the rails—it can be easy never to think much about it.

I know I didn't.



This Country Doesn't Move by Itself

That may be the biggest thing I've learned.

This country doesn't move by itself.

People move it.

Someone drives the truck.

Someone operates the train.

Someone switches the cars.

Someone works the yard.

Someone maintains the tracks.

Someone inspects the equipment.

Someone dispatches the load.

Someone loads it.

Someone unloads it.

Someone repairs what breaks.

Someone works through the night while most of us are sleeping.

And somewhere hundreds—or thousands—of miles away, the rest of us simply expect what we need to arrive.

Food.

Fuel.

Medicine.

Building materials.

Machinery.

Packages.

The ordinary things that make ordinary life possible.

We rarely see the journey behind them.

But there are people behind every mile.

We Depend on You More Than We Realize

I wonder how many of us really understand what would happen if, one morning, you simply didn't show up.

If the trucks stopped rolling.

If the trains stopped moving.

If the yards went quiet.

If the people maintaining, coordinating, repairing, loading, hauling, switching, and delivering everything simply stayed home.

It wouldn't take long before the rest of us noticed.

And yet somehow, when everything *is* working, it becomes almost invisible.

That's the strange thing about the people who keep systems running:

When you do your jobs well, the rest of us can forget just how much we depend on you.

To the Truckers

I see you differently now.

The truck beside me on the interstate isn't simply an enormous vehicle occupying the lane next to me.

There's a human being in there.

Someone working.

Someone concentrating.

Someone navigating weather, traffic, construction, deadlines, and drivers who don't always give you the space you need.

Someone carrying something the rest of us are counting on.

And sometimes, without ever knowing it, **you've helped another traveler find her way through the dark.**

I haven't forgotten.

To the Railroad Workers

I'm newer to seeing you.

For much of my life, a train was simply something passing through.

Now I understand a little more.

Behind every locomotive and every seemingly endless line of freight cars is an entire network of people most of us will never see.

And after unexpectedly spending time in places where railroads are woven into the life of the community—and talking with people who have worked within that system—I find myself looking at trains completely differently.

Now when I see one stretching across the landscape, I think:

Look at everything moving.

And then:

Look at all the people it takes to make that happen.

So This Is Simply a Thank You

Not from an industry.

Not from a company.

And certainly not from someone who fully understands everything your jobs require.

Just from someone whose own journey gave her a chance to notice.

We call your work essential when something goes wrong.

Maybe we should remember that you're essential when everything is going right, too.

Because you keep showing up.

You keep carrying the load.

You keep crossing the miles.

You keep us moving, even when we forget to notice who's doing the moving.

And to those truckers whose taillights I followed through rain, darkness, badly marked roads,
and some very lonely stretches of interstate—

you probably never knew I was back there.

But I remember.

I notice now.

And I'm grateful.

Thank you.

With love and appreciation,

Brenda

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Continue the journey:

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