



The Florida Gator Tale

Newsletter of the Florida Chapter of the
Motorcycle Sport Touring Association

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Feature Article

Downsizing

By Stephen Evans

[Editor's Request: If you have ridden somewhere interesting at any time and would like to share your experiences and some photos from your journey with other riders, please contact editor@flmsta.org to publish an article. Thanks!]

As we age, our strength, our balance and our reaction time all decrease and that's a fact of life I'm sure everyone reading this is well aware of. Those facts may or may not have something to do with the fact that a little more than 50% of all motorcycle-related deaths occur in the age group of riders that are 40-plus years of age, and I believe that would be most of us. Whether these accidents involve one or multiple vehicles really doesn't matter, they're happening.

I'm not here to tell you what size bike you should be riding, but I would like to tell you about something I recently did that made a big difference in my riding and really brought back the "FUN FACTOR" of riding. We all know that one size does not fit all but I'd like to share with you a decision I recently made after thinking about it and researching it for two years just in case you may be on the fence thinking about the same subject. I downsized my ride and for me it was the correct decision. I felt a need to do so as the only other option down the line was a trike which I will never be interested in.

To start with I'm 76 (yoa) and somewhat close to the ground at 5'6 and 3/4" with a weight of 148 lbs and a 29" inseam. So, you can see that I'm a small-built man and just as everything else in life, it has its advantages and disadvantages. Add to that the fact that I have five totally replaced joints (both knees-both shoulders and a right hip, with the hip and left shoulder being replaced twice), along with a broken right thigh bone that is held together with a clamp and wire, all of which makes me weaker overall than a person without these issues. One of the disadvantages, to me anyway, is that my 2016 FJR was becoming too big and too heavy for me. I was becoming somewhat intimidated, not by its speed or power, but by its weight and size. Add to that, if one can only put the balls of their feet on the ground at a light then doing so with 430 lbs or 490 lbs is much better than with 640 lbs, let alone having to pick one up off the ground. So, I made the decision to downsize, and my choices were many, and they ALL were good.



Honda NC 750X

I wanted something under 500 lbs and something in a upright seating position and found the following - Yamaha Tracer 9 - Triumph Tiger 900 - Triumph Sport - Suzuki VStrom 650 and the Kawasaki Versys 650, just to name the ones I liked the best. I liked every single one of them, and they were all under 500 lbs wet. However, I chose a 2022 Honda NC 750X (DCT) for a number of reasons. Years ago, I had a 2012 Honda NC 700X, along with a 2014 FJR, and loved it. I took it from Florida out to California and back covering just under 9,000 miles in 28 days without a single hiccup and even

did part of the TAT with it in Colorado, so don't tell me you can't ride a midsize bike on a long trip. I wrote about the trip in the December 2018 issue of the *Gator Tale*. I also know an MSTA member in Ohio with a Suzuki VStrom 650XT that went to Alaska this past summer for 5 weeks and did 11,633 miles, so what's not to like here?

The 2022 NC 750X (DCT) weighs in at 490 lbs, which is 150 lbs less (more than I weigh) than the FJR, and with the engine slanted forward and the gas tank under the seat, the COG is very low, which allows this bike to be flicked back and forth in the curves with extreme ease. I also love the "trunk" that it has where the normal gas tank would be, the fact that it gets 65 to 75 mpg if kept under 70 mph on back roads, and the price which was a shade under 10 grand, thus my choice. I also wanted the DCT, which I keep in standard/automatic mode when on the interstate, but other than that, it's in sport mode, and I use the paddles/flippers to shift up and down, which is instantaneous. I can't say enough about it. I kept the FJR because I still wanted to do a couple more Iron Butt rides that I had yet to get to, but as time went on (one year), I had some more medical issues (24 medical operations/procedures in the last 22 years), and thus I decided to trade in the FJR on another midsize bike and got a 2023 Honda CB500X which only weighs in at 430 lbs (210 less than the FJR) and is capable of doing some off road riding. It is referred to by some as a mini-Africa Twin. If you think the NC 750X is fun, you should try the CB500X as both these bikes are as nimble as a cat with an excellent riding position.

