



Episode 4: Three Stops in Kentucky Air Date: April 2, 2020

[00:00:00] [harmonica comes in, mimicking sound of truck passing on highway]

Karen Bray: [00:00:08] Back probably ten or eleven years ago, we did a survey on the trucks that go up and down this road. [harmonica thrilling] So we know now that we're doing at least ten to twelve thousand trucks a day. [harmonica thrilling] So we advertise [theme music begins] to let all that people out here know we're here.

[over CB] *You take a right, we're west of the interstate. You'll see a bunch of trucks here.*

We advertise our fuel price, our food specials.

[over CB] *Oh honey, we've got a full menu and everything is good here.*

If you just want to take a break you know stop in and see us.

Trucker 1: [00:00:47] [over CB] *Oh man, lord have mercy.* [music continues]

"Long Haul" Paul Marhoefer: [00:00:54] I was one of those new people once, hauling down I-75 through Kentucky for the first time. [sound of truck passing by] This was the late '80s, and it is difficult to understate the hunger for the human voice among your average truck driver back then. I mean, you had your CB Radio, [static over CB] whatever AM/FM stations you could pick up, maybe a few verbal jabs from the forklift driver 300 miles back, and that was about it. [static over CB continues] The waitstaff at these Kentucky truck stops understood that hunger all too well.

Karen: [over CB] *Free coffee... [inaudible]... Cigarettes start as low as \$29.99 a carton and up.*

Paul: They were like the sirens of the CB.

Karen: [over CB] *Tomorrow's special is a country ham steak with two sides and a roll of cornbread for eight dollars.*

Paul: There was something about the way they called you "honey," that just drew the yankee boys in like flies.

Karen: [over CB] *Honey they're good, I promise.*

Paul: Not to mention, that *one special* that's always on the menu.

Karen: [over CB] *And drivers don't forget, we offer that homemade nanner nanner pudding.*

Paul: The nanner nanner pudding.

Karen: [over CB] *Yum yum yum, come and get you some*

Paul: It's like a refrain at these places, all along this stretch of I-75.

[montage of several voices speaking over CB] *nanner nanner nanner pudding... [inaudible]... yum yum, come and get you some...*

Paul: So today on the show we're going to settle once and for all, the question of who started this whole nanner nanner pudding thing.

Karen: [over CB] *Mmmhmm, it's at the 76*

Paul: I'm taking you on a tour of my favorite Kentucky truck stops. [Chattering over CB] I'm talking about those little mom & pop operations that are still holding out against the big chains – the kind of places that used to have phones at each table, and might not even have gas pumps, just diesel. We're gonna hit up three of these stops, working our way south from exit 76, to exit 62, and finally exit 49.

So sit tight. I'm Long Haul Paul, and from PRX's Radiotopia and Overdrive magazine, this is Over the Road. [theme music fades out]

Paul: These days, the mom and pop truck stop is a dying breed. Part of the problem is that company drivers like me are actually instructed to fuel up only at one of the big chain stops – like Pilot and Loves – that's because the more fuel our company buys, the more of a discount we get. That puts these independent establishments at a real disadvantage. But even if I can't fuel here anymore, I still like to wheel in when I can. [Paul says, "alright" with a sigh, parks and gets out of truck]

These truck stops remind me of my better days as a trucker. Back when I was still sporting that mullet and a tan. [*Smoky Mountain Rain* playing on radio in the background]

They remind me of when I owned that canary yellow Western Star, and diesel was 79 cents a gallon. Maybe, it's like seeing an old relative who can bear witness to what you once were, before life had its way with you.

Karen: It's so good to see you, and after I saw you, I said: Oh, I know him!

Paul: That's how it is with Karen Bray, manager of the 76 Fuel Center.

Karen: I might forget your name, but probably not your face once I see you, so.

Paul: [soft, acoustic guitar music begins] In one of those little accidents of history, the truck stop was originally built in 1976, right here at exit 76.

Karen: That was just the name it got because of the exit here.

Paul: But it's changed a lot since then – the kind of place that just keeps growing under the pressure of pure necessity, with no central planning whatsoever.

Karen: Back many years ago, this little area that we're sitting here in was a truck wash and then part of it was the garage.

Paul: When the owners decided to add on a restaurant, they used what materials they had.

Karen: This dining room here is actually a trailer from a truck.

