



# The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the  
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

August 2023 - Volume 16 Issue 8

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## Contact Information:

### Florida State Director:

Van VanSteelant – [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com)

### East Central Florida Area Rep:

Tom Blake – [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com)

### West Central Florida Area Rep:

Doug Westly – [flwingrdr@msn.com](mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com)

### Florida Gator Tale Editor:

Kim Longacre – [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org)

## Feature Article

### Road Trip - Knoxville 2023 STAR Convention

*By Robert Holder, Kim Krzywicki, Elaine Kendall,  
Dennis Vallarose, Bob Miller and Jamie Rohrbaugh*



*(l-r) Robert Holder, Kim Krzywicki, Elaine Kendall (aka plus one),  
Dennis Vallarose, Bob Miller and Jamie Rohrbaugh*

## Five old guys + one

After considerable planning and discussion our group decided to ride together to STAR 2023. We “practiced” almost weekly for the next several weeks; going on longer rides than our norm. One thing that did not change was our “we ride to eat” motto. Be it breakfast, lunch, or dinner; we’re going to eat.

As we neared the start date, Robert Holder happened upon another motorcycle enthusiast looking for others to ride with. When he explained MSTa and the STAR meeting, she was very interested and wondered if she could join us on our trip? As a new member, I had been impressed with the safety and skill these guys exhibited but, heck, we didn't even know this woman or how she rode. So, after some emails and phone conversations, we decided to go for a “test ride” with her. Elaine showed up on a custom VFR 800 Honda and demonstrated her 38 years of motorcycle experience. She immediately fit right in, and we became “five old guys plus one” (younger lady).

We instantly bonded as a group; off we went to STAR.

## Road Trip - Knoxville 2023 STAR Convention

### It all started with a conversation

Earlier this year, I met MSTA member Robert Holder. He told me about the association and a local group of riders he regularly rode with. The next week, I met the guys and found out they were much like me; older, retired, motorcycle lovers. After the first breakfast ride, I was hooked and immediately joined MSTA. We rode almost weekly and did one group ride to Lake Weir for a Southern Region lunch. Again, I met similar motorcycle enthusiasts who shared common interests.

Many of the guys were long-term members. Not the least of which was Dennis Villarose, former MSTA President.

After a few weeks, the guys asked me if I wanted to go to STAR 2023 in Knoxville. I considered it and told them it would be the longest motorcycle ride I had ever done. I had some reservations (I've been riding for nearly 60 years) I learned it's about the journey, not the destination.



**Left to right: Robert Holder, Kim Krzywicki, Elaine Kendall (a.k.a. plus one) Dennis Villarose, Bob Miller and me; Jamie Rohrbaugh**

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We broke up our trip to Knoxville into segments; two days up to and two days back. We rode in a safety formation; taking turns leading and tail-spotting. We purposely took back roads and scenic routes. The first day was a 9 hour stretch, 484 miles. We rode from Jacksonville to Commerce Georgia with only two meals and a snack. Along the way, we discovered the hospitality and support from many locals that we met. Almost every time we would roll into a restaurant, gas station or convenience store, someone would approach us and ask “hey-where y'all going?”. They would tell us about their bikes and adventures, and watch with some envy as we rode off. (I'm so glad I got out of my comfort zone to do this trip!)

Day two promised to be a shorter ride as we had less than 200 miles to go. We took our time and enjoyed some twists and turns as we approached Knoxville. Our route put us transiting the Nantahala National Forest. What a preview of this beautiful area and the scenery that was to be ahead. Finally in the early afternoon we pulled up to the hotel. STAR 2023 we're here!

Along our journey (by using communicators) we had hours of sharing stories, telling jokes and warning of dangerous motorists. After two days and almost 700 miles of riding we were a choreographed unit; changing lanes in perfect unison; forming cohesive lines without explanation and reading each other's style.

While arriving safely at the hotel and enjoying dinner was a welcome rest, we were ready for some mountain roads!

We were wheels up rolling bright and early Sunday morning. A bit of Foothills Parkway and some Little River Gorge Road made us forget our road weariness.

Monday found us taking on the “Tail of the Dragon”. This famous road had been the focus of our planned rides. It has over 300 turns in just 11 miles.



