



Episode 5: Back Home

Air Date: April 16, 2020

“Long Haul” Paul Marhoefer: [00:00:54] In my early years out here, I learned a lot from a close friend and mentor of mine – an old reefer hauler name of Thud Thornburgh. You might recall I spoke to his dad Theldon a couple episodes back about his days as a wildcatter. Well Thud told me, Paul: “To be any good at this, you have to be willing to do what no one has any right to ask of you.” What he meant by that is, that Thanksgiving dinners, Christmas with the family, your kids’ birthdays – these things can never be taken for granted again once you become an over the road truck driver. [soft acoustic guitar music begins]

After a while, though, there’s a certain emotional callus that forms. You learn not to fret over every little thing that might be going on back at home, and you do this as a means of survival.

You find yourself in Jackson, Georgia on Christmas Eve, 600 miles from home at some truck stop, talking to complete strangers at a McDonalds, coaching them while you coach yourself: “I mean look, Christmas was no cake walk for the baby Jesus, either. Try living in a barn in December with your newborn baby laying in a feed trough. See how well that goes over with The Department of Family Services.” You could actually catch me saying things like this.

At least, that’s how it was from my perspective – the trucker’s perspective. But there’s another side to this story: what happens to Mary and the baby Jesus when Joseph’s got a load of lettuce bound for Boston? And that’s the one we’ll be hearing today, from our very own Lacy Jane Roberts. [music fades out]

Lacy: [00:00:02] [to Paul] Paul?

Paul: [to Lacy] Lacy!

Lacy: Hi!

Paul: [as narrator] If you've been with us since the beginning, you know that Lacy is not only a whip-smart producer, but that she also comes from a family of truckers.

Lacy: Well, when I was a little kid it was pretty much everybody. It was my dad, all of my uncles, both of my grandpas, and my grandma too. [Lacy's family members chattering in the background, Grandma asks, "what's this?" and Lacy responds, "that's my microphone" and male voices says, "she's recording everything you say."]

And most of them were men. So like the men of the family were gone a lot. And that was normal. Like dads. Dads are gone a lot. [family continues chattering in the background]

Paul: [to Lacy] So you went to visit your folks recently. [soft minimal tones come in]

Lacy: Yeah I did. [footsteps going up stairs. In the background Lacy asks, "what's goin' on out here?" and someone answers, "...yellow jackets and the ants"] [theme music comes in]

Lacy: I want to talk to my mom.

Lacy's Mom: [00:02:57] Well my memory is very similar to your memory [laughs]

Lacy: My dad

Lacy's Dad: [00:03:01] I loved it; that's how I grew up, I was a ranch kid.

Lacy: About those days. I wanted to talk to my grandparents...

Lacy's Grandma: [00:03:08] You're my favorite granddaughter and I spoiled you rotten.

Lacy: ...and I wanted to talk to my younger brother Zane.

Lacy: [to Zane] How much younger than me are you?

Zane: [00:03:16] A year and some months

Lacy: Almost two years

Zane: Yeah... it's more like a year. But yeah

Lacy: I guess I wanted to understand better the ways in which trucking impacted my family, 'cause my memories of it are the memories of a little kid.

Paul: Today on the show we'll hear a story that spans three generations: from a fateful New Year's Eve kiss in 1957, to the very real choices facing Lacy and her brothers today. So sit tight. From PRX's Radiotopia and Overdrive Magazine, this is Over the Road. I'm Long Haul Paul.
[theme music fades out]

Paul: [to Lacy] So where exactly are you from out there?

Lacy: I was born in a little town in Southeastern Montana called Miles City. It's best known for a couple things: one, being in the great western *Lonesome Dove*, and being where the cowboy in *Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* was from. [Paul laughs]

Paul: I think I've delivered tropical plants to Miles City, Montana to the Wal-Mart. I'm shooting from the hip here, but is there a Wal-Mart in Miles City?

Lacy: Yeah, yeah that's possible. We got a Wal-Mart. But yeah, it's where my family is really really from. [Lacy's family members chattering in the background] Follow me, Grandma.

