



Episode 6: Our Punjabi Brothers

Air Date: April 30, 2020

[00:00:00] [audio from news broadcast: reporter speaking, "Interstate 5 and Highway 99, we're gridlocked today as hundreds of truckers carried out a rolling protest. Good evening. Thanks for joining us."] [ambient tones begin, gradually turning into sound of harmonica trilling]

"Long Haul" Paul Marhoefer: [00:00:08] Sacramento, California. 2017. [news coverage continues, reporter says, "Monday morning aimed at putting the brakes on new federal..."] [sounds of truck horns honking faintly in the background] Almost one thousand semis take to the road in one of the largest demonstrations by truckers, ever. [loud tinny sounding music blaring from truck driving by]

Binda Atwal: [00:00:21] People need to open their eyes and see what's going on and stop all this government interference, you know? [honking horns and voices chattering in the background]

Paul: And all of it led by an unlikely group of truckers. [joyful Punjabi plays in the background]

Binda: There was like Punjabi music blasting. [ambient noise from outdoors, truck motor humming and voices chattering in the background, speaking in Punjabi] They had like tea and fried pakoras for everybody that was driving through, so everybody was taking the rest area exit and they would just hand them to in their truck. [Punjabi music continues and then transitions into twangy, acoustic guitar music]

Paul: Today on the show, we're circling back to a subject we've been following since the start of the series... [news anchor speaking, "new regulation that would go into effect December 18th forcing them to use electronic logging device."]the electronic logging device.

[montage of news coverage, "ELD automatically records the time a driver spends behind the wheel... Accidents, but truckers say the devices would put them on 14-hour timers creating danger when the time runs out]

But we're coming at it from another side. [theme music comes in]

It's the story of how a community of immigrants banded together in the face of government regulation and became a force to be reckoned with in the trucking industry, all while changing a few hearts in the process.

Mike Landis: [00:01:41] ...yellow turban on and he has that bright blue Peterbilt and he gets out wearing, I forget what they call it, but it looks just like a sheet that he's wearing and it's the same color as his truck. And I was like whoa!

Paul: From Radiotopia and Overdrive Magazine, this is Over the Road. I'm Long Haul Paul. [theme fades out]

I remember first seeing Punjabi drivers out on the road in 1997. I was loading canned olives at a warehouse near Redding, California, and there were these three dudes there, and they were all wearing turbans. And that's fine, that's all well and good – to each his own – until they got assigned to their dock doors before I got mine. [twangy, bluesy guitar music comes in]

Now, this happened at a time when trucking was changing rapidly. Deregulation had pretty much dropped out the floor on freight rates, and good jobs were disappearing. While at the same time, more and more immigrants were coming into the industry to pick up the slack. It was a perfect recipe for resentment, and prejudice. Me, I wasn't making squat on that load of olives, and here were these people from God knows where, further depressing the freight market. And while we're at it, let's just go ahead and load them first. In that moment, I'm not going to lie to you – I was livid. [music fades out]

The sad truth is that when times get tough, a trucker has a reflexive tendency to blame some other trucker for his troubles. And when you're white, male, and have enjoyed everything those privileges confer and yet you're barely making it, the easiest trucker to blame is the one who looks and talks differently than you. We tend to kick downwards rather than band together and address the powers that be. And that's what makes the story we're telling today, so remarkable. [car alarm beeps once to signify locked doors, followed by sounds of people getting out of car]

It starts out in a pristine suburban neighborhood of California's Central Valley, at the home of Binda Atwal. [doorbells rings] Truth is I wasn't the one ringing that doorbell. At this exact moment I was waiting on a load of yogurt bound for Detroit. But we were lucky enough to team

up with a reporter at KQED public radio, named Alex Hall. [Door opens, Atwals and Alex greet each other]

Anyhow, Binda gives Alex a quick tour of the house.

Binda: This is the master bedroom

Paul: His son helps out...