The dragon is touted as America's number one motorcycle and sports car road

Right from the beginning it was obvious that every day would be filled with good rides; informative programs and of course good food. Our goal was to patronize local eateries. We had some great meals. Breakfast; Mae Bobs Diner: Irwinton, Ga. Inexpensive and old style service. Dinner at La Hacienda: Commerce, Ga. Close to our Holiday Inn Express. Traditional fare with big margaritas. Cook's Country Kitchen: This Blairsville store/diner is a fun place to visit if all you do is watch people. It's packed daily and owned and operated by the Cook family. "We love bikers' ' is their sign outside-they sure do. Hillbilly's: another local favorite. It's in Sevierville, so right on our route. We were told several MSTAs groups had stopped there. A real surprise was Mariscos Pacifico located in Knoxville. It's a Mexican/Seafood place. Not your normal south of the border stuff. The food is plentiful and at a reasonable price.

Star arranged for a daily shuttle to local restaurants. We took full advantage of this perk.

Heading back to Florida we took a slightly different route. This did not dissuade us from our food quest. We hit Flapjacks back in Sevierville for breakfast. The Sawmill in Blairsville for lunch, but finally succumbed to a chain restaurant by eating at Ruby Tuesdays in Vidalia for dinner.



Will it all fit? My wife said I was taking too much stuff. I packed three pairs of boots, two rain gear suits a bike cover and misc. clothes. Too much? It all fit, somehow.

STAR BBQ lunch ride. Roane County Park

On our last day, we decided to take a weather delay. It was a blessing to have such an experienced group who could offer routes and weather advisories. The proof was not using full rain gear during the whole 10 day period.

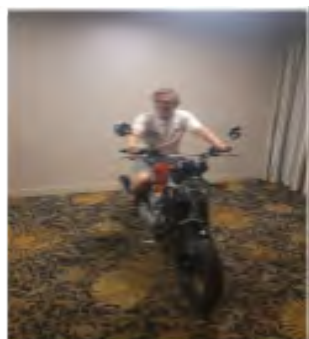
So, on Friday, after 1,804 miles, we parted ways off I 295 in Jacksonville. It was with a much better knowledge of my bike, the roads, safety and also having grown closer to my new friends.

### STAR 2023

Our annual meeting was action packed with lots of programs. There were industry experts talking about new systems. There we experienced riders discussing how to safely ride in today's road environment. The leaders of MSTA gave us a club overview with state of the club presentations. We also got an update on the Dan Clark safety program. Several of his family members attended our meeting. There were also available pre-planned, pre-scouted routes. Over the previous several weeks MSTA local Knoxville members had been out reviewing and checking local routes for safety. This translated into wonderful scenery and some challenging twists and turns. They had even uploaded many of the routes into a program that could be used with a GPS unit.

Breakout session topics ranged from “what not to do on a motorcycle” to technical updates. Author Michael O’Neill also gave an interesting talk on Roads Less Traveled. A former Honda employee; Doug Westley, gave a presentation on Honda’s Dual Clutch Transmission.

Did I mention the motorcycle?. One lucky attendee won a brand new Royal Enfield motorcycle. Howard Baumgardner, longtime MSTA member, had the winning raffle ticket.



Postscript: During our journey we passed over 80 Dollar General Stores. It seems they had pre planned their locations in concert with our preplanned motor cycle route. Maybe we're onto something?. Maybe it's a way to become an internet influencer? Stay Tuned! We're already talking about our next road trip.

(\*writers note: all of my old guys, plus one group contributed to this article. Especially Elaine Kendall-Google Docs editing. Thank you!)

## *Safety Talk*

**IMPORTANT NOTICES:** Ultimately, the safety of motorcycle riders and their passengers is their own responsibility. Nothing presented in the column supersedes, negates or relieves a motorcyclist and/or passenger from assumption of personal responsibility for their actions and safety. [Editor's Note: This article is reprinted from the March 2014 and November 2020 editions of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]

### **Coping with the Left-Turn Menace**

**By Doug Westly**



We've all seen it and talked about it. So why does it still happen? Why do we continue to lose so many riders (and sometimes friends) to the left-turning vehicle that violates our right-of-way? According to statistics, more motorcycle-involved multi-car accidents occur at/in intersections than anywhere else on public roads (Source: MSF).

There are lots of factors involved in left-turn car/motorcycle crashes. The most obvious one is the inability of the driver to visually recognize the approaching motorcycle in the oncoming lane. Whether it is a distracted driver, someone trying to squeeze through a perceived "hole" in the traffic, etc. the result is usually bad news for the motorcyclist.

