

## **John Broker, 2007 Grand Champion BC Professional Truck Driving Championships**

At 10, John Broker was driving tractors on his family's wheat and cattle farm. At 13, he advanced to a pick-up truck. Two years later, he was steering a five-tonne truck around the Alberta fields. And at 20, he was on the road piloting with semi-trailers.

Some might say driving trucks is in John Broker's blood - his father drove rigs as did his brother, Matt. But the Port Coquitlam man has refined his craft so well that he can now be considered one of the best in the country.

"I take a lot of pride in what I do," he says. "I'm good at it." His trophies, medals and other accolades do the talking.



The 30-year Class 1 driver has clinched the *Grand Champion* title of the BC Professional Truck Driving Championships seven times including 2005, which earned him a place at the national event in Moncton, NB, Sept. 22-24. He also took first place in the tandem category nationally in 2001 and third place in 2003.

His company, Martin Brower of Canada Co. - the only Canadian distributor for McDonald's Restaurants - has also honoured its star driver with a special merit award.

His wife, Marilyn, supports him at each contest. But, she notes with a laugh, "I can't watch him when he's competing. I get so nervous. All the other wives think it's funny".

Still, the fact he's so skilled at his trade reassures her when he's on the road doing long shifts. "It makes me happy because I know he's going to come home safe," she says, then quips, "He can drive trucks better than I can steer a grocery cart."

Safety is key when travelling with large trailers across the province. Every 30 seconds, Broker checks his mirrors and gauges "and then, for the next 30 seconds, I daydream or listen to music," he says, adding for the first 10 years of his career he had no radio. "It's like a routine.... I think about the cabin at the lake. My wife and kids. I always think about home. There's an old (saying), 'Take your time getting there, but hurry home'."

Broker loves the journey around B.C.: the sunrises and sunsets, fresh snow, northern lights. "These are extraordinary views," he says. He takes a video camera to capture the scenes.

Road hazards are everywhere, though. The weather, especially in the north, can cause havoc, wildlife and debris abound, and tourists are unpredictable, leaving their cars to take a picture. Broker has also been the first responder to several motor vehicle accidents. It's part of the job, he says, and it keeps him alert.

The additional challenges - beyond driving a 48 foot trailer - help him sharpen his driving techniques for the championships; he has been competing since 1982, when he won Rookie of the Year at the BC Truck Rodeo.

At the Provincial and National Championships, there are three tests: a written exam (testing the drivers' general knowledge of the industry and equipment); a pre-trip inspection (approximating

the drivers' regular vehicle inspection); and a driving test (simulating the daily skills of manoeuvring, cornering and judging distance). Points are deducted for jerky movements, unplanned stops, contact with barriers and deviation from prescribed driving positions.

Driving into McDonald's parking lots is the best practice Broker can get. "With all those cars, it can get pretty tight," he says. But despite the pressure, it's a job he'd never leave. "The few times I have been in an office, I've thought, 'I couldn't do this. I need to be moving'."

*(Article courtesy of [The Tri-City News](#), article by Janis Cleugh, photo by Colleen Flanagan)*