Now, you may be thinking that these bikes are not capable of doing a long day in the saddle, and you would probably have a good chance of being correct on that with the CB500X (I'll find out in the near future) but not so with the NC 750X. While attending the Fly BY Week rally (August) in Marietta Ohio (which I highly recommend attending but do not go out for dinner with Tom Blake as your stomach will be hurting - not from the food but from laughing because of the humor), I had planned to leave Sunday and take 2 days and all back roads coming home. However, due to Hurricane Idalia heading straight for Lake City, which arrived on Wednesday, I rode straight through doing 841 miles in 12 and 1/2 hours. I also attended the rally in Lewisburg, West Virginia in September and came home in one day (741 miles of which all but 237 miles were back roads). So, these midsize bikes are more than ready for the task. Add to that, the old saying "Less is more" comes to mind here as these bikes IMHO are far more FUN than their big brothers.

Again, I'm not telling anyone what to ride or what to do. I'm a person who loves information and believes in sharing that information with others. If you're a larger and taller person than myself, then this article will mean nothing to you. But there may be someone out there who may be on the fence about downsizing their ride, and my firsthand advice would be to do it. I have two midsize bikes now that suit me to a T. If not now, it may be the correct decision for you sometime in the future, and if so, I hope this helped.

- *Stephen Evans*

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 February 2018 edition of the FLMSTA Gator Tale.]

Solo Riding – Best Recommendations

By Doug Westly



As I prepare for a Saturday solo ride of about 400 miles, it occurs to me that MSTA riders are a strange bunch. While most motorcyclists are happy always being in a group, we occasionally (and for some, always) like to get out by ourselves. And I am not talking about a ride around the block, either. It may be across the state, or in my case down to the Everglades and back, just for lunch, or even across the country with nobody to keep us company except the bike.

There are entire books, online forums and seminars where you can find tips and hints on long-distance, solo riding. Long-distance riders all have their own tips and techniques. Here are a few of mine:

- *A thorough bike check.* You are going out there, depending on your mount to get you to your destination. Before you go, do a thorough inspection of the bike. I don't mean a once-over. I am talking about putting your hands on every nut, bolt, fastener, cable, line, light, spoke, etc. Don't just check air pressure. Rotate the tires and inspect the tread. Do I even have to mention oil? Well, I did, anyway. Find it before it finds you, otherwise luck could mean you're stuck on a backroad in the middle of nowhere. And do this check at least a week in advance, so you have time to order, repair, replace or fix anything without having to rush at the last minute.
- *Make a riding plan.* That means route, gas stops, meals, nightly stops if it is over-night, etc. Take a look at the weather fore-cast and plan, plan, plan. Once you make the plan, stick to it. Oh, and tell someone the plan. That way they know where to go look if the worst were to happen.
- *Check-in.* With today's communications, there is no reason to ever be out of touch. Enable your location finding for your significant other. If you are going to be way out there, then get a SPOT or other type of satellite communications. It's easy, fairly inexpensive and means you can always reach out if you need. Don't let your loved ones worry.
- *Don't overextend yourself.* Make sure your riding plan is realistic. Take more frequent stops. Long distance riders tend to want to just keep riding. There is a difference between a fun long ride and an Iron Butt challenge.
- *If you haven't done a lot of long distance days, try this.* Instead of thinking about it as one long ride, imagine it as a number of short rides, from one planned stop to the next one. Mentally that makes it a lot easier to absorb and manage.
- *Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.* Start before the ride. If you wait until the morning of the trip, you're too late. Your body needs time to absorb and process. Once you're on the road, stay hydrated. Use a hydration system. That way, you can take sips during the ride, and not depend on stopping to get a drink.