Binda's son: [00:04:46] [in the background] This is my mom's room

Binda: [to his son] Yeah 'cause I'm always on the truck, huh?

Paul: Binda's two sons are six and three now.

Binda: [to Alex] Yeah, the Batman, the Black Panther, he has a Black Panther blanket...

Paul: Downstairs, the living room is beautifully decorated with ornate wooden furniture, and religious imagery.

Binda: That's the ten Gurus. And that's the Golden Temple...that's like our equivalent of the Vatican.

Paul: There are family photos, everywhere.

Binda's son: That's my dad, that's my mama.

Paul: In a strange kind of twist, Binda actually got into trucking, so he could spend more time with his kids. [Binda and his sons having a conversation in the background]

Binda: Before, I was working in pizza. And like, I was a general manager, but in pizza weekends are the busiest, so you always have to work Saturday and Sunday. And with trucking, at least I got two, three days off to spend completely with my kids.

Paul: So when Binda was out on the road he might be gone for days at a time, but he could also be home on the weekends.

Binda: Yeah, so that was the main reason I got into trucking, surprisingly.

Puneet Atwal: [00:05:38] It was hard. In the beginning, he was gone most of the time.

Paul: Binda's wife is home too.

Puneet: I'm Puneet Atwal

Paul: She had just had their first child when Binda went out on the road.

Puneet: So it was hard. [Puneet and Binda's son speaking in the background] But the kids know what their dad does, or they know how it is, because most of our family members are in trucking business.

Paul: And this is part of the reason we wanted to talk to Binda. Because just a couple years after getting his commercial driver's license, he found himself at the very heart of a family, a community, and eventually a movement, of Punjabi truck drivers.

Binda: Like, if you want to just count my street and like three neighboring streets here, I could probably name like fifteen people. [upbeat music comes in]

One of my uncles – my dad's brother – lives four houses down, one side of the street; and my dad's other brother lives three houses down, the other side of the street. And we're all truck drivers, you know. It's like a thirty, thirty-two house subdivision, maybe forty. But like all the houses here that are Indians, except for one family, everybody has at least one truck driver. [driving by a house] And that house right there with a car backed up in the driveway, those are also Indians – they're also truckers.

Paul: Binda takes Alex for a little drive around town, and it's like this pretty much wherever they go. [montage of Binda showing Alex around neighborhood. Binda says, "See the red truck? You can tell from the last name across the top."]

And then when they talk to those drivers, it's the same story all over again.

[montage of local truckers sharing their stories: "My father-in-law, he's also a truck driver...Let's see... My brother and my cousin, my uncle, my brother is a truck driver, he used to do dispatch... 80% of the men in my family, they drive a truck")]

As this last driver suggested, the Punjabis who go into trucking are in fact overwhelmingly male.

Binda: I have uncles, cousins, brother-in-law's, friends...

Kulwant: [00:07:28] We decide when we are in India, we decide we are truck drivers.

Binda: I know maybe over like five, six hundred Punjabi truck drivers. [ambient sounds from inside restaurant, voices chattering in background, music playing faintly in background]

Paul: When they stop for lunch, turns out even the owner of the restaurant used to be a trucker.

Ranjit: [00:07:45] Yeah, I deliver only truck drivers, not others...

Binda: Like he won't deliver residential, but for truckers he'll deliver because trucks cannot come here.

Paul: There are no precise figures on this, but we're talking many thousands of Indian-American truck drivers in California alone. [music fades out]

And many of those drivers trace their roots back to a single state of India, called Punjab.

Binda: So Punjab is a state in northern India. But as far as the culture and ethnicity goes, when you talk to a Punjabi person, they will not identify as Indian. They will identify as Punjabi.

Paul: Part of what sets this region apart, is the Sikh religion, which originated in Punjab about 500 years ago.

Binda: There's Sikhs there and there's Hindus there.

Paul: And as Binda tells it, this religious divide helps explain the rise of Punjabi trucking in America. [archival audio news coverage: reporter says, "August the 15th, 1947: Independence Day for India..."]