So how do we cope with this all-too common traffic menace? Here are just a few thoughts, collected from various sources, riders and just plain old experience:

First off, we just have to make the assumption that **NOBODY** sees us on the road. Just because you're wearing hi-vis everything, from underwear to a one-piece, day-glow orange, LED-lit billboard suit, do not expect that to protect you. **SOME** drivers may see it. Ride like you're invisible.

Treat every intersection with caution. That doesn't just mean the ones with lights, stop signs and so on. Remember, every driveway emptying onto your road is an intersection. Every side street off your path of travel is an opportunity for a driver to turn in front of you.

Pay attention to vehicles as they approach or are facing you in the oncoming lanes. If they are stopped or are slowing, expect them to turn...and not see you in the process.

Can we catch clues about their intentions? Watch the driver. See where they are looking. Oh, and just because you make eye contact with them, don't assume they actually see you. Catching a theme here?

Another effective tactic, particularly at controlled intersections where vehicles are waiting to turn, is to watch the front tires. If they start to turn or roll, you can guarantee the driver intends to **GO**.

How about announcing your presence? Modulating headlight systems seem to work well and are legal in all 50 states, provided they are activated only during daylight hours. On the other hand, flashing your high beams can be a two-edged sword. The other driver may think you're indicating for them to proceed with their turn. Be careful about signals!

Finally, a last thought...**SLOW DOWN** for those intersections and situations where an unwanted physics lesson with another vehicle is a real possibility. Remember to **SCAN AHEAD** for traffic and possible danger. Don't forget the MSF mantra: **SEARCH-EVALUATE-EXECUTE (SEE)!** (It really does work...)

***Ride safe!*** – Doug Westly



## South Director's Report

### **So, were you at STAR 2023?**

What a month!! STAR '23 was a success! We still fit in 3 Brunch Rides and avoided the worst of the heat. For those who remember Johnny... "so how hot is it???"

First, the local info - Our East and West Central rides spanned the State. Catch their reports below. The South Brunch ride covered the middle ground! Buck and I departed at dark-thirty from the 7-11. Predictably, the sun rose behind us as we ventured west, then north. With the temp holding at 80°, we enjoyed our cruise over familiar roads.



*Pretty rides under shady trees at the Wild Turkey Tavern*

We found a good crowd gathering under the shady trees, and were then welcomed by the staff with a table for 12! We filled that, and kept our server hopping! Though this was a new-to-the membership destination, a few diners knew this place well! Even had the t-shirt to prove it! All agreed that we should repeat this one, maybe for lunch next time...



*Good crowd, great brunch at the South ride*

With the brunch orders in and beverages being consumed, the 50/50 raffle resulted with Don M. going home \$30 happier! Our new total is \$214. As always, a BIG THANKS to all who participate in our raffle!!

And once again, we did beat the rains home. The temps along the coast were up to the low 90's per usual. Hence the justification for the early starts!!



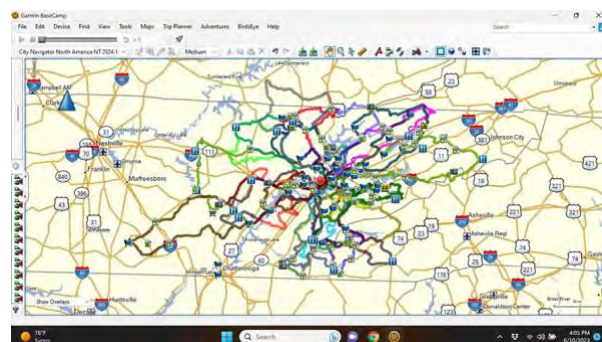
*Dinnertime with Floridians et al at STAR '23*

## **STAR 2023**

You've enjoyed the terrific feature article that really did our rally justice! Here are a few more words from other attendees...

### **Jim Beyerl...**

Knoxville was my second STAR and first time successfully using downloaded GPX files transferred into my Nav V. I was not able to link up with others but took five good solo rides (Devil Tri Rugby, Melungeous, Lunch Ride, Cumberland Plateau, and 1/2 of Chilhowie Mt.



