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A LIFE IN THE THEATRE

by Mervyn Rothstein

"We see a part of the theatre most people don't understand," **JOEY KVERAGAS** says—"what it really means to take a show apart, put it in trucks, move it to the next venue, set it back up and have everything ready when someone walks in and sits down to see a performance."

Kveragas, 67, and his wife Terri, 60, are two of about 100 owner–operator drivers that are part of the team at Clark Transfer. The Harrisburg, Pennsylvania–based company has been getting the shows on the road all over the United States and Canada since 1949, beginning with the national touring company of *Mister Roberts*.



"We're in Spokane right now" with a new Volvo truck, **TERRI KVERAGAS** says. "We just delivered *Mary Poppins* to its theatre. Then we're taking *Mary Poppins* to Albuquerque. We deliver it and we go to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and pick up *Jersey Boys*, the show we're on tour with all the time"—they're lead drivers—"and take that to Calgary, Alberta."



Joey and Terri Kveragas (above) have been driving touring shows all over North America for a combined 56 years.

Joey, who was born in Endicott, New York but grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania—"66 years in Scranton"—has been driving for Clark for 36 years, since 1976. Terri, a native of Laredo, Texas, is a 20-year veteran. "I got started through Joey," she says.

Joey was teaching industrial arts when his father died; at that point he took over his dad's pig-farming business. Then a friend introduced him to Clark.

What he loves most about driving, he says, is "the variety. Even though everything is the same, it's changing all the time. We're all over the country, at all different times."

The job isn't only driving. "If we're in charge of a show," Joey says, "the way we are with the first national tour of *Jersey Boys*, I may be responsible to see that all the trucks for that show are in the proper position at the proper time—the right truck in the right place at the right time—to get loaded and unloaded. Making sure that everyone has the right information to get to the next venue and be there on time."

The average number of trucks per show is about eight, he says, but *Jersey Boys* requires 13. "*Wicked* has 15. For *Jersey Boys*, two of those trucks are what we call an advance—we send them ahead to prestage some equipment. Eleven show-to-show trucks move from theatre to theatre." In September, he says, "we will have been on the road for five years with *Jersey Boys*."

Over his career, he says, he has been involved with "hundreds of shows—pretty much every major show that has been out there. When I started I also did a lot of rock and roll, and we do symphonies and operas and ballets."

They like going to the shows, but don't always have the opportunity. "We do see them occasionally," he says, "but we don't get to see too many of them. We come in to pick them up when they're about to finish, and we have to be gone by the time they're set up."

They share their new truck with their two mini-dachshunds, Maggie and Lilly. And they plan to continue to take their dogs on the road—to, as it were, keep on truckin'.

"Especially since we just purchased a new vehicle about a month ago," he says. "I like to say I'm in the sixth year of my five-year retirement program. My new benchmark is 70. We're going to go from there."