

Ride to 2018 Florida District Rally in Altamonte Springs, FL.  
by Dennis Bible

Thursday morning, March 22nd, Bill Schleicher and I rolled out of Blairsville at 9AM under clear skies and 28 degrees F. We were headed to the 2018 Florida District Rally in Altamonte Springs, FL. Bill was leading as I was on our new 2018 Goldwing Tour and wanting to devote as much attention to learning the bike as I could. We headed south on Hwy 129, intending to stay off the Interstates as long as

possible. We kept to Hwy 129 through Gainesville, Athens and Eatonton, then continued south on Hwy 441 through Dublin, McRae and Pearson, finally stopping for the night in Lake City, FL.

Friday morning saw us up and fed early and headed to Palatka, FL., via hwy 100, where we picked up "The Black Bear Trail" south through the Ocala National Forest (never did see a bear), then Hwy 40 east to Hwy 17 south to DeLand and eventually I-4 West (to avoid Orlando traffic) to the Rally Headquarters at the Altamonte Springs Hilton Hotel, arriving about noon. The place was a zoo as the Hilton had booked not only GWRRA but also a MG British Car Rally which took up 1/2 the parking. It took us 20 minutes to find parking for our bikes!

We found Chapter J members Nick & Sandy George right away along with Georgia District reps Larry & Pam Clemmer and Vance & Fern Oakes. We met up with a lot of old friends from various Florida and Tennessee Chapters too. Good to see all those folks! It didn't take long to shop through the indoor and outdoor vendors as much of the merchandise is consistent rally to rally and we've actually got most of the gear we need. I did pick up a summer riding jacket and some goodies for Sue. About 3PM we headed for our hotel and called it a day. Saturday morning we were headed west on I-4 at 6AM to Winter Haven where we had booked a couple of hours of "dual time" in a J-3 Piper Cub on floats at the Jack Brown Seaplane Base. It was a perfect day to fly on the water and we got to test our "glassy water and rough water" take-off and landing skills! This brought back a lot of great memories from my bush flying days in Alaska! It was a new experience for Bill who has had a career of flying in high performance military aircraft but never on water (intentionally anyway)! It was a great experience and we were both pumped the rest of the day! Leaving the Seaplane Base about noon, we hit the Interstates and toll roads in order to get north quickly and spent Saturday night in Valdosta, GA., after an exhausting but fun 10 hour day of flying and riding!

Sunday morning we rolled out of Valdosta heading north on I-75 under an overcast sky at 60 degrees. The ride was uneventful until we rode into a cold front just south of Macon and the temperatures went from 68 to 42 in about 5 miles. Not being dressed for that cold, we suffered for 15 more miles to exit 149 and a Denny's Restaurant for breakfast. We were chilled to the bone! After breakfast, we suited up properly (with everything we had) and headed north to Macon to pick up Hwy 129 again. Here we encountered a cold rain at 44 degrees for about an hour and continued home staying on Hwy 129!

I want to especially thank Bill for leading most of the way which allowed me to explore not only the riding qualities of our new ride but also the audio, CB, navigation systems and the unfamiliar ergonomics of the bike.

Good ride! 1,300 plus miles, 4 days!

Dennis Bible