We have to go back to the partition of India at the end of British colonial rule.

Binda: OK in '47 when India is split, the feeling was that the Hindus got India and the Muslims got Pakistan, and the Sikhs got nothing. [twangy guitar music comes in] So, you know, this feeling kept building, building, building, building. And then here comes one leader and like all the Sikhs are following him.

[archival audio from a Bhindranwale speech followed by news coverage: reporter says, "Bhindranwale has become well known for urging village Sikhs to abstain from drink and drugs, and not cut their hair..."]

He was getting very popular. So the Congress party, the ruling party in India at the time, they devised the attack on the Golden Temple, which is like the holiest shrine of the Sikhs.

[montage of archival audio news coverage: "... tension in the Punjab, which was a Northern state of India..." with sounds of protest in the background]

Paul: The attack ended with Indian soldiers actually storming the temple itself, leaving hundreds or maybe even thousands of people dead, including the leader of this movement.

Binda: So after 1984, in retaliation, two Sikhs, they were bodyguards for the Indian prime minister, Indira Gandhi at the time. They shot and killed her.

[archival audio news coverage: reporter says, "We regret to announce the death of the Prime Minister... The majority Hindus and the Sikh community are spilling over into violence..." while people wail in grief in the background]

Binda: So from 1984, started a Sikh genocide spree. [archival news coverage continues] If they would see any Sikh youth, a Sikh man. Heck, a Sikh child. They were killing four-year-old kids.

[archival news coverage: interviewer asks witness, "So Sikh people were killed?" and witness responds, "Yeah, he was burned alive in that car."]

A lot of people escaped from India to save their lives.

[archival news coverage: Punjab man says, "They killed our children. They killed our relatives. They killed our brothers..."] [all sounds fade to silence]

So that's why there was a large influx of Sikh immigration in the 80s, late 80s.

Alex: [to Binda's dad, Gurmail] [00:10:51] Hi!

Gurmail Atwal: [00:10:52] How are you?

Alex: I'm Alex.

Gurmail: My name is Gurmail

Alex: Nice to meet you. [Gurmail affirms] [conversation continues in the background]

Paul: Binda was actually born here in California, but his dad, Gurmail Atwal, came to the U.S. in the 80s.

Gurmail: ...In 1983

Paul: This was before the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the violence against the Sikhs. He actually came because he married an Indian woman who lived in the U.S.

Gurmail: All the youngest, they have a dream to go abroad at that time.

Paul: In the early 80s, there was only a very small Punjabi community in the Central Valley.

Gurmail: The first town where I used to move, in Winton. I was the first, only one Indian in that town.

Paul: But not for long.

Binda: My dad came in '83. My grandpa came in '92. My grandma in '95. One of my uncles in '99. My dad's sister in 2003. And his other brother in 2006 within like, you know, twenty-three years he had his whole family here. Now I have nobody on my dad's side of the family in India at all.

Paul: Like a lot of Punjabi immigrants, their family settled in the area around Livingston, CA, about an hour north of Fresno.

Gurmail: Now you see every town in Livingston, two Indian temples. Because the community come over here from India. [baby babbling in the background]

Paul: Binda's dad saw this same trend play out with Punjabi truckers.

Gurmail: In '83 there were few.

Paul: He could basically count them at first.

Gurmail: I know their names even [lists names of people and trucking companies] – not more than forty people driving truck, Indian people.

Paul: And eventually he would become one of them. [harmonica trill comes in followed by atmospheric tones]

Binda: So when my dad first came from India, he was clean shaven. He just had a mustache and he got a job with the ConAgra Banquet Foods as a quality control supervisor.

Gurmail: But they shut down in '93.

Paul: By that time, Binda's dad had decided to grow out his beard and hair. As you may know, this is one of the basic practices of the Sikh faith, and also why many Sikhs wear their hair in a turban.