Paul: I'm looking at this picture of your grandmother, she's standing on a mountain road with her semi, and she's staring straight into the camera like: yeah I know I look like a young Audrey Hepburn and I drive a truck, so do you have some kind of problem with that?

Lacy: [laughs] She'd love that.

Paul: I'm just so curious to see how your conversation went with your grandmother.

Lacy: [to Grandma] Why don't you sit here and let me see what it sounds like?

Lacy: [to Paul] It was really nice.

Lacy's Grandma: Oh, okay

Lacy: We could go sit in the car?

Lacy's Grandma: Okay

Lacy: Is that okay? [Grandma affirms]

Lacy: [to Paul] I have a I have a big boisterous family. [family chattering in the background] I have four younger brothers and they're loud, and my grandpa is loud, and everyone's yelling at each other or the TV all the time. And, it was nice for us to just be able to sit quietly and talk at length. [car door closes]

Lacy: Okay, Grandma.

Lacy's Grandma: Okay!

Lacy: Tell me about how you and Grandpa met.

Lacy's Grandma: How we met? Oh. [plucky acoustic guitar music comes in] Okay, this was on December 31st.

Lacy: [to Paul] It's like kind of a legendary story in my family. New Year's Eve, in the late 50s in Miles City, at the Elks Lodge.

Lacy's Grandma: Big Dance. And that's when I first met him.

Lacy: [to Paul] Grandma was either twelve or thirteen. And my grandpa was like a real hot shot. In my mind, he's sort of like he rolls his cigarettes up, in his white T-shirts.

Lacy's Grandma: And he came up the stairs and gave me a big kiss for New Year's Eve.

Lacy: [to Grandma] The first thing he did when he met, you had never met him before and he just planted one on you?

Lacy's Grandma: No, I knew his sister but no, I didn't know him until down the road.

Lacy: [to Paul] And that's how they met for the first time. [Paul laughing] And then they started the way you know Grandma puts it, they started "going together." [music fades out]

Lacy's Grandma: At the age of fourteen, we got married and Tom was seventeen, I was fourteen.

Lacy: And then when did he become a truck driver?

Lacy's Grandma: Well he'd done a lot of truck driving when he was young. I think of it when he was fifteen he was running around delivering milk in different cities up there around Miles City.

Lacy: [to Paul] My grandpa was a trucker for quite some time before she started driving. And she was mostly at home.

[to Grandma] You know, it was almost like you were a single mom in those early years when grandpa was on the road all the time and you were workin' and...

Lacy's Grandma: Yeah, he was gone all the time. And there were times when he'd be out and he'd have to get a check from somebody he delivered to, and then he'd have to run around to

get the cash back. You know, it's just hard to get that all done and get home again. You know, it's pathetic.

Lacy: Did you miss your husband?

Lacy's Grandma: Oh yeah, and they missed their dad too. He was a good man with them. He always protected them, because I always had to make 'em behave. [soft, minimal atmospheric tones come in] And then down the road, he bought his own truck and we started doing that a little more seriously. That was 1970 'cause I quit my job.

Lacy: [to Paul] She would from time to time leave the girls with my great grandma or someone else to stay for a week at a time or something and then go take trips with my grandpa.

Lacy's Grandma: Started truckin' with Tom a lot.

Lacy: [to Paul] And in those times she would drive you know while he slept to give him a break.

Lacy's Grandma: Tom was working too hard because he'd be on the road all the time.

Lacy: [to Paul] My grandpa was running really really hard. This like weekly route from California to Winnipeg.

Lacy's Grandma: So one day I told him: "Tom you go west, and let me go east. We can get through this"

Lacy: [to Paul] She said, "why don't you let me help?"

Lacy's Grandma: He looked at me like I was crazy. He says, "what the heck's wrong with you? You never even put fuel on this truck. Why do you want to go trucking by yourself?" And I said "well, you just let me show ya. You get in the sleeper and stay out of there and I'll show you I can drive a truck." And I did. Drove all the way over to Winnipeg and back in and he didn't do much of anything.

