

FAMILY

Jan and I have just returned from the funeral of our beloved friend and Chapter 1-A Tampa member Sid Spann. As I looked around the crowded church at Sid's funeral, I realized exactly what it means to be a member of the Gold Wing Road Riders family. This has been a rough month for our G.W.R.R.A. family in Florida. As of this article we have lost 3 of our members. Chris Christopher, our close friend and Chapter 1-A Tampa member passed away and was buried on Wed. June 4th after a valiant fight with cancer. On Sat. June 7th while on a long group ride with his chapter, 2-R Ft. Lauderdale, Howard Allen was involved in an accident on Ozello Trail in Homosassa and died of complications at Citrus Memorial Hospital in Inverness. On Friday June 13th Sid Spann, the aforementioned Tampa member, passed away in Tampa after heart bypass surgery.

What does this have to do with the Gold Wing Road Riders Association and Riders Education? Maybe nothing. Then again, maybe everything! This will not be an article about the dangers we face every minute we ride. This is about the very essence of what our organization is all about. FAMILY.

While attending Chris Christopher's funeral I observed member after member step up to the podium to sing the praises of our friend. Chris's wife Eva was given a lot of support during Chris's ordeal and again at the funeral. She recently mentioned the many cards and E-Mails she received and was comforted knowing she could count on "the family" to be there for her in her time of need.

Three days after Chris's burial I received an E-Mail from Larry Franklin, chapter educator for chapter 2-R Ft. Lauderdale, explaining the accident in Homosassa and the injuries incurred by Howard Allen. He asked if I knew anyone in the area with a trailer who could pick up the damaged Gold Wing at a local auto shop where it was being kept. The daily charge for this was quite high and removing it would be economically sound. I immediately called my friend and Chapter 1-T Inverness member John Darbyson and asked if he would bring his trailer and accompany me to the auto shop to retrieve Howard's bike. Without hesitation he said yes and made the 50 min. trip to my house and then to the shop to pick up the bike and place it in my garage for safe keeping until it could be retuned to Ft. Lauderdale. John Darbyson is 82 yrs. young. John Darbyson is the epitome of the G.W.R.R.A. family member. Jan and I sat in the hospital with Howard's wife Laura until she was ready to return to a nearby friend's home. On Sunday June 15th, Fathers Day, Larry Franklin and Herb Jefferson, 2-R, drove 6 hrs. to pick up the bike and return it home. 11-12 hrs round trip. FAMILY.

At Sid Spann's funeral I observed members and officers from all around the Tampa area dressed in their colors as a tribute to a man who had a perpetual smile and a glad hand for everyone he met. The outpouring of love and affection from the gathering for Sid's wife Bobbie was very evident. While there I had a chance to speak with Jim and Rebecca Iverson, chapter directors of 1-B Brandon. The Iverson's recently lost their house to a fire and were in the process of recovering from their loss. I asked how they were doing during this crises and Jim's answer once again confirmed what I had already known about our organization and am writing about today. He said "We are very blessed to have had so much support from our G.W.R.R.A. family ". It was that remark that prompted this article.

Our philosophy on life has always been to take each day and live it to it's fullest. We should all, as they say, " stop and smell the roses ". How lucky we are to be involved in a hobby that takes us all over our beautiful country meeting new friends and communing with the great outdoors. We in this wonderful organization that is G.W.R.R.A. are as Jim says " blessed " to have so many friends to count on in time of need. We are all members of an incredible extended FAMILY.

Drive Safe, Have Fun
Joe and Gracie