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ON THE ROAD

Driven together

Howard and Linda Payne dumped their successful lives for an RV and the open road

By **Larry Muhammad**
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 The Courier-Journal

Howard and Linda Payne were living high on the hog -- six-figure income, 4,000-square-foot home, country-club membership.

But in January, the Louisville couple decided to give all that up for a midlife adventure.

They quit work, sold their house and moved in May into a 400-square-foot RV that will carry them on an extended road trip across America, starting tomorrow.

"I was going to the spa anytime I wanted to, had a housekeeper, the whole nine yards," said Linda Payne, 41, laughing. "Now I'm living in a box, washing my own dishes and have to go to a coin laundry to wash the clothes."

As Howard Payne, a 42-year-old a real-estate lawyer, explained it: "The corporate world is always a little bit stressful, and Linda and I tend to connect with each other better when we're traveling and out in nature. We just want to pursue what we enjoy, work on our passions. I like to write, do a little photography, just wanted to be outdoors. So, in January I gave six months' notice, we sold the house in May, and that's basically it."

Are they nuts?

Not really. According to a recent Gallup poll, 77 percent of Americans hate their jobs. And



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Howard and Linda Payne lounged near the RV they call home. The couple will begin an extended road trip across America tomorrow. (Photos by Mary Ann Gerth, The Courier-Journal)

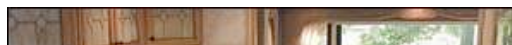
TO FIND OUT MORE

- Visit the Paynes' Web site, www.rv-dreams.com/index.html
- For information about the RV lifestyle, www.escapees.com



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The Paynes sold their former Hurstbourne-area patio home so they could begin a new lifestyle.



more Americans are jumping off the corporate treadmill, pursuing simpler, less materialistic lifestyles -- about 15 percent of baby boomers, according to the New York-based Trends Research Institute.

Book-length testimonials include "First We Quit Our Jobs: How One Work Driven Couple Got on the Road to a New Life" by Marilyn Abraham (Dell, \$29) and "Cutting Loose: From Rat Race to Dream Lifestyles" by A. Louis Ripskis (Impact Journal Press, \$10).

The Paynes said their work lives were affecting their personal lives. "Basically what happened is through 19 years of marriage, we would get so caught up in our own world of work, that our lives tended to be co-existing with one another," said Linda Payne, a saleswoman and purchasing manager.

"We were like roommates almost, because we were so focused on our jobs, and anytime we took a vacation, that's when we would reconnect to one another, and when we came back off vacation, we went back to work that took us away from each other."

Howard Payne said changes in his work situation added more stress. "My career was going all right. I had started the company with some other attorney friends, sold it in 2003, made a little profit, but with the new company taking over, I was managing seven offices. And the new company is a Wall Street firm, so there was more financial pressure."

Then last year, the Paynes took a vacation in Alaska that changed their outlook.

"We were cut off from everything -- no cell phones, no computers, no TVs, we didn't read the newspapers, and some places didn't even have electricity," Linda Payne said. "And what happened is that we bonded with each other so much that when we returned home we went into a depression because we had to disconnect because of work."

The couple tried to figure out how they could travel for a living, but couldn't. "Then we researched the possibility of living on the road with less expenses, and we made a decision," Howard Payne said.



Linda and Howard Payne showed off the interior living area of their 400-square-foot RV. (By Mary Ann Gerth, The Courier-Journal) [+ enlarge](#)

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With no children, and a nest egg saved for retirement, they decided to leisurely tour the United States in an RV, working odd jobs along the way to pay expenses.

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(www.workamper.com/WorkamperNews/WNIndex.cfm), about jobs for RVers, like campground managers, tours guides at national parks, working in souvenir shops, low-paying jobs," Linda Payne said. "But when we're living this kind of lifestyle, we really don't need a large income, just money for food, gas and lodging, and a lot of the jobs will provide you with lodging."

The Paynes are called "full-timers," an industry term for people living year-round in a recreational vehicle. The Ohio-based Family Motor Coach Association says they make up about 13 percent of its 129,000 members.

Like nomads, wherever they park their RV is their home. The Paynes intend to visit five states by January.

They'll drive to an RV dealer in Chattanooga, Tenn., for repairs, and then visit friends in Philadelphia, Miss.; and Gulf Shores, Ala. For Thanksgiving, they'll visit family in Fort Myers, Fla. They plan to pull into Quartzite, Ariz., next January for an RV roundup.

After that, they're going wherever the road takes them, staying a week or more at each destination, and driving about 150 miles at a stretch to save money on gas.

"We won't be in any hurry to get anywhere, and we're going to do less driving than we would at home," Linda Payne said. "Our RV is hooked to a pickup, which has two tanks that cost about \$100 to fill, but we can go about 700 miles on the two tanks."

The Paynes also plan to do volunteer work at churches, chambers of commerce and social service agencies along the way.

Linda Payne added, "The thing that makes us a little unique is that RVers are of traditional retirement age, and we're slightly younger than that. Most people our age won't take this chance. We're taking a leap of faith."

^^ Back to top

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