

CNN Bloggers Roll onto Campus in Biofuel-Powered Truck, Film Segment

Contributed by Andrew Abernathy
08/08/2008

Brad Crafton (left), research technician with UM's Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute is interviewed by CNN's Cody McCloy (second from left) and Brian Hardy in front of the Lyceum. Photo courtesy of Ole Miss Editor Ashley Dees.

OXFORD, Miss. -- After more than 1,000 online voters had their say, CNN's Cody McCloy and Brian Hardy drove a 1978 International Harvester Scout that runs on environmentally friendly fuel onto the University of Mississippi campus Friday morning and filmed a news segment.

"Our readers overwhelmingly chose Ole Miss," McCloy said in reference to their blog posts, which the team has been updating throughout their journey that began two weeks ago in the San Francisco Bay area.

As part of CNN's online "Cody's Big Biofuel Adventure," the two bloggers stopped on the Oxford campus to film an interview with Brad Crafton, research technician with UM's Mississippi Mineral Resources Institute. Throughout their journey, the duo produced video segments and visited researchers and experts in the developing field of biofuels.

Crafton, who produces his own biodiesel, has partnered with UM Landscaping Services to help provide the alternative fuel to run a growing number of campus lawnmowers. He also drives a 1980 Mercedes-Benz, which runs on an almost pure mixture of biodiesel.

Minus the cost of his labor, Crafton can produce the fuel for about a dollar a gallon, he said. He donated five gallons of the fuel to the visiting bloggers before they left for CNN studios in Atlanta, the last leg of their trip. The two will have logged almost 4,000 miles since leaving California, McCloy said.

McCloy, who originally proposed the CNN blog, purchased the Scout online and on his own dime. However, CNN did pick up the tab for the fuel, he said.

Biodiesel is made from chemically modified cooking oils and can be mixed with regular diesel to make a cleaner burning product. McCloy said he and Hardy ran their vehicle on a mixture as low as 5 percent biodiesel and up to almost pure biodiesel. He said the 30-year-old truck averages 23 miles per gallon.

"Biodiesel tends to burn the ozone-damaging gases cleaner," McCloy said. "A lot of the benefit of (biofuel) is that most places where it's used, it is produced locally."

They managed to find biodeisel for sale in major cities during their journey, filling up gas cans and mixing it with regular diesel as they went along. Biofuel mixes with regular diesel in the gas tank, he said.

However, McCloy said they also found that biodiesel is not necessarily cheaper, as they had to pay nearly \$5 a gallon at some locations.

"I don't think biodiesel is the solution (to the fuel crisis)," he said. "But it shows that people are thinking outside the box. Biodiesel has a role to play and it opens a conversation."

As of next week, Crafton and UM landscaping will be transitioning all of its equipment to a blend of 20 percent biofuel, cutting emissions by practically 20 percent.

Crafton collects his used cooking oil from sources on campus and in Oxford. He said it isn't hard to convince some people to donate because it saves them a disposal bill.

Last April, Chancellor Robert Khayat signed the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment. The initiative, sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, calls for colleges and universities to identify major sources of greenhouse gas emissions and reduce this output over five years.

Visit "[Cody's Big Biofuel Adventure](#)."