



## Ag's White Truck

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The presence of a white truck in the agricultural landscape is virtually a given. Across the nation this phenomenon exists. I have worked in various echelons of agriculture (ag), from research to governmental to management to field hand. At all these stages there was the obligatory white truck on the scene. I've seen them creep into the field from afar, I've driven them, and I've gotten rides in them. They seem to equate the driver with some sort of leadership position. They are definitely noticeable from a distance; the white metal is a stark contrast to the browns and greens of the landscape. It invokes the feeling: "Oh, here he comes" in the minds of the field hands.

Not only is the white truck ubiquitous with a sense of power on the agrarian landscape, but so is the notion that the driver will be a man. To his industry peers he is recognized as a man with a purpose and responsibility on the job; he's been trusted with the company vehicle and he's keeping it clean. For example, I took conducted an informal study in Salinas, CA on who drives these things. A non-biased discovery was that white, young (25-40), clean-cut guys were the predominant drivers. What gives? White guy = white truck? There was that 3% though, of Latinos or women who drove them. Perhaps these are folks who had worked their way up the ladder to crew manager and were given 'loftier' responsibilities. Also

worth noting as a young woman driving a white truck in Salinas at the time, I got many surprised (or were they flirtatious?) looks from men. "There is somebody different from us on the scene?" "What's she doing?" "Who's she working for?" I could imagine onlookers asking themselves.

### Why Trucks?

Trucks are the old standard for farmers. Are the people that drive these things truly farmers though? Generally, they are at least in the industry if they roam into the fields.

But rarely do the drivers plant the crop or do the actual hands-on farming. These white trucks belong to the management or related echelon, i.e. PCA, researcher/extension agent, fertilizer salesman, etc. Field and crew managers generally get issued one of these icons if working for a larger establishment, or purchase them on their own accord. Team unity through identical company vehicles is good in theory—it creates uniformity, homogeny and professionalism. These

are the guys that drive from site to site hurriedly, hopping out now and again to chat with one of the crew members, relay messages, or unload/pick-up supplies. Drivers are often labeled with the term "tan-left-arm managers." You've seen these guys—their arm resting out the driver window, busily puttering about, multi-tasking, eating, conducting business from their mobile



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office on the front seat all while perusing muddy and uneven ranch roads. They have work clothes on, but are unsoiled. Trucks are designed to carry a cargo in the bed, but given today's common farm-sized acreage, this little 5'x6' just won't suffice, so it usually goes empty and its utility is diminished. The truck is not used for its initial design purpose, but rather a vestige of its former function.

### Why white?

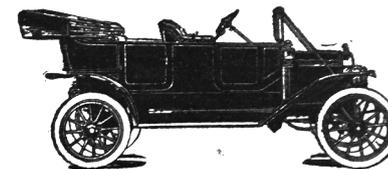
It seems rather impractical that farm trucks are commonly white since they're driven on dusty or muddy fields. However, you rarely see these vehicles splattered in brown schmeck. They are generally kept quite white. But why and how? White represents clean, and with a crisp, newly-glistening, washed truck the

driver appears new, fresh, clean and honest. For this to invoke trustworthiness from such an untainted, virgin surface may be a reach, but it happens all the same.

It is inevitable that mud gets splattered on these unmarred surfaces at some point in the day. But, somehow by tomorrow it shows up clean again. Who cleans these things? My wager is some other 'lower echelon' staff person does the cleaning-up at the end of the day. Or as my employer advised, "Just bring it down to any of the car washers in town." They were always well attended. A sign that repeatedly humored me as I waited in line behind other soiled white trucks read: '\$5 extra for dangling mud.' This evidently muddied-up their scene, too.



Up—up—up has gone the cost of living for the horse. And down—down—down has come the price of the easily-operated and economical Ford, to a point where no farmer can afford to keep a horse for road travel only.



**"In society today, technology companies can do what they damn well please, but this is the Grange. This is a fraternity. Attorneys have a different sense of things, that's their teaching and training. This type of organization needs to work for the good of all. Be mindful of the younger people coming in, they are comfortable with technology. I was in technology before I got into poultry, and I like turkeys better than programmers."**

—From meeting of California State Grange