



Search Terms: Gary Hatter

Document List

Expanded List

KWIC™

Full

Story originally published in
Lexington Herald-Leader
Later picked up by
The Houston Chronicle &
The Wichita Eagle

Document 1 of 4. [Next](#) ▶

Copyright 2000 The Houston Chronicle Publishing Company
The Houston Chronicle

[View Related Topics](#)

July 22, 2000, Saturday 3 STAR EDITION

SECTION: A; Pg. 27

LENGTH: 496 words

HEADLINE: Trying to cut costs;
Man drives his lawnmower across nation to raise cash for surgery to avoid paralysis

SOURCE: Knight Ridder Tribune News

BYLINE: ALEXANDREA RAVENELLE

DATELINE: LEXINGTON, Ky.

BODY:

LEXINGTON, Ky. - In a red Cellular One T-shirt and faded blue jeans, a camera around his neck, Gary Hatter is the average cross-country traveler. Until it comes to his vehicle of choice: a bright orange four-wheel-drive lawn tractor. His cause: a \$ 100,000 back operation he needs to prevent becoming paralyzed. "I've been mowing lawns since I was 10," Hatter said. Hatter, who lives in Champaign, Ill., later drove trucks and at 24 injured his back while unloading milk crates. Now 46, he's had two operations. The second surgery was to correct his first operation, in which the doctor removed the wrong spinal disk. He has been told he needs a third operation to avoid being paralyzed from spinal-disk degeneration. His surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation will cost \$ 100,000 - pricey for a man who has been receiving disability benefits for more than 20 years and doesn't have health insurance. Hatter is hoping to raise the money he needs by distributing black-and-white checkered race flags for a \$ 5 donation and through monetary gifts from strangers. "I just hope that someone along the way hears about this who can and will help," he said. As he traveled through central Kentucky this week, he had so far driven for 48 consecutive days through 18 states and covered more than 2,800 miles. The world record is 51 days, 16 states and 4,039 miles, Hatter said. Hatter's trip started in Portland, Maine, and will take him through all 48 states of the continental United States. He plans to end up in Jacksonville, Fla., after traveling about 14,000 miles. His son, Gary Hatter Jr., 17, is accompanying him and helping with the fund

raising. Gary Jr. drives ahead of his father most of the time, setting up interviews with his dad and arranging for free hotel rooms. So far, the two have raised less than \$ 100, according to Hatter, in part because of the cost of gas. His mower only gets 12.8 miles to the gallon. Still, Hatter is optimistic. "Response has just been absolutely overwhelming," he said. "People have been waving, taking pictures and asking for autographs. People like that are what help me keep going." Sometimes, the going hasn't been easy. "This is harder than anything I've ever done," he said. Hatter avoids most interstate highways but often drives on the shoulder of two-lane roads with cars whizzing by as he moves along at just 9 mph. There are some roads he just couldn't avoid, such as the Lincoln Tunnel from New York to New Jersey and the Ben Franklin Bridge to Philadelphia. "You can get killed in places like that," Hatter said. "It's just too dangerous." He also has his son drive behind the tractor on occasion as a warning to speeding cars. The tractor is the type of vehicle average lawn-mowing people dream about. The four-cylinder vehicle has four-wheel drive, a 5.5 gallon tank, a roof and two flags streaming behind it. The only thing the tractor is missing is cruise control. Hatter uses a wooden block for that.

GRAPHIC: Photo: Gary Hatter makes his way through Kentucky on the 48th day of his ride on a lawn tractor to raise money for his back surgery.; Associated Press

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

TYPE: -LINKS-

LOAD-DATE: July 25, 2000

Document 1 of 4. [Next ▶](#)



Search Terms: Gary Hatter

To narrow your search, please enter a word or phrase:

[@ About LEXIS-NEXIS Academic Universe](#) [ⓘ Terms and Conditions](#) [⏴ Top of Page](#)

[Copyright© 2000. LEXIS-NEXIS. a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All Rights Reserved.](#)