

Montana 500 Newsletter

Apr—Jun 2013

Volume 13 no. 2



Montana Cross Country T Assn.
1004 Sioux Road
Helena, MT 59602

www.montana500.org

2011 Officers and Directors:

President: Mike Cuffe
Vice President: Mike Stormo
Secretary: Jillian Robison
Treasurer: Janet Cerovski

Directors:

Mike Cuffe 2015
Mike Stormo 2014
Nan Robison 2014
Garrett Green 2014
Janet Cerovski 2014
Mike Robison 2013
Tom Carnegie 2013
Doug Langel 2013
Mark Hutchinson 2013

Meeting Secretary: Jillian Robison
Correspondence: Tom Carnegie
Newsletter Editor: Tom Carnegie

Membership dues \$10.00
Touring class: \$25.00
Endurance runner: \$35.00

Cover photo: Yep! Keep 'er under 20 mph for the first 500! After that, open 'er up.



Pres Talk

Mike Cuffe

Residents of the little historical town of Fort Benton are excited for us to arrive, and I am excited about our routes for 2013. Beautiful scenery of wheat fields and plains and Missouri River Breaks line our routes, and we are likely to see the deer and the antelope play. No trips over the Continental Divide this trip, but there will be a few good grades to pull and perhaps some wind.

Fort Benton Chamber is planning some kind of an event on Sunday, June 16, during our check in and safety inspection at the hotel, and Taylor Ford will greet us Tuesday evening with a chili feed. Taylor Ford offers parking for trailers and trucks. Not a lot of room around the Grand Union Hotel. Tear down Wednesday will be at NY Tire, about two blocks from the hotel and six blocks from the picnic pavilion at Fort Benton Park. Some really neat places to check out in Fort Benton.

Will have some options for Thursday fun drive. Details when we arrive, one possibility is a six mile drive on gravel road leading to a

ferry ride across the Missouri River and a really neat antique mercantile plus visits to several museums in Fort Benton. Or we could roll down to Great Falls to Giant Springs Park and the Charlie Russell Museum. He is a famous western artist.
Now for the Montana 500 routes.

Monday morning line up at the junction of Highways 87, 80 and 223. Take off for Great Falls and a short break. Then reverse direction, pass the starting point and cruise on to Havre. Next leg is west on Highway 2 to Chester. Then run south to Fort Benton. Total distance is 248 miles.

Tuesday we travel southwest on Highway 80 to Highway 81 where we turn east and then south on 191 to Lewistown. Next leg is west on Highway 200 to Stanford, and then north to Fort Benton on Highway 80. Distance is 200 miles.

Wednesday features a quick trip southeast on Highways 228 and 331 to Belt and back. Total distance is 72 miles.

Total distance for all three day runs is about 520 miles.

These routes have some interesting curves, most but not all forewarned by signs. I just drove them all again this week. Not much traffic, mostly smooth highway, narrow shoulders plus deer and antelope in fields. Oh yes, lots of rabbits, and on an earlier visit a green headed pheasant lifted out of the borrow pit to wipe out on the hood of my pickup just west of Fort Benton.

Some drivers running with us this year will have just driven the Missouri River Tour hosted by the Rocky Mountain Model T Club. Dave Cooley (406-253-7253) is tour director. It is a progressive tour with stay overs in Great Falls, Fort Benton, Lewistown, White Sulfur Springs and back to Great Falls.

See you soon, Mike Cuffe. Questions? Call 406-293-1247 or email mcuffe@interbel.net

Editor's Propaganda
Tom Carnegie

The Spokane bunch just did the "Washington 100", otherwise known as the "Shake-down Break-down" tour. It is sort of a mini Montana 500. Two legs, under time with the cars leaving at one-minute intervals. There was more "shake-down" than "break-down" as all the cars made it home under their own power. Skeeter Carlson got to go in his new Montana 500 car. We have just finished it up for this year's run. It was good that Skeeter got to do the Shake and break run, as he doesn't know how much of the Montana 500 he'll be able to do, although he is planning to enter for sure. Skeeter just turned 90 years old.