*2000 miles of available routes at STAR '23*

Overlook). Many of the roads stitched together were great. Some of the small back roads looked like driveways. *(He's not joking! Nicely paved, with switchbacks, too!-Van)* Many thanks to the authors who made them and Norm Kern who put it together. I stayed mainly west of Knoxville because most of the roads east and south I had been on.

The hotel was fine but not a good walk-able neighborhood. I ate all my meals there and found them acceptable. The talks following the banquet got a little long.

## Jim Park adds...

If you are a member of the MSTA and have never attended our annual STAR event, you are missing out on one of the best benefits of being a member. The National rally is always located in areas for the best riding in the country. In addition, STAR offers evening seminars, vendors and of course social activities.



*STAR'23 in Knoxville was in the heart of twisty and scenic roads.*

This year's STAR was no different! Held in Knoxville, Tennessee, it was in the heart of both twisty and scenic roads. Thanks to the hard work of Roger White and his Tennessee riding group who mapped out the "best of the best" of those roads and provided GPS routes and excellent ride boards to enhance the attendees' riding experience. Hats off to Roger and his gang for all of their efforts pre-riding all of those great roads! Our small Florida riding group, consisting of Van, Prior and myself, were able to enjoy a few hundred miles of the over 2,000 miles of the available routes.

This year's Welcome Meeting had an added treat. We were welcomed to the area by the Knox County Mayor, Glenn Jacobs. Those of you that are Professional Wrestling fans would know him as "Kane" formerly of the WWE.

With the exception of one rainy morning, our weather was nearly perfect with blue skies and temperatures in the 70's and low 80's, far better than what we were having here in the Sunshine State.

Next year STAR will be held in October in Kerrville, Texas, also known as the "Texas Hill Country." Start making your plans now!

## Van says...



*In the clouds on a damp Monday a spectacular overlook*

Powers contacted me shortly before we were to head north, wondering how I was getting to Knoxville. Turns out we had the same agenda and roosting 820 miles together had us at the Inn on time and in good spirits. While in Tennessee, along with Jim Park, we managed close to 800 miles of hills, dales, and CURVES galore!



*Van finally got to ride The Dragon*

Be there next year!! When you attend, you honor the efforts of nearly 100 volunteers who contribute 1000's of hours for our benefit!! Our requirements for an event hotel often places them at the fringe of great riding areas. The minor "commuting" needed to reach the fun roads is just part of the adventure. The upsides are plenty of rooms, lots of parking, meeting rooms for the terrific seminars and banquets, and onsite dining options all make for a painless rally.

And a few personal words about riding with friends. Prior

As Prior headed north to Wisconsin, I asked Jim what his plans were to head home. Seems we were going to ride the same roads, and why not together!! His route on Thursday just happened to include a run down the Dragon. I finally got to ride it and bought the T-shirt...An added bonus was the 200 miles of more curves we enjoyed in and around Clayton, Georgia, on Friday. The man knows his favorites...A BIG THANKS for sharing the road with me!!



*Mayor Glenn Jacobs, aka "Kane" of the WWE, spoke at STAR*



*Van and Prior having fun enroute to lunch*



## What's Next??

We have three brunch rides in August. We continue to spread out the destinations to entice as many of you as we can!! On the **5th**, join Tom for the **East Central Brunch ride**, when we head to a new-to-us location, **Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q in Cocoa**. After several years since our last visit, the **South ride** heads to the **Big V Restaurant in LaBelle on the 19th**. And on the **26th**, join Doug for the **West Central ride**, which heads to **Roosters Cafe in Brooksville**, another new-to-us destination.

## Membership News!!

If you are receiving the *Gator Tale*, but not my announcements, **PLEASE** email me ASAP to correct my files. I believe I'm up to date...

THANKS to Don Moe for his efforts EVERY month to bring our Florida membership up to date with all the news about our new and renewing members!!

### Here's what we know today...

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Dell Haverland      Ellen Kocher      Kim Krzywicki      Bill McDaniel      Robert Miller  
Kendra Semenick

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Jim Faulkner      Michael Kwon      Mabel Navarro      Bob Summers      Lynn Treischmann  
Tom Treischmann

We urge all our members to renew their memberships and continue supporting their MSTA. If you have a question about when your membership expires, please contact the membership committee at [membership@ridemsta.com](mailto:membership@ridemsta.com). Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at [PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew) or [PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTAjoin) respectively. If you use a pre-printed form from STARreview or an ITR, be sure to mail it to the new member of our new membership team, **Scott Snedden, 11484 Waterwood Dr., Tyler, TX 75703**, and not to the address of any prior membership director.