Lacy: [to Paul] And then she did it on her own basically for fifteen or twenty years. [music fades out]

Paul: Didn't your grandmother have a secret weapon when dealing with the border personnel?

Lacy: [to Paul] She did. She is she baked like 100 cookies every week.

Lacy's Grandma: Lacy's favorite cookies.

Lacy: What kind of cookies were they?

Lacy's Grandma: They were pumpkin cookies. You loved them.

Lacy: [to Paul] It was this Betty Crocker recipe for pumpkin chocolate chip cookies.

Lacy's Grandma: And them guys were always – see the truck. “Come on in. Get you unloaded.” That’s the first thing they say.

Paul: Your grandmother, like armed with cookies, she probably could have annexed Alberta in her day, [Lacy laughs] if she wanted to do that and just let that be her gift to America.

Lacy: [to Paul] You know, probably, and I think she’s probably made millions of cookies.

[to Grandma] So those pumpkin chocolate chip cookies really greased the wheels for you?

Lacy's Grandma: Oh yeah, it did in my trucking days. Yes it did, helped out a lot. [soft acoustic guitar music begins]

Paul: Was there anything else that came up that you weren’t expecting?

Lacy: [to Paul] Well I. I didn't really plan to but I ended up asking...

[to Grandma] What would you think if one of these boys decided to be a truck driver now?

Lacy: [to Paul] You know, what would you have done if one of my brothers became a truck driver? My grandma said...

Lacy's Grandma: Oh, I think Zane might. If that's what you want to do you do it.

Lacy: [to Paul] And then I asked her...

[to Grandma] What if I married a truck driver?

Lacy's Grandma: Well it's a little different. I don't know. I'd protect my granddaughter.

Lacy: You wouldn't want me to marry a truck driver?

Lacy's Grandma: No, I want you to live normally.

Lacy: [to Paul] I would want you to have a normal life. [Paul laughs] That's what she said. A normal life.

Lacy's Grandma: It's hard. You know, you watch your mom. There were times when your dad wasn't doing well and your mom having to put up with stuff until the end. And that was it. The end. [soft acoustic music comes in]

Lacy: [to Paul] I There's something to her about, you know, you can make a life out on the road but it's harder to be left behind. Maybe a little bit.

Paul: Yeah. Wow.

Lacy: [to Grandma] I think that's all my questions. [Grandma affirms] What do you think?

Lacy's Grandma: It's been too long ago. [laughs] [music fades out]

Paul: Now, this is your grandmother on your mom's side or dad's side?

Lacy: [to Paul] Yeah, Mom's side now.

Lacy's Mom: [00:12:35] I am Lacy Robert's mom [laughs]. I'm your mom. [laughs]

Lacy: [to Paul] My mom is an extremely active person. She never sits still. She doesn't dwell on the past, and I think that's [nervously laughs] served her very well over the years, considering how much she's had to do.

Paul: How does your mom remember all this, growing up with trucker parents?

Lacy: [to Paul] Well, my mom you know is kind of like me, I guess. You know, she grew up with a trucker dad and during the first whatever dozen or so years of her life he was gone a lot a lot.

Lacy's Mom: I remember my mother always being like the disciplinarian and the one who had to like teach us all the things.

Lacy: [to Paul] And then when he was home he was sort of the good cop and Grandma was always the bad cop.

Paul: I fell into that good cop thing too and I was gone a lot you know. So it's almost like being a trucker Dad you don't have to get your hands dirty with like a lot of the disciplinary things.

Lacy: [to Paul] Yeah. That's the way she talks about it.

Lacy's Mom: I do have one very fond memory of my first grade school carnival or something and there was like a cake walk and just riding on my dad's shoulders to the carnival with the cake and then getting there and I thought it was such a big deal in my little girl mind that everybody was going to be so thrilled to see my dad because my dad was never around. They

were gonna be like, "whoa, Terry's Dad's here." [laughs] And nobody cared [laughs]. But for me it was like such a thing.

Paul: And how did she feel about trucking at the time, as a job?