Paul: Namely, the wooden floor and fiberglass sides of an old semi-trailer.

Karen: And it was just cut out and pulled in and attached to the old truck stop – there part there – the restaurant was made on to that and that's what you see in there now.

Paul: My old friend Big Jim calls it the dry box cafe. The walls are still lined with e-tracks: those metal strips that we use to secure cargo inside of a trailer. The floors are a hodge-podge of hardwood, linoleum and painted plywood. There is a certain bombed out beauty to it all – repurposed long before repurposing was cool. [Guitar music fades out]

Paul: [to Karen] You know, we've been talking about the whole nanner pudding thing, and you know, the arguments, who had the first nanner pudding; do you want to weigh in on that, Karen?

Karen: Well I'm going to be honest with you, I actually think we did.

Paul: [as narrator] And here it is, the opening salvo.

Karen: Miss Jane Cummins built this truck stop in 1976 and that was one of Miss Jane's famous things, is the nanner nanner nanner pudding and that's all I've known; I've been doing this 30 years and as long as I ever knew, Miss Jane Cummins was the original lady that started that right here at this little truck stop.

Paul: Well, there you have it.

Karen: The nanner nanner nanner pudding, you know. [Paul laughs in the background] And I honestly do believe we were the first. [sound of griddle sizzling]

Paul: So with our first testimonial in hand, my wife Denise and I decide to sit down for breakfast. I just can't resist that pan-fried Kentucky cornbread. [voices chattering and ambient sounds of people eating in restaurant] It's a special treat to eat like this out on the road. That's because at

a lot of the big truck stops, there's nothing but fast food chains, really. And as often happens at a mom and pop like this, we find ourselves talking with the driver at the next table.

Cathy Simmons: [00:7:34] I am Cathy Simmons and I have been trucking for 34 years. And the mom and pops as we call them – no brand names, no chains, no nothing and everything – are falling by the wayside. And I would rather sit down, be able to take my time than to go ahead and have fast food which is what is pushed down my throat *all the time*.

Paul: Cathy actually sees a connection here with the issue of electronic logging and hours of service, which we've been talking about since the start of the series.

Cathy: You're screwed, pardon my French.

Paul: The constant ticking of the 14-hour clock can make it feel like a waste of time to stop for a meal.

Cathy: You know, we have obesity in trucking, we've always had obesity but not like what we do now. And part of that is because we're not able to stop, we're not able to go ahead and actually kinda get out and just take our time because 14-hour clock, once that sucker starts there's no stopping it.

Paul: Cathy has an interesting perspective on all this, because she's actually been around truck stops since she was a kid.

Cathy: I can remember my mom. She used to work at a truck stop as a waitress and she had her regulars that came in *all the time*, all the time.

Paul: And eventually, she became one of those regulars. [simple percussive beat begins] Like any long-time trucker, she's got her favorite stops...

Cathy: [listing quickly] Marlin Truckstop. Casey Jones Village. The Ranch House. Dixie Truckstop. Boise Stage Stop.

Paul: ...in every corner of the country.

Cathy: Merkel, Texas. Tonopah, Arizona. Ontario, Oregon. Sinclair, Wyoming. Going across I-80 in Nebraska. Rapid City, South Dakota.

Paul: She knows where the food is best.

Cathy: Best country fried steak there was... best Mexican burrito there was for pulled pork... the best chicken noodle soup.

Paul: Where the portions are biggest.

Cathy: Steak was a good six to eight inches on the plate. Their pancakes are the size of a twelve-inch plate, half inch thick, an inch and half thick pork chop. [beat music fades into slow, twangy guitar]

Paul: But she also knows that these places are about more than just food and diesel.

Cathy: Go 'head and get the corner booth, or go and push a couple of tables together – ten, twelve of us at a time. Bullshitting, and pardon the French again, but that's basically what it is. And that's what was the best about the mom and pops and everything, is because you could do that and they didn't care. [twangy guitar continues]

Paul: I wonder if that's why Cathy keeps coming back to these places, because like me, they remind her of better days.

Cathy: Do we have the camaraderie that we used to have? No.

Paul: And she tells me this story.

Cathy: We were running, second husband coming back across 54 one night almost into Clovis, New Mexico.

Paul: She and her husband Jerry were hauling in a convoy with a couple of reefers, when the lead truck hit a cow and went off the road.