If you only want to update your phone, email, bikes, or other details, you can do so quickly via [PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate](http://PlanetReg.com/MSTAupdate). **Please include enough unchanging information to assure the correct member is updated in the database.**

When you encounter a rider who would seem to be a good fit as a new MSTA member, please pass along one of our brand-new **Invitation-To-Ride Tri-folds!** For each new member you recruit and who provides your name and/or membership number on the application, you will receive a coupon for a **raffle ticket for the motorcycle touring package drawing at our next STAR event**. Any new or current member who joins or renews as a Sustaining Member will likewise receive a coupon for a raffle ticket for each year of the new membership term.



## Random Ramblings!!

We have lots of BRUNCH rides for the next couple of months. With 3 rides a month, you have plenty of chances to invite a friend along and introduce them to our group!! More ITRs are available now...

We will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

We've had a terrific year sharing good grub and lots of great gab!! Our new personnel are making 2023 even more better... 😊

Hoping you're living the life you love, and loving the life you live...

*When you can...*

*Join one of our monthly rides!!*

*And invite a friend to ride along!!*

*Ride well! Ride often!! Do it safely!!!*

**ATGATT Van**

**MSTA Florida State Director**

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### East-Central Ride – C.J. Cannon's, Vero Beach, FL – Tom Blake



C.J. Cannon's at the Vero airport was every bit as good as expected. Plenty of comfortable seating, a friendly and attentive staff and, man, was the food ever good! Terry had oatmeal with blueberries, bananas and a little milk. It came in a huge bowl, and he could only find room for about half. Carl had a big plate of fried

eggs and grits. I had a bacon & cheddar omelet with a side of mixed fruit and toast. There were gobs of fresh and tasty bacon bits inside and on top of the omelet (thank God no looming cholesterol checks), and the fruit was fresh, juicy and sweet! SOOO good. Their coffee was excellent, as well. And, may I say, with this very seasoned cast of characters, there was no shortage of stories to amuse and amaze. Good times.

Terry and I had an easy ride down from Palm Bay but darted all around to hit any road with a curve. The skies were a pretty blue, and it felt good to be riding. Of course, it warmed up for the ride home, but we drank plenty of water at CJ's and the extra hydration made the ride quite bearable. Carl said he came up I-95 but planned on a more leisurely ride home. My very special thanks to him for making the rather longish (125-mile) brunch ride. He singlehandedly pushed up the EC turnout by 50% over last month!

Terry and I continued to seek out more roads with curves on the way home despite dark clouds forming to the north and west. One cell near Melbourne looked especially ominous for Terry. But it was moving fast to the east, and he said he only caught a few sprinkles at the tail end of it. I didn't have to go as far north and was fine. I hope Carl fared as well.

I have to keep reminding myself that despite the time of year, early morning rides can be quite enjoyable - as today was. And the camaraderie around the table is always a plus. Next month, it's Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q in Cocoa – the go to place for brunch in that neck of the woods.

## West Central Brunch Ride – Sunrise Eatery, Zephyrhills, FL – Doug Westly

We had great weather for the brunch ride to Sunrise Eatery in Zephyrhills on Sunday. Seven MSTA'ers showed for the gathering, including Doug Westly, Denny Mitchell, Dale Hall, Alan Spears (the long rider at 85 miles to the meeting) the Clarks and Eve Blazsur. The Eatery set up up a table for the group with no waiting. Good food and service, and everyone had a great time talking motorcycles. Most of the group headed back south together after the brunch!

Next month, Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, it's Roosters Café in Brooksville, so make plans to join us!



*Everyone had a great time talking motorcycles at The Eatery.*

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## Florida Rides This Month

Always remember to check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) and/or your email for updates on scheduled rides. Changes in times, dates, and especially locations are often out of our control and with short notice.

### **MSTA Florida East Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: **Kay's Real Pit Bar-B-Q**, 552 W King St., Cocoa, FL ☎ (407) 323-6469 ([map](#))

Description: This is a new place for us, but I've eaten there many times. It's your basic, old-fashioned BBQ place but kept up to date and clean. They know how to make good, reasonably priced breakfasts. It's also very accessible with plenty of paved parking.

