

My First Concrete Delivery

Dear Grandchildren

Daniel had arrived in the concrete dispatch yard that very morning. His bright red coat was shining very very brightly in the early morning sun. His motor was ticking over ever so sweetly that twice his driver had tried starting him all over again while he was already going. Daniel was parked outside the office and couldn't really see all of the yard. He couldn't see Hank, the yard boss, but the thick black smoke he was blowing out began to fill up the yard. Daniel could hear Hank muttering to himself. "Here is yet another new flashy concrete truck."

Hank was the meanest of all the concrete trucks. He was the first truck that the firm had bought, so he was the oldest. His once bright red coat had now turned into a dirty faded red with a lot of concrete splashes and large chunks of rust starting to show through. He had had such a rough life that it was no wonder he was all upset when a new truck like Daniel arrived with a new shiny coat gleaming in the morning sun. It reminded him of how proud he was when he first began delivering concrete around the city. It was such a wonderful feeling to see the buildings go up with the concrete that he personally had delivered to the building sites. Hank didn't make any deliveries anymore. He didn't have a current certificate of fitness so was banned from going out on the road.

Another load was being mixed in the big concrete mixer and Hank pointed to one of the smaller trucks and yelled, "Your load you miserable excuse for a concrete truck. Take it to the new flats in the Hutt and make certain you do not drop any on the motorway or there will be hell to pay." Tim knew it was for him as Hank didn't like him and always called him 'a miserable excuse for a concrete truck'. He went quietly to the fill-up chute under the mixer outlet and gave a little frightened, "Toot." The mixer operator pulled the handle, the big mixing bowl began to tilt very slowly and the concrete began to rattle down the chute into the bowl on Tim's back. The first couple of stones always sent a shiver up his chassis. Today was just the same. The shiver went all over him but it wasn't long before the full weight of the load was making him feel very weak in the shock absorbers. Before he could get a breath to start Hank was yelling at him, "Get out of here you stupid lazy little useless truck and don't dilly-dally on the way to the job." By now, Daniel had peeked around the corner to see what was going on. He hadn't been able to hear clearly what was said but knew that something was not right.

Already Daniel could hear the next load of concrete going into the mixing bowl and Hank had given this load to another of the concrete trucks that were starting to line up. When everything seemed to be going just right a siren screamed over the entire yard. As if

by magic, the trucks all backed to the fence line. Hank rushed around behind the concrete mixer blowing out a lot more smoke from his exhaust. Daniel wondered if it was natural for a concrete truck to smoke like that. The drivers all ran over to the concrete mixer too. The concrete trucks were all alone by the fence. Some of them were beginning to be very anxious. They were looking at one another and giving sidelong glances towards the mixer. Daniel could see that the mixer was turning faster now and making a lot of funny noises. The first load had not made those noises so he peeped around the back where Hank had gone and saw for the first time smoke coming from the control room where the mixer bowl lived. A hose had been coupled up to Hank and he was pushing and making a lot of grunting noises pumping water from the big tap in the wall. The hose was being held by a man in the office who was playing the stream of water over what looked like a wall full of dials and things. Hank saw Daniel looking at him but was so busy that he didn't have any breath to yell at him but he gave him such a dirty look that Daniel knew he was going to get it from Hank when all of this was over.

Daniel's driver ran out of the office and drove him, to the opposite side of the street. From there Daniel had a good look at the whole yard. He saw the fire engine arrive and take over the pumping from Hank. He saw the drivers of the other trucks help the firemen put out the fire in the mixing office. He saw Hank go and talk to the trucks. He knew that the trucks did not like what Hank had said because they left the meeting in a very subdued manner. Daniel was left outside the yard all day. When Tim came back, he parked beside Daniel. Daniel had a good long talk to Tim about what had happened. For the rest of that day there were no concrete deliveries to anywhere in the city. Daniel began to feel that this yard was going to be very tough to work in. How were you to get to know the other trucks when Hank didn't like the trucks talking to each? Nevertheless, Tim had shown Daniel a small park in the yard that was just big enough for the two of them to hide. Hank never went there because it was away from the office. Hank always worked in full view of the office, as he liked people looking at him.

During the night when the drivers had gone home, the yard was full of other people who seemed to be concentrating their efforts in the office where all of the dials and things were located. The whole yard was lit up with floodlights. It made the yard so bright that it seemed as if it was still daytime. It was very hard for the concrete trucks to get any rest that night. There were a lot of visiting trucks arriving with what looked like equipment for the concrete mixing bowl. They kept asking what had happened and blamed the concrete trucks for having to work all night when they should be in their own garages enjoying a little rest. Hank of course was enjoying the discomfort that this night was causing the concrete trucks. He was even stirring up the visiting trucks by telling them that the concrete trucks caused the fire. Daniel was very pleased to have Tim beside him that night, as it was all very scary to be blamed for something that you didn't do.