Thank-you to those who have chosen to receive their newsletters by e-mail. If you aren't already, please consider receiving this newsletter electronically. That would save the club a lot in postage and handling, plus you would get it soon and it would always be in color. If you would like to receive e-mail newsletters, please send an e-mail to:

montana500@antiqueautoranch.com

Review of the ECCT

By Tom Carnegie

OK, I've got a confession to make. I really don't set up my own coils. Not much anyway. I usually have Mark Hutchinson or Mike Robison do it for me. At least the initial set up. They have a better grasp on the intricacies of the upper bridge point drop and such like that. This is an important point, as I will talk about later in this review.

It was thought by the Spokane Montana 500 crew that there was a better way to set coils up than just crank-em-up on the hand cranked coil tester (HCCT). The theory behind the HCCT is that if a coil draws a certain amount of current, and doesn't double spark, then it will operate the same as another coil set up the same way. This is roughly true, but rough ain't good enough for the Montana 500. I and others believe that the four coils should be "balanced". What that means to us is that how much current they pull is of secondary consideration. What is of primary consideration is how long it takes the coils to ramp up and fire. Mark Hutchinson discovered a mechanical way to balance coils that works quite well, but it is dependent on the consistency of the coils being balanced. That is, in order for two coils to be able to be balanced mechanically, they have to have similar core characteristics, the same number of windings, etc. This is not the case on some old coils. They are either made differently, or there characteristics have

changed over the years. I decided that the best way to do the final set up on a coil was to fire it with a fixed shot of current, and take a picture of what happens with an oscilloscope. I noticed that any given coil fired pretty much the same way every time. I called this “fingerprinting” a coil. I would then match up my coils in sets of four with similar fingerprints.

This “fingerprinting” operation with an oscilloscope takes quite a bit of work. As such, I was excited when I heard that Mike Kossor of Mictel had developed a test device that essentially does what I had been doing with the oscilloscope, yet without the scope. It is called the ECCT, which stands for Electronically Cranked Coil Tester. It is extremely handy in as much as it can be used as a stand alone instrument or it can be interfaced with the coil box on your Model T. It also doubles as a condenser checker and can be interfaced with your PC to see additional data. It will show you the current draw of your coil, but the important measurement is the “ramp to fire” time. If you set the “ramp to fire” time to be the same for all four of your coils, you will necessarily have a balanced set. The coils don't have to be electrically or mechanically identical to achieve this result from this tester. It will just happen, if you follow the instructions correctly. This is where I got into trouble, as I alluded to in the first paragraph. I tried to set up a coil that hadn't been properly adjusted as far as the upper point drop was concerned. The readings I got were spurious. After the upper point was adjusted cor-

rectly, all was well.

What were the results that I achieved? Well, to be honest, the coils I tuned up were pretty well tuned to begin with, so they didn't need a bunch of adjusting. Even though, better results were noted on virtually every test of the car when running on battery. This, I believe is where the ECCT shines. Adjusting coils to run well on battery. On magneto, the improvement was not so noticeable. My test protocol was to test a set of coils on a fixed length test run for maximum speed (minimum time) with a stop watch, then adjust the coils with the ECCT and run the same tests again. I spent the better part of a day doing this. When I was done I had put nearly twenty-five miles onto my T testing the coils. All at a quarter of a mile at a time.

I do have one complaint. The tester is turned on with a "soft" switch. I prefer a "hard" switch that actually physically disconnects the battery. It seems to me that "hard" switches extend the battery life. The battery is a normal nine volt battery. I think that there is a learning curve with this tool, as there is with virtually any tool, I suppose. It also seems to me that the more you use it the better and faster you will become at setting up coils. But, is this better than a hand-cranked coil tester? Is it better than other devices on the market made to test coils? The short answer, as far as I'm concerned is "yes". Setting up coils to fire by time is what the hand-cranked coil tester wants to do, the ECCT actually does it.



Image courtesy of MICTEL Inc.

Press release for 2013 Montana 500

Dozens of Model T Fords, more than most of us have ever seen, will converge on Fort Benton for Father's Day weekend. Drivers from 18 to 80 will rendezvous with the vehicle that put the world on wheels, and they drive 500 miles the next three days in the 53rd annual Montana 500.

"Check them out the afternoon of June 16 at the stately Grand Union Hotel," invites Mike Cuffe, president of the Montana Model T Cross Country Touring Society.

"Check in, safety inspections and demonstrations will be taking place that Sunday, and rides may be available."