Contact: Tom, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎ (321) 794-6147

### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: **Big V Restaurant**, 32 Hall St., LaBelle, FL ☎ (863) 675-2917 ([map](#))

Description: It's been years since we ventured here. Looks like they spruced it up and kept the prices reasonable!

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

### **MSTA Florida West Central Brunch Ride**

When: Saturday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Location: **Roosters Cafe**, 715 W. Jefferson St., Brooksville, FL ☎ (352) 540-4890 ([map](#))

Description: New-to-us place where you can get breakfast all day. Looks good!!

Contact: Doug, [flwingrdr@msn.com](mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com), or ☎ (813) 928-1663

## **Future Florida Rides**

Note that the future ride events are included to facilitate longer term planning. The destinations and/or dates may be changed just before the ride dates. Please check the Florida MSTA [Event Calendar](#) for any updates.

### **MSTA Florida South Brunch Ride**

When: **SUNDAY, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **The Outpost Bar and Grille**, 14057 SW Golf Club Dr., **Indiantown**, FL ☎ (772) 597-3790  
([map](#))

Description: SUNDAY, SUNDAY, SUNDAY!!! New-to-us destination that only does BRUNCH on SUNDAYS!!

Contact: Van, [busavanflmsta@gmail.com](mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com), or ☎ (561) 386-2594

### **MSTA Florida East Central Brunch Ride**

When: **Saturday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM**

Location: **Kountry Kitchen with Love**, 1749 Old Dixie Hwy, **Vero Beach**, FL ☎ (772) 567-6733 ([map](#))

Description: Extra good breakfasts, friendly service, reasonable prices. What's not to like? Though new to FL MSTA, this is an old favorite of the Space Coast BMW Riders.

Contact: Tom, [tblake1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com), or ☎ (321) 794-6147

### **MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride**

When: **Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Shamrock Inn**, 8343 E. Orange Ave., **Floral City**, FL ☎ (352) 726-6414 ([map](#))

Description: Back to LUNCH RIDES!! One of our local rider's favorites.

Contact: Doug, [flwingrdr@msn.com](mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com), or ☎ (813) 928-1663

For additional Florida events and information, [click here](#) to see the Florida MSTA website's Events page. The Florida MSTA chapter also has a presence on Facebook with upcoming events and past photos: [click here](#).

## **Florida MSTA Apparel**



As a reminder, our Florida State Storefront is open online for your MSTA-branded apparel! Go to [mstaflorida.qbstores.com](http://mstaflorida.qbstores.com). We have made arrangements with the supplier for our National Gearbox to allow our State membership to buy shirts, hats, etc. with our State logos directly from the source!!! No muss, no fuss!! Order yours today!! They offer both embroidery and digital print options. Click onto the Embroidered Apparel or Shop By Logo for each option. Don't hesitate to contact Queensboro directly with any and all questions. They are very customer friendly. They also offer Polo shirts and T-shirts with pockets!! Shopping finds online... We found some fun motorcycle t-shirts you can order online. Click the image for this particular t-shirt. There are other fun motorcycle t-shirts online at <https://teespring.com/shop/motorcycle-tshirts>.



These MSTA websites have extensive event information:

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*National MSTA* [RideMSTA.com](http://RideMSTA.com)    *SE Regional MSTA* [MSTA-SE.com](http://MSTA-SE.com)    *Florida MSTA* [FLMSTA.org](http://FLMSTA.org)

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We're also on Facebook: [facebook.com/FLMSTA/](https://facebook.com/FLMSTA/)

<b>More Contact Information</b>			
<b>Kim Longacre</b> Newsletter Editor <a href="mailto:editor@flmsta.org">editor@flmsta.org</a>	<b>P. 'Van' VanSteelant</b> FL State Director ☎ (561) 386-2594 <a href="mailto:busavanflmsta@gmail.com">busavanflmsta@gmail.com</a>	<b>Tom Blake</b> East Central Area Rep ☎ (321) 794-6147 <a href="mailto:tblake1@cfl.rr.com">tblake1@cfl.rr.com</a>	<b>Doug Westly</b> West Central Area Rep ☎ (813) 928-1663 <a href="mailto:flwingrdr@msn.com">flwingrdr@msn.com</a>

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*Classified Ads*

To find a buyer for your motorcycle items, please send your ad and pictures by email to [editor@flmsta.org](mailto:editor@flmsta.org). Don't trash it, recycle it! One man's trash is another man's treasure!