Binda: So he would apply for jobs and he would tell them, you know, I have six years, seven years experience as a quality control supervisor. I have a bachelor's degree, yada, yada, yada. They would tell him, "OK, come in. No worries."

Gurmail: But when they see my beard, they would say, "Oh, we'll think about it."

Binda: And he didn't get a job anywhere. So after like, you know, just going place to place three, four months, he went to the local college and he got his license through there.

Gurmail: That's why I have to get truck driver license.

Paul: Trucking was simply the job he could get at that time – the pay was good, and nobody cared about the beard.

Kulwant: [00:13:34] There's no other option.

Paul: It's a story we heard many times, from other truckers in Binda's community.

Kulwant: When we come from other country, we have nothing.

Binda: So at that moment, either you could farm or you could, you know, work at a gas station, or they'll go drive a truck. [soft tones come in]

Trucker 1: [00:13:56] [truck motor running] Like I was working in the store making fifteen hundred per month. When I start driving, I start making like seven thousand per month.

Binda: You don't need a bachelor's degree to start making, you know, four or five thousand dollars a month.

Trucker 2: [00:14:04] It's good yeah – pays your bills, pays everything.

Paul: This same reality exists for a lot of recent immigrants: for someone with limited education or English-language skills, trucking is about as good a job as you can get – maybe the only job you can get where the pay is decent – which could explain why by some estimates, almost 20% of truckers in America today were born in another country. [Punjabi music comes in]

But part of what makes the Punjabi story so remarkable, is how this community has embraced trucking, with many becoming owner-operators and small fleet owners, or even running their own truck stops.

There's actually like this whole genre of Punjabi trucking songs.

Binda: Like Surjit Khan and Sidhu Moosewala... there's a lot of them. [Punjabi music continues, now with lyrics]

Paul: The music videos look like your average hip-hop video, except everyone is dancing around tractor trailers instead of exotic cars. [hip-hop beat comes in]

It all feels a little bizarre to an old folkie like me, but they make trucking look, pretty cool.

Binda: Man, I got a little cousin he just turned sixteen. He doesn't have a car license yet, but he's marking his calendar until he turns eighteen and can start driving local. [music fades out]

Paul: But here's the thing about Binda. He really doesn't buy into the whole cool-factor of trucking. For him it's just a job.

Binda: Trucking is like the last option, like, okay, you can't do anything else? Go be a truck driver. You'll make good money.

Paul: Which raises the question: why is Binda driving a truck at all? I mean, he was born here in the U.S.; he's a native English speaker; has a four-year college degree and as it turns out – two years of law school under his belt.

Binda: Yes, I did go to law school for two years. But back when I was young and dumb, I got a two misdemeanor DUIs, so I couldn't take the bar exam until they were off my record.

Paul: That's how Binda ended up working in a pizza restaurant, and ultimately driving a truck. So like everyone else in this story – and like me – trucking gave him a way out of trouble. [minimal tones come in]

Binda: At that time, it seemed like the best way for me to provide for my family to where I was, you know, bringing in a good amount of money. [quick-paced, minimal piano melody comes in, accompanied by trilling harmonica]

Paul: That was in 2015, which happens to be the same year the federal government first announced the new ELD mandate, that would soon require virtually all truckers to run an electronic log.

Opposition to the new rules started to build right away, including within the Punjabi community. And Binda found himself in a unique position.

Binda: So they're doing all these videos in Punjabi and they tell me, like, hey, you know, you went to law school, you have a bachelors – do it in English. So I did it in English. And I mean that thing gained so much traction. There was about a thousand trucks in the rolling protest.

Paul: After the break, Binda here, who never meant to be a trucker in the first place, becomes the spokesman for the largest trucker protest in a generation. [music fades out]

Alright, we're gonna pick it up right where we left off with Binda. He drops out of law school, gets his CDL, buys his own truck; and that same year, the feds announce the new ELD mandate.

