

Founder David Simmons

In the spring of 2018, after 11 years of towing a 15-foot tear drop [T@B](#) (and loving the camper) we decided to trade it in for something bigger. After much searching, we were introduced to the Winnebago Towables brand at our local dealer. At the same time, we stumbled across "Traveling Roberts" YouTube videos chronicling his travels and how his Winnebago Travel Trailer was holding up to them. We decided on one of the available floor plans (2106DS) and made the purchase. With the purchase came a print version of the WIT magazine (now all digital). While planning our first year's adventures we noticed in the magazine an ad for the upcoming Grand National Rally 2018 (GNR). In the ad was the words 'vendor row'. My wife and I have a craft business (well she has the business, I am just honored to be her free employee) and those words meant the expense of traveling from Maine to Iowa could be paid for by attending as both an attendee and a vendor. The call was made and we were on our way.

That is how we ended up in Forest City, Iowa in the summer of 2018. In between selling our product I searched the grounds for other Winnebago Towables. There was only a hand full of Winnebago and Sunnybrook Towed Owners attending. The GNR was a wonderful experience. During the rally we met with the Winnebago Towables and had a group meeting. That is when I met Doug Ripley. Doug had a history of dealing with WIT and Winnebago Industries. At the meeting, if I remember correctly, he mentioned that he had been in contact with WIT leadership and had created a Winnebago group. He asked if it was something that the group present thought should be followed up on. We agreed and with any good organization we punished Doug for his forethought by selecting him as President and asking him to continue organizing the group's structure. At the time WIT bylaws required a President and Vice-President be listed. Doug asked me if I would be willing to hold that place until proper elections could be held.

Doug did a great job of working with the GNR and WIT leadership over the next year in selecting our present level and dry location on the fairgrounds, negotiating with them for us to have our tow vehicles be parked with our trailers in the event of an evacuation of the grounds and he created our Facebook group (our major means of communications). During GNR 2019 we now had our row, structure, and ability to communicate to our members. We added some campers and thanks to Doug our group wasn't forgotten by Winnebago, and we grew our relationship with Winnebago Towables Middlebury.

The group has continued to grow and in 2023 we had a very successful "Camp Winnebago" (the new name for GNR) and a very successful owners rally at Middlebury, Indiana where we strengthened our relationship with Winnebago Towables Management and employees' team. As with everything, life is about relationships.

Building friendships and associations is what humans do. The WIT TOWS community is all about those relationships. C. S. Lewis described friendship as two (or more) people that love the same thing. To say, "You too?" when discovering that shared interest. Our members come from all over, with different experiences but a shared love of travel, camping with friends and learning about their Winnebago Travel Trailers.

As we continue to spread the word about our two annual events, Camp Winnebago and Middlebury, our attendance will grow. With growth the possibilities will grow with us. Who knows what regional events, workshops or tours will be planned and attended.

In 2023 I was selected as President, getting the baton from Doug, and will work to make the Camp Winnebago 2024 and our Middlebury rally the best attended, most fun and where our relations between each other and the team at Winnebago Towables division will continue to flourish. We have a fun, inquisitive, and confident membership group. Let's work to get "40 campers in 2024" at Camp Winnebago and 20 campers at Middlebury this year. Doable goals!