



**The Channel One-Nine Special
Channel One-Nine #4
Air Date: April 9, 2020**

Todd Dills [00:00:00] It's Todd Dills from Overdrive Magazine, back with another Channel One-Nine Special. [montage of names of several truck makes and models] [theme music begins]

Part of a driver's job is to know their own equipment, inside and out. [montage of various specs and mileage]

So today we'll be taking questions about engines, gears, brakes, lights and all else you might want to know about the truck itself.

Ingrid: [00:00:36] Over the years I've been known to mostly ride and drive in a Peterbilt.

Todd: Our guide today is Ingrid Brown...

Ingrid: He-lllo!

Todd: ...hailing from the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

Ingrid: ...right on the Tennessee North Carolina line. I have been a driver, and an owner-operator and now a company driver for forty plus years.

Todd: OK, let's get into it. [music fades out]

Elizabeth: [00:01:02] [voicemail beep] [over the phone] Hi, this is Elizabeth from San Antonio, Texas. I have a lot of questions about trucking. The first, I guess, is how many gears you have. I drive a manual transmission myself and I remember when I learned that someone told me that trucks have like 18 gears and I want to know if that's true. Bye!

Todd: Ingrid?

Ingrid: Yes, it is true. I have 18 gears. It's called an 18 speed and you have a low range and a high range.

Todd: So picture a typical manual shifter in a car, but three times as long with almost twice as many gear positions. Then on top of that, you've got a selector switch called a splitter that allows you to move between the low range and high range.

Ingrid: And the low range is when you're taking off, when you're pulling something heavy, to start off or up a hill or anything. And then as you pick up speed, then it goes into the top – the high range.

Todd: Kind of like how a classic 10-speed bicycle has its five main gears in the rear and a front shifter, too.

Ingrid: You know it just splits your gears.

Todd: Should add, that not all trucks have so many speeds. You also have your nines, tens...

Ingrid: ...thirteens, and fifteens, and eighteens.

Todd: All depends on the needs and desires of the truck's owner, ultimately – the higher the number of speeds, the more versatility you have in how you haul, what you haul, and where you haul it.

Landon: [00:02:24] [voicemail beep] [over the phone] Good evening. My name is Landon Williams. I'm out in Milford, Pennsylvania.

Todd: The next question is related, but a little more complicated.

Landon: [over the phone] And sometimes when we go up hills, the truck drivers will typically slow down to speed so low that I'm not really sure what's going on there. I'm not sure if that's the transmission saver or what's going on there. Thank you.

Ingrid: Well one of the reasons we slow down is because we have such heavy weight. Gravity's gonna pull you backwards and slow you down. And that transmission starts dropping gears so

that it hits right horsepower to get the truck and the trailer up the hill. So, you'll see they'll turn their flashers on, so that you're protected and you understand why I'm slowing down.

Todd: Okay, one more about speed.

Hally: [00:03:09] [voicemail beep] [over the phone] Hi there! This is Hally from Indiana and I was curious why trucks will drive at the exact same speed and not let cars pass. So I was curious as to why truckers did that. Thanks.

Ingrid: Well first off, trucks are governed. Not all but, but a lot of trucks and large company trucks are governed.

Todd: Meaning the top speed is actually limited by the truck's computer.

Ingrid: They can't go over 62, 65, 67, 68. Well you may have a truck that's one or two miles above the next truck. But they hit a hill, one truck slows down because of the weight, and the other truck goes around to pass him because now he's four or five mile per hour faster. They get clear of the hill, and they're back down to one or two mile an hour. So now they're side by side, trying to get past the one that's holding him down on the hill.

Todd: So basically, be patient. [soft, acoustic guitar music begins]

Ingrid: That's it, it's about the patience of everything with us. We definitely are not out here tryna get in anyone's way. We're trying to get out of your way more than anything.

Todd: [over the phone] Yup. Okay, next one...