Cathy: He had to go to the hospital; his truck was still drivable. I drove our truck; Jerry drove his truck to the truck stop there in Clovis. We took his keys into the truck stop, told them where he was at, and they ask is it reefer or dry? Reefer. Is this is the tank full? Yes it is. We'll keep an eye out on it we'll check on it. That's what we did. That's what you do. [slow, soft guitar music begins] You know it's a loaner job in a way but also too, you can meet people out here on the road. You can talk to them. You may never see him again and then again five, ten years down the road you may run into him again at a truck stop. You may not remember the name but you'll remember the face and you'll go, "You know hey how you doing?" "You know, you know, you know." We're a family.

Paul: [to Cathy] Yeah, that doesn't usually happen at a Subway.

Cathy: No. No, it does not. So yeah. But where I'm at today, when I'm over here on 75, this is where I usually go ahead and stop. But if, you know, if they're still here in another ten, fifteen years we'll be blessed. If not, the only way anybody will remember is the stories that are told. [guitar music fades out] [sound of vehicle driving]

Paul: Well, we could easily sit and talk all day, but it's time to move along to exit 62: the Derby City South Truck Plaza. I usually stop at Derby City when I'm headed south. That's because there's a hard up-hill pull when you get back on the interstate going north-bound, but there's a nice down-hill slope going south. That's the way Denise and I are headed, so I fire up the CB to see what they're serving. [static over CB]

Paul: [over CB] *How 'bout that Derby City, you got a copy on me down there, Little Mama?*

Trucker 2: [00:12:37] [over CB] *Hello, hello* [inaudible]

Paul: I should really explain here, that when one talks on the CB radio, it's important to speak like you're from two states south of where you're actually from.

Paul: [over CB] *This here Derby City?*

Trucker 2: [over CB] *That's right.*

Paul: I once carried on with a cowboy trucker like this for a good three or four hundred miles through Pennsylvania, New Jersey and onto the islands, only to learn that the ol' Tex was actually a Long Island Jew. Me, I was just a papist boy whose folks hailed from Chicago. Here's the thing, though: say you go down to Kentucky and talk on the CB like some dull Midwesterner, nobody will ever answer you. But if you sound a little bit like ol' Carl who just got released from the nervous hospital, mmhmmm, well you can make friends pretty quick. Anyway, that's why I talk like this.

[over CB] *Now what's y'all's daily special?*

Trucker 2: [over CB] *Oh, this is Derby City environmental, tanker truck. You don't want what I got, come on.*

Paul: [over CB] *Oh, you got that hazardous waste?*

Trucker 2: [over CB] *Old dirty landfill water, come on.*

Paul: Well now, that won't do.

Paul: [over CB] *Now I was trying to get a hold of little mama over at the Derby City, guess this radio ain't getting out.*

Trucker 2: [over CB] *I know they got them biscuits and mustard, uh-huh.* [heavenly, atmospheric music begins]

Paul: Then through the static, comes another voice.

Waitress: [00:14:00] [over CB] *You have the Derby City off the exit 62. Today's special is...*

Paul: She promises fried catfish.

Waitress: [over CB] *Catfish...*

Paul: Free coffee.

Waitress: [over CB] [inaudible] *free coffee...*

Paul: And of course, the nanner nanner pudding.

Waitress: [over CB] *And don't forget, nanner nanner pudding. Yummmm, yum, come and get you some..."*

Paul: So I wheel in to investigate. [Paul parks truck]

The Derby City South Truck Plaza is a different kind of place – it wasn't a truck wash that decided to serve food. [voices chattering, ambient sounds from restaurant] It looks like an actual restaurant; nicely appointed with booths and tables.

Sure, it doesn't have the makeshift charm of the 76er, but I have a special fondness for this place. You see, back in the great recession, around '08, when you might wait a week to get a

load out of Indiana, and money was really tight, I came up with this side-gig. What I'd do is, I'd buy 20 or 30 watermelons down in Florida for a dollar a piece, pile them in the trailer with whatever else I was hauling, then sell 'em for two bucks, two and a half bucks, along I-75. The Derby City was my number one spot, thanks to this woman.

Janet: [00:15:17] My name's Janet. I worked here at the Derby City Truckstop 25 years.

Paul: Janet waited tables, and she would let me come in and sell those watermelons right in the restaurant. Back then, it seems Janet was always here.

