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## TRAVELING MEMORIAL DAY FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

(TONTITOWN, AR – 06/08/18) It’s been described a “Traveling Memorial Day” by some and an “American cultural phenomenon” by others as the Spirit Ride continues the unique journey it began in June of 2017 to promote public awareness of the Move Over law. The ceremonial Spirit casket has been relayed throughout the nation from tow truck to tow truck, and before year’s end will have passed hands in 300 cities with truck processions totaling over 10,000 trucks from towing, fire, police and EMS.

The Spirit casket will relay to Donald Rogers Wrecker Service in Tontitown, AR on 06/08/18 when police, fire fighters, emergency medical technicians and tow operators will gather for a ceremony paying tribute to fallen first responders killed on the roadways.

The focal point of the Ceremony is the Spirit casket: custom built to eight feet in length and painted by wrecker artist, Cecil Burrowes. The artwork features scenes of first responders working on the roadways, depicting the risks they face. One scene shows a towman carrying the world on his back as cars whiz by. Another scene portrays a police officer at an accident scene with a truck bearing down at his back.

The color scheme of the casket represents patriotism and tragedy. On one end are red and white stripes and faded stars. On the other end are red, white, and blue bars: red symbolizing the blood sacrificed, white - the spirit of the fallen, and blue - the loss to family.

The ceremony includes a blessing recited by all present and the singing of “Bless the Spirit Riders,” an original song composed as an anthem for the Spirit Ride.

Spirit Ride ceremonies also feature, twirling rain sticks, color guards, Taps buglers, bagpipers and original folk songs performed live in tribute to first responders who have been struck down while working on the roadway. The man who built the casket, veteran singer, songwriter Mike Corbin, is on hand to sing the Spirit Ride’s anthem, Bless the Spirit Riders.

Processions of up to 100 trucks follow the casket which carries the message, Slow Down, Move Over. There is a Move Over law in each state of the Union, designed to protect first responders and other roadside workers, but according to the National Safety Commission, 71% of Americans are not aware of this law.

The Spirit Ride has been generating TV, Radio, Print and Internet media coverage of its ceremonies and processions all across America, and most importantly its message of Slow Down, Move Over.

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## SPIRIT RIDE COMING THROUGH LOOKS BACK TO THE PONY EXPRESS

(TONTITOWN, AR – 06/08/18) While there may be little in common between the Spirit Ride and the Pony Express, both ventures do share some common dynamics.

The Pony Express was a private venture created to serve the need of delivering the mail to a population center that had mushroomed overnight with the Gold Rush of 1849. By 1860 there was a dire need for faster communication, particularly between San Francisco and the East. The Pony Express succeeded in reducing mail transport by ten days.

The Spirit Ride neither has a profit motive nor is about speed or transporting mail, though it is about accelerating public awareness of the Slow Down, Move-Over Law and carrying that message cross country. Too many motorists either ignore the law or are unaware of it. According to the National Safety Commission 71% of Americans have not heard of this law. Meanwhile, there are hundreds of casualties each year among first responders and over 100 fatalities, 60% of them towers, struck by passing vehicles.

Pony Express Riders sometimes feared being struck by arrows as they rode swiftly to make good time, the average ride about 75 miles, swapping horses every ten miles, then relaying their mail bag to the next rider in an exchange that barely made time for hello and goodbye. The Spirit Rider will ride an hour or two, and some will ride several hours, to relay the Spirit Casket to the next towman and carrier bed. Perhaps in the relay these Riders have something in common, if 150 years apart.

The dedication of the Pony Express Riders and the Spirit Riders are based on different motivations. The Pony Express Riders were paid three times the wage of an unskilled laborer at the time; and though not a lucrative amount, he was paid. The Spirit Rider is a volunteer, motivated by heart and the experiences of running an operation fraught with risk and peril. Maybe one of his drivers was struck and killed working a breakdown, or one of his competitors lost a driver that way, to say nothing of the countless injuries he's aware drivers have suffered out there. To the Rider, the special casket he carries represents the spirit of the towers who paid the ultimate sacrifice; a precious cargo indeed.

The Pony Express Rider took a loyalty oath to good behavior before he could join this exclusive corps. The Spirit Rider's oath to deliver his charge safely is implicit with his understanding of what he transports.

There were nearly 200 relief stations from Missouri through to California where the Riders either swapped horses or fell back to let a fresh man take the bags from there. There are over 300 relay points around the country for the Spirit Ride.

The Pony Express came to an abrupt halt one and a half years after it began when the telegraph lines were strung up across the country. The Spirit Ride will have run the same length of time before it finds a home in a museum as a work of art. The design includes a dozen hand-painted images of towers and first responders at work by one of the towing industry's renowned wrecker artists, Cecil Burrowes.

The Pony Express was about efficiency but could not turn a profit in its short life span. Perhaps if the telegraph lines had come a decade or two later it might have. The Spirit Ride is a non-profit venture founded by American Towman Magazine and B/A Products as a non-profit project, found online at [atspiritride.com](http://atspiritride.com).

While both Rides came from different kinds of purpose, both will go down in the annals of history as shortlived but admirable in their energetic vision. The Pony Express succeeded in significantly improving communications for the young nation. The Spirit Ride hopes to do the same for an industry born with the automobile. The Spirit Ride is on a crusade to save lives. The mail carrying venture wanted a long life no doubt. The Spirit Ride is destined to be like a shooting star; brief but perhaps magnificent in its effect.

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*The Spirit Ride is a non-profit venture founded by American Towman Magazine and B/A Products.*

*American Towman is the foremost trade publication for the Towing & Recovery industry, now publishing in our fifth decade. We also produce the industry's premier Expositions – American Towman Exposition in Baltimore, Maryland; Tow Expo International in Dallas, Texas; and American Towman ShowPlace in Las Vegas, Nevada.*

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## THE SPIRIT RIDE IS ROLLING THROUGH TONTITOWN

**(TONTITOWN, AR – 06/08/18)** The very professionals who earn a living from highway accidents are now taking to the streets to promote highway safety and help safeguard the lives of fellow first responders. The American Towman Spirit Ride is continuing on its journey, relaying a colorful, ceremonial casket from tow truck to tow truck across the nation. The casket honors first responders who have been killed on the roadside and carries the message: Slow Down, Move Over.

About 300 towing companies across the country are relaying the casket to promote their state's Move Over law with processions involving 10,000 tow trucks and emergency service vehicles.

The Ride, which began in June of 2017, will pass through Tontitown, AR with the Spirit casket being relayed to Donald Rogers Wrecker Service. A ceremony will take place at 10:00 am 06/08/18, followed by a procession of tow trucks and emergency service vehicles through Tontitown.

The Move Over law is unknown to many motorists. According to the National Safety Commission, 70% of American motorists do not know the law exists. The law is on the books in all states of the Union and requires passing vehicles to move over one lane when approaching an incident where emergency lights are flashing and tow operators, police, fire fighters and emergency-medical technicians are working.

The ceremonial casket, named Spirit, was custom painted by artist Cecil Burrowes, who specializes in painting intricate designs on trucks and wreckers. Painted on Spirit are a dozen scenarios depicting first-responders at the scenes of highways incidents.

The casket was built by a lifelong singer-songwriter, Mike Corbin, who composed the Spirit Ride's anthem, Bless the Spirit Riders, which he performs at the ceremony to honor fallen first responders. The ceremony precedes the procession of emergency service vehicles.

Hundreds of roadside professionals are casualties each year of roadside incidents; about 100 of them are fatalities. Among first responders killed, 60% of them are tow operators.

According to American Towman Magazine President Steve Calitri, the Ride is the greatest towing project since the first tow truck was built in 1916. "The Ride," says Calitri, "is generating public awareness of the perils first responders face and galvanizing police resolve for enforcing the Move-Over law."

The Spirit Ride was founded by American Towman Magazine and B/A Products and is a project of American Towman Spirit, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, born to promote highway safety. Scores of sponsors have pitched in with funds to support the coordination of the Ride and its media outreach campaign. All the towing companies participating are contributing their services.

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## Points of Interest

- \*The man who built the Spirit casket is the same who wrote and sings the songs live at the ceremony: Booms in the Sky, Bless the Spirit Riders, I'll Return. His name is Mike Corbin.
- \*Many of the first responders present at the ceremonies were close to those who were struck down
- \*Casualty rate is increasing as the problems of motorists distracted by cell and smart phones, drugs, and alcohol, persist. The Federal Highway Administration has stated that casualties on the roadside have doubled among fire, rescue, and EMS sectors in 2017. Meanwhile a tow operator is killed every six days on the nation's highways.
- \*A tow operator changing a flat tire or working the levers of a car carrier is positioned but inches from traffic zooming by.
- \*The Spirit Ride began in 2017 and continues through 2018 routing from North Carolina, zig-zagging cross-country to California.
- \*The Spirit Ride RV Motorcoach was featured during an official ceremony at Federal DOT Headquarters, where the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary spoke promoting awareness of the risks first responders face on the highways.
- \*Many participants in the Ride have called for it to run perpetually as a travelling memorial day for First Responders.
- \*The Spirit Ride is a non-profit project of American Towman Spirit Inc., a 501c3 corporation. The Ride was co-founded by American Towman Magazine and B/A Products. The Ride's support system is funded by corporate and individual contributions. All towing services are volunteered.

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*Spirit Ride*  
SLOW DOWN • MOVE OVER

THE SLOW DOWN • MOVE OVER

CENTURY