

Reprinted from **Real Answers**

What prompts
one man to act
while others watch?

Volume 13, Issue 1

real | real QUESTIONS
real ANSWERS

BRIDGESTONE

trucktires.com

1-800-543-7522

Back at home, truck hero Shawn Berube gets behind the wheel. Below, Shawn takes center stage to accept the 50th anniversary Bridgestone Firestone Canadian Truck Hero Award from David Wilkins, U.S. Ambassador to Canada (right).

What prompts one man to act while others watch



Trucker Shawn Berube was honored as a Bridgestone Firestone Canadian Truck Hero for his courage, integrity and quick thinking in pulling another trucker from a burning tractor and saving his life.

He was the only one in a gathering of people who acted.

It all happened on March 31, 2006, in a little town called Michipicoten, Ontario, about 225 kilometers (140 miles) north of Sault Ste. Marie. After pulling into a truckstop for the night, Shawn used the pay phone to call a friend. Here's what happened, in his own words:



Shawn Berube
November 16, 2006



Shawn Berube

VANCOUVER

Tell us about that night.

“I was using the pay phone, and I smelled smoke. I didn’t think twice about it; I assumed it came from the restaurant. But when I smelled burning plastic, I knew something was wrong. I scanned the parking lot, looking for the source, and I saw smoke coming from a truck. I hung up on my friend – he didn’t know what was going on until I told him everything later – and raced over to the tractor.”

Were you the only one around?

“No, people were gathered around the tractor, looking at the smoke. I opened the cab door to make sure no one was inside, and sure enough – there was an older man lying half in and half out of the driver’s seat.

“Later I learned he was sleeping in the bunk, woke up and tried to get out of the cab when he was overcome by smoke. I reached into the cab, grabbed the guy by his arm and pulled him out of his truck.”



Did the emergency crews arrive by then?

“Nobody called, so I ran back over to the pay phone and dialed 9-1-1.

“When I returned to the truck, it was smoldering pretty good. My truck was on the other side of the parking lot, so I asked someone who was parked close by if I could use their fire extinguisher.

“Unfortunately there wasn’t anything I could do at that point – and the truck was quickly engulfed in flames. I’d say, from the first flare, it took just 15 minutes before it was toast.”

What else happened?

“It was pretty late – around midnight or so – so I went around and banged on nearby truck doors, waking up drivers so they could move their rigs away from the burning truck.

“Thinking back on that night, it was almost comical to watch these guys. They were angry when I roused them from their sleep, but when they realized there was a truck on fire – and I’m trying to help – their faces changed from anger to confusion – and then to surprise and gratitude. And then they hustled to get their tractor moved, away from danger.”

Is the guy you saved okay?

“Yes, his name is Bernard; he’s about 70 years old. Bernard is a trucker from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He had smoke inhalation so they took him to the hospital. I visited Bernard in the hospital the next morning and he was doing well.

“And I didn’t save him ... I didn’t do anything special, anybody would have done it.”

But nobody did. Everyone was standing around watching. You did something.

“I just pulled him from the cab is all.”

So how long have you been driving?

“A long time! My uncle was a driver and he taught me how to drive. I was working as a company driver when I received this award from Bridgestone. Now I’m working for an owner operator hauling general freight in Canada and the U.S.”

Where’s home?

“St. Paul, Alberta. But I’m never there. I go home every two or three months or so.

“I’m thinking about hanging up the keys, but I don’t know. It would be nice to buy a houseboat, tie it up and just sit for a while. When I was a kid, I wanted to see the world.

“I’ve seen it.” **TA**

Editor’s note: Since 1956, the Truck Hero award has been presented to 50 professional Canadian truck drivers. Dayton Tire created the award, and when the company became a part of Bridgestone Firestone in 1983, the tradition of recognizing truck drivers was happily continued. Today, the Bridgestone Firestone Canadian Truck Hero award is presented at the Ontario Trucking Association’s annual convention in Toronto, Ontario.