Janet: I always told the drivers I wore out two floors in here 'cause they replaced the floor twice. I said I wore it out walking. [twangy guitar music begins]

Janet: Well I had never waitressed before in my life and my mother's neighbor was the manager here and she kept begging me to come to work here and it took her a year to talk me into it because I said I'm not waitress material. I was really shy, backwards and these drivers brought me out of that quick. Some of them call me the mud flap girl – the girl in the mud flaps – when I was younger; they said I was built like her and that's what they would call me and I'd say y'all hush; they'd say get out on the counter and pose like her, and I said get out of here! [Paul laughs in the background]

Paul: I actually first met Janet because a fellow driver I knew was just crazy about her.

Janet: I call him Jake. He came in, and was like, "oh my god, oh my god!"

Paul: Jake decided that Janet looked *exactly like* a certain country music star...

Janet: Tammy Wynette, and he says I looked like Tammy Wynette.

Paul: So he called her Tammy, and it kind of caught on.

Janet: A lot of the customers, they would also call me Tammy, and this one guy he really thought that was my name. [quick-paced piano joins in with guitar]

Paul: This is the type of nonsense that truck stop waitresses put up with all the time. But Janet had a special way of handling herself with such drivers.

Janet: Actually, my first day on the fuel desk, I sold a record amount of fuel. And you know what really done it? I would get on the radio and I'd say, they'd say: "What do you look like?" I said well honey they call me four by four. I'd say I'm four foot tall, four foot wide and 400 pounds. And this driver came in said, "she's lying to y'all." I said, "no, you can tarp your load with a pair my bloomers", like that you know. And he said, "Guys, she's lying; and she's about five foot ten, hundred and twenty-five pounds and she's gorgeous." Well, the rest of the day that kept on and on and on and they were just pouring in here buying fuel because of that.

Paul: Yeah, she flat went CB viral there for a while.

Janet: Yeah, I've heard, I've probably heard every pickup line you could ever imagine. This driver come in and kept aggravating, wantin' my phone number so I just made up a number and gave it to him. And he came back a couple weeks later he said, "that wasn't the right number." I said, "what do you mean that wasn't the right number?" "No" he said, "that was a nursing home."

I said, "hell, that's where I live! They let me come to work so I could pay my rent. [Paul laughing in background] But it was just a joke, you know. And he just died laughing. There's several times when they came really aggravating, now I would give him the sheriff's department phone number. But I was always real quick with a comeback. You know drivers always tell 'em, "Don't mess with her man. You can't get nothing over on her." [Sound of griddle sizzling]

But for me like when I worked here, and I was raising four kids by myself, you know, my life outside of here was rough. [laughs nervously] It was rough. So it was like when I walked through these doors I forgot about being a mother, what I dealt with when I was at home, and it was like a getaway for me actually. It became a getaway because I cut up and carried on with the drivers so much and enjoyed my job so much. But then when I walked out the door I was back to be a mom again, you know. This job really helped me. It really did. That's why I was here the 25 years. The person that said she couldn't be a waitress, wasn't waitress material, became to love it. [sounds from the kitchen, followed by soft, atmospheric tones]

Evelyn Mitchell: [00:19:30] Are we on recording? OK then you better ask questions because I don't want to rattle on.

Paul: After our lunch of soup beans and fried catfish, we're lucky enough to run into the owner of the Derby City.

Evelyn: I am Evelyn Mitchell...

Paul: Folks call her Ms. Evelyn.

Evelyn: ... and I live in Mount Vernon, Kentucky and that's where this Derby City South Truck Plaza sits: exit 62. That's my favorite number. [laughing]

Paul: Ms. Evelyn is a busy woman, so we get right down to business.

[to Evelyn] So the mystery is the nanner nanner pudding. Where did the nanner pudding start?

Paul: [as narrator] Naturally, Ms. Evelyn says it all started right here.

Evelyn: We're in the country. And they call the potato, a tater, and a tomato, mater. And that nanner pudding, yum yum, come and get you some, and I don't know, it just caught on and everybody...

Paul: [to Evelyn] It became a thing.

Evelyn: It became a thing.

Paul: [as narrator] OK, we've heard this kind of argument before up at the 76, but Ms. Evelyn offers us her take, wrapped in a history lesson. [soft, acoustic guitar music begins]

Evelyn: Let's see I opened in '68. It started sometime in the '70s I'd say

Paul: And that's how we get into the unlikely story of how she became the owner of a truck stop.