Ingrid: Todd, hold that thought [Todd affirms]. Hold that thought for just a second, I just have to show this receipt, it won't take one second...

Todd: See what I mean about patience?

Ingrid: 37-36! Sorry, paid parking. [music fades out]

Blake: [00:04:43] [voicemail beep] [over the phone] Hi, my name is Blake from Delray Beach, Florida. I often have to drive from Delray to Tampa, at night and I always wondered why the trucks have so many lights on them like does it indicate anything or is it just kind of like a way to indicate your own personal style? Thanks. Bye.

Ingrid: Hah! Well that's something that's been a personal preference, and in the air forever. We like to add lights.

Todd: We're talking about those little amber bulbs that some of us call "chicken lights."

Ingrid: It also lights up around our truck at night. You can see a shadow of a car in your lights, that reflect off the ground. You know it starts snowing, same exact thing. The more lights, the more visible. The more visible, the more you're able and you're out of harm's way for us to maneuver.

Todd: [voicemail beep] Okay, moving on.

Trip: [00:05:34] [over the phone] Hi, my name is Trip. I live in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Todd: I love this next one.

Trip: Every now and again I'll hear a tractor trailer and it'll just sort of roar, and I think it's called engine braking, but I don't really know what it is. So what is that kind of loud farting sound? Thanks.

Ingrid: [laughs] Oh, in the trucking world we call that a *Jake Brake*, like, J-A-K-E. And it is known as an engine brake. What it does is it literally uses the pressure through the motor, and it slows the engine down, and it's actually an extra braking mechanism for tractors and trailers. [sound of truck driving down the road, engine roaring]

Todd: The bursts of compressed gas it releases from the cylinders can be very loud on some trucks. [sound loud bursts from the truck engine] That's the 'farting sound' Trip was talking about.

Ingrid: Well that roaring sound, we kind of think it sounds pretty neat – that's part of the diesel in your blood deal I think. And again, it is also a fantastic warning sign for people.

Todd: So if you hear that sound, focus close on the road ahead, because a rig with better visibility than you is puttin' on the brakes. [sound of truck zooming by, fades out]

Glenn: [00:6:54] [voicemail beep] [over the phone] Hi, my name is Glenn. I live in the Catskill Mountains of New York.

Todd: OK Ingrid, last question for you here.

Glenn: I've wondered why truckers never turn off their trucks. I mean, I get it in the wintertime, keep the heat on. But otherwise, I am baffled.

Ingrid: Well I am a guilty party of not turning Miss Faith off.

Todd: Miss Faith would be the name of Ingrid's last Peterbilt.

Ingrid: You know, trucks, one thing especially in the winter. Their fuel can gel in the tanks. Once that fuel gels up, you're not gonna get it cranked up, cause it's just like jelly. For summer, well there you go again. Air conditioning's a must in a whole lot of the country through the summer months.

Todd: Often enough though, the idling sound you hear at a truck stop may not be the primary engine at all, but a much smaller engine – a generator basically – just big enough to provide heat, A/C and electricity.

Ingrid: Now in this truck, I have what's called an Espar heater.

Todd: Ingrid's got an even smaller unit, just for heat.

Ingrid: It's a little motor that runs off of the battery and pulls fuel out of the tank, but it's quiet, and it just blows warm air through.

Todd: Truth is, plenty drivers *want* to avoid idling, and they're finding ways to do it, some without burning fuel at all. [theme comes in] On your next road trip, keep an eye out for trucks with solar panels on the roof – they're out there.

Todd: Thanks for all the questions and answers we received for this one, and a special shout to Ingrid for talking us through it all.

[over the phone, to Ingrid] Stay safe out there and...

Ingrid: Thank you. Talk to you later, bye Todd.

Todd: 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 for the feedback we got for this episode from the drivers whose voices you heard at the top: Taylor Barker, Cody Blankenship, Mike "Mustang" Crawford, and Jason Miller. [theme music continues]

[00:09:23] **END OF EPISODE.**