Finally, go out there and enjoy the solitude. I do some of my best thinking when I'm on a long, solo ride. Maybe an epiphany will strike you as well, while you're alone on the road.

Ride safe! – Doug Westly



South Director's Report

Well, winter riding seems to agree with you all...

We had four lunch rides this month, attended by 58 riders! Mind you, there were repeat attendees, as expected. We try to make our events available to as many members and friends as possible. It helps that some of us think a 350+ mile round trip for lunch is just the best way to spend a day among friends! Join us, won't you?!?

All that said, we are still working on increasing our opportunities for our more northern members. We'll be in touch about possibly starting with simple meet-up rides. No expectations or formalities. 2024 will hopefully see us doing better for all our members.

Tom and Doug's reports are below. Tom's is a two-fer, as he set up the Black Friday Lunch in addition to his ride to Renegades. We packed a lot into early November. The South Ride to Paul's Kitchen in Wauchula on the 11th was a huge hit! Eight riders met at the Shell Station. Two friends of Jim Park, Tim and Bill, joined Lou and Cathy, past PA SDs here visiting family, to round out the usuals, Buck, Mike & Van. A wonderful day of riding unfolded for all, and we arrived to find a parking lot packed with bikes and Spyderys! We had Paul's prepared for 10-12, and ended up with 26 hungry patrons. We had riders from Hollywood to Melbourne to Sun City. The staff did a great job keeping us happy and everybody said the food was worth a return visit! Our group of 8 chose 3 different routes home, and pulled into home with big grins from a day well spent on two wheels!



A wonderful day of riding and good food at Paul's for 26 riders on the South ride

Here's what Lou and Cathy said:

Florida MSTA Members,

Cathy and I were delighted to have been invited to join Jim, Van, and other Florida MSTA members for your breakfast ride on 11/11/23. We were visiting our daughter in West Palm Beach (immediately after visiting another daughter in Colorado) and had not been on our bikes for several weeks. Jim recommended RMM Motorcycle Rentals in W. Palm Beach and despite calling them one day before the ride they were able to rent us a bike and they gave us an MSTA 10% discount!

We really enjoyed the ride through central Florida and the view of Lake Okeechobee. As you all already know, there is so much history in Florida that most visitors who cling to the beach towns miss.

When we arrived for lunch, I was amazed to see the huge turnout of Florida members! The destination was perfect and the catfish was delicious. As a past PA MSTA State Director, I wish our lunch rides were so well attended! I was really impressed by the friendships and camaraderie that I witnessed at your meeting. You have a state group to be proud of. Cathy and I felt truly welcomed!

I mentioned to a few of you that I will be coordinating the 2024 TriStar event in Sparta, NC. Would love to see you all attend! Thanks for making us feel so welcome.

Sincerely,

Lou and Cathy Laguna

(We will certainly promote the TriStar event. They have BIG plans as new coordinators.)

What's Next??

We'll be heading to a new-to-us destination for our **Statewide Holiday Lunch Ride on December 9th!!** We have reserved tables at the Lake Wales Family Restaurant, in **Lake Wales!!** Easy to find, lots of parking, friendly staff and centrally located for most of our members.

AND... Doug has added some fun and frolic to the event! His plans follow...

MYSTERY SCAVENGER HUNT! - You'll want to join us for the **December Florida MSTA Statewide Holiday Lunch Ride!** Along with the lunch, there will be a Mystery Scavenger Hunt for members while on their way to the restaurant! Tokens will be hidden in the Central FL countryside, redeemable for prizes at the luncheon. They will all be within a 25-mile radius of Lake Wales, covering all four compass points. The four prize token clues will be released by email the day before the luncheon. **BE SURE TO CHECK YOUR EMAIL FRIDAY AFTERNOON, DECEMBER 8TH!!**

The tokens themselves will not be placed/available before 9 AM on the luncheon morning. Each clue will be in the form of a rhyming riddle. Solve the riddle, find the token, present the token at the luncheon, as well as a picture of where you found it, and claim a prize (and bragging rights)! We will offer gift cards as prizes, funded by the proceeds from our 50/50 raffle.