Evelyn: Owsley County, Boonville.

Paul: Evelyn was born way out in the Eastern tip of Kentucky.

Evelyn: No way to get there from here. [both laugh]

Paul: Where she worked in the fields...

Evelyn: I was strong and tomboyish.

Paul: ...not in the kitchen.

Evelyn: Didn't know how to cook when I married.

Paul: When Evelyn left home, she didn't know what a CB handle was.

Evelyn: ...but we have several pots and pans that have handles... [Paul laughs]

Paul: And she didn't even like country music.

Evelyn: Well I listened to classical and I listened to Barbra Streisand, Nat King Cole...

Paul: Yet here she is, running a truck stop. [guitar music fades out]

Evelyn: [Ambient sounds from restaurant] It's a long story, but I was a schoolteacher. And my oldest daughter was in college. And all at once, I couldn't pay for her tuition and so I just decided I had to do something different and there was this little rinky dink truck building. The bank was repossessing it and they wanted someone to take over the payments. I just jumped in with both feet up to my ears and took it over. Just taught every day went over at nighttime and and yes I can do repair work. [laughs] I know how to miter and how drive nails and how to saw and how to hang drywall and how to finish it. So that's how I got started.

Paul: But it gets better, because that was just her *first* truck stop – the Derby City North, opened in 1968. [minimal tones begins] She and her husband ran that stop together, until she found out that he was stealing from her.

Evelyn: Two things you don't mess with me: that's my family and my money. [laughs]

Paul: And he had taken that money and leased a bit of land.

Evelyn: Then he couldn't finish what he had started. And so in order to keep himself out of jail and get my money back I took the lease over and built it from scratch.

Paul: And *that bit of land* is where she built the Derby City *South* – where we're sitting right now.

Evelyn: 1986, we opened. And when I came down here I'm going, "oh my gosh..." [laughs]

Paul: So just to re-cap: Ms. Evelyn has been in the truck stop game since she opened her first business in 1968. And according to her, that's where the nanner pudding started.

Evelyn: Yum yum, you know, and it spread across the country. There's copycats everywhere, you know.

Paul: She doesn't name names, but there's no doubt who she's talking about.

Evelyn: Our neighbor down there, they picked up our saying and copied it. [both laugh]

Paul: Could she be talking about the 49er Fuel Center, just down the road? That's the third of my favorite Kentucky truck stops. After the break, we head there for answers. And I'll introduce you to my favorite singing waitress in all of Appalachia.

Genevieve: [00:24:18] You do know the story behind the nanner pudding, right?

Paul: [to Genevieve] No, I don't know the story. [Music fades out]

Paul: OK, so we visited the 76er. We visited Derby City. Now all that's left is the 49er. [Advertisement for 49er plays over CB while Paul drives]

It's not far south of Derby City, but you feel the difference. We are definitely in the mountains now – what they call the Cumberland Plateau.

The 49er Fuel Center is surrounded by nothing – just hills and trees – but when we stop by, the place is busy. [Sounds of a busy dining room, voices chattering]

Genevieve: Typical day is wait on a hundred people or more.

Paul: And we're in luck, my old friend Genevieve is in the middle of a twelve-hour shift.

Genevieve: Well I wore a phone on me for about a month and on average anywhere from six miles a day to fifteen to eighteen miles a day depending on how busy we are.

Paul: I'll tell you how I became close with Genevieve. [Genevieve singing *Coal Miner's Daughter* in the background] I had been coming in here for years and never said much. Sometimes you could hear Genevieve singing while she worked, and so one day I took a chance and gave her my CD. Turned out she was working on an album herself, and we kind of became musician buddies. [Genevieve continues singing *Coal Miner's Daughter* in the background and Paul claps]

The clientele here is mixed today: some four wheelers stopping in for gas; a retired couple in their RV, and more than a few truck drivers.

Genevieve: I'm everybody's psychiatrist. I'm everybody's nurse. I'm everybody's bring your food. I'm a lot of things to a lot of drivers.

Paul: But when she has a spare minute, Genevieve gives us her take on the nanner pudding.

[to Genevieve] At the 76 they're saying it start up there, the 62 saying it started with them. Do you have an opinion on that?

Genevieve: Well my opinion is it started right here at the 49er, and they called it "nanner nanner nanner pudding" for many, many, many years.