Lacy: [to Paul] I think that she you know, grew up around truck driving so it wasn't anything weird.

Lacy's Mom: I mean that was just a way of life, right? I didn't really think about it too much. Yeah. And that translated into a relationship with somebody who also became an over the road driver that you knew what you were in for, there were no surprises.

Lacy: [to Paul] I think she was twenty when she got married, maybe twenty-one.

Lacy's Mom: We don't have conversations, it's just like oh you're getting married. Hmm. Okay. [laughs] There is no like okay, you're you should stop and think about this you're too young, A. B, he's gonna be gone a lot. You know what that's like. Are you sure that's what you want? C, this is gonna be the father to your kids and you're gonna be raising your kids a lot on your own. Should ya think about that now? No, nobody did that for me. No.

Lacy: [to Paul] My mom was always a pretty independent person and so I think that, you know, when they were first married my dad was trucking it worked for her.

Lacy's Mom: And not having to be responsible for anything other than myself for a good part of the time that we were we were dating and married.

Lacy: [to Paul] I didn't know about that time when he first started trucking and it was really great for both of them because he was making money and she was really independent and they had a great life. [acoustic guitar music comes in]

Lacy: When was it that you started to like, think about my dad's truck driving in a negative way?

Lacy's Mom: It's definitely once the kids started happening. Absolutely.

Lacy: [to Paul] My mom unexpectedly got pregnant with me.

Lacy's Mom: I had to find a baby-sitter who lived nearby and I work so I could go nurse on my breaks.

Lacy: [to Paul] Then my brother came twenty-two months later and then I had another brother, two or three years after that and another brother two or three years after that.

Lacy's Mom: It was just a lot for me as a twenty-two, twenty-three-year-old to do.

Lacy: [to Paul] So my mom was pregnant or breastfeeding for almost ten years. And she was doing a lot of that stuff on her own.

Lacy's Mom: When I was pregnant with Zane, I had this moment where we had a dog and the dog died in the backyard and I was like eight and a half months pregnant and I'm like, "what do I do with the big dead dog bloating in the backyard?" [laughing] You know, things like they just happen that you just don't really like what do I do with this right now, you know? And in a moment when you're like already dealing with all this other stuff a thing like that just overwhelms you to the point like I'm sick of this. [music fades out]

Lacy: [to Paul] It just got a lot harder 'cause there was just so much more to do. Rather than her sort of doing her own thing when he was gone it was her raising kids on her own.

Lacy's Mom: Yeah. I mean you might see your dad like four days a month at that point in time.

Lacy: Yeah, I really I have like no memory of Dad during that time.

Lacy's Mom: Probably, it was harder on Zane just because he is like a little mini me with his dad and he liked to wear the big straw cowboy hat like his dad. And you know, that's how I would notice it. Not like, "when's Daddy gonna be home?" I didn't really hear that. You know, I didn't really hear anything like, "I miss Daddy." That sort of thing. But I also didn't feel that when I was a kid.

Lacy: [to Paul] I think he was home fairly regularly, but he'd only be home for a short amount of time

Lacy's Mom: I mean I grew up in the same house that I had the same memories as a child when my dad was gone. [acoustic guitar music comes in] We didn't do much. We always had that big old house and that big old yard and that's where we'd stay. [laughs]

Lacy: [to Paul] In my memory what happened was like he trucked the whole time basically from the time I was born until I was eleven and it just got too hard.

Lacy's Mom: Had we not spent so much time apart throughout our relationship maybe things would have been different. It's true. But it was just, we were together eleven years, and that's a long time to grow apart.

Lacy: [to Paul] She went to college during this time.

Lacy's Mom: I had developed a very independent life from him and I liked it better.

Lacy: [to Paul] And they split up and my dad moved out and we moved into this rental house and I think we were there for a year and then we moved to Missoula. [guitar music continues]

Paul: How was your mom ever able to do that to be a trucker's wife with four kids at home and get a bachelor's degree?