Binda: For me, it just meant you would lose more home time, the flexibility to be honest with you, you know.

Paul: Remember that on paper logs, you basically regulated yourself. This means you could easily tack an extra thirty minutes onto your workday, or maybe take a nap in the middle of your shift and then make up the time later. No one but the most hawk-eyed inspector would know the difference. And sometimes, those little liberties could mean a lot. You might go to church on Sunday morning; maybe linger a little longer at the family barbeque, or in Binda's case, make it home at night to see your newborn son. He felt like electronic logs would take all that away.

Binda: Cause like, my dad was a single parent when he raised us. I played football in high school. I played Indian sport called kabaddi. And my dad never came to any of my practices. I want to be there for all that stuff. I don't want to miss his childhood. [minimal tones come in]

Paul: As the start-date for the ELD mandate approached, Binda realized he wasn't the only one who felt this way.

Binda: There's an app called WhatsApp, right? So we have trucking groups on there and each group has like 250 Sikh people in it. So, you know, all these videos started coming out. [audio from social media videos in Punjabi] And then people started saying like, hey, you know, I'm in so and so city, what can I do? [montage of social media videos, calling for support in English and Punjabi]

And they went on and put like flyers at like truck stops. Rest areas or like Indian restaurants or at the Sikh temple where we know people park and we just getting started getting such a big response. [guitar music comes in]

Like I started getting like 100 calls a day, like, what are we going to do? Where do we need to go? What do we need to do, you know?

Paul: So Binda, and a few of the other people who were sharing videos, decided to call a meeting.

Binda: We met at the first Sikh temple made in California in Stockton. And the response there was just astonishing. We had maybe three hundred and fifty people there. Okay. So we met there and we sat down. We made like a five-member committee. And I was kind of made in charge of the media because they're like, your English is the best, you know. So you talk to all like the TV, the radio, the newspaper.

[news coverage of the protest: reporter interviewing Binda says, "...Protest of the new regulation..." and Binda says, "The electronic log pretty much makes us into a machine." Reporter summarizes, "...Atwal is protesting the electronic logging devices...."]

Paul: Binda and his Punjabi network linked up with a national protest planned for the first week of October 2017, called Operation Black and Blue. In California, the event kicked off with a rally at the state capitol, in Sacramento. [music fades out]

Binda: When we got to Sacramento, you know, in front of the State Capitol building, I mean, we had maybe five, six hundred people out there.

[audio from speeches during the protest. One person shares, "...Truck drivers' rights...right as drivers, give us dignity..."]

And we had speeches out there. You know, I myself was doing them in English, but mostly they were in Punjabi. [audio speech in Punjabi] And it was just like kind of trying to, you know, wake these sleeping people up, like, look think, you know? [low, minimal tones come in with strong down beat]

So that was Sacramento. And then we had Bakersfield. And then we had Fresno on the third day. [montage of audio from speeches during the protest: speakers, crowd cheers and responses]

And then the next day, we were supposed to meet up in Yuba City.

Paul: This was the culmination of the whole action: a rolling protest. Hundreds of trucks showed up to participate.

Binda: They had numbers printed out from like one to fifteen hundred, and we put 782 numbers on windshields there at the Sikh temple parking lot itself. [truck horn honks, truck motor humming]

Paul: And many others showed up to ride along.

Binda: So there was a thousand trucks in the protest. [trucks honking in agreement] But in reality, that number was probably like, you know, three, four thousand people that parked their trucks. [montage of protest news coverage]

Paul: And this is where, for Binda at least, the whole protest began to unravel.

Binda: Once we hit the freeway, then people started parking on the side or slowing down.

Paul: The protest had no official permits, so the trucks ended up scattered over miles, with no clear organization. Some drivers decided to just stop in the middle of the highway to get attention, blocking traffic altogether.

Binda: And that's when the news helicopter came out. [sound of whirling helicopter overhead] [audio from news coverage: reporter says, "...Right there, there's somebody actually on the freeway in front of that truck, standing in front of that orange truck..."]

