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Streak of Midnight

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30 seconds, 273 yards, 0 clothes: the run from Curtis to Beardshear

Streak of Midnight

*Names changed to protect the naked

You are standing face-to-face with your significant other. Both of you are staring romantically into each other’s eyes, hands held with care. You’ve been having a great homecoming together, and it’s about to become even greater. Standing underneath the bells of Iowa State, you are about to complete one of the greatest ISU traditions and fulfill your dreams. The clock strikes midnight. You both go in for the kiss that will change your life—

OH SHIT YOUR BEST FRIEND IS RUNNING ACROSS CENTRAL CAMPUS NAKED!

This is a common occurrence for freshmen and others who are unaware of another great ISU tradition — The Curtiss-Beardshear Run. For the modest and naive people, the Curtiss-Beardshear Run (also called Anti-Campaniling) is when people run across Central Campus from Curtiss Hall to Beardshear Hall naked. The run begins at midnight, and the goal is to sprint from the top of the stairs at Curtiss all the way to the top of the stairs at Beardshear before the clock finishes ringing in the hour.

Accomplish or fail, it’s something many students continue to partake in. But when did it get started? How does this keep going with the cops around? Why do people do it?

“The excitement and the thrill made it worth it,” says Steve*, a sophomore who ran his freshman year.

Also—the girls, “I was with a group of three guys, including myself, and twelve girls ... I got twelve girls’ phone numbers.”

The history behind the custom is murky at best. It must have started a long time ago, but the “when” has yet to be uncovered. The purpose has also been lost to history, but it has evolved as a way for people to pull a prank on lovers campaniling or a thing that people “just do” and a rite of passage for some.

While many people associate this tradition with homecoming and Veishea—or Not-Veishea—it actually happens more than you think. In fact, it happens on a regular basis. Steve’s experience was spur of the moment.

“As I was passing Curtiss one evening, I jokingly asked if they [twelve girls] were going to do it. When they said they were, I decided to join—and it was great,” he says.

Don’t think your physique should keep you from joining in either.

“You’re all there to run across campus naked, the last thing you want is for somebody to be a jerk to you about your body, so why do it to somebody else? I think it’s the unspoken rule,” Steve says.

When it comes to the cops, Steve says you shouldn’t be too worried of getting put behind bars.

“The police are aware that it happens as a tradition, so they don’t arrest people for it. They will arrest you for being drunk, though,” he says.

Police Officer Anthony Greiter has an official answer.

“Our response to complaints on ‘the Run’ will have the same protocol that any other call will have,” he says.

In other words, there is no difference to how police treat the run compared to any other call/complaint they get.

So yeah, you can run—but do so at your own peril.

Running the 273 yards from Curtiss to Beardshear sounds easy enough, but veterans know it’s harder than it looks. The total time for the clock to chime and strike 12 times is about 30 seconds. Walking the distance from Curtiss to Beardshear takes about three minutes.

“I would train up before you do it yourself. It was a surprisingly long run for such a short amount of time,” Steve says.

The best way to not get your clothes stolen is just as simple as taking them with you while you run or have a friend hold them.

Even though the backstory is as concrete as the origin of the sandwich, the spirit is well-known and embraced by many.

“Once I was done I felt pretty proud–well, as proud as a noob freshman could feel, I suppose.”