

mandments and a cross adorn the walls, and Milam, who confesses to thoroughly enjoying the expense account and hotels in the “unreal job” he once held, admonishes students, “Don’t tell me your dirty joke. I’ve got no time for that and I don’t like that foul language mess.”

While it was a company buy-out and subsequent layoffs that shut down his lavish lifestyle on the road, it was the moment he held his newborn son Jacob in his arms 28 years ago that transformed his life. “On May 3rd, it’s been 28 years and I have had not a drop [of alcohol],” he said. “I knew if I was ever going to make anything of myself, I was going to have to be a better man.”

Being better translated into starting a school in 2006 that he says is not about him “getting rich but

to change people’s lives.”

Daniels readily tells of how factory workers, professionals wanting a change of pace, some who want an adventure, retired couples who want to “sight see and get paid for it” and even a Catholic priest have been on their student rosters. Students continue to check back in after graduating to show both she and Milam how well they are doing. One sent a photo that day after successfully backing his rig into a tight fit. Another reports that after previously rarely ever leaving Weakley County, he’s now been to California, seen New Orleans and Dallas and is well on his way to having his own truck.

“Drivers can make \$1000 a week,” said Milam of the financial opportunities awaiting anyone interested in pursuing a career in an industry that is in dire need



Greenfield native Richard Milam took seven years to restore his 1953 five-window Chevrolet truck, found sitting in a Sidonia field.

of skilled workers.

As to why there’s a shortage, expected responses are offered and then immediately remedied as Milam and Daniels talk.

said Daniels.

“Twelve years ago, when I was on the road and putting in 2.2 million miles, I had maps, lots of maps,” said Milam. “The smart phone is the greatest invention. When I was young, I had to find a pay phone to talk to Jacob.”

Pay has also gone from 17 cents a mile in Milam’s truck driving days to current opportunities when 40 cents would be low.

Trucks are now automatics and filled with “modern conveniences such as microwaves, fridges, and flat screen TVs” said Daniels while also underscoring how truck stops have transitioned to serve a changing demographic of driver.

Smart phones with GPS, Facetime and/or Skype have reduced the frustration of finding one’s way and the loneliness often described for the long hauls,

While less than 10% of the industry is made up of women drivers, they are sought after, said Milam, explaining that they have fewer accidents, cleaner

trucks, are on time more often, and “don’t play around in a truck stop.”

According to Milam, female trainers are actually paid more. “The steering wheel does not discriminate,” he added.

After building up a system that included a second school, a trucking company and a storefront, Milam determined he had “too many irons in the fire” and scaled back. He reopened the Sharon school in September 2017 and is ready to provide area residents options that they cannot easily find in today’s economy.

“I could put 1500 people to work today if I had them,” he noted.

The cost of Milam’s three-week course is \$2500. For more information visit the website at roadrunnerdrivingschool.org, @rrds250 on Facebook, or call 731-456-2008.

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