Paul: And like Ms. Evelyn, Genevieve has a theory.

Genevieve: But I think they've just all three copied it because at one time the owner here was over all the other two as well.

Paul: Turns out that the owner of the 49er used to own the *other* fuel stops – not the restaurants, but just the fuel business. That fuel company, called Spur Oil, is the one connection between all these stops.

Genevieve: It all came from spur oil.

Paul: The plot thickens.

[to Genevieve] That said, I believe I'd like some nanner pudding. [Genevieve affirms]

I figure it's time to get a taste of what this whole controversy is all about.

Genevieve: We gotta get your first reaction to the banana pudding.

Paul: [to Genevieve] That's good stuff right there...

Paul: [as narrator] And just when I think we've gotten to the bottom of this thing, Genevieve throws in another curveball.

[to Genevieve] That's awfully good nanner pudding.

Genevieve: Well I don't call it nanner pudding. I call it banana pudding. [Paul laughs] Because they call it nanner pudding and you do know the story behind the nanner pudding?

Paul: [to Genevieve] No, what is – I don't know the story.

Genevieve: Well it's a sexual story. So I really don't want to comment on it. [Paul says, "oh wow" in the background] That's what nanner nanner nanner pudding is. It's the guys coming in to get the female.

Paul: [to Genevieve] That's what that is...

Genevieve: That's what the nanner nanner pudding is, the guys coming in to get the female.

Paul: [to Genevieve] Well, see I always thought that there was an undertone.

Genevieve: Yes. Here, we're not allowed to say nanner pudding but we say banana pudding.

Paul: Sure enough, that very day we had heard it for ourselves out on the road.

Trucker 3: [00:28:09] [over CB] [inaudible] ...*nanner nanner nanner pudding*...

Genevieve: [over CB] *No, honey, we's just banana pudding. You have a good day, honey.*

Genevieve: [Well that's the truth; the whole truth and nothing but the truth. [laughs]

Paul: [to Genevieve] Well I think we've gotten to the bottom of this...

Genevieve: You've found the bottom of it. [laughs] But you edit some of that out there. [both laugh] [harmonica thrilling comes in gradually]

Paul: I actually polled a couple trucking buddies about this interpretation of the nanner pudding. Neither of these guys are boy scouts, but they both said they thought it was just pudding, end of story. For Karen and Ms. Evelyn, it's the same – just pudding.

But for many drivers, I know there remains a certain mystique around the Southern woman. She calls some flatbedder from Michigan baby over the CB, and he just melts, cause ain't nobody calling him baby up there in Flint. So the nanner pudding becomes an extension of all that, whether anything comes of it or not. [harmonica music fades out]

There's still one more twist in this nanner pudding thing. But before we get there, I want to share a little more of Genevieve's story. So after her shift, she leads us down a series of winding country roads. [Paul and Genevieve walk into Genevieve's trailer]

Genevieve: Well this is my work home here in East Bernstein.

Paul: What she calls her "work home" is a RV trailer parked on a friend's property. [voices chattering while country music plays through speakers in the background, outside the trailer]

Her actual home is in Hyden, Kentucky, more than an hour east of here in the mountains.

Genevieve: I work two days on, two days off at the 49er. I leave my home at 5:30 a.m. I arrive at the 49er at 6:45. I get off work after a 12-hour shift and sometimes longer. And then I go back to work the next morning, and when I get off work, I drive an hour and fifteen minutes to return to my hometown. And I've been doing that for quite some time. [laughs softly]

Paul: She does all that to support her family. And that's an important thing to remember about these mom and pop truck stops. For women like Janet and Genevieve, these places offer just enough money to raise four kids all on their own, in a part of the country that doesn't have a lot of other opportunities.

Genevieve: Oh, I grew up in the most beautiful place in the world. There's no other place on the planet like it.

Paul: Genevieve comes from coal country.

Genevieve: It's lots of mountains, coal mining, good people. I grew up in a coal camp, what they call a coal camp. There was ten houses on one side of us. Ten on the other. My father worked in a coal mine that was probably no taller than what that table is right over there. On his hands and knees, he worked for a dollar a day. And then he got raised up to three dollars a day and we thought we were rich. He saved up enough money to buy a little house with a grocery store on it.

Paul: That's where Genevieve worked her first job, serving up lunch for the coal miners.

