

CHAPTER I

BE THE TRUCK.  
NOT THE SQUIRREL.

*“The highways are littered with the carcasses of people with misguided or uninspired careers, underperforming engines, blurred visions, dysfunctional drivers, and empty fuel tanks, people who have been run over by stronger, faster, and better moving vehicles along the road to success.”*

*--Andrew J. Sherman*

Each one of us has had that moment when we are stuck, frozen in time and without momentum, like a deer in headlights about to be struck by a truck traveling seventy miles per hour down the highway. In that life or death situation, we are either going to choose to get out of the way or to remain lifeless and dumbfounded by the peril. These eat or be eaten moments affect people at many different stages of their lives, their concerns, and their relationships.

THE ECOSYSTEM OF THE HIGHWAY

Think about the ecosystem of a typical highway. The most powerful vehicle is clearly the eighteen-wheel truck, its awesome strength and size confidently carrying valuable cargo to its destination. On the other end of the spectrum is the squirrel, whose indecision leads to its demise.

**Trucks** are strong, durable, versatile, and build on their momentum as they move towards their destination according

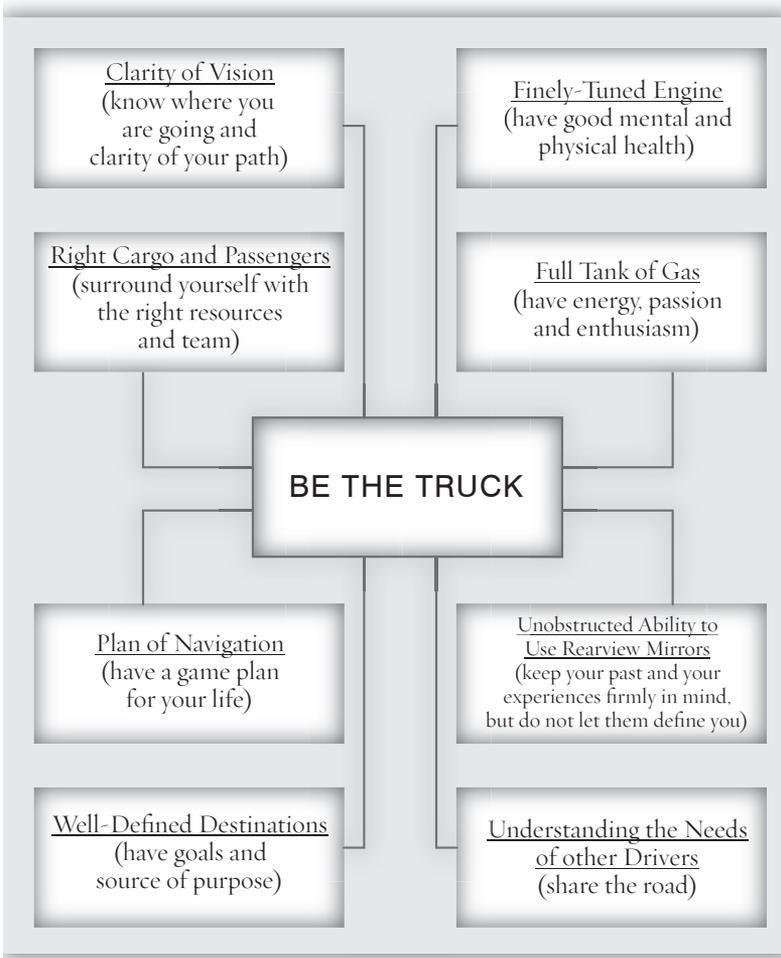
to a road map and on a designated timetable. Nothing stands in their way as they slowly and steadily get to where they are going with confidence and purpose. On the road of life, have you put a game plan in place that will make you a truck? Or are you more likely to be the squirrel scampering from place to place with no clear destination? *Road Rules*® will allow you to gather the knowledge, insights, and wisdom you will need to truly be the truck and not the squirrel. By following these rules, you position yourself to harness the power of the truck and avoid the fate of the squirrel.

**Squirrels** are generally happy to eat acorns and mind their own business until one day they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. WHAM! They never knew what hit them. They are overpowered or blindsided by a force much greater than they are and their fate is sealed.

In today's unpredictable world and economy, it's more important than ever to position yourself to be the truck. Whether it is in your business or personal life, you have to remain focused or you will fritter away time, your most valuable resource, on small, near-term priorities, like finding the next acorn.

So how do you live your life like the truck and not the squirrel?

Here are eight critical aspects:



Being the truck does *not* mean barreling down the road forward without regard to what's in front of you or reaching your destination at any cost. The message of this book is that you should embrace and enjoy the ride towards your destination, always carrying a full cargo of knowledge ready to deliver and share with others. These are the rules to live by on the road of life. You are issued a driver's license as a privilege, not as a

legal right, and that privilege is conditioned on your following the rules of the road. Along the path to your destination are many of life's lessons, some simple and straightforward and some that will require a few layers of the onion to be peeled away. Your ability to understand and adopt these lessons, and to truly apply them in defining your life's path and your actions, decisions and choices, etc, will all define your success as a person. Your ability to "connect the dots," to harvest your relationships and your intangible assets to ensure alignment between your core values and your actions, will help you live a productive, enlightened, and enriched life. Life is a journey, so enjoy the ride!