By morning, the mixing bowl had been repaired. It seemed to be working even better than before. Daniel wondered if he would at last get his first load of concrete to deliver. As daylight approached, Daniel was getting quite excited at the prospect of his first delivery he had already planned the day in his mind. He would take his first load to a building site. Dump it off and get straight back to the yard for another load. He was really ready for the day's work. What Daniel didn't know was that Hank had not had a very good night and he was so very very grumpy and he certainly did not share Daniel's eagerness.

When the sound of the first load being mixed reached Daniel's ears, he started his motor and went into the loading position under the fill-up chute. Before he could even toot the operator to say that he was ready Hank had raced over to him and seemed to tower above him. Hank looked down with a very angry eye over his battered mudguard and said, "And where do you think you are going you horrible excuse for a such a little concrete truck?"

Daniel was so excited to be at last under the fill-up chute he replied quite innocently, "As soon as I'm loaded you can tell me where to go and I'll be on my way."

"On your stupid way indeed!" exclaimed Hank, "You go over to the fence and wait. Don't you dare move until I say so. You understand one thing I am the Boss around here not you. I say who does what around here. Got it?"

"Y-Y-Y-Yesssss." Spluttered a very frightened Daniel.

Poor Daniel he had his first taste of Big Bully Hank and Tim knew how Daniel was feeling right then. Tim had once been as keen as Daniel and Hank had left him by the fence for three whole days before letting him take his first load of concrete. Hank yelled at Tim, "Come on you miserable pathetic little creature of a concrete truck, take this load," "I'll get you one of these days," thought Tim as he backed up under the fill-up chute.

As the day went on all the trucks were busy filling up with concrete dragging themselves out of the yard under the full weight of the load and coming back to be filled up again and away to yet another job. Daniel was lost in his own thoughts when Hank roared over to him yelling, "Come on you miserable little flashy concrete truck let's see how good you are." Daniel was so taken aback that he didn't realise that Hank was telling him to go to the fill-up chute. Before he was able to say, "Goodness me," he had a very heavy load of concrete in his bowl. He struggled out of the yard with all that weight and was out on the road on the way to his very first job to Wellington Central. The traffic in the city was very heavy that day and the way he was going around the corners showed that he was not used to the roads with such a big heavy load on his back let alone trying to cope with the traffic. On several occasions other trucks growled at him, "Come on. Get a move on. Get yourself into gear."

Daniel tried very hard and it wasn't too long before he was at the building site. He backed in across the footpath through the gate and onto the job. Someone grabbed the discharge chute at the back of his bowl. He was the site's dogman and he signalled for Daniel to continue to back in. Daniel backed in very slowly, he was being so careful, and this made the dogman impatient. Then Daniel hit something very hard and the dogman swore at Daniel for not watching where he was going. Daniel had backed into the concrete skip. The dogman put his discharge chute into the skip. Daniel reversed the bowl and the concrete began to fill the skip. It seemed to take a long time to fill up. When it began to spill over the edges the dogman signalled to Jacob, the crane, that all was set and to take the skip away. As the skip rose up higher right over the back of Daniel, it dripped concrete all over his nice shiny red bowl. Jacob just smiled to himself and the dogman laughed and said, "It want take long for you to be looking just like old Hank." A peculiar shiver went right through Daniel's wheel nuts, "Me look like Hank? I hope I don't turn into something like that."

It didn't take long for the load to be gone and Daniel was on his way back to the yard. He was so far away in thought that he didn't realise that he was still stopped on a green light. A much smaller delivery truck right behind growled, "Get out of the way you big lump. What are you waiting for? Shift yourself or I'll shift you." Then for some reason he gave Daniel a bump in the rear bumper. Daniel was so surprised that he turned around and called back, "Sorry. These pre-selector gears are still a bit stiff." He roared off and was soon driving back into the yard and before Hank said anything about the concrete splashes, Daniel said very quickly.

"You mention anything about the concrete on my red paintwork and I think I will tell my very good friend, the mechanic, about your dirty smoke from your exhaust and I think he would be able to fix it for you." Hank knew the mechanic would give him an engine overhaul. This would make Hank very quiet and all of the larger than life bravado he used on the other trucks would be lost. Therefore, with some feeling of calmness Daniel went and parked himself by the fence to wait his turn to take another load to another building site within the city. He really was a true concrete truck now. He even had the concrete splashes over his very shiny red paintwork to prove it. They were like a badge of honour, which he wore with well deserved pride. Well done Daniel, you will make a very good concrete truck.

Grandad Bevan