



**The Channel One-Nine Special
Channel One-Nine #2
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Todd Dills [00:00:00] Hey everybody, Todd Dills with Overdrive magazine, back with another Channel One-Nine Special, where we put your trucking questions to the professionals. As of this week the phone-lines are open, and the questions are rolling in.

Caller 1: [00:00:12] [Voicemail beep, speaking over the phone] Hey there, I'm calling from Medford, Massachusetts with a question about roads. I'm figuring that long haul truckers see just about every stretch of highway in the country. So I'm wondering, yeah, what's the best stretch of road out there? Thanks. Let me know.

Todd: Now there's a classic question— something every trucker has an opinion on.

[“Heartbeat” by Mandi Jo Pinheiro begins] [Montage of truckers sharing their favorite roads over radio transmitter]

Todd: One owner-operator we know named Mandi Jo Pinheiro, even wrote a song on the subject.

[“Heartbeat” by Mandi Jo Pinheiro continues]

Todd: So we tossed this question out this time to a relative new-comer for a fresh take on the matter.

Fred Claxton: [00:00:58] My name is Fredrick Claxton, everyone back home calls me “Choice.”

Todd: Choice has been loading a flatbed for three years.

Fred: I always say you gotta like it or love it or you're not flatbedding, cause just to be doing it is torture.

Todd: And when I asked about his favorite stretch of road, he actually gave me two answers. But before we get to those, it might help to know a little more about the man. [Percussive music begins] First off, he's a big-town guy.

Fred: Born and raised in New York.

Todd: That has definitely shaped the way he drives and *where* he likes to drive as well. The perfect road has to have character, but it's also got to be something of a challenge. [Percussive music intensifies]

Fred: I was never a speed demon growing up. But I am what a New Yorker would call an aggressive driver: I love to maneuver.

Todd: New York is also where he picked up his nickname.

Fred: I was sitting at a table with friends one time, and one of 'em told me I was the master of my own choices.

Todd: And the phrase stuck with him.

Fred: I just decided to start writing "Choice Master" in graffiti and it's also a pen name 'cause I like to write. [Percussive music continues with addition of guitar]

Todd: Decades later, after a career with a major clothing brand brought him all the way out to the west coast, Choice decided to take a motorcycle ride across the country.

Fred: from LA to New York, on a street bike [Laughs]

Todd: And it changed his life.

Fred: Everybody calls me crazy, but it was the first time I had seen anything in between the east coast and the west coast. And I thought what could be better than traveling in a truck. I get to listen to my music, see the US and get paid to do it. [Music fades out]

Fred: My mother was really excited about me trucking, and I remember the first time she asked me what is the most beautiful state, and when I said Utah, she was like, "really? Utah?"

Todd: Here is his first favorite road: Interstate 15, from Las Vegas to Salt Lake City.

Fred: Keeps me on my toes, cause there's a lot of inclines, declines, lot of twists and turns, but for the most part it's just two lanes.

Todd: So it's a challenge for sure, working the gears and engine brake to control downhill speed...

Fred: It's not like a car, I can't just ride my brake all the way down a hill. It'll smoke, and then I'll lose my brakes, and next think you know I'm gonna get off a cliff.

Todd: But at the same time...

Fred: It's just beautiful. [Gentle, bluesy guitar music begins] I'm in awe every time I drive through it.

Todd: There's one chunk in particular, where I-15 crosses the Moapa valley, and then roughly traces the route of the Virgin river.

Fred: Those canyons, are just like unfinished art. What I always think about, is there used to be water flowing through those canyons— nice beautiful water, and I can imagine when the native Indians were running it, what it would be like to be a child and play out in these canyons. That's what I think about when I drive through there.

Todd: Okay, that's favorite road number one. For number two, he went with something a little different.

Fred: You can call me crazy, but I like 95, man.

Todd: Yeah, that would be perhaps the most heavily trafficked north-south route in the nation, I-95, particularly the northern part of it that cuts right through New York City.

Fred: [Todd and Fred laugh] I know every trucker that hears this is gonna be like, this dude is off his rocker. But I like to drive something that has character. I really don't use cruise control a lot, first of all, I like to use the pedal. [Harmonica comes in trilling accompanied by percussion] There's traffic but when it's moving, I like it.

Todd: And that feeling doesn't end at the off-ramp either.

Fred: I love driving through New York City, I'll take those loads all day. And I don't mean, a lot of people will say, 'I just drove across the George Washington Bridge, I drove New York City.' No you did not drive NYC. You bring that, you deliver on Central Park West where trucks don't even belong, You're taking lanes 'cause box trucks, so you got to go in the oncoming lane. I love it. I love it.

["Heartbeat" comes back in]

Todd: Please keep those questions coming, and we'll keep working on answers. Give us a call at 765-245-4844, and leave us a message.

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 Julie Shapiro. Thanks to the truckers whose voices you heard at the top: Brad James, Phyllis Snow, Lesandra Gatson, and Jackie Wallace; plus a few we know only by their handles: D-Mat, Little Mama and the Texican. Special thanks of course to Twin Falls, Idaho-based owner-operator Mandi Jo Pinheiro for her "Heartbeat" song. You can find her music on YouTube, Spotify, and most other places, under Mandi Jo Pinheiro. That's M-A-N-D-I J-O P-I-N-H-E-I-R-O. Or search her name at OverdriveOnline.com. Find more about Fredrick Claxton's "Truckers Feeding the Homeless" effort via TruckersFeedingtheHomeless.com. Paul will be back with you next week, with a deep dive into the history of trucking. 'Til then, Ghostwriter's over and out. [Percussive music fades out]

[00:06:54] END OF EPISODE.