Lacy: [to Paul] Honestly Paul, I have no idea. I mean I should have asked her that. I think that the answer for her would probably be, "I did it 'cause I had to, like what was the other choice?" [guitar music continues]

Paul: What was the other choice? Coming up after the break, we'll hear from Lacy's dad about why he chose to drive a truck, and finally from her brother Zane, about why he chose not to. [music fades out]

So this cattle hauler dad of yours, did you have a chance to talk to him at all?

Lacy: [to Paul] Yeah. And it was really nice to talk to him about this stuff. [soft chatter in the background] So he still trucks, but he's home every weekend now. And when we showed up in Miles City, my dad made this plan that he wanted to take me and my brother to the ranch he grew up on. [car doors closing] It's like thirty miles up a dirt road so it takes like an hour or an hour and a half to get there. [sound of car driving]

It was an insanely beautiful late spring in eastern Montana. It was super, super green; everything was just popping.

Lacy's Dad: We're quite a ways from the place yet.

Lacy: [to Paul] It was a cattle ranch, really out in the middle of nowhere.

Lacy's Dad: I mean, we had a gun rack in the school bus for heaven's sakes [laughs] [Lacy and her dad continue conversation in the background]

Lacy: [to Paul] I mean, I think that I had a free-range childhood. I mean, he used to get sent off to school by himself when was like seven years old with a shotgun in case he saw any coyotes.

Lacy's Dad: And you know, I mean they were the scourge, all ranchers hate him.

Lacy: [to Paul] So he was actually one of those kids in those like one room schoolhouses out there. This isn't like the 1800s. [laughs] You know, it was like my dad was born in 1964. So you know it was like the late 60s, 70s. Until he was a teenager until he entered high school and that's when he had to go to school in town.

Lacy's Dad: And I didn't know nothin'. And I'm looking around and I ain't fittin' in and people are making fun of me. I was mortified. I went home about balling, and of course then every bully in the place wanted to fight ya because you were such a, you know, hick.

Lacy: [to Paul] My grandpa would take jobs in the winter when it was slow on the ranch hauling bulls. My dad would go with him.

Lacy's Dad: Yeah. In fact when I was fourteen, I took a truck by myself and followed him to Glasgow Montana with a load of cows all by myself and I was only fourteen.

Lacy: [to Paul] So he had that experience. And then he told me that you know he thought it was so cool.

[to Dad] Did you think about doing anything else?

Lacy's Dad: No, them were all my heroes. The young guys that were driving trucks and stuff. I couldn't wait 'til I got old enough to get my CDL so I could go myself.

Lacy: Why were they you're heroes?

Lacy's Dad: I don't know. [laughs]

Lacy: What about it? Did it seem glamorous?

Lacy's Dad: It seemed really glamorous. But you know hindsight's 20-20. [laughs]

Lacy: Plus I mean, I guess I don't really have a sense of what kind of work there was for people out here. You know what is this... this is the mid 80s?

Lacy's Dad: Yeah it was the early 80s and there was nothing. It was back when the interest rates were really high. I tried really hard like to get on in the mines and nobody was hiring. So we just – I, you could always get a job driving truck if you were good at it. So that's what I did.

Lacy: [to Paul] I honestly didn't know enough about trucking or had enough curiosity about his trucking career before to ask him about all of all of the things I asked him about.

[to Dad] So when we were, I don't know, when we were in Miles City and living on Trescott Street and were little, how many miles a week were you doin'? How often were you coming home on average?

Lacy's Dad: If I was hauling produce, I would go to California and back and stop at home and sleep overnight. And then go to Canada and unload and reload come home and sleep overnight and go back to California. So it's probably 5,000 miles week around there.

Lacy: [to Paul] He was – he said he was running 5,000 miles a week.

Paul: Yeah. That's a lot of miles.

Lacy: [to Paul] I don't know how to quantify that for someone who doesn't speak in miles but like, how many hours of driving do you think it would take to do 5,000 miles in a week Paul?

Paul: To quantify that on a weekly basis, you're talking an eighty to a hundred-hour work week.