Additionally, there will be a fifth bonus token clue, more challenging and with a special prize for whoever solves the riddle and retrieves the token. There will be only one clue for each token.

Good Luck and Have Fun!

And one more thing... We will once again have our **Just For Fun New Year's Day Lunch ride to Peck's Old Port Restaurant!!** Doug has checked in on their recovery from this season's hurricane and they are open, looking to fill hungry bellies!! Make your plans now!!

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...

As we have shared previously, we recently lost a great person and ambassador of our Club and sport. Carl's tribute was wonderfully crafted in honoring Ilse's life while she was with us. RIP.



We added 5 new members to the FLMSTA:

- Terry Casto of Indialantic
- Michael Clark of Sun City Center
- Greg Cyr of Green Cove Springs (Palm Coast)
- Herman Greinstein of Port St. Lucie
- Chuck Waychoff of The Villages

Welcome!

These Florida memberships have recently renewed:

Richard Alleman Tom Blake Buck Jones Dennis Mitchell

These Florida memberships have recently expired or will expire soon:

Stephen Evans Randolph Freyer Tim Lynch Don Mroczenski Hugh Palmer
Tod Powers Bob Shields

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. Renewing or joining can be done quickly and securely online at PlanetReg.com/MSTArenew or 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. **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!!

How can you not like the "winter" down here... Cooler temps and longer rides await!!

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... You know what to do...

We've had a great year trying out new-to-us locations! We will continue to support our local, small business restaurants. Please send your recommendations to any of the ride coordinators.

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

East-Central Ride – Renegades On The River Restaurant, Crescent City, FL – Tom Blake

Saturday, November 4th was a real Goldilocks riding day. Not too hot, not too cold... j-u-s-t right.

Four of us headed inland and took rural roads north to Renegades on the (St John's) River about nine miles west of Crescent City. Renegades is a snowbird haven with row upon row of motorhome pads, boat and water sports equipment rentals and a general store. The restaurant sat well back from the road, down near the river. Across a pond was a separate tiki bar. The restaurant was very attractive with ample indoor seating plus a separate bar area. A large, screened porch facing the river was too nice to pass up.



It was a treat to find eight riders from the northern third of the state already there. And arriving late enough to miss the \$55 50/50 was one more from the state's center. Some old friends, some new. Lots of friendly chatter. Good times!

For my group's ride home, we headed straight south and then got lost on Putnum County back roads - thanks to the infamous BMW Connected App GPS system on 2021 and newer models. It wanted us to turn onto non-existent roads, cross a section of dirt road which was checked as an avoidance and refused to route us onto other desirable roads it thought didn't exist but did. Frustration.

We finally managed to reach Seville on US 17 and then headed east all the way to Old Dixie Highway north of Ormond Beach. Old Dixie is part of the tree-canopied Ormond Scenic Loop, which is always fun to ride, in this case, south across the Tomoka River into Ormond. Then, as it was getting late and most of us had evening plans, we pinned our ears back and ran about mach 1.85 or so down I-95 and still, traffic was flying past us! Extreme caution was a necessity when changing lanes because some vehicles were closing at Valentino Rossi speeds.

Perfect riding weather, many interesting roads, fantastic destination, good friends old and new. Despite the GPS issues and I-95, it was a beautiful day of riding, camaraderie and good food.

Black Friday Lunch Ride, The Roost at Four Seasons, Frostproof, FL – Tom Blake

I've long been curious where the term Black Friday came from. Seems it originated in 1869 as a term of financial distress when the gold market collapsed on a Friday. The 1929 stock market crash that started the Great Depression was called Black Tuesday. But in the 1950's, the day after Thanksgiving got the name Black Friday to denote the heavily hyped start of the holiday shopping season when bottom lines turned from distress to gain. Interesting how the same word has come to have such opposing connotations.