Genevieve: But I got married young and divorced young and made a family and had to take care of my children.

Paul: She was thirteen when she had her first child; nineteen when she got divorced.

Genevieve: Then I went to work in the coal mines. I'd get dirty and black and coal dirt all over me and little black things in your eyes that you couldn't get out. Your hands were pitiful lookin' and it was rough for a woman. Rough. I was a tomboy I guess. I did everything Daddy did. And he'd use me for an example. He'd tell them grow man, "if you worked as hard as that girl right there did, then we'd get something done."

Paul: [to Genevieve] And so now how did you wind up working at the 49er?

Genevieve: I was just going to Lexington one day and stopped there to get gas and they had a sign in the window said they needed a waitress so I applied.

Paul: [to Genevieve] Now, that's a long commute though from Hyden...

Genevieve: There's no – over there where I live at – it's just a little small town and there's – where the coal mining went down so bad and things like that, there's just not a lot of jobs. There's not a lot of work. At all. [soft guitar music begins]

There's what, three gas stations, a couple restaurants, two or three pharmacies and one red light. There's no hope; there's no hope of landing a job there. And God knows if I ever made it successful in life I'm gonna figure out how, what how to get jobs to those people. Yes I would. That would be my number one goal is to take out a few mountains and put an interstate in because if you don't have your interstate you can't get the goods to the people to make things successful in your community.

Paul: I'm really struck when she says that, about putting an interstate right through those mountains. I mean, what some might see as destroying the beauty of this place, she sees as its only hope. But then again it kind of makes sense, because that's where Genevieve found *her* job: working at a truck stop by the interstate. [guitar music fades out]

Genevieve: And back to the nanner pudding.

Paul: And then out of nowhere, Genevieve brings us back to the nanner pudding.

Genevieve: Yes. After we spoke today earlier, I was speaking with Mark...

Paul: He's the kitchen manager at the 49er.

Genevieve: ... and Mark said the banana pudding would have to go all the way back to the 62, to Ms. Evelyn. Because she's the oldest truck stop in this area of the three and that banana pudding would have to start with her.

Paul: Well, I'd say that for the purposes of this podcast at least, we can call the question settled.

Genevieve: Credit has to go where credit is due and the credit goes to Ms. Evelyn.

Paul: Still, I know there will always be those die-hard holdouts who will never be swayed on this subject, no matter the evidence. I'm looking at you Kevin...

[over CB] *A buddy of mine said it started up there in Kentucky.*

Trucker 4: [00:34:330] [over CB] *No, it started in Georgia.*

Paul: There's an old saying in trucking – and this is the kind of thing you see printed on coffee mugs and keychains – that arguing with a truck driver is like wrestling a pig in the mud. Sooner or later, you realize the pig just likes it. So out here I'm afraid, the nanner nanner pudding feud will never truly be settled. [radio static in the background while Paul drives]

Just a couple days after that conversation with Genevieve, I'm passing through Kentucky again on my way to Florida. As long as these three truck stops are hanging on, it's always a tough call which one I should stop at for dinner. But on this night, I pull off at exit 49. Part of the draw here is that this truck stop is located smack dab in the middle of the Daniel Boone National Forest. And there's a walking trail right behind the restaurant. Once, when I didn't know Genevieve well, I told her I was gonna to go hike that mountain behind the stop. She said, "Mountain? You mean that driveway?" [Paul walking on trail] There was no way I could live down being a hoosier flatlander after that. To Genevieve this is no mountain – a ridge maybe, but not a mountain. [atmospheric tones begin while footsteps in the woods continue]

There's a hard hill at the beginning, and then it levels out. Deep in the forest, you can't hear the interstate anymore and the trees get very thick. Then after two and a half miles of this, at the end of that walk, is a perfectly manicured family cemetery. So you might think you're in the wilderness, but you're really not. People live out here. [footsteps continue]

Genevieve is right, I know: it takes more than just a little ridge behind a truck stop to make a mountain. The night of our interview, when she and her husband Dewey invited us into their immaculate home, they sang us this song, and I could hear the real mountains in their voices. [Genevieve and husband, Dewey sing *Lonely Heart Road*]

When you work over the road, you consign yourself to a life of relational brevity. All these people you meet – Genevieve, Janet, Karen – people who should just be passing acquaintances, they become endeared to you. Just knowing they'll still be there becomes a personal treasure, something you look forward to in an otherwise throw-away world. You come to admire them – the people *and* the truck stops – for their fierce resilience.

