



**The Channel One-Nine Special
Channel One-Nine #1
Air Date: February 27, 2020**

Todd Dills [00:00:00] Hey there, and welcome to the Channel One-Nine Special– I’m Todd Dills. In case you’re just joining us, or wondering where Paul is, and who I am, here’s the deal: I’m an editor at Overdrive Magazine, meaning I spend most of my time writing about trucking *for* truckers. But for this podcast, I’ll be hosting this series of mini-episodes where we help answer *your* questions about trucking. And if you’re hearing this and you *are* a trucker, then keep tuned, but bear with me– we’ll be hitting some real basics to start. [Theme begins, an upbeat acoustic guitar picking tune]

For this first Channel-One Nine, we’re going to talk about *handles*. [Staticky chatter over radio transmitter] CB handles.

Trucker 1: [00:00:41] [Continuous plucky rhythm on guitar begins] That’s the only one I’ve ever really had was freq and in frequency. That’s because I’m the go-to radio guy at our company. I fix everybody’s CB. [Staticky message over radio transmitter]

Trucker 2: [00:00:53] Well, started out years ago, I hauled concrete on a flatbed. And one of my buddies said, “Hey, this is Concrete Cowboy” and it stuck with me.

Todd: In the late 1950s, the Federal Communications Commission started requiring licenses for anyone wanting to use a CB– that’s a citizens band radio. [Staticky chatter over radio transmitter] It was easy enough to get a license, but CBs got so common that many truckers just didn’t bother with it. To evade the FCC, truckers and others without licenses came up with fictitious names for themselves.

Trucker 3: [00:01:24] [Over CB] Ah they call me “Shadow.” I’m not gonna get into the story of how I got that name but...

Todd: Even though the FCC stopped requiring CB licenses in the early 80s, the tradition of handles has stuck around. They can be jokes...

Trucker 4: [00:01:37] [Over CB] They nicknamed me “Little Mama” because I used to weigh 110 pounds soakin’ wet.

Todd: Exercises in wish fulfillment...

Trucker 5: [00:01:43] But I’ve gone by “Two Speed” because it’s like slow and slower.

Todd: Yes, appropriated insults, too...

Debbie “Dingo” Desiderato: [00:01:49] If you google the words “Wild Australian bitch” it comes back “dingo.” [All laugh]

Todd: Sort of.

Debbie: Yeah, that’s my handle. [All laugh]

Mike Crawford: [00:01:59] Ghostwriter, how the heck are you?

Todd: But Mike Crawford here might be the first trucker who told me that a CB handle meant to last is rarely something you give yourself.

Mike: We gave him the handle “Beer Tab” because when he was sittin’ there drinkin’ beer, that’s how he kept count of how many he’d had was he’d save the little tabs.

Todd: A legit handle is like a nickname that takes.

Mike: The reason is he looks like Curly from the Three Stooges and he can sound and act just like him.

Todd: In fact, Crawford gave me my own handle.

Mike: You’re like a ghost. I’m somewhere and all of a sudden, you show up. And with you being everywhere and with you being able to write about everything, he needs a “Ghostwriter”

Todd: That’s w - r - i - t - e - r.

Mike: “Ghostwriter.” Yeah that’s a good one. [Noisy chatter over CB and plucky rhythm on guitar fades out]

Todd: But how Mike Crawford became the “Mustang” is a more interesting story.

Mike: Working on a ranch out in Colorado for \$100 a week...

Todd: He'd come off the road in the 1980s to try his hand as a cowboy out in Colorado.

Mike: It was a wild mustang from out in Nevada or somewhere.

Todd: There, he would come to know a wild horse

Mike: I named this horse “Norman.”

Todd: Norman.

Mike: He was very friendly and he was very playful. He would come up behind ya and he'd take his nose and knock your hat off. He was like a puppy dog.

Todd: Mike took on the project of breaking Norman to a rider.

Mike: And uh, I can ride most anything. [Low tones begin, growing louder with anticipation] Well...

Todd: It didn't always go well.

Mike: Well. I climbed up in the saddle. [Tones intensify] I squeezed my legs together which was a command to get him to, you know, go forward. Uh, he didn't walk forward. He went straight up. You ever try to get a saddle out from between your legs when you're eight foot in the air and there's no horse under you? [Tones intensify and then fade out] I hit hard. Me, the saddle still between my legs. And I'm lying there “ugh” tryna breathe. Norman comes over and I swear to god this is tru– there were some other people around who would verify it. Norman come over, bent down, looked at me like, “Are you alright?” and licked my face, like a damn dog would. Anyhow, everybody kept callin' me “Mustang,” man.

Todd: And like any good handle, the name stuck. [Continuous plucky guitar picks up again]

Todd: Mustang's long career in trucking saw both the glory days, and the long decline, of the CB. [Indistinct staticky chatter over CB] Truckers today call it the quote, “original social media” for its heyday in the 1970s, when impromptu highway meet-and-greets were a something of a norm for drivers– CB coffee breaks, some called them.

Mike: You got to know guys after– you be drivin' down the road, you see a truck comin' on and holler over. “Hey, Beer Tab is that you or Monkey Child, is that you?”

Todd: When friendships were forged over the airwaves.

Mike: We'd go along just BS-ing the whole way. It was a social thing.

Todd: Those things still happen, but the steady rise of the cellphone did a number on CB culture among truckers...

Mike: Everybody is on the phone.

Todd: ...and everybody else.

Mike: The cell phone, it became the downfall for a lot of things...

Todd: One good thing. It makes it fairly simple to collect questions for a podcast. If you've got a question about trucking, dial: 765-245-4844 to ask the pros. Be sure to state your name and your location within your message. [Indistinct chatter from Mike over CB] [Theme music comes back in]

The Channel One-Nine Special is a feature of Over the Road from Radiotopia and Overdrive Magazine. It's produced by Ian Coss and myself, Todd Dills with support from Lacy Roberts, Paul Marhoefer, and Julia Shapiro. Thanks to the truckers who's voices you heard at the top: Steve Comishack, Jason Earlywine, and Walkabout Transport owner-operator Debbie "Dingo" Desiderato. Don't believe her, go 'head google it. Paul will be back with you next week all the way from Grand Island, Nebraska. Until then, Ghostwriter's over and out.

[Trucker over CB: "Okey dokey, toodle-loo. We'll catch you on there on the trail. Keep the bugs off your glass and the bears off your tail, right?"] [Theme music continues and fades out]

[00:06:26] **END OF EPISODE.**