And then that's when the police started ticketing people. [reporter continues, "...Protest to that one truck being pulled over. Someone has gone out the top...."]

Like 88 people got a ticket for having the number in the windshield. But in no way at all was that part of the protest to shut down the freeway and do that. [truck horn honks while trucks drive away] [music fades out]

Paul: The whole ELD protest left Binda feeling well, pretty bitter. He had helped to build a movement, but he couldn't actually hold it together when they finally got out on the road. I have to be honest, though, I kind of envy what Binda and his Punjabi brethren were able to accomplish out there in California. I mean, do you know how hard it is to get two truckers to agree on anything – even the price of diesel? So as far as I'm concerned, if you can get a thousand truckers and point them in one direction – Binda Atwal, you could just be the next JFK.

There's an interesting coda to this story, though, which is how these protests affected the trucking community itself. In a way, this may be the most lasting impact of Operation Black and Blue.

Binda: Before we did the Black and Blue, the Punjabi truckers got hardly any respect from like I mean, if you think truckers is predominantly Caucasian, right like white males that are drivers. And they were like the old school truckers. And they called the Indians "ragheads," you know, "diaper heads", "A-rabs," and you name it, they called 'em that. But after the Black and Blue, after, you know, the thousand plus showing, they started calling us the Punjabi brothers, the Sikh brothers. There'll be like Facebook posts and stuff. And people would say something bad about a Sikh or a Punjabi. And before a Sikh or Punjabi could respond you got like twenty white people responding like, hey, you know, they're not all like that. We met these people. They're good. They got the same problems as us.

Paul: One of those changed hearts, belonged to our old friend Mike Landis. When we interviewed Mike for our very first episode at the truck show, he told us how his own attitude towards the Sikh and Punjabi drivers has changed.

Mike: Having grown up watching 9/11 on a TV in biology class, to me if someone had a big beard look Middle Eastern and had a turban on their head, they were crap. [train horn in

background] That was a wrong way to look at it. I knew it deep down. But just always stuck in my head.

Paul: Right up until the ELD protests began.

Mike: I went to D.C. on October of '17 and we decided to go to Constitution and talk to the public.

Paul: The same week that Binda and company were organizing the rolling protest in California, Mike and a few dozen or so other truckers parked their rigs along Constitution Ave near the White House. But a group of Punjabi drivers showed up in D.C. too, and when one of the leaders stepped out of his truck with the full turban and beard, Mike was, well, impressed.

Mike: And I'm thinking of myself, I'm like, man, if I was in a place where most people probably looked at me and were like, "oh my god." And he's still getting out wearing that because he's proud to wear it. And he's here with us. That kind of says a lot.

Paul: And just like in California, the east coast Punjabis had completely out-organized every other faction of truckers.

Mike: You know he had put together with a few of the others these vans and stuff that went around to the different states and picked up all these different Sikh and Punjabi drivers and stuff, and they brought us food. They would walk up to us and shake our hand and thank us for being there with our trucks. They outnumbered us four to one, I guarantee you. You know they asked me like, "Hey where are you from?" and I'm like, "Oh, I'm from Lititz" and they're like, "Oh yeah us too." I'm like, "What?" Here they own the pizza joint down the street from my house! [soft, pleasant acoustic guitar music comes in]

At the end of it, I was on a bench watch and looking at the Washington Monument and this whole thing has just been this crazy, weird, emotional eye opening, like you're already there fighting for something you believe in kind of. And then you know I've always had this idea of these people, and just totally feel like a complete piece of crap for having this idea for so long in my life. [laughs]

When we talk to them they want some type of action, because they come from areas of the world where if they try and protest they're liable to be killed for one, and for two, they've been in a suppressed type of situation where they're like you have the opportunity to fight for something that's right like that's your right as a citizen here to be able to do that. And you're not going to stand up and do it. Are you crazy? And they're a hundred percent right. [music fades out]

Paul: A few days after we interviewed Binda, Sikh families from all around Livingston gathered together at their local temples. [live Punjabi music plays]

Binda was out driving that night, but his wife and children went. There was music, fellowship – and just like at the Black and Blue protests – plenty of food. [music continues accompanied by singing]

This event falls on the same day as Diwali, one of the major Hindu holidays.