In any case, our Black Friday lunch has always been about doing something fun on a day off from work if you're not entertaining company, shopping or traveling. This year, it was a ride to The Roost at Four Seasons in Frostproof. Seven showed up from the south and central east coasts despite somewhat threatening forecasts. Temperatures stayed in the mid-to-upper 60's all day. With appropriate clothing, it made for a very refreshing day on the road although my group did encounter light rain a couple times on the way home. Thanks to all for your participation.



(l-r) Melbourne rides and Eastside rides at the Roost

As for the restaurant, I was told the only change from when it was known simply as Four Seasons to now is that they quit doing dinners. We ate there several years ago, and I was not overwhelmed. But this time, the food and service were very much above expectations.

Now into December, it's time to wish each of you a joyous Holiday Season and good tidings for the New Year. - Tom

P.S. RIP Ilse "Jacky" Zeigler.



Riders from Southeast and Central East coasts at the Black Friday Lunch Ride

West Central Lunch Ride – The Upper Deck, Springhill (Weeki Wachee), FL – Doug Westly

If you didn't show for the November West Central lunch ride, you missed out! We had 12 riders gather at The Upper Deck in Weeki Wachee on Saturday morning. It was a big enough group that we ended up in two different parking locations around the restaurant. The weather had just passed and it was a gorgeous morning to be out riding!



Good turnout for the West Central ride at the Upper Deck in Weeki Wachee – we needed 2 parking lots!

The gang gathered on the outside deck, overlooking the Weeki Wachee River and Rogers Park. Great food and lots of war stories! They even conned Doug into a comment or two on the December Statewide Luncheon Mystery Scavenger Hunt (Don't worry, no actual clues or real information were given out. Nobody gets those until the day before!).

Right now, we're in the middle of planning for the annual **New Year's Day ride to Peck's Old Port Cove in Ozello**. We'll be headed there in the next week or so to make sure they're back up and open after the hurricane hit last season. Word is they'll be good to go, so plan on a great New Year's Day ride out to the very west coast!

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 Statewide Holiday Lunch Ride

When: **Saturday, December 9th, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Lake Wales Family Restaurant, 109 E State Rd 60 West, Lake Wales, FL**
☎ (386) 524-4052 ([map](#))

Description: NEW-TO-US destination! Reservations made, lots of parking, easy to get to, and centrally located for most of the membership. AND WE ADDED THE MYSTERY SCAVENGER HUNT!! DETAILS COMING VIA EMAILS AND THE GATOR TALE!! GIFT CARD PRIZES TO BE AWARDED TO THE SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS!!

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

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.

Just For Fun New Year's Lunch Ride

When: **Monday, January 1st, 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM**

Location: **Peck's Old Port Cove, 139 N Ozello Trail, Crystal River, FL**
☎ (386) 524-4052 ([map](#))

Description: Let's keep the tradition going!! They have reopened after the last hurricane, and welcome our return!! Reservations are made! Just a great way to kick off the new year!!

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

MSTA Florida East Central Lunch Ride

When: **Scheduling in progress**

MSTA Florida South Lunch Ride

When: **Scheduling in progress**

MSTA Florida West Central Lunch Ride

When: **Scheduling in progress**

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. 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:

National MSTA RideMSTA.com **SE Regional MSTA** MSTA-SE.com **Florida MSTA** FLMSTA.org

We're also on Facebook: facebook.com/FLMSTA/

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Classified Ads

2018 Kawasaki Ninja 1000 ABS For Sale



- Corner carver AND a long-distance companion!
- One owner
- Stock bike
- 16,872 adult ridden miles
- 1043 cc 6 speed
- Side bags with trims/keyed to the bike
- 1 year-old battery
- 1500 miles on Dunlop RoadSmart IV tires
- 1500 miles on dealer oil change
- Asking \$9675.00

Van, FL State Director

busavanflmsta@gmail.com / (561) 386-2594

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