There's parochial pride in claiming, yes, I knew Janet back when she was CB viral – luring in the freight haulers like so many flies. There's real satisfaction in recounting the days when Karen and her late husband, Abner, up at the 76, used to grill out at the fuel island, feeding drivers like me and not even charging a dime. [Genevieve continues singing]

You don't even will yourself into this family, it just happens. Just like how Cathy and I started talking over our meal at the 76. And sometimes, when those relationships are lost, when the truck stop closes, and those people are gone to you forever as if into the ether, there is a kind of death. For itinerants like me, it can be a cause for mourning. [Genevieve and Dewey continue singing *Lonely Heart Road*]

[Theme song begins] Next week on the show, our producer Lacy Jane Roberts is taking you out to Montana to meet the family.

Lacy Roberts: [00:40:39] Did you miss your husband?

Speaker 1: [00:40:40] Oh yeah, and they missed their dad too.

Paul: We'll be talking about how trucking affects those closest to us: our partners and children.

Lacy: So you were the bad cop and he was the good cop?

Speaker 1: [laughs] Yeah, back in the day.

Paul: Thanks to everyone who entrusted us with their stories, and especially to Genevieve and Dewey, who entrusted us with their song, *Lonely Heart Road*. We'll catch you next time, over the road. [Theme song continues]

Our Over the Road pit crew includes producer and sound designer Ian Coss, and contributing producer Lacy Roberts at Transmitter Media. Our editor from Overdrive Magazine is Todd Dills. Our digital producer is Erin Wade. Our project manager is Audrey Mardavich, and our executive producer for Radiotopia is Julie Shapiro. I'm Long Haul Paul.

All the music on the show is by Ian Coss and myself, featuring performances by Travis "The Snakeman" Wammack, Terry "Two Socks" Richardson, Tisha Mingo, Jim Whitehead, Jan Grant Gullet, The Late Great Roger Clark, and Mr. Andrew Marshall. Additional engineering by Donnie Gullet down in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

Special thanks for this episode goes to my lovely wife, Denise, who rode along with us in Kentucky while we recorded this episode. For some reason, when it's just me out here, to be honest, it's tough to get anyone to open up. But when Denise is with me, everyone wants to talk.

Over the Road is made possible by support from the folks I have worked for, for a really long time – Moeller Trucking: now celebrating over 30 years of safe and reliable transportation for the food industry. For more information, check out MoellerTrucking.com.

Over the Road is a collaboration between Overdrive Magazine and PRX's Radiotopia – a collection of the best independent podcasts around. Give serious thought to binging Ear Hustle on your next thousand-mile run. The show began as a collaboration between an actual San Quentin inmate named Earlonne Woods and visual artist Nigel Poor about what life is really like behind bars.

I'm also recommending Ear Hustle to you because when I had a lot of questions about how to do this podcast, I reached out to Earlonne, just weeks after his sentence was commuted by then governor Jerry Brown. He pretty much gave me the road map of how to do this job in a matter of a ten-minute phone conversation, and I'm forever in his debt for that. Seriously, find out more about the whole network at Radiotopia.fm.

Look for Overdrive Magazine at Overdriveonline.com, where you can read Todd's Channel 19 blog, hear the Overdrive Radio podcast, and explore news, business and lifestyle reporting about trucking.

You can find Over the Road online at overtheroad.fm. Be sure to follow us on all those usual platforms too – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @overtheroadpod. You can see some of my videos on YouTube by looking for “Long Haul Paul Music.”

Thanks for listening, hanging in til the end of the run. We'll be back next week with more stories from Over the Road. [theme song fades out]

[Montage of Paul's outtakes edited to overlap over one another] We'll be back next week with more stories from Over the Road! [playful music with strong down beat begins] It's late, I'm punchy, my apologies. 2:33 in the morning. ...that he was stealing from her...When we get right down to business...At least a bit of land...That's where the nanner pudding started... Try that sentence one more time... Au-au-auuuudrey Mardavich! And again, on the last sentence...Trying harder to do...Really cool redhead...Over the Road is made possible by...Drives her bicycle to work...worked for for a really long time: Moeller Trucking!...*the* Julie Shapiro. We'll catch you next time Over the Road. [Paul yawns]

[45:32] **END OF EPISODE.**