#### SOME PERSPECTIVES ON SQUIRRELS

Although there are some who consider squirrels to be essentially rats with long furry tails, I have no problem with squirrels, nor is the theme of this book intended to be anti-squirrel. I hope to avoid any nasty calls or e-mails from PETA or the SPCA as the result of the subtitle. After all, squirrels have some positive attributes: for example, the foresight and the knowledge to store acorns to last through the cold winter, which is a great life lesson.

The Simmons Society was founded by Professor Roger M. Knutson of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, to further studies of road fauna...also known as roadkill. Professor Knutson has published a book called *Common Animals of Roads, Streets and Highways: A Field Guide to Flattened Fauna*. It probably does not lend itself to coffee table chats, but does con-

tain some disheartening data. A publication called the *Animal People Newsletter* estimates that the following animals are killed by motor vehicles in the United States on an annual basis:

- ⊙ 41 million squirrels
- ⊙ 26 million cats
- ⊙ 22 million rats
- ⊙ 19 million opossums
- ⊙ 15 million raccoons
- ⊙ 6 million dogs
- ⊙ 350,000 deer

If this data is correct, vehicles on U.S. roads are killing over 100 million animals per year, with squirrels occupying the unenviable position of being number one on the list. Many of the animals that meet their fate as roadkill share some of the same characteristics.

- ⊙ They did not see their demise coming.
- ⊙ They were killed by something much bigger and stronger than them.
- ⊙ They reacted to a threat with inertia.
- ⊙ They lacked the ability to escape their circumstances.

None of us should act in this fashion, yet too often we live our lives no differently than animals soon to be roadkill. We

suffer from DITH Syndrome™ —Deer In The Headlights Syndrome. We either do not see danger coming or we see it, freeze in shock, and essentially accept our peril.

Who has the best perspective on the road? The squirrel sits two inches above the ground and can barely see much ahead of him. He lives in the present, with no perspective on the future or the past. Surely the truck driver who sits fifteen feet above the road has vision which is further and wider than everyone else. Where do you sit? How can you get a better view and clearer perspective on the road of life? What is your perspective on your life, your future, your family, or the hurdles that lie ahead of you and your goals?

Living a life dedicated to proactivity means that when life's challenges come at you hard and fast, do not stand there in shock, but rather develop the speed, attitude, training, skills, and ability to take action—or at the very least, get out of the way to avoid an accident. It also means having a game plan for reaching your destination, not wandering through life, which increases your chances of being a squirrel. The old saying that “if you don't know where you are going, then any road will get you there” provides some insight into the importance of defining goals as a precursor to actions.

#### YOUR PATH RELATIVE TO OTHERS THAT CAME BEFORE YOU

You are not alone on your path. Many others have walked it before you and many others will walk it after you. You will not be the only truck on the highway. The Earth is 4.5 bil-

lion years old and has just over 6.5 billion inhabitants. Every problem, every experience, every challenge you face has been faced before and should be examined on a relative basis. We have electronic access to technology that gives us a direct path to the knowledge, insights and wisdom of those who walked before us and have opportunities to share navigational tips for those who will follow in their footsteps. We have metaphysical access to the collective and limitless bounds of the human spirit and to the collective knowledge of all those who have lived before us. We have social access to the folklore, stories, and literature that teaches us how to navigate the new roads that lie ahead of us. It has been said that the only thing truly new in this life is the history we haven't yet learned or discovered. I am not sure that I accept this notion entirely on its face, but it does serve as a gentle reminder and source of comfort next time you face a problem or challenge that appears to be unique or insurmountable.

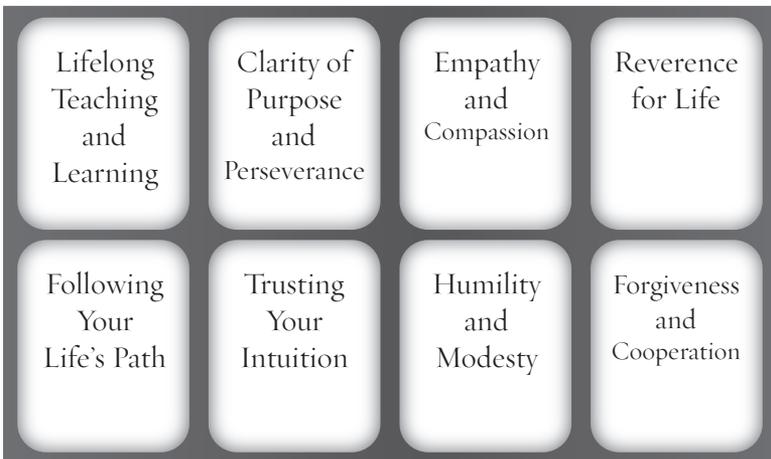
#### TRUCK DRIVERS AND LEADERS

From a core value and skill set perspective, many of the attributes that you would seek in an effective leader are the same that you would want in a truck driver:

- ⊙ Charts a clear path towards his or her destination
- ⊙ Stays focused for long periods of time without rest
- ⊙ Takes responsibility for valuable cargo
- ⊙ Understands that even the slightest mistake can cause significant harm to others

- ⊙ Knows the importance of navigating alternative paths in the face of logjams
- ⊙ Controls and harnesses the power and capability of his or her vehicle to stay within the boundary of applicable laws and norms
- ⊙ Uses skills and experiences to prevent the vehicle from crashing during a steep decline, and uses momentum and patience to climb steep upward hills
- ⊙ Communicates effectively with others

THE EIGHT CYLINDER ENGINE  
FOR LIFE'S JOURNEY



## BEING THE TRUCK

To truly be the metaphorical truck that lies at the heart of this book, you must embrace and believe in the notion that you are in control of your own destiny. Your skill sets, your choices, your network, your street smarts, and your overall determination will greatly influence your outcomes and the consequences of your decisions. You are in control.

## KNOW YOUR INNER DRIVER

It is my hope that some of the insights shared in *Road Rules*® will help you get to your true destination in life. But *how* you get there depends on you. We all have different styles, different approaches, and different ways of mapping out our journeys. We all have different sources of comfort and tolerance for risk. In many ways, our driving styles are reflective of our approach to the pace at which we intend to reach our destination. **Be in touch with your inner driver.** Understand how your driving skills behind the wheel may be in alignment with your driving style on the road of life.

## CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING DRIVING STYLES:

- ⊙ Hyper-Aggressive—This driver is going to get to her destination as fast as she can without regard to others around her, the rules of the road, or common courtesies. Her chances of an accident are high.
- ⊙ Man on a Mission—This driver is strategic and methodical. He knows when to speed up and when

to slow down, when to pass and when a speed trap may lie ahead.

- ⊙ The Safari Adventurer—This driver views every trip behind the wheel as an adventure. Side roads become her main roads. She embraces the journey, albeit sometimes too much. There is never a fruit stand that isn't worth stopping for or an antique shop that does not warrant "just a few minutes of shopping."
- ⊙ The Plodder—This driver moves at one pace: moderate. He takes moderate risks in life and reaps moderate rewards. He is not in a terrible hurry to reach his destination, but is deliberate in his actions. He is pleased with the pace of his life, even if not all destinations are reached quite as quickly as others.
- ⊙ Slow Boat to China—This driver puts safety first ahead of all other priorities, irrespective of its impact on her ability to reach her destination; she will drive forty-eight in a fifty-five speed limit zone. The irony is that in her attempt to avoid an accident she is actually endangering others by not keeping pace.
- ⊙ Too Distracted to Focus—This driver will never reach his destination because he is too distracted to focus. There is always a radio dial to adjust, a cell

phone to answer, a text message to send; driving (and safety) are secondary to the many other tasks he seeks to accomplish while driving.

- ⊙ The Backseat Driver—This driver (who actually is not driving at all) takes more pleasure in directing others to do what she will not do for herself. Her ability to reach her destination depends on the actions of others, but she would like to dictate the course, the pace, and the methodology.

Which best describes you? Are you a different type of driver depending on the circumstances and road conditions? Do you have the ability to adjust your skills accordingly? Are you the driver you want to be? How do others perceive you? How is your driving style impacting the clarity of your view or the certainty of the path that you are on?

Each Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, Jewish people all over the world consider the following self-reflection:

*Who shall be truly alive and who shall merely exist;*

*Who shall be happy and who shall be miserable;*

*Who shall attain fulfillment in his days*

*And who shall not attain fulfillment in his days;*

*Who shall be tormented by the fire of ambition*

*And who shall be overcome by the waters of failure;*

*Who shall be pierced by the sharp sword of envy*

*And who shall be torn by the wild beast of resentment;*

*Who shall hunger for companionship  
And who shall thirst for approval;*

*Who shall be shattered by the earthquake of social change  
And who shall be plagued by the pressures of conformity;*

*Who shall be strangled by insecurity  
And who shall be stoned into submission;*

*Who shall be content with his lot  
And who shall wander in search of satisfaction;*

*Who shall be serene and who shall be distraught;*

*Who shall be at ease and who shall be afflicted with anxiety;*

*Who shall be poor in his own eyes  
And who shall be rich in tranquility;*

*Who shall be brought low with futility  
And who shall be exalted through achievement?*

You have the free will to choose the answers to these questions and define your path. But to do so, you must commit to a life of proactivity—a life with both hands on the wheel, clear vision, a full tank of fuel, and a well-mapped route to reach your destination. You must also develop empathy and compassion for those that may never reach their destination and offer support and encouragement for those who will pass you by. We must all be guided by the brutal reality that nothing lasts forever except the legacy that you leave behind. How do you want to be remembered by the other passengers and drivers in your travels?

Life. Strap on your seatbelt, take a deep breath, and get ready for a wild and bumpy ride.