Lacy: So that would be the produce time and then the bull hauling time

Lacy's Dad: And the bull hauling time was probably even worse. I mean you just go, go, go, go. You had to get the loads while they were there because you knew the next month there might be nothing. [twangy guitar music comes in] So if you had something to do you went and did it.

Lacy: [to Paul] Paul, you and I talked about this a good bit when we were on the road. When we were talking about the years when you were driving really hard and you described them as a blur, [Paul affirms] I think that that's what it was like for my dad...

Lacy's Dad: You know, it just seemed like it was forever

Lacy: [to Paul] ...the way that he talks about it.

Lacy: How much were you sleeping?

Lacy's Dad: Not very much.

Lacy: How would you feel when you would come home?

Lacy's Dad: I didn't. I wasn't any good to you or your mom or anybody. I would just sleep and then get up and leave again.

Lacy: [to Paul] He couldn't do anything but sleep. You know he was so exhausted.

[to Dad] I remember, I do remember Mom, when you would come home, it would be like, "Dad's coming home but you gotta let him sleep. [laughing] Like, you can't – you have to leave that alone." [laughs] I do you remember that. [Dad affirms] [music fades out]

Paul: You know, that one of the things about getting a reputation as a good, dependable, hard runner is you get in this cycle where the more you do for people, the more they expect of you.

Lacy: [to Paul] You know, something I remember you saying when we were talking when we were driving, you wanted to be the guy that could get it done.

Paul: Yeah. I mean there is something about you know when the dispatcher says I've got about three guys I thought I could trust with this load, you're one of them. And a good dispatcher knows how to give you the Newt Rockne talk, you know, and talk about those sissies who have to be home every weekend with their little families. [Lacy laughs] So you know. And that's what

it is it becomes, that sort of thing. Then all of a sudden you're that guy that's, you know, whose wife is saying, "leave your dad alone, he's exhausted."

Lacy: When you were like in your 20s when we were little kids and you were doing 5,000 plus miles a week, how do you keep going? I mean is it like – is it the money? Like is it...

Lacy's Dad: It's partly the money. And you did that, you drove that hard to get home for a night. To see your family, you would drive straight through from L.A. to Miles City Montana just so you could sleep at home and see your kids until the next day

Lacy: So that was the light at the end of the tunnel.

Lacy's Dad: Yup. And then you would, you know, you'd have that night and probably leave the next evening. Go on to Canada and come back and spend a night and part of a day at home. And then you'd drove straight to California, get unloaded and reloaded and drive straight home so you could spend a day with your family. [soft acoustic guitar music comes in]

Lacy's Dad: I know when you leave down that country you get to Idaho. When you crossed into Idaho it was only five hundred miles home five-six hundred miles home and you feel like you're almost home. [Lacy laughs] No kidding.

Lacy: And we're in like eastern Montana out here. [Dad affirms] Like you're two states away from home still. Two big ones.

Lacy's Dad: Yeah, yeah. It'd be six-hundred miles to go. But when you crossed into Idaho you think you're home, "Oh I'm almost home." [music fades out]

Lacy: [to Paul] You know maybe – he'd never told me a lot of these stories either. Like he'd never volunteered these stories and I wonder if it's because he just didn't think that there was much that was extraordinary about it. Because it's such a fact of life for him.

Paul: I've kind of – I've wondered about this whole thing about, you know, if you're a trucker, you know, an itinerant worker you're gone a lot. At some point do you relinquish the right to your own story? You don't get to tell your story, someone has to ask.

Lacy: Is that something that you feel with you and your family?

Paul: Well I was very fortunate to have had a wife who would tell my kids things like, "our bills are really tight so your dad's going back out to California again to kinda get us out of trouble." And so I mean these were things that were repeated to me by my daughters. And so, you know, sort of like your grandfather, I got to be the good guy when I got home. So I was very fortunate to have had someone who was a pretty good PR agent for me but not every truck driver is fortunate that way. [acoustic guitar music transition]

Lacy: So, the last person I want to tell you about Paul, is my brother Zane.

Zane: My name is Zane Roberts.

Lacy: [quietly] Who are you?