Fort Benton Chamber of Commerce is helping arrange special events including photo ops and possibly a celebration during the Sunday check in. It could be a special Father's Day that Dad, or Gramps, will always remember. Several previous Montana 500 champions will be entering this prestigious Model T endurance run, including Doug Langel, from Rudyard, who participated in the original event. He may drive in the touring class, and his son Brandon will be running under time.

"Watch us flag out Monday morning to start the 53rd running of the famous Montana 500," Cuffe suggested.

"Cheer us off to Havre at 8:30 am. We start on Highway 87 at the Fort Benton junction. Take photos along the way, but please don't crowd us or drive close to us. Vehicles pacing just ahead of us or right behind us can be a problem. Pass us, but then pull on ahead."

Monday morning takeoff will point the cars toward Great Falls. After a short break they reverse back past Fort Benton to Havre, Chester and home to the Grand Union Hotel. On Tuesday Tin Lizzies roll south through Geraldine, through Denton and Lewistown then west to Stanford be-

fore turning north to Fort Benton. They finish the Tuesday loop at Jim Taylor Ford where a welcome is planned. Finishing time will vary, but Cuffe expects the leaders to gallop in on their 20 horses between 5 and 6 pm.

Wednesday Henry Ford's favorite automobiles go to Belt and return by noon. The first three cars pull into NY Tire where engines are inspected to ensure they meet stock Model T Ford standards. Drivers and groupies that follow them will gather at the Fort Benton park pavilion for awards presentation.

Green starting flags signal "blast off" for each driver. Cars start at one minute intervals, and timers stop the clock as they approach the next community. These cars are among the best running Model Ts in the world. They are finely tuned and well balanced. Some 16 million were built, all of them basically the same with a few refinements, over 20 years. A hundred years ago Ts could run as well, but there were few roads smooth enough for top performance. Remember, mules were still pulling steamboat freight by the wagon load out of Fort Benton when the first Model was built.

Montana 500 participants come from all over the USA and Canada. Some are veteran Endurance Run jockeys, but for some it is a once in a lifetime dream come true. Occasionally, a father-son team pulls in unexpectedly from some far off place.

Jay Klehfoth, executive officer for Model T Ford Club of America (MTFCA) is slated to attend for the first time ever, and he doubles as editor of VINTAGE FORD, the classy monthly magazine published by MTFCA. Fort Benton and area will reap national publicity, perhaps even a magazine cover shot or centerfold photo.

Built by Ford Motor Co. between 1908 and 1927, all Model Ts run a basic four cylinder engine. Many lawn

tractors have more power than the Model T 20 horsepower power plant. Model Ts use a planetary semi-automatic transmission with shifting accomplished by foot pedal. Montana 500 entrants run some of the finest tuned Tin Lizzies in the world.

This timed endurance run is based at a different location each spring. 2013 is the first time ever for Fort Benton. Drivers enjoy being cheered off each day, and often photographers find a vantage point along the route or near the finish. Some rest homes bring out residents for part of the fun.

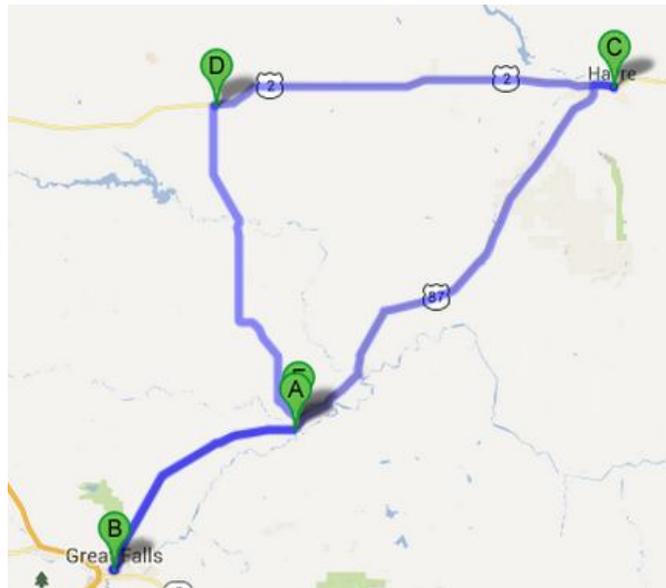
Fort Benton was the original hub of travel for a vast area as the uppermost navigable point on the Missouri River. It was the distribution point for people and freight. Two famous routes were the whoop up trail to Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta, and the Mullan Road leading to Walla Walla, Washington.

