

Down to details

Dan Heister's meticulous planning and knack for truck mechanics boost his success. **BY JAMES JAILLET**

If it has wheels, steel hauler Dan Heister says he can drive it, and he's never shied away from trying.

Reared on a grain farm in Iowa, he had plenty of equipment to toy with, and he was driving tractors and pickups before he knew how to ride a bicycle, he says.

He's also offered impromptu instruction where necessary. In the Army, he taught newcomers how to drive trucks and heavy equipment haulers despite his official role as a helicopter mechanic. In truck driving school in Tennessee, he spent more time helping the other students than he did studying his own materials.

So when it came time to turn his behind-the-wheel dexterity to a career, it was "an easy transition," says the 44-year-old owner-operator.

He's ridden his passion to success as an owner-operator, evident in more ways than one. In 2009, Heister received Boyd Bros.' One Million Safe Miles Award and was nominated for the Truckload Carriers Association Owner-Operator of the Year honor. In 2008, he netted more than \$78,000.

Heister enlisted in the Army after he graduated high school. Growing up in a small town in Iowa, he says, jobs were at a premium, and "I was looking for adventure." He served from 1984 to 1995 as a helicopter mechanic. Heister repaired engines for nearly every type of rotary-wing craft the Army has, he says, including Blackhawk, Cobra and Apache helicopters.

Heister found his home in trucking less than a year after leaving the Army, when he became a company driver for Clanton, Ala.-based Boyd Bros. Transportation, where he's been ever since.

Over the years, he had the itch to purchase his own truck. "I'd talk about it several times a year, and my wife finally said, 'Buy one or shut up about it.'"



TRUCKER OF THE MONTH

Dan Heister uses his '03 International 9400I to haul cast iron and steel piping around the Southeast and the Midwest. He says of his truck, "Fancy just costs more. I just bought a truck to make money."

Leticia Conlter