

9/06/05

A New Guinness World's Record

by
Tom Holbrook

The Guinness family... a name best known in England and Ireland for their beer which they've been brewing for a couple of centuries, but in the United States you say "Guinness" and one automatically thinks of World's Records. But did you know that the Guinness Book of World's Records has only been around for 50 years? 1951 was the year when the seed of an idea was planted in the mind of the Managing Director of Guinness Breweries when he and a friend argued at a party as to what bird was the fastest game bird. Four years later, almost exactly 50 years ago on August 27, 1955, the very first edition of the official Guinness Book was printed and bound. Over that 50 year period more than 100 million Guinness Books have been sold in 100 different countries and 37 languages, and is claimed to be the world's best ever selling copyrighted book.

This past weekend The Villages held their first ever challenge to a Guinness World Record by trying to wrest the record of Most Golf Carts to Participate in a Parade from Timber Pines Retirement Community in Spring Hill, FL. On March 16, 2004 the previous record of 306 golf carts, then held by Sun City Center of Hillsborough County, FL, was beaten substantially by Timber Pines with a total of 1,138 golf carts, spanning a parade route of over 3 miles.

Several members of The Villages staff put together a challenge to establish a new record and the residents of The Villages took up the gauntlet. Several months of intense planning resulted in 3,225 (unofficial count) Villagers' golf carts winding their way over a circuitous route from the Buffalo grazing fields on Rt. 466 to Market Square in Sumter Landing. End to end, in a single line, the golf carts would easily occupy over 5 miles. Passersby on Rt. 466 were astonished at what they saw and acknowledged that fact with whistles, waves and horns blowing. Every participant in the parade was astonished as well. Over and over one could hear, "I just can't believe all these golf carts together all at once."

Was it an easy task? No way. The logistics to organize this event was Herculean and not without a few pitfalls, but a determined effort resulted in 3,000+ carts and probably 6,000+ individuals having a great and successful day under overcast skies. As predicted on the parade's website, PATIENCE was the key word for those taking part in the challenge. Many spent a couple of hours in the morning in pre-staging staging areas before moving to the official staging area in the middle of a pasture, where another 2 ½ - 3 hours were spent getting to know those sitting one or two feet on either side of them.

Needless to say there were carts of every color, size, design and shape, as well as owners of every size and shape. And even though most of the carts tend to look the same from the outside one only had to look within to discover the personality, or lack thereof, of the owner of the cart.

There were Steve and Barb from upstate New York... new residents of Winifred Village as of a few weeks ago. During the wait Steve had his feet up on the front of the dash, smoking a Cuban cigar, enjoying his Bud Light, explaining to a friend up North why he was sitting in the middle of a hay field used by resident Buffalo, surrounded by a few thousand friends, and preaching to his friend as to why he should retire here.

There was Bob and Jean from Wisconsin, with their dog Eli, who took the waiting time in stride by playing a few hands of Euchre with their friends from Michigan. We can't forget Ed and Cathy, from California, who had a palm tree tied to the back of their cart, John and Jean, from Ohio, driving a '32 Ford Coupe wannabe for a cart, Frank and Jean, from Minnesota, with six 12 pack boxes of beer on the back of their cart, and, of course, Bob and Chris from Texas who adorned the front of their cart with genuine Texas Longhorns. These were just a few of the thousand different carts, each as I said, with a story of their own to tell.

For those who didn't or couldn't participate...I'm sorry you missed out and I hope you'll bring yourself to get involved with like events in the future. It says a great deal about a community where so many individuals are eager to get out and make the effort to have fun and add another chapter in book of "How to Grow Old Gracefully and Have Fun Doing It."

And for those previous record holders at Timber Lines community... Who's Your Daddy Now?

#