

## Wingding 39 Trip to Grapevine TX

Well let me first say, the trip getting to Wingding 39 at Grapevine Texas was not as interesting as getting to Wingding 38 in Billings Montana, in terms of the associated sights to be seen, but it did offer a different ride. It was pretty much a straight shot for us. Bill Ruth leading, me, Len Rovenski in the middle and Larry Coffield rode gunner, a small group to be sure. We rode from Pittsburgh to Jackson TN the first day (674mi.). Then from Jackson to Greenville TX the next (490mi.) That left us only 73 miles to cover in the morning to get to the Gaylord Texan Resort in Grapevine TX to get settled in and register for the event. Well, in the 4<sup>th</sup> largest metro area in the country, Fort Worth - Dallas, with over 7 million people the last 73 miles only took 3 hours on a Tuesday morning on the interstate beltway to get to our destination. It was dry and hot even though Hurricane Harvey was just about 300 miles to the southeast of us. We only hit one thunderstorm in Arkansas on the way out and rode through it in no time. We were glad to arrive. Three hours of stop and go interstate traffic is worse than a day's ride cruising down the interstate.

The Gaylord Texan Resort was quite impressive, it was huge, over 2 million sq.ft. huge, with over 1,500 guest rooms and four restaurants and the convention hall. The inside area was climate controlled and included a meandering river walk inside. It took me 15 minutes to get from my room to the parking garage where the bikes were parked. Due to Bill's mobility issues he wisely rented a electric scooter just to get around the place. (more about this later). We registered and looked around the GWRRA merchandise booth. While we were speculating about next year's Wingding location Larry noticed coffee cups and badges along with other merchandise for sale showing the Wingding 40 was to be held in Phoenix AZ. You can imagine how we were surprised the next day at opening ceremonies when they announced Wingding 40 would be in Knoxville TN.

The next day we met up with Dave and Janet Mazon and Tom and Helene McQuillan and took some pictures together. (look at the pictures in the Photo tab on the website). We toured the vendors hall, all the regulars were there and some new ones too. Later in the event it was noticeable that many installation booths were not as busy as usual and some vendors commenting on the lower participation level than other Wingdings. After talking with the staff at the registering tables they were noticing about a third of the pre-registered members had not checked in. With the national news reporting the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, it undoubtedly had an effect on those who may have changed their mind. Although we had not seen any rain at all, the weather was in the low 90's. The locals in town were commenting how we brought in the "cool" weather.

Wednesday Bill was going to clean up his bike in the parking garage and Larry and I were taking a local self guided ride. That's when it happened! Bill took a terrible spill on his trike that required four EMT s to respond and give medical treatment to clean up the blood and some nasty road rash which required bandaging. Mind you the was not his Goldwing trike but the little dinky scooter he rented. He was carrying his clean up bucket looking for a water faucet when he turned abruptly and fell over. The EMT s were called by someone noticing and naturally that was their big action for the day. It made for good teasing.

Now its Wednesday night, light parade, another award for Bill's bike, all cleaned up ready to go! Over 4000 blue lights, and a clean bike. There were many others as the competition is getting more intense for Bill each year. They lined up in downtown Grapevine getting ready to start the parade. But Bill was soon to find out that the Light Parade judges were not able to make it to Wingding as the were

from the Houston area. Needless to say Bill was disappointed. Not his day. The parade when on and was a sight to see for the Wingdingers and locals who lined the streets.

We wake up Thursday morning only to hear there is a gas shortage and long lines at all the pumps with many gas stations already out of gas. This turns out to be a social media reaction that was soon overcome, with the larger gas chains resupplying their stations in the same day. We then headed for a ride to Main St. in Fort Worth to see the infamous cattle drive down Main Street held every day for the tourist crowd. It was neat, we took some pictures walked around the souvenir shops and ended up at Billy Bob's Texas dance hall where they have big name country western stars, dancing and in house rodeo. Friday we spent just meandering around downtown and the resort. That evening there was a grand fireworks display that is put on every Friday during the summer months. The resort had a setup on the parking lot roof with a bar and concessions for taking in the entertainment.

Saturday came early, we headed over to the nearby shopping mall parking lot to watch the bike parade, bike show and drill team performances. The drill teams were great, they really had to do a lot of practicing to pull off the drills they were doing. The Golden Angels from California were especially good. Well as you could assume, Bill took first place for best Trike and Trailer in the show. From there we mounted up and headed home. Stopped in Little Rock for the evening then rode to just past Cincinnati the next day. When we got to the motel outside of Cincinnati Larry noticed his tire pressure alarm going off on the dash of his new bike. Darn if he didn't suck up a nail. He made it to a truck stop, plugged it and it was good all the way home. The trip from there was downhill all the way. We were glad we had good weather and no other problems. Now we are looking forward to next year at Knoxville.