

# No. 1 Truck Driver Believes In 55 Miles Per Hour Speed Limit On Highways; Keeps It Slow And Safe

America's No. 1 truck driver believes in the 55 mile an hour speed limit. As Olen Lee Welk, 63, of Big Sandy, Texas, explains in his tried Texas drawl: "I never tried to fly."

One could say he had his chances. For instance, "Oley" Welk went to school with Clyde Barrow who, with a girl named Bonnie, took a "fast trip" of crime and mayhem. In 1934, the year they were gunned down, Oley Welk took up commercial trucking.

Welk, named "1977 Truck Driver of the Year" by the American Trucking Association (ATA), has never felt the need to go fast in a 43-year-career of driving heavy and oversized tractor-trailers for an estimated 3.5 million accident-free miles. In fact, he says: "I run between 55 and 58 — I'm never bothered."

"I usually beat the fast trucks

from the east coast to the west coast, or west to east," he declares. "All you gotta do is get used to it," he adds. "I always believed if you want to move, they have a place in Indianapolis. You can go race with A. J. (Foyt)."

Welk, who has seen his share of gruesome accidents caused by speeding, believes the worst consequence of exceeding the 55 mph speed limit can result when a front or rear tire blows.

"I love men, love my wife, love everybody else," he says. "I don't want to run over anybody if I blow-out a tire."

Welk, who visited Washington recently for President Carter's inauguration and to be honored for his long safety record, drives the big rigs for C & H Transportation Co., Inc., of Dallas, the country's leading heavy-hauling carrier. He marked his 25th year with C & H on January 21. Welk is the first heavy hauler to win the ATA's highest honor. He loves driving ("I'm going on 'til I'm 85," he vows.)

At the U. S. Department of Transportation, he got a trophy and diamond pin from former Federal Highway Administrator Norbert Tiemann. He also met Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., (USAF-Ret.), special assistant to the secretary for the 55 mph speed limit, who travels the nation seeking support for the speed limit.

The "Truck Driver of the Year" said he favors installing road speed governors in trucks to restrict their maximum speed to about 55 mph—as do C & H and many other trucking firms. "It saves your engine," Welk points out. "You don't

overwind your engine.

The veteran driver said his truck has a five-speed transmission and a three-speed rear end — "what I call an old folks' transmission." He said the C & H company trucks are "geared perfect for 55 mph."

He said that C & H adopted the 55 mph speed limit about 1959. Drivers are subject to a lay-off if caught violating the limit three times. "The next time," he said, "you're gone."

While he liked things better before there were CB radios, Oley Welk has used a CB radio for about four years. CBers know him by the handle of "Hawaiian Hitchhiker," although he has never been to the Islands. But a son once brought him a Hawaiian ashtray shaped like a foot, with a "way big" big toe, explaining that "hippies use the big toe for hitchhiking."

Welk painted the big toe red, and keeps the ashtray in his truck as his symbol.

He doesn't like to see the CB used to flaunt the 55 mph speed limit, but only to help people who are in need or who are involved in accidents. "I've helped plenty of them. I don't call them Smokey-Bear. I call them the Highway Patrol."

Welk was also named 1977 Driver of the Year by two states, Texas and Missouri, which nominated him for the national title. He was named a "knight of the road" in 1958 when he came upon an overturned car. The dead driver had thousands of dollars in cash in his wallet.

Welk refused to give the money to alleged "relatives" who approached him. He turned it over to the Texas Highway Patrol. "And I owed a payment on my truck at the time," he said.

His wife Hazel, 59, sometimes rides with him ("sitting there riding and bossing me," he says. "She has about 20,000 miles.") They have four sons and two daughters, as well as 15 grandchildren and two great-grandsons. Two sons are trucking for C & H, while a third son used to. The fourth boy, an ex-Marine, drives a city bus.

He says the worst accident he ever saw involved a woman who had lost both legs and had her clothes stripped off. Welk gave her his old Army blanket to cover herself up. The accident took place in a 25 mph zone, he said. Her husband had been speeding.

His millions of miles of heavy hauling (with loads up to 120,000 pounds) have taken him throughout the U. S. and Canada, except for Alaska ("too cold for me"), Hawaii, and

a few New England states.

His unusual cargoes have included explosives and giant missiles ("I hauled Apollo 7 out of Washington down to California").

Still, it's the trips he didn't take that are the unusual part of Oley Welk's story—i.e., a trip to baseball's big leagues. He was a sandlot player in Dallas in 1934 when Dizzy Dean invited him to go to Florida for a tryout with the St. Louis Cardinals.

"I was a knuckleball pitcher," he recalls. "I could make it do a jig dance in a rainstorm. But I couldn't afford the trip to Florida — so I took up trucking."

"All I know now is good old

dumb truck driving," Welk says. "but I love it." He also keeps it slow.....and safe.

On a hill in Ripley, Ohio, stands the John Rankin house, once a major stop on the underground railway. A lantern placed in its upper window, visible across the Ohio River in Kentucky, helped some 2,000 escaping slaves find their way to the safety of the free state, National Geographic says.

The size of an acre derived from the amount of land two oxen could plow in one day, National Geographic World says.

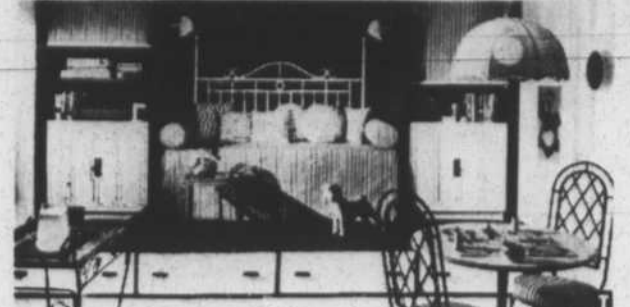
## Fossilized Remains Of Alligators Found

Fossilized remains of alligators four feet long have been found in the Arctic climate of Ellesmere island, the National Geographic Society says. Scientists also have recovered bone fragments of turtles that weighed several hundred pounds and a cow-sized animal that seemed to be part rhinoceros and part hippopotamus, all relics of some 48 million years ago when North America and Europe were believed connected across the North Atlantic.



Americans, late in adopting the fork, mostly used knives until after the Civil War. Then special fish and dessert forks were fashionable, and ice cream was eaten with forks.

## THE BOTTOM LINE ON STORAGE SPACE



SPACE PLATFORM — Charming, bed-setting room with cotton ticking and under-the-floor drawers.

When you get down to it, young people can always use more storage space. Now things that are underfoot in a teen-ager's room can be under the floor instead.

It's easy to put up a platform in one part of the room, with step drawers underneath to add stash-away space.

Put the bed and a pair of matching chests in the alcove and build open shelves above the chests. The Window Shade Manufacturers Association suggests treating the shelves to laminated window shades that act as pull-down doors. You can do it yourself with a pressure sensitive laminate method called Joanna's Lam-Eze.

The shades match the bright look of Waverly's red and white ticking in bedspread, accent pillows and Meadowcraft's red lacquer ice cream parlor chairs. All the material is 100 percent cotton, so it's easy to work with, easy on the eye and easy to care for, for a long time.

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