



ERIN
HARREL

of Cape Coral
is the mother
of three children.

The road to insanity

Annual vacation trek northward proves **chaotic** but rewarding

“Come on guys, it’s time to go,” I whisper to my sleepy kids as my husband, Greg, and I desperately try to coax all three children into the car without totally waking them up.

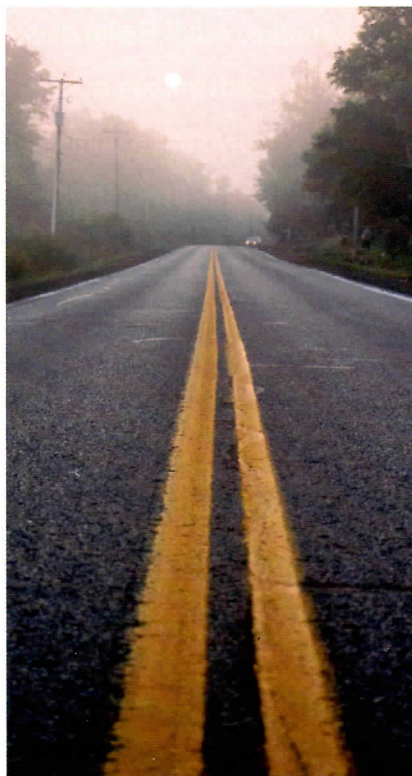
It’s 3 a.m. and we’re trying to get on the road for our annual summer vacation to Ohio.

The night before, the kids are always so excited they can barely get to sleep. Then, we foolishly believe we can get them up to start the trip without awakening that excitement. Yep, every year, we think they will just nap in the car. And every year, the routine warrants the same result: one long, insane car ride.

After 10 years of making the same trek north each summer, we still haven’t learned that they are going to wake up and stay up.

Normally, we don’t get to the end of our street before someone has to pee. Mind you, we include a trip to the toilet in our sleepwalk to the car. And about 15 minutes into the trip, someone has an extremity that escapes control and lands over the invisible line the manufacturer forgot to install in the car.

The chaos drives my husband crazy. Greg is somewhat of a travel tyrant, and I mean that in the nicest of ways. Everything that goes into the vehicle must have a place; no loose items, and one “bag o’ junk” to entertain all three kids. All food items



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must be neatly packed and fit in a cooler in between the front and back seats so that he and the kids can reach it.

Over the years, I have learned to pack light (except for shoes — I’m willing to take on that fight). We’re allowed one duffel bag per person and, yes, the “shoe bag.” You never know when the kids are going to need their dress shoes or those really cute orange tennis shoes that only match one shirt. I usually get away with the extra bag, but only at the

sacrifice of a makeup/high-maintenance bag.

Despite it all, each year we get excited to jump into the car and drive for 23 hours to see our relatives. We somehow forget the sibling version of World Wrestling Entertainment that begins around Tennessee, or the 3,276 versions of the alphabet game we play as we truck our way through Kentucky. We forget that we have to hold our bodily functions until the driver (usually Greg) has to pee. (I think he was a camel in his past life.)

Really, we look forward to the time together and we somehow find a way to forget all of the drama and pure chaos that takes place each year on the road. Maybe we just enjoy seeing our relatives so much that it’s worth the drive, or maybe we forget all of the mayhem because it is a time the family can be together.

I suppose the conditions are not the best, but guaranteed, some family bonding always occurs. We talk about years past and what this one will bring. Sometimes we read the travel journal from previous years. This year, the kids are old enough to write in the journal themselves, and that should really give us something to look forward to next summer.

As many of you pack up and head out on the roads, count your blessings that you have time to spend together (instead of all the exits you wish you could stop at when you have to relieve yourself).

Happy travels! 