

TN: VOL STATE WINNIES

Road Trip to Hawaii: Winnebago Grand National Rally 2021

Oh, what a beautiful sight from the air. No, I'm not talking about Rocket Man of Los Angeles. I'm speaking of the grand panorama photo taken by the skilled Winnebago technical team who operated the drone. Simply breath taking. Hundreds upon hundreds of RV's—large ones, medium sized ones, compact ones, self-propelled and towable. Just about every model that Winnebago makes. It was a grand sight after a year of COVID restrictions.

And it was even more enriching to see long-time friends and meet new ones. And there were Winnebago faithful who made this Road Trip to Hawaii Grand National Rally 2021 as their fiftieth Winnebago Rally. Oh what loyalty.

While we Vol State Winnies didn't have anyone with that kind of longevity, we had a remarkable time together in the Tennessee Row. We were able to share ideas, encourage one another, renew friendships, and create bonds based on shared interests and values. Plus, we had A LOT of fun at various Pucker Brush events, row parties, seminars, and the Luau Dinner.

Several Vol State Winnies arrived during pre-GNR. Some wanted to attend the Pucker Brush Parade. As one Tennessee member described it: "We arrived just a few minutes before 10AM, the start time, and the streets were lined up at least two rows deep. We placed our chairs in the third row and watched a parade that lasted a good hour! The parade participants threw candy to the kids - many of them had large bags. By the end of the parade, some of the small children had trouble picking up their bags by themselves. Toward the end of the parade, the 3M folks came along handing out all types of sponges. It was interesting to see all the adults grapple for these sponges. In the end, everyone got plenty of sponges!"

Another pre-GNR activity that many enjoyed was the Omelet Breakfast at the Emergency Response Center. "For a \$10 donation, participants selected a dixie cup full of ingredients (peppers, onions, cheese, olives, tomatoes, etc.) to be added to their omelet. The line went amazingly quick. Once

through the line, there were plenty of tables inside and outside to consume the food. Met many GNR folks at the breakfast.”

The Factory Service Teams also saw many RV owners who arrived early. The Winnebago service technicians friendly, smiling and attentive listeners. Overall, they were customer focused. This was another highlight of this GNR as many owners had been rebuffed by selling dealerships which seemed more interested in selling than providing service after the sale. One owner who had seven items that he wanted to try to get corrected was absolutely “blown away” when told by the service technician that most of the items were small and would be taken care of by Winnebago’s “Good Will.” That sure fosters brand loyalty.

Another positive comment was about the Luau dinner and entertainment. “While the line for the Luau meal was long and not as fast as we would like given the temperature that afternoon, the food was good. The post-Luau entertainment was really good! We heard many people say that it was as good or better than what they saw while in Hawaii. In general, all the entertainment was excellent.” Because of the high temperature and humidity that day, it seemed as if Winnebago had mobilized their entire workforce to distribute bottled water to anyone waiting in line that afternoon who needed a drink. We appreciated the concern for our welfare and the hospitality very much.

We VSW really enjoyed sharing our hospitality with others too. Late afternoon each day of the GNR we had a “happy hour-type” gathering in our state row tent. It was a time where we invited all Tennessee RVers in attendance at the GNR to join us for a sub party one night, a pizza party another night, finish the lemonade another night and so on. We celebrated one new couple as they became members of the Volunteer State Winnies.

And speaking of lemonade, we again participated in the state row parties. We served regular lemonade and gallons of the “world famous” Lynchburg Lemonade. There were plenty of requests for seconds. Of course the recipe for the latter will have to remain a secret. Only Ralph’s and Virginia’s pet Corgi overheard the exact mixture, but is sworn to secrecy.

Other highlights that Vol State Winnies mentioned were Many of the seminars: “Escape the Human Zoo” by Kathy Holcomb was particularly entertaining. Michelin RV Tires and Onan RV Generator seminars generated many questions that were ably answered by the presenters.

Oh, and let’s not forget about the trivia competitions. One of our members won 1st place in the Class C trivia competition, and several other members came in second place in the Thursday Trivia Night competition.

And finally, our kudos go to the WIT staff who planned this great GNR and to the many volunteers who greeted us upon arrival, marshaled us into an arrival area, guided us to our parking locations and were available the entire week whenever we had questions. So, thank you to all who had a hand in making this GNR a truly SUPER event!

Compiled and written by David Strand