Binda: “Diva” just means light, so it’s called the festival of lights.

Paul: But for Sikhs, the day has a special significance, and Binda told us the story.

Binda: Our sixth Guru, teacher...

Paul: Like so many of the stories Binda shared, it begins in a time of oppression, and resistance. A Sikh guru was executed for refusing to forsake his faith, and so his young son rose to become the new guru.

Binda: And at the age of fourteen he was imprisoned in a fort, for two years because his father wouldn’t convert, and he wouldn’t convert. So then on the event of Diwali, the emperor told him, OK I’ll free you. And there were also 52 kings from neighboring jurisdictions or whatever who were imprisoned in the same cell. And he told him as many people who can hold onto your shirt and follow you out. I’ll let them go. [soft atmospheric tones come in]

So what the guru did, he told his people to sew him a shirt with 52 coattails. So all the kings grabbed one, and they followed him out, so it’s called “Bandi Chhor”, prisoner release. It’s like, Punjabis tend to flock together, we’re a really close-knit community.

Paul: If our own “prisoner release” is ever going to come for all the truckers out there who feel trapped by regulation and surveillance, then I might just expect to see one of our Punjabi brothers leading the march. Man, I hope they’ll save a coattail for me. [strong percussive beat comes in]

And in case you’re wondering if those protests ever did lead to any actual change, the short answer is yes. We’ll fill you in on that in our final episode, because it’s actually been playing out as we’ve been working on this series. [theme music comes in]

But we’re not done yet!

In our next episode, I’m going to introduce you to some of the greatest characters and storytellers I’ve ever met out here. We’re calling it “Long Haul Paul’s, Long Haul of Fame,” and well, Radiotopia is pretty much lettin’ the inmates run the asylum on this one. So, on our penultimate episode, I’m going to pass the mic around, and introduce you to some folks who are simply my heroes.

Our Over the Road pit crew includes producer and sound designer Ian Coss, contributing producer Lacy Roberts at Transmitter Media, and for this episode, field producer Alex Hall at KQED. Our editor from Overdrive Magazine is Todd Dills. But I have to say, the title ‘editor’

really doesn't capture what Todd has done for this show. Todd is the one who really stuck his neck out for me, and turned just a basic wise-guy trucker into an actual writer. No one but my wife Denise should have to be a traffic cop in my head, but Todd, man he does alright.

Anyhow, our digital producer is Erin Wade, our project manager, the wonderful lady who holds everything together, 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, Tishomingo Jim Whitehead, Jan Grant-Gullet, The Late Great Roger Clark, and Mr. Andrew Marshall. Additional engineering by Donnie Gullet and Muscle Shoals Music Marketing

Special thanks to Julie Caine at KQED who connected us with Alex, and all the other folks at the station who supported this collaboration. Also to Jagmeet Singh Mac at PRX for his guidance and insight on this one. And a deep bow to our friend Binda for taking the time to talk to us. We know just how much he values a day at home with the family, so the fact that he set that day aside for this show, means a lot.

Over the Road is made possible by support from the folks I've 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.

Look for Overdrive Magazine at Overdriveonline.com. To read Todd and Carolyn Magner Mason's contemporaneous account of the West Coast ELD protests in 2017, search "Into the Limelight: Sikh Truckers in America." While you're there, catch Todd's Channel 19 blog, hear the Overdrive Radio podcast, and more while you're at it. Seriously, the staff at Overdrive are truly first-rate people. And the fact that I'm even associated with that publication, still blows me away.

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. [music fades out]

[00:34:56] **END OF EPISODE.**