Cuffe, state representative from Eureka and Lincoln County, has promised rides to a variety of legislators along the route. His 1923 roadster was parked in front of the Capitol for the House Chambers Centennial this year, and last year Newt Gingrich spun the crank of this Tin Lizzie at the state Republican convention while Rick Hill and Steve Daines cheered. At that time Cuffe and the cute little roadster were en route to Butte for the 2012 Montana 500. In 2010 he drove to North Dakota for the start of the 50th anniversary, then ran with the pack back to Missoula.

Henry Ford would be proud of this special fleet of Model T Fords and the happy guys and gals driving them. "Come to historic Fort Benton and join the fun," says Cuffe. "Or give us a wave and a shout along the route."

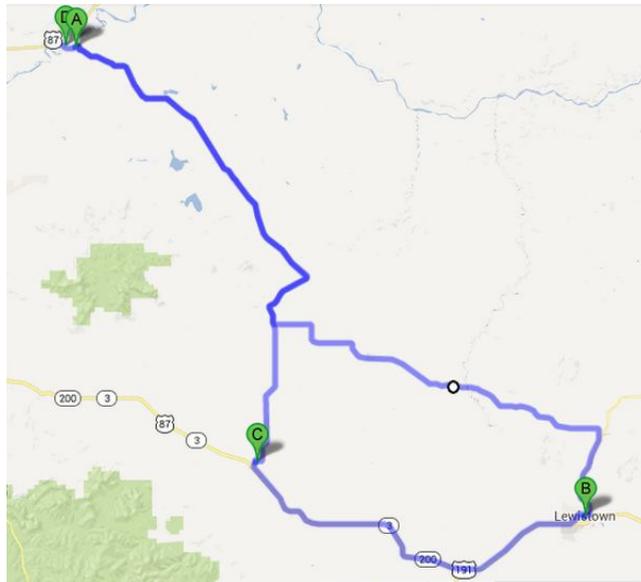
Tentative Routes:

Day one:



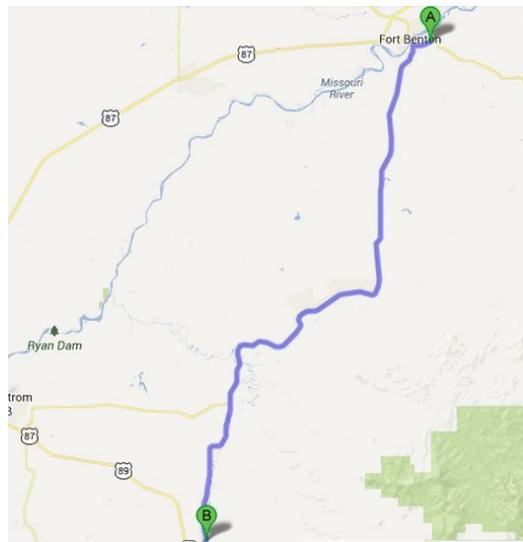
Ft. Benton to Great Falls to Havre to
Chester to Ft. Benton. Total miles: 248

Day two:



Ft. Benton to Lewistown to Stanford to Ft. Benton

Day three:



Ft. Benton to Belt and back

The Ultimate Showdown
(Fiction)
By Tom Carnegie

Part one:

I don't know about all of the science behind it. How many gigawatts of power that are needed or where the flux capacitors came from, or even if flux capacitors are involved, but somehow the professor got a commitment from almost everyone. What he did was to use his time machine to go back into time and ask all of the previous winners of the Montana 500 if they would like to race with each other head to head in a 500 mile ultimate showdown. All of the drivers agreed with the exception of C. E. Van Horn. He thought Frank Schuler should drive, as it is Frank's car. Frank was not invited. All of the cars and drivers will be transported together to a neutral year. Each driver will drive his car as it was before its winning run, so it will be in top form. Multiple winners will be allowed to choose their favorite winner from amongst their winning cars. Each car will run under the rules for the year that it won. There will be no teardown, as the cars were all declared legal after they won. The results will be in part two.

Montana Cross Country T Assn.
7516 E. Mission Ave.
Spokane Valley, WA 99212