Zane: I am the brother of the beautiful Lacy Roberts

Paul: Zane. That's a great western name. That's a true cowboy name there, huh?

Lacy: [to Paul] I mean, my name is Lacy Jane Roberts and my brother's name is Zane Tyler Roberts. Couldn't get two more perfect little cowboy and cowgirl names. [Lacy and Paul laughs]

Paul: So Zane, was he like – did he grow up like a cowboy? Was he kind of like a rodeo guy? A bull hauler guy?

Lacy: [to Paul] Oh, he was such a little mini me of my dad.

Zane: I remember one time I went to Fresno with Dad when we were like I was pretty in second grade. So I did a lot sleeping in the back and he just drove and...

Lacy: [to Paul] He just like worshipped the ground my dad walked on and loved the truck.

Zane: ...and ate Vienna sausages

Lacy: Yeah, like straight out of the can?

Zane: Yeah, that's really all we ate.

Lacy: [to Paul] my dad, for example, was really into the Dallas Cowboys and you know when he was home, him and Zane would always watch the Dallas Cowboys game together. He's still like – ninety percent of his shirts are Cowboys jerseys.

Paul: Wow. And now did Zane ever – did he become a truck driver or what did he wind up doing?

Lacy: No, Zane never became a truck driver.

Zane: No. I decided a long time ago I would never do that. I would never, place money or work above things I care about. That's probably one of my first lessons, life lessons for sure.

Lacy: [to Paul] For Zane, those years he remembers them being harder because I think he felt my dad's absence a little bit more. [soft, acoustic music comes in] And so I don't think I realized until we talked how sort of tender that little that memory is for him.

So Zane told me this story that he remembers from being really little, that he'd never told me about before. When we were little, he and my cousin used to be best friends, and they'd hang out all the time. And one day they were hanging out over at my aunt's house and they were playing with toy trucks...

Zane: Since we were little you know he had toy trucks and that's what he wanted to do 'cause he thought it was cool.

Lacy: [to Paul] ...but the trucks meant something different to Zane.

Zane: And I resented that a lot. Just he didn't know. He didn't know what he was talking about.

Lacy: Why do you think you knew at such a tender age?

Zane: Just 'cause I knew what it did to our family, you know?

Lacy: I guess like one thing I'm trying to figure out is like what did trucking do to our family. Like part of me is sort of like nothing? You know, it supported us. But do you resent the fact that Dad was a truck driver?

Zane: Um, no. He drove hard because he had four kids. That's all he really knew how to do. And he resented it. We were too young to know exactly how much but he always hated it 'cause it just did, you can't be a parent. You know, that's all you do is truck just driving all the time. But there's not a lot of opportunity out there anyway. So, no matter what, you got to work. You just try to be home every night. That's the most important thing, you know?

Lacy: I think you would be a really good dad. if you ever end up doing that.

Zane: I've heard, yeah. I just... [long pause, Zane gets emotional] I haven't thought about any of this in a long time.

Lacy: [to Paul] I think that Zane feels some of the pain that my dad felt. Just because he knows about it and thinking back on that time I think brings some of that up.

Zane: The things you bury, you know? [Lacy and Zane hug, Zane sniffles] I just knew that I wouldn't do that to my family if I had one. That's no way to live. There's more important things than that, and a lot of people don't ever have that thought, you know? So...

Lacy: [whispering] I think that's enough.

Lacy: [to Paul] Can I ask you a question Paul?

Paul: Sure.

Lacy: [to Paul] What does it make you feel when I tell you this story about me and Zane?

Paul: It kind of reminds me of, I used to buy my grandkids these semis all the time. [Lacy laughs softly] And my daughter would catch us playing semis for hours. And my grandson would say, “what kind of wreck is this, Grandpa? Boom!” And then he’d shove one semi into another. And I’d say, “that’s a T-bone.” And “what kind of wreck is this, Grandpa?” And we would play what kind of wreck is this, Grandpa for long periods of time. [Lacy laughs] And then one day, and by then they had amassed a fleet of about eight trucks. And one day my daughter just took all those trucks and threw them away. She said it was a mess, they were always getting in the way, but I always kind of wondered if maybe she thought those boys were having just a little bit too much fun with those trucks. [Lacy laughs]

And in talking to you, I almost wonder if you’re speaking a truth back to me that I’ve never really explored that much with my kids. We’ve had these discussions – “Oh come on Dad, you did the best you could.” And “let’s have a beer.” Yeah but it’s not. It’s – I don’t know. I suppose when I hear what you say, Lacy, I think well this is probably a lot what my own kids went through. You know I mean?

Lacy: [to Paul] Yeah. And they say to you, “Dad we know that you did the best you could. And you had to do what you had to do. We understand.” Does that make you feel better?

Paul: Yeah, I appreciate it. But, you know, when you when you’re a parent you get one chance to get it right. So I’m not sure. I don’t know how to answer that, Lacy, because it’s not like, “pew, well I’m glad you understood” because you still don’t get that time back whether they understand that or not. And an old man’s conscience can be very harsh at times.

Lacy: [to Paul] I’m just asking because I’d like to ease my dad’s conscience a little bit ‘cause I know that he feels really bad. I know that he has these similar feelings that you’ve had. And I’m not quite sure how to do that.

Paul: The best thing you can do is – what makes me feel good is just to be able to spend time with my grown children and their children and just – you know, my daughter gave me a haircut the other day. [Lacy laughs] It was just a wonderful time. But I went to another barber to get it corrected and she busted me because now my hair is just really short. It’s like that buzz cut long beard look that’s going around now.

Lacy: [to Paul] Oh man. I like this advice. Hang out with your dad, give him a haircut.

Paul: Yeah. Just have a nice time. [Lacy laughs] Because these sessions, like these deeply introspective sessions, they might be healthy but it’s probably more like a colonoscopy. You don’t want to have it done every week.

Lacy: [to Paul] Yeah. Okay. [soft acoustic guitar music comes in]

Paul: I do want to say that I think it's very kind and sweet that you're kind of asking these questions at this point in your life. I think your dad is very fortunate to have a daughter like that.

Lacy: [to Paul] Well, I think doing this project has sort of made me think about these things in a different way. [soft acoustic guitar music continues and then transitions into Paul singing "Miss Lacy Jane"]

*Bozeman, Oh Bozeman, a stage with steel
You made Missoula, sheer force of will
till you bought it at Eastbound
Just to find you some good ground
Miss Lacy Jane
Montana, Montana is where you bear your own load
She shines like a diamond
Me, I'm just as broken but I'm holdin' my name
would you take this one token
Miss Lacy Jane
Northbound of Hastings on 2-81
You know I'm over my head here
I'm lost and undone
I never meant to cause you no pain
So I wrote you this song
Miss Lacy Jane*

Paul: 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.

Special thanks to Lacy and her family for leaving everything on the field on this episode. Much respect. Also to Gretta Cohn at Transmitter Media, who made it possible for Lacy to work with us on the show. On a personal note, special thanks to Thud Thornburg, my old friend and mentor, who I referenced at the top of the show. We hauled many a load together, even teamed a load of tropical plants once to Alaska in the dead of winter. We lost Theldon to cancer a couple months ago. He was the best hand I ever knew.

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. Check out Damon Krukowski's "Ways of Hearing" series, from

Radiotopia's Showcase podcast. I'll tell you this: it really changed the way I think about my own music and how it's heard. So thanks for that, Damon.

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. [Paul continues to sing "Miss Lacy Jane and then music fades out]

*Bozeman, Oh Bozeman, a stage with steel
Another load for Grand Island, down for the kill
Touchdown Chicago, in a cold misty rain,
Maybe find you that good ground
Miss Lacy Jane
Northbound of Hastings on 2-81
I'm over my head here
I'm lost and undone
I never meant to cause you no pain
So I wrote you this song
Miss Lacy Jane
Bozeman, Oh Bozeman, a stage with steel*

[00:47:30] **END OF EPISODE.**