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See the USA, in just over four days

*Ben Wear, Getting There*

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The point of hobbies is there really is no point.

Case in point: the road trip that Central Texans Curtis and Ray Morriss began Friday and hope to complete Tuesday evening.

If things go as planned — and Curtis said late Sunday afternoon that so far they have — the Morriss brothers will have driven a car through every one of these Lower 48 United States in 100 hours, setting what they hope will be a record. They will have put about 6,850 miles on Curtis' Acura TSX (about 245 gallons, at what they estimate will be 28 miles per gallon, something like $750 for gasoline), stopping only for fueling and git-er-done-quick bathroom breaks, and grazing on a cache of food in the back seat.

They'll have passed through all of Woody Guthrie's America, from the Mississippi cotton fields to the George Washington Bridge in Manhattan, alongside Chicago's big highway shoulders, under Montana's sizable sky, past a great salt lake and finally a few feet into Arizona.

All to set a record. An unofficial record. Maybe. And perhaps for the second time in a year.

And to raise some money for a Leander school district volunteer program, though Curtis said the pledges have been minimal so far.

This trip is to transportation what scarfing a two-pound bag of M&M's is to eating. Empty travel calories made up mostly of interstate highways.

So, Curtis' wife, Kathy, back in Leander probably considers this behavior crazy, right?

"I don't know that she's actually used that word," he said. "There's been some other words like 'odd,' or 'strange,' or 'I don't get it.' "

The Morriss siblings are part of a fraternity of indeterminate size fascinated by the challenge of devising the most efficient way of driving through or barely grazing every state aside from Alaska and Hawaii (Washington, D.C., also gets skipped). There are even 10 rules for this, er, sport, according to the 48in96.com website, a production of one such group of explorers, Jay Lowe and Ted Jacobs. Lowe and Jacobs live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Anyway, the website includes the rules first set out by the Guinness World Records people, plus what Lowe and Jacobs regard as the seminal rule: If you get a traffic ticket, the drive becomes invalid. The rules also stipulate that the start time and place be authenticated, and that there be two drivers and a nondriving navigator. Curtis says they have a GPS device that will digitally record the path of their trip.

Curtis, 47, a civil engineer with Baker-Aicklen & Associates Inc. in Round Rock, and Ray, 45, currently in between careers, will be ignoring that last rule. Which is OK, because Guinness is now ignoring these trips. Curtis says the Universe's Authority on mostness, fastness and bigness some years ago decided it was not so good to honor greatness in an activity that might involve inappropriate highway speeds. So, 48-state driving has devolved into a sort of Wild West affair.

Lowe and Jacobs, who in 1994 set the last official Guinness record of 118 hours and 15 minutes, on their website claim the current record of 104 hours and 57 minutes. They plan to go back out on the roads in June, the site says, and break the magic four-day barrier. Thus, 48-in-96.

Au contraire, Curtis would say, if engineers from Leander ever unholstered random French. Curtis says he and his brother did it in 101 hours and 29 minutes a year ago, their first attempt. The goal this time is 100 hours.

None of this occurs by happenstance. The route is carefully crafted to make the trip as short as possible (Lowe and Jacobs will no longer reveal their super-duper-secret map; the Morriss map is open to all), with 10 of what Curtis calls "U-turn states," places where they'll simply drive a few feet across a border to check that state off the list and then go back the other way.

They knocked the first three states off in the first minute. After leaving Austin on Friday morning, the Morrisses late that afternoon arrived at their starting point, the Downstream Casino Resort right on the Oklahoma-Missouri border. The parking lot is in Oklahoma, Morriss said, the driveway in Missouri and Kansas just three-tenths of a mile down the road. Boom, boom, boom, 45 to go.

Then it was across Arkansas and Dixie, up through the Mid-Atlantic and into the big Northeast cities on the weekend and, when possible, at night to ensure the least possible traffic. Trading off six-hour driving shifts while the other brother dozed, they were in Gary, Ind., late Sunday afternoon. By the time Statesman subscribers read this, the brothers should be barreling across South Dakota.

Tuesday evening, if all goes well and state troopers are held at bay (Curtis says his car does NOT have a radar detector), the Acura will arrive at the Four Corners area, knocking off Colorado, New Mexico and then Arizona in a frenzied few final minutes. Then it's off to a truck stop as quickly as possible. Remember, there will have been no time to shower. For more than four days.

No matter the final time, Curtis says his wife has assured him this is in fact the final time. No more such drives. Except that in July, he and Kathy and their children Sarah and Amanda will motor up to Moab, Utah, on a family vacation.

"I just like long drives," Curtis said.

Apparently so.

Getting There appears Mondays. For questions, tips or story ideas, contact Getting There at 445-3698 or bwear@statesman.com.

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.statesman.com/news/local/see-the-usa-in-just-over-four-days-704906.html>

**May 21, 2010**

[**Texas brothers to attempt 48-state drive for record**](http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/x1414110601/Texas-brothers-to-attempt-48-state-drive-for-record)

**By Roger McKinney**

[Globe Staff Writer](http://www.joplinglobe.com/)

Curtis and Ray Morriss at 4:56 p.m. Friday drove away from Downstream Casino Resort on a journey that they hope will take them to all of the lower 48 states in less than 100 hours.

The Guinness World Records stopped recognizing the trip in 1994, when the record was 118 hours, the Austin, Texas, brothers said.

They don’t say they won’t break the speed limit at times, but a traffic ticket would result in automatic disqualification. They abide by the rules originally set by Guinness World Records.

Their trip includes 17 gas stops, spending around six minutes at each stop.

“Stop is a four-letter word,” Curtis said.

They said Downstream was an ideal location from which to start, with the parking lot in Kansas, the hotel and casino in Oklahoma, and the entrance road in Missouri.

“I wanted to start in Northeast Oklahoma, where it meets Missouri and Kansas,” Curtis, 47, said. “I determined there’s a giant casino right there.”

They made the 48-state journey last year in 101 hours and 29 minutes, averaging 69 mph.

“We hit a snowstorm in Montana and a cattle drive in Nevada,” Curtis said. They said they didn’t hit any road construction, but they found heavy traffic in Chicago. They got lost in Washington, D.C.

“There’s a law in Oregon that there’s no self-service gas pumps,” said Ray, 45. “We were in Oregon at 4 in the morning and we had to wait 15 minutes for a station to open.”

Last year’s trip started in southeastern Oklahoma. Besides the changed starting point, they also have eliminated stopping in Washington, D.C., because it’s not a state. They have made other adjustments, shaving 100 miles off the total.

Curtis said they will take turns driving and sleeping, but never the same person doing both at the same time.

They will take a counter clockwise route through the country, first heading south. They said they hadn’t yet decided what route they will take on their final leg of the trip through Oregon and California and into Nevada.

They have a GPS data logger that logs the car’s position every second of the trip.

Their car is packed with food and drinks, including peanuts, trail mix, a box of Cheerios, two cases of water, energy drinks and vegetable juice.

“And deodorant,” Ray said.

“Oh, that’s what I forgot,” Curtis said, laughing.

They’re planning on getting 450 to 500 miles per tank of gas in the 2009 Acura TSX they’re driving.

They expect the trip to cover 48 states in 6,900 miles. They plan to end up at the four-corners area where Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona meet about 7 p.m. Tuesday.

They said this will be their last attempt.

“That’s what my wife has told me,” Curtis said.

On the road

People may follow Curtis and Ray Morriss on their journey